

THE ENCOMIUM IN THE SLAVONIC-ROMANIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

VALERIU MARINESCU

This study tries to reconstruct, by making use of some literary texts that had been written in Slavonic, the official language at that time, a possible image of the man living in the Romanian Middle Ages. In the Old Romanian literature, the encomium has a considerable tradition; the Romanian literature from the second half of the 15th century is mostly oriented towards the courtly historiography, with a strong emphasis on the personality cult. The writers should be seen as “image directors”, because they make “advertising” efforts to shape the favourable image that the sovereigns wished to impose both to their servants and neighbours. Beyond the “purposeful” encomium addressed to the patron, what is in fact expressed in the encomiastical texts are the Romanians’ aspirations to peace, prosperity, to multiplying the “good deeds” done by the sovereign to everybody’s benefit.

The Romanian literature written in Slavonic and the centuries during which this cultural vehicle was used by the Romanians cannot be ignored under any circumstances. As is well known, Slavonic used to be a cultural language in our country, having the same functions as Latin or Greek had in other territories. The Romanian literature of Slavonic expression represents an integral part of our national literary process and it is for this reason that it should not be regarded as a preface of the 17th century literature, but as a well-defined period, with precise purposes and with functions of the greatest importance for the Romanian future writing.¹

I have set as the purpose of this paper – choosing a new approach, enlightened by the perspectives of the history of mentalities (thus bringing my contribution to the theme of the symposium that I took part in: *Characteristics of the south-east European realities and new methods of approach*) –, to reconstruct, by making use of some literary texts that had been written in Slavonic, the official language at that time, a possible image of the man living in the Romanian Middle Ages, a man whose existence was deeply affected by a profound sense of insecurity. The medieval man thought that he was living in a passing world, a world of appearances, and the sense of insecurity led him to the (acutely felt) need to find some support and protection.² Consequently, when man, acting by himself, failed

¹ Dan Horia Mazilu, *Recitind literatura română veche*, 1, Bucharest University Publishing House, s.a., p. 16-18.

² A book *Sentimentul de insecuritate oglindit în literatura română medievală* by Valeriu Marinescu is to be published soon in Bucharest.

to succeed in his struggle for existence, for survival, he looked for a powerful protector, who did not usually help him selflessly, but expected something in return; in literature, this “something in return” is represented by the text itself.

In the Old Romanian literature, the encomium has a considerable tradition, praise being dedicated to God on one side, and to the earthly authority on the other (therefore, the object of the encomium can be the transcendent or the historical present). Due to the limited space reserved for my paper, I had to limit myself to a brief selection of the data regarding the individual need for divine and human help. My research focused especially on defining the royal figure and the ideas related to it, starting from the hypothesis that the Romanians had profound feelings of trust, respect and veneration towards their princes, who were seen as God chosen and, at the same time, as men’s representatives before God.

Christianity recommended glorifying the divinity: “Chant to God in your hearts, gratifying him in psalms, in praises and divine songs” (extracted from *Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians*, III:16) or “... May we sing the praises of God, the Holy Lord, the Supreme Being, the One and Only” (extracted from *Saint Paul’s First Epistle to Timothy*, I:17). The believers are asked to spend their time as religiously as possible, saying prayers, psalms and singing hymns.

The life of the medieval man cannot possibly be conceived without God; for a Christian, existing means being with God; when God turns His face from a human being, the latter ceases to exist. Everything happens for a reason, everything happens with God’s will, which the Christian truly accepts, as it is said in *Lord’s Prayer*: “Thy will be done”. The Romanians from the Middle Ages followed the advice of Paul, the Apostle: “Persist in praying” (*Epistle to the Colossians* IV:2), the orthodoxy representing a real *modus vivendi* of this world with the vocation of faith. In *Învățăturile* (*The Teachings*) addressed to his son Theodosius, Neagoe Basarab makes it clear that the reason why man was endowed with limbs and senses is to praise God: “We were endowed with speech to worship God and to praise his Holy Name to the skies on and on...”.³ Nicolae Cartoian considers *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie* (*Neagoe Basarab’s Teachings to his son Theodosius*) to be “the most precious monument of the Romanian way of thinking and feeling that was ever written in Slavonic”.

The first texts known in the history of our literature belong to the hymnic poetry: *Pripeale* (*Hasty lines*) at all burial feasts, in the name of God and Virgin Mary and of all holy fathers, great and sainted, the celebrated martyrs and all special patron saints. These lines are to be sung together with the Psalms, chosen when the *Polieleu* is sung, starting with the 8th day of September. The work of *Filothei*, the monk, ex-chancellor of Prince Mircea. These hasty lines (written at the end of the 14th century, according to some researchers, or at the beginning of

³ *Învățăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie* (ed.) Florica Moisil and Dan Zamfirescu. Preface and footnotes by Dan Zamfirescu and G. Mihăilă, Bucharest, Ed. Mînerua, 1970, p. 126.

the 15th century, according to others), 33 in number, composed in medieval Bulgarian, translated into Romanian for the first time at the beginning of the 18th century and printed in the Psalm Book in Buzău in 1703, are simple, half-lined, unskilful lines, but containing pious thoughts.

For the man living in the Middle Ages, the entire spiritual life was dominated by a religious feeling. But, as a consequence of the centralization policy adopted by the feudal State, our religious literature from the second half of the 15th century is mostly oriented towards the court historiography, with a strong emphasis on the personality cult (a vocation that was unfortunately extended for too long).

The Church (using the words of Saint John Climacus) considers pride to be the first of the “deadly sins”, heavy sins, and the words of Jesus, from *Gospel According to Luke* (XVIII: 14) underline this aspect: “... everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted”. On the other hand, it is still Jesus who prompts his contemporaries “to render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s” (Luke: XX: 25), and Saint Paul, the Apostle says that “there is no such power that does not come from God”, when he speaks about every man’s rightful obedience to the sovereign. Therefore, the “earthly sovereign” himself ought to be praised as well, especially because the earthly order is conceived as homologous to the divine order.

From a different perspective, people, having ideals that they strive to achieve and yearning for performance, have always created models and, quite often, imitating a model turned into glorifying it. The theme of the exemplary royal figure began to come into focus intensively; the sovereign was supposed to outshine everybody by his wisdom, righteousness, courage, forgiveness, mercy, self-control, in a word, to reign by the example of his virtues. In his *Învățăturile* (*Teachings*), Neagoe Basarab speaks about the attitude that a prince should have towards his servants “as it is for your love, for the mercy that you show to them that they serve you and are ready to give their lives and shed their blood for”. It is obvious that, had it not been for the prince’s protection, the servants would have left him, and, as Neagoe Basarab puts it, “without any servants ... what kind of lord are you?”

It is worth praising the facts that exceeded everybody’s expectations and especially those which had positive consequences for the people from among whom the exemplary hero rose. Gradually, people came to sanctify, the praised person (it is in fact about the oriental image of the sovereign-god, the almighty holder of supreme power). If the West built its royal imaginary around the crusader knight, in Eastern Europe, the existence of the Byzantine autocrat imprinted a different rhythm and different forms to feudalism. Throughout the 14th to 18th centuries, the model of the royal figure that was as well to be pursued in Țările Române (the Romanian Lands) was that of the Byzantine autocrat, our scholars transforming the prince figures into myths.⁴

⁴ Valeriu Marinescu, *Vocația magnificării în literatura română veche*, București, Ed. Ars Docendi, 2003, p. 123.

The texts that I am to draw my attention to at this point, promote (with the purpose to praise) sovereigns that are exemplary in all their actions. The stories to be told will take shape in a world that belongs less to history and more to story telling, the latter being the birth certificate of the model hero. As a matter of fact, the writers should be seen as “image directors” (the expression may seem inadequate, being very modern, but I find it the most appropriate in this case), because they make “publicity” efforts to shape the favourable image that the sovereigns wished to impose both to their servants and neighbours. But, in posterity, the iconic image suffered a constant rise and fall...

The first chronicle of Moldavia, the first Romanian lay work written in Slavonic (G. Mihăilă) is *Letopisețul de când s-a început, cu voia lui Dumnezeu, Țara Moldovei* (*The chronicle of the beginning of Moldavia, God willing*), a text written at the royal court of Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) (and continued during the reign of his followers), and this is the reason why the model of the royal figure imposed is the founder of Putna monastery.

Literary speaking, *Letopisețul de când s-a început, cu voia lui Dumnezeu, Țara Moldovei* was considered to be a prehistory of the narration with a historical subject. The text that is to be quoted clearly points out the importance that the prince attached to the heroic ideal in the history of Moldavia; Stephen embodies the hero that loves fighting and that not only fights well, but also enjoys the voluptuousness of the battle, as an implicit act of bravery: “In the year 6973 [1465], January the 23rd, on Thursday, at midnight, prince Stephen made his entrance into Chilia and surrounded the fortress. And he peacefully spent the night there, and on Friday morning he attacked the Chilia fortress and started to break it down. And they fought all day long till the evening. And on Saturday, the fortress surrendered and prince Stephen made his entrance into the fortress, God willing. And he stayed there for three days, celebrating, praising God and comforting the people within the fortress”.⁵

Apart from the scenes of fight, there are hardly any information of a different nature, and when this yet happens, the narration is cold, arid, lapidary: “In the same year, August 29th, there was a big earthquake that hit the entire earth, while the prince was having lunch. In the year 6980 [1472], September the 14th, prince Stephen got married to princess Maria from Mangop”. The question arises why is it that only Stephen’s heroic deeds are especially magnified? The predilection for the warrior sovereign should also be attributed to the Byzantine influence, war representing a constant element of the Byzantine reality.

With the exception of these “wonders of bravery”, – the same as those done by heroes in fairy tales, the type of hero which was so splendid that “one could stare at the sun but not in his face” – Stephen is protected by God and he fears Him (the phrase “on God’s mercy” is firstly used in this chronicle, when narrating the

⁵ *Literatura română veche* (1402-1647). Edition and footnotes by G. Mihăilă and Dan Zamfirescu, vol. II, Bucharest, 1969, p. 31.

moment when Stephen becomes prince), he proves to be righteous, his righteousness being a particular characteristic of the enlightened monarch and thus he is a *pater patriae*. The end of *Letopisețul ...*, the same as the well-known portrait, drawn by Ureche in his chronicle, once again underlines that the one sitting on the throne of Moldavia is sent by God, since his death – an irreparable loss for the country – is announced by a series of natural disasters: “And that year, just before his death, there was a heavy, harsh winter as it had never been before. And during summer there were massive rains and overflows and floods, due to storm water”. The death of the sovereign becomes a catastrophe in itself, since the monarch’s life is in fact his people’s life, and a country without a sovereign cannot “live” (the situation is indeed to be remedied as soon as possible, by investing the heir to the throne).

The next phase in the evolution of the encomiastic prose is represented by the chronicles of the monks Macarie, Eftimie and Azarie. In the century following Stephen the Great’s reign, the courtly chronicles, this time signed by their authors, prove to be excessively laudative when addressed to the sovereign that patronizes the writer, and defamatory when directed to the sovereign’s enemies. And there is another element that comes as a novelty: while in *Letopisețul de când s-a început, cu voia lui Dumnezeu, Țara Moldovei* the chronicle was focused mainly on the prince, and the writer was almost totally anonymous, this time, the writer is present in each and every page.

Macarie, Eftimie and Azarie, living in isolation, away from the royal court where history was being made, living in an atmosphere of mysticism, being particularly fed with biblical apocrypha and hagiographic legends, in which the hero is shown in an aura of miracle⁶, are inclined to see in the prince, whose life they are writing about on command, an ideal prototype of Christian virtues; therefore, their chronicles have a panegyric character, the same as the hagiographic legends that they were used to. They had a double duty: on one hand, to settle the “object” on a convenient and stable platform, and, on the other hand, the encomium should please the eulogized, in his position as a receiver.⁷

Regarding their style and composition, the three chronicles have a more or less uniform character and they share a few common elements:

- the ineffable, namely underlining the inability to cope with the “object”, as there are not enough words to worthily glorify the rightful person (this is a constant topos of the encomium dedicated to the sovereigns);
- the assurance that the author expresses only a few of the many things that he may actually have to say;
- the notification that the entire world would be full of admiration for the sovereign (the topos “the whole world is singing his praises”);

⁶ Nicolae Cartojan, *Istoria literaturii române vechi*. Postface and final biographies by Dan Simonescu. Preface by Dan Zamfirescu, Bucharest, Ed. Minerva, 1980, p. 69.

⁷ Dan Horia Mazilu, *Proza oratorică în literatura română*, vol. II, București, Editura Minerva, 1987, p. 112.

- the emphasis on the forefathers (for instance, in the case of Petru Rareș, Stephen the Great's son);
- outbidding – based on a comparison with famous specimens that the tradition has to offer, one can see the superiority of the “object” (for instance, the case of Alexandru Lăpușneanu, compared by Eftimie, with Alexander the Great due to an onomastic coincidence).

The three historians despise data, omit many of them, simply because they do not match with the “beautiful” style, they also use the allegory and the symbol, instead of plain narration, creating literary works, to the taste of their patrons.⁸

Macarie, bishop of Roman, writes like a monk, “stealing stylistic devices from the chronicle of the Byzantine Manasses” (G. Călinescu), “without even thinking that the situations are never perfectly identical” (I. Bogdan). Starting his narration with the year of Stephen the Great's death (1504), Macarie sets as his goal to bring “the thread of his story up to the present day reign, without bragging with rhetorical ornaments, but putting into effect the royal command of *Petru cel ales* (Peter the chosen one)”.⁹ Consequently, we have a chronicle written on command, whose purpose is to glorify the personality of Rareș, emphasizing his qualities, the praises addressed to him turning into a panegyric. The reign of Petru Rareș represents the core of the chronicle, and it is described in a rhetorical style, with moralizing and religious intentions, the typically monk like humility being part of the protocol: “... he commanded me, a sinner, the last of the priests, the humble Macarie...”

Between “the end of the blessed one till doomsday and blissful for his bravery prince Ioan Ștefan” and the enthronement of Petru Rareș, the chronicle is stylistically characterized by aridity, being based almost exclusively on historical data (battles, plots), the same as *Letopiseșul de când s-a început, cu voia lui Dumnezeu, Țara Moldovei*. What we find interesting is the fact that Moldavia's history is related to that of the “powerful ones” at the time, the Turks, (this does not come as a surprise to us, considering Iorga's opinion, according to which there is no such thing as a national history *stricto sensu*, and the Romanian history makes no exception); we hear about the conquest of Jerusalem and Palestine, about the campaign against Egypt and the one against Hungary.

The chronicle starts to be exciting after the coronation of “*Petru cel Minunat*” (Peter the Wonderful) from the dynasty of Mușatini, due to divine grace (“God willing”), but also to popular will (“he was elected sovereign”, “he was honourably enthroned, according to people's counsel”). The chronicle presents the scene of the enthronement, the sacred ritual introducing the prince into a religious system specific to the mediaevalism, through which the prerogatives are transmitted from the superior, divine authority to the subordinate, vassal one: “he was ... consecrated with the sacred oil by the hand” of archbishop Teoctist.

⁸ *Istoria literaturii române*, vol. I, București, Editura Academiei, 1964; 2nd revised edition, Bucharest, 1970, p. 272.

⁹ *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)*, ed. cit., p. 17.

Among the virtues glorified, the extraordinary bravery comes first – a natural virtue, considering the descendance of Rareș. Apart from proving himself “great in bravery and furious as a lion in battle”, Rareș is also a pious and religious church founder (“he took care of churches, building them up, and he worked with the fear of God”), generous with those who admit to their mistakes and, on the opposite, ruthless with the plotters (for instance, with Alexandru Cornea, “given prey to weapon and food to sword”), his attributes and those of his reign gaining imperial reflexes. We could say that this panegyric is based on an event narrated apparently accidentally, resorting to the metaphor of the wheel of fortune: “the wheel of church being span from one another, I got lucky and I, the humble, was named bishop in the southern part of the country, on April 23rd.”¹⁰ So, Rareș seems to be praised not so much for his real merits, but especially for having appointed Macarie bishop and this is the reason why G. Călinescu calls the latter “a flatterer, with false humility and enough vileness”.

This is a rather bombastic work, the scene in which Petru Rareș, reduced to wander, gets reunited with his family, who took refuge in the fortress Ciceul, being a good example to this effect: “Stretching his arms and embracing his children with fatherly love, he would kiss them and protect them as an eagle protects its callow eaglets. And stretching his arms again, he enfolded his wise wife Helen, crying. And she, clasping his neck, was crying her heart out and kissing him wholeheartedly, not as the Traitor Delilah kissed Samson or as Tindarida did with her husband, the brave hero. There were wails and sobs everywhere, everybody would knock out their chest”.¹¹ The same as in hagiographies, “God leant over them and, seeing floods of tears, he had mercy on the one who was praying so devotedly”, the latter thus regaining his throne and being paid a tribute to, through the suite of the boyars “who received their lord with open arms, and, kneeling down, they received forgiveness for their boldness”. The end of his reign is a well-deserved one, confirming the divine words (which, for sure, kept coming back to the ears of the bishop of Roman): “Blessed be those who weep, because they will find solace” and “Come to Me all that are tired and burdened and I shall give you rest”; Rareș “humours his lucky old age with baths, drinks and food, as if he were a bird with golden fethers or a swan throning over some buildings”.¹²

The next prince of Moldavia, Iliăș, is situated at the opposite pole by Macarie: he is sly, unfaithful, immoral, a conspirator, a tyrant, a murderer; but let’s hear it in Macarie’s own words: “... on the poor he had no mercy at all, considering himself too wise and priding himself with catching birds. And occupying himself with this, the supercilious prince would choose his councillors from among Agar’s sons during the day and, during the night, he would let his ears and heart be open to foul mouths, till the devil found his dwelling inside him for good. For never did he

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 180.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 182–183.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 185.

want to see wise people before his eyes, and one could see in his mouth and tongue, and especially in his heart, only the lust to get wealthy, and indeed, heaps of coins did the sly gather: the boyars' income came into his possession by some means or other, he completely got hold of the personal properties and the real estate of the bishops and the monasteries, and he also ruthlessly plundered the priests and prayers throughout the country, leaving them in tears and sobs".¹³ A new question arises now: why was he so bitter? And the mystery is solved by Macarie himself: his dethronement as a bishop. In a highly-hierocratical system, any dignitary finds all by himself in front of his superior, who can deprive him of his privileges and even take his life; nobody can feel safe, the most prevailing mentality being that of life insecurity, as we mentioned from the very beginning (there is no doubt that the Romanian Middle Ages was a time of fear!). Therefore, we can begin to understand Macarie, who proves his opportunism once again, when, at the beginning of a new reign (by becoming the new sovereign, Stephen, Iliăș's brother, reinstates Macarie bishop), he "clears his throat" and "sings to a different tune": "And the new prince of Moldavia was a warm-hearted monarch, with a gentle look and a beautiful countenance. As soon as he became sovereign, from his very first steps, he proved to those who had elected him that they had made a good choice, encouraging them to hope for the best. And there shone again the rays of good faith, and the horizon of benevolence was alight again, and everybody praised prince Stephen and loved him dearly, because he was merciful, he loved the monks and fed the poor".¹⁴ The ascendancy of the eulogized is currently correlated with the descendancy of the eulogizer: "And he bent his crowned head and his knees before the face of the emperor of all emperors and, with God's mercy, he was consecrated with the oil of benediction by me, the humble".

Eftimie, the least of the hegumens, (this self-designation does not surprise us, since humility was something rather typical, as we have shown before) presents – in a Macarian rhetorical style – the facts from the second reign of Petru Rareș, the evil reigns of his sons, Rareș (who changed his name into Mahmet) and Ștefan cel Tânăr (Stephen the Young), and then the reign of Alexandru Lăpușneanu, "the righteous and brave offset of faith" – who also commanded the writing of this text.

Before writing the encomiastical text, dedicated to the reign of Lăpușneanu on the Moldavian throne, Eftimie builds a defamatory text, deliberately emphasizing the negative traits of Rareș's sons (the vices abrogate the privileges of royal blood), in order to draw attention to the high qualities of the next prince. We are the readers of a political lampoon (in his relations with the political power, the writer often "signed" a pact – all important European courts had their own historians – a pact whose substance can be noticed in the themes chosen, in the humanity model proposed, in the adhesions and detachments of the writer, marked by irony, satire

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 186.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 188.

or sarcasm), the two shameful reigns illustrating a decayed past, devoid of militant interests. Iliaş “was totally opposed to our righteous Christian and orthodox belief [...], he hated the priests and deacons, he called the monks enemies and devils [...], he ate meat on Wednesday and Friday and during the forty days, namely during the big fast, as well as during the other holy fasts [...], he even started torturing and killing the boyars: for some of them he took their eyes out and killed them in different ways, and he strangled others in gaols [...], then he behaved so impudently as if he were a rabid dog, under the spells”,¹⁵ finally embracing the Islamism. Ștefan cel Tânăr (Stephen the Young) “started to think and act the same as his brother, or even worse. He started to bring immoral women and Turkish priests and other devil-possessed companions. [...] That is why he made himself hateful and unlikeable to everybody, due to his murders and his savage beastly habit, and everybody started to turn their backs to him and run away as if he were an atrocious snake. He took many people’s eyes out, cut their noses and ears and threw them into deep waters”.¹⁶ God is the only righteous judge and his representative on earth, somehow anticipating the Doomsday, has as his main task to administer justice: “You loved justice and hated the evil doing; that is why your God consecrated you, of all your partakers, with the oil of joy” (*Psalms* 44: 9). On the other hand, “the kings who commit wrongdoings are horrid, because only by doing justice is the throne strengthened” (*Parables*, XVI: 12). We now understand – the historian prelate hopes – the unfavourable light thrown on these two Moldavian princes, who not only disregarded the divine imperatives, but also tried to replace the divinity itself, since they took it upon themselves to take human lives, a privilege that only the Life Giver had. The interdiction to shed human blood is stipulated both in the *Old Testament* (“If somebody is to spill human blood, that blood will be spilt by human hand, since God created man after His own appearance” – *Genesis*, IX: 6), and in the *New Testament* (“... all those who draw their swords, shall die of sword” – *Gospel of Matthew*, XXVI: 52).

The enthronement of Alexandru Lăpușneanu gives Eftimie an immense satisfaction. The qualifications “the Brave and New”, “the Good and New” relate to the hero of Antiquity, Alexander the Great, taking into account that the Romanian reader had already become familiar with the Slavonic version of the popular novel narrating the extraordinary deeds of the Macedonian leader, ever since the 15th century. The protagonist proves to be a summum of all prince models – righteous autocrat, impartial judge, cultural and civilizing founder, respectful son and husband, with a political and governing programme that has as its moral support the religious dominant (as a representative of divinity, the autocrat reconstructs the supreme instance in the hypostasis of judging and guarding the proper behavior of the righteous believers). As a matter of fact, Eftimie’s chronicle establishes an ethics that is closely related to the orthodox mentality and transforms

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 195–197.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 198.

a sanguine sovereign – because this is how the tradition of our literature registers him, based on the data provided by Grigore Ureche and Costache Negruzzi – into a formative model. Tyranny, which, theoretically speaking, represents the worst régime, proves to be less atrocious than anarchy; the art of governing the crowd entails exercising the leading force in order to unify the people and act in such a way to maintain peace.

Eftimie is the man who seizes the day (this is actually what the ancient people recommended!), he does not think about how the posterity is going to judge him and he exemplarily does his vassal “duty” to his senior. He praises Lăpușeanu not for his military deeds, but for his spiritual qualities (faith, humility, religiousness, calmness, diplomacy, tolerance), exploiting more the topos of the country’s unity around the autocrat, in an edenic, peaceful atmosphere of celebration. Wandering in Poland, “the brave and wise soldier, the wonderful Alexander” made his appearance “as a shining star from the north and, in his way to the east, he manfully headed to his country, to seize the throne in Moldovlahia”.¹⁷ The new prince is surprised during one of his trips, being paid a first tribute to by a cortege that welcomes him (the same as Jesus at the entrance into Jerusalem, on Palm Sunday): “And he reached the Dnestr, together with all the wanderers, with all the Polish leaders and armies. As soon as they heard, the Moldavian boyars and habitants ran towards Alexander and joyfully welcome him, by making profound reverences. And he looked at them with clear eyes and beautiful face, with mercy and sympathy”.¹⁸ Lăpușeanu forgives his adversaries, comforts the spirits, releases all those who had been wrongfully punished from prison, honours “the Moldavian churches and all sacred monasteries”, establishes a “profound peace” internally, and that is why “there was rumour spread everywhere about him and about his love for God and for the holy churches, and his name was famous in all the neighbouring countries and kingdoms”.¹⁹ The historian resorts to a rhetoric of insistence, by making use of the pleonasm: “prince Alexander, as a smart and wise man”, “kind and merciful towards all people” etc.

The prince represents a true revelation not only for the entire people, but also for “the great and only ruler, the Turkish emperor Suliimen” (the magnification becomes excessive, without limit – the Turkish oppression seemed to have suddenly vanished, the Grand Turk himself converting into a true friend of the Moldavians) who sends him “imperial gifts” and “wonderful sceptre”, concluding a “durable peace” (we wonder how durable the peace with the Turks could possibly have been...). Finally, we hear about the building of Slatina monastery, when the miraculous element appears, the same as in hagiographies: “While prince Alexander was heading for Slatina, as we mentioned before, when he reached the area between the villages Corlătești and Toderești, in the middle of Moldova river, the horse

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 199.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 199.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 200.

stumbled and horse and rider both fell into the water, because the river was overflowed. But prince Alexander mounted another horse and unflinchingly kept on going to the desired place, and, as a wise man he indeed was, he understood that had been one of the devil's works...".²⁰ Conclusively, in Eftimie's chronicle, Alexandru Lăpușneanu is seen as a blessing for Moldavia, as being born not for himself, but for the country and for the commonwealth, for *res publica*.

Azarie receives an assignment from Petru Șchiopul (Peter the Hobbler) to write a chronicle of the country, with a particular view on the years of his reign. He resorts to the same rhetoric style, to the same comparisons, interjections, vocatives, epithets and thoughts as his master, Macarie, whose humble apprentice and son he considered himself to be. His chronicle covers the epoch between 1551 (the beginning of Ștefan Rareș's reign) and 1574 (the year of Petru Șchiopul's enthronement). The model of prince proposed will still be Alexandru Lăpușneanu, a bright figure, a prince endowed with all virtues, "a strong-built man, with a beautiful countenance, calm and gentle". Admired from the very beginning, Lăpușneanu is seen as a wise, peace-loving and cultural founder: "... he started building an impressive monastery, with a church within it, a sanctuary for my God, called Slatina, so beautifully decorated that, if God wished to dwell in a building created by man, this would certainly be the one. And he also took care of the other older monasteries, increasing their patrimony and showing mercy on them, and he built sanctuaries everywhere, fed the poor and had mercy on them, renewed the royal palaces, and thus, everything was put in order wisely and knowingly".²¹ Obviously, Azarie shares the same view with the church and the boyards regarding the conception related to the sovereign's authority, and this is why he eulogizes Lăpușneanu – a supporter of the clergy and orthodoxy, but harshly condemns Despot-vodă (Despot the prince) and Ioan-vodă cel Cumplit (Joan the atrocious prince), who, due to their policy, brought on themselves the hatred of both the boyards and the church. So, Despot "... committed many wrongdoings, by imposing heavy taxes on people, he did not have mercy on the poor and he hated the sacred Christian traditions",²² that, after this awful governance, the second coming of Lăpușneanu on the throne is equivalent with the beginning of a new era: "... the benefic rays of orthodoxy shone again. And the cinder that spread the smoke of bad faith was put out, as the dark winter of the unclean Lutherans was chased away by spring, which brought joy to any being, especially to the boyards' welfare, and the waves were replaced by a joyful silence".²³ Azarie seems to deliberately overlook Lăpușneanu's massacre of the 47 boyards, since, in the feudal conception, slyness was a crime that legitimated capital punishment.

Azarie also uses praising terms for Lăpușneanu's wife, lady Roxane, who had a rainfall of benefactions pouring down the helpless and poor, and she also rained

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 202.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 208.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 210.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 213–214.

gifts on those who were toiling “with old age and its pains and hardships; with her touching mercy, she impelled the priests to prey, and for the God loving monks, who spent their abstinent life in monasteries, or lived a life full of suffering in solitude, she would refresh their hearts with repeated visits”.²⁴ It can be seen that for Azarie, the help granted to the clergy represents a corner stone in composing the eulogies, the church being considered an important state service, no less than other services, strictly connected to the prince.

Apart from Alexandru Lăpușeanu, Azarie’s chronicle also presents, as we have expected, another ideal of prince, embodied by Petru Șchiopul (Peter the Hobbler), whose portrait proves to be conventional: “... a man of good origin, kind, handsome, good-hearted, merciful by nature, very generous, hating injustice, good-natured with the poor, a fair judge, because, as it is written in the books, the lord’s honesty goes along with his justice. Many have received countless benefactions from him, the monasteries and monks took water from the refreshing waves of his benefactions and the divine songs flourished again in the beautifully painted churches and everybody’s life started to have a slow pace and everybody lived in peace and quietude”.²⁵ What is quite interesting is that apart from the regular qualities – wisdom, kindness, great origin – the writer also adds his being handsome, an exterior, visible sign of perfection. God is handsome and so should be his vicar on earth, as the psalmist says: “Handsome are you as nobody else among people’s kind, there is charm pouring down your lips and this is why God blessed you for ever” (Psalm 44:3).

The earthly authority will also be magnified in the verses dedicated to the royal emblem, in stiches dedicated to the patriarchal and episcopal emblems, or in epigrams on names. The encomiastical, laudative compositions, later the stiches on royal emblem will become a career in the Romanian medieval culture. There was an interest in pleasing the eulogized, because the pleasure could be followed by gratitude and reward.

The genre of heraldic verses was inaugurated in our culture, both in Slavonic and in Romanian, by Udriște Năsturel, during Matei Basarab’s reign; Năsturel introduces, in the editorial practice from Muntenia, the manner of composing and printing some verses on the first page of books, glorifying the patron of the printing (the one who covered the costs of its printing). These verses aim to explain, to decode – totally or selectively – the symbols from the emblem of the person who had financed the printing, and the qualities discovered in the graphical symbols of the emblem will then be transferred to the sponsor in question. Among the stylistic devices used we can mention the laudative allegory, the genealogical allusion, the mythological allusion, the etymological decodation.

In *Molitvenicul* imprinted in Câmpulung, in 1635, it is printed the text composed by Udriște Năsturel in Slavonic and entitled, in G. Mihăilă’s translation,

²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 215.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 219.

La prealuminată stemă a milostivilor Domni Basarabești (To the brightest emblem of the merciful princes Basarab family), the invocation of the emblem and its brief heraldic description facilitates the next step in the author's intention: pointing out the qualities of Basarab family, seen in the superlative (obtained by using the superlative *the ...-est*: the brightest, the oldest and the bravest ancestry of the Basarab). So, the wisdom, the age, the bravery that brings prestige ("their bravery is the victory that amazes many ears"), the peace prevailing over the country ("the earthing enjoys a peaceful life") are all magnified and, finally, the divinity will be invoked to protect the royal family: "Oh, God, do not let them perish,/ And this crown of theirs be cast away,/ Do not ever let the crow be removed from its bosom!".²⁶

As a conclusion, I would like to mention that my only purpose was to select a few texts (the only approach possible in a limited number of pages) that helped me to describe the mechanisms that formed the basis of a precise spiritual and psychologic function: eulogizing.²⁷ In order to shape the most accurate image I also resorted – as could be seen – to writings that were not exactly part of what we call the Slavonic-Romanian historiography.

To find yourself a protector and to like offering protection in return represent man's everlasting aspiration. The presence of the monarch eliminates all kind of disturbance and offers a feeling of security for all the subjects. Beyond the "purposeful" encomium addressed to the patron, what is in fact expressed in the encomiastical texts are the Romanians' aspirations to peace, prosperity, to multiplying the "good deeds" done by the sovereign to everybody's benefit.

²⁶ In Al. Alexianu, *Istoria poeziei române de la 1570 la 1830*, vol. I, Editura "Porto-Franco", Galați and Muzeul Literaturii Române din București, 1993, p. 30.

²⁷ See more in Valeriu Marinescu – *Vocația magnificării în literatura română veche*, ed. cit.