ELEMENTS OF A JOURNALISTIC STYLE IN THE ROMANIAN RELIGIOUS PRESS OF THE 19th CENTURY

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Abstract: *The existence of a journalistic functional style is still a controversy amongst the theorists of the Romanian language. Still many of them identify certain features that lead to the conclusion that such a concept has a reflection in the reality of the mass-media. Gheorghe Bolocan found 70.000 terms used in the language of the Romanian press and a preponderance of the noun; Paula Diaconescu talks about a composite linguistic structure and linguistic stereotypes; Al. Andriescu reveals a preference for neologisms and a certain redundancy in using words from the same semantic field, a concision in the use of language and some unique features given by the extra linguistic (communicational) context. The theorists agree on some individual features of the language of the press: clarity, concision, credibility.*

The Romanian press of the XIX century is mainly a press of opinion and a magazine type of press, but it does not completely lack the features I have mentioned above. By monitoring the Romanian religious press from this period of time, I have revealed features and elements that lead to the conclusion that the Church press had some incipient means of communicating the message specific to the journalistic style, against its declared mission and the specialized theological language.

Keywords*: journalistic style, XIX century press, language.*

Research premises

The beginning of the Romanian religious press is connected to the apparition of the first laic generalist gazettes: *Curierul românesc* (Bucureşti, 1829), *Albina românească* (Iaşi, 1829) and *Gazeta de Transilvania* (Braşov, 1838). Ten years later, after the development of the theological education institutions and the emergence of cultivated clerics in the Orthodox Church, the first religious newspaper is printed in Buzău, in January, 7, 1839. Named *Vestitorul bisericesc, gazetă religioasă şi morală*, this periodic did not have the expected impact on the public, but in its short existence (for only one year), this religious periodic marks an important moment in the history of the religious journalism in the Principalities and opens a road to another way of spreading the word of God.

The first journalists were well aware of the press' mission as a factor of education amongst the people, as a means of cultivating and unifying the written language of all Romanians, as an agent with a decisive role in the development of the individual as informed and active citizen. "The principles contained in the notices announcing the publishing and in the programme-articles demonstrate that the first pages of the Romanian history of the media can be put under the sign of a very responsible view on the press role in the society" (Safta, Popescu, 2013: 723–728).

Similar to the laic newspapers, the religious press had its specific goals in providing the public with moral and catechetic principles and with information from the Church field. According to those goals, the means of making them possible consist in finding the most proper way to communicate the message, using both the old language of the sacred books and combining it with new techniques specific to the mass-media.

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Questions to answer

Do the religious publications have the same preoccupations and goals as the laic press of the XIX century?

What are the differences between the generalist press and the religious press, as a specific type, from this perspective?

Can we talk about a journalist style when it comes to the confessional press?

What are the elements that define the gazettes in the researched period of time?

The theoretical approaches

The journalistic style is a complex and disputed concept in linguistics. Some researchers do not include it in the typology of the functional style of the language. Coteanu states that the language of the press is just a hybrid type, with elements from both the belletristic style and the scientific style (Coteanu, 1964: 57). Other linguists give arguments using linguistic elements, as well as extra linguistic features. Some of the linguistic components of a so called journalistic style are: the preponderance of the neologisms from the socio-political field, semantically meaningless words, pronouns, numerals, articles, connective words, interject, in a proportion of 50% (Bolocan *apud* Vişinescu, 2003: 18), the composite linguistic structure, the linguistic stereotypes, the existence, as a subsystem of the journalistic style, of a scientific language used to popularize science (Diaconescu *apud* Vişinescu, *op.cit.*: 18). Based on an analysis of the XIX century Romanian press, Al. Andriescu defines the journalistic style as an entity different from the other functional styles of the language, having the following features: large vocabulary, containing neologisms, popular terms, regional words, old terms, argotic words; specific images and associations of words: a large number of noun-adjective combinations, the tendency to replace the implicit superlative with the explicit, sometimes pleonastic, superlative, the use of some stereotypical phrases with metaphorical value, predictable analogies and rhetorical constructions using repetitions (Andriescu, 1979: 193).

The extra linguistic elements are: the goal of the communication act, the intention of the source and the effect on the receptor. In the mass communication, the goal is to transmit current public interest messages to an audience with a specific profile. The unaltered messages have to reach the public, in order to inform it, convince it or to produce pleasure to it.

Each functional style of the language materializes in genders or species. A journalistic gender as type of discourse can be defined using the following criteria: the type of discourse, the type of scenery and the modality of constructing and communicating the referent; the goal of the communication, the pragmatic function and the macrostructure of the discourse; the degree of involvement of the enunciator; the compositional structure of the text and the micro structural organization (Florea - coordonator, 2011: 29).

Methodology

In the present article, I have analyzed some of the existing XIX century collections in The Romanian Academy Library and in the local libraries of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The research cluster contains gazettes edited by the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Greek-Catholic Church and the Roman-Catholic Church in Romania. As periodicity, they are either weekly, monthly or with a twice a month apparition.

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The researched cluster contains 15 gazettes: *Vestitorul Bisericesc* (Buzău, 1839-1840), *Eho Eclesiastic, gazetă religioasă-morală* (Bucureşti, 1850-1852), *Biserica Română, Foaie religioasă morală* (Bucureşti, 1862-1864, 1871-1872), *Ortodoxul* (Bucureşti, 1880-1886), *Biserica Română, ziar ecclesiastic* (Bucureşti, 1883-1884), *Biserica şi şcoala, foae religioasă şi ştiinţifică* (Piteşti, 1886), *Foia bisericescă pentru predici pre domineci, serbători şi tote ocasiunile* (Gherla, Giuleşti, 1894), *Preotul, foaie bisericească* (Iaşi, 1861-1866), *Predicatorul moralului evanghelicu sau alu umanităţiei* (Iaşi, 1864-1865), *Foaia oficială bisericească a Sfintei Mitropolii a Moldoviei* (Iaşi, 1868-1872), *Revista Teologică* (Iaşi, 1883-1887), *Deşteptarea, ziar eclesiastico-literar* (Iaşi, 1882-1886), *Biserica şi şcoala* (Galaţi, 1889-1897), *Telegraful Român* (Sibiu, 1853-present days), *Revista catolica* (Satu-Mare, 1885, Baia Mare, 1886-1887, Siseşti, 1891, 1903-1905) and *Foi'a basericesca. Organu pentru cultur'a religiosa a clerului si a poporului* (Blaj, 1883-1887).

The research is focused on identifying some characteristics in language and style, that define what theorists name a journalistic style and also on identifying the information articles with the features of journalistic species like: news stories, reports, reportages and portraits.

Results

From a historical perspective, a study of the Romanian religious press of the XIX century cannot be assumed without taking into account that the newspapers are like a mirror reflecting the events and the realities of the Church in those times, a period of profound changes in the life of the Romanian provinces and thus in the life of the congregation and the clerics. The Revolution (1848), the Unification of the Principalities (1859), the events from 1866 and 1881, when Romania becomes a monarchy, are reflected in the press discourse in that period. Because of the strong connection between the State and the Church, any concern about the future of the Romanians is more or less commented depending on the people who finance and patronize the publishing of the gazettes. Above that, the Church had its own problems: in 1865 the Romanian Orthodox Church declared its autocephaly, followed by vehement protests from the Ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople, who finally accepted the new status in 1885. These were some of the main themes that appear in the religious press, although the frequency of the informative articles is low. The press of the Church maintained a neutral discourse, focused on patriotism and the welfare of the Romanian congregation. Very important themes, largely debated were: the development of the theological institutes and the remuneration of the clerics.

In the XIX century, the beginning of the Romanian press, more than in any other period of time, "The newspaper is the proper field for all kinds of language innovations, in many case with profound consequences on the later evolution of the literary language in general" (Andriescu, *op.cit.*: 10). The period is characterized by the existence of opposite tendencies and ideas about the language evolution, that are visible in the pages of the newspapers and magazines through various aspects: the presence of new words, borrowed from different foreign languages, terms in process of searching for a stable and adequate form, for a proper phonetic and grammatical emplacement. Andriescu considers that the journalistic style in the Romanian language system can be more easily identified starting with the year 1840 and it reaches an almost definite form after 1860 (*ibidem*: 7). At the same time, a phenomenon of the specialization of the press takes place, which determines the presence of specific features in the different functional language styles and their variables. One of the main common ideas stated by

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the literati of that time was the model to follow in order to obtain a general language for all Romanians. That model was the language of the old religious books. The idea belongs to Heliade Rădulescu, who has often written about this aspect in the columns of *Curierul românesc.* Some of his articles are reproduced by Gheorghe Asachi in *Albina românească*. "Our theological language has the same pattern everywhere. If we take as model this sacred and well received language, then nobody would ever be in the dark neither in his own dialect, nor after the foreign languages that he knows, and as a consequence, we will all have the same literary language" (*apud* Andriescu: 60)[1]. Actually, Heliade recommended the exclusion of the various forms of the same word in different newspapers by confronting them to the words in the books of the Church, which was already severely tested by the current use. His conception, expressed even in the preface of his grammar book published in 1828, was famous in his time, especially because the editor did constantly reminded it any time he had the chance to discuss the unification of the Romanian language or in his polemic articles edited in the columns of the Walachian gazette. These efforts had good results in the second half of the XIX century, when many of the archaic and regional characteristics just disappear from the language of the Romanian press. There are still other regional phonetical and grammatical features still present together with some reminiscences of the old language, especially in Moldavia, where Asachi favoured this style.

I have identified two major periods in the existence of the religious press in the XIX century.

I. The incipient press: moral-religious character, consisting on fragments from the Holy Scriptures, biblical analyses, apologetics, historical studies; specialized theological language, a content with no connection with the realities of the Church, the only connection refers to the Sundays and the other religious celebrations; Cyrillic alphabet. The page setting, although it may be in columns, is monotonous, with long texts, no images, no subheads. Pages often look like the holy books. Sometimes the articles have no titles, the text just flows into the next page without any mark of continuity. We cannot speak of a journalistic style in this period.

But, in terms of the programme-articles, even the first gazettes did mentioned the informative role of the press, as important as the educational, moral-religious role: "*Vestitorul* will contain stories, anecdotes, sentences and all kind of news from the interior and from the exterior of the country, in relation with the interests of the Church" (the announcement preceding the first edition of *Vestitorul bisericesc*, December, 18, 1838 – apud Cocora, 1960: 216-217)[2].

II. The mature press, after 1880: the content elements mentioned above are still present in the summary, but there are problems of the present reality the press starts to signal, such as the remuneration of the clerics, issues concerning the status of the Church in the state and in the context of their evolution on the international scene (a strong connection between the State and the Church), celebrations, the ordinations of new priests, visits of important Church men, speeches of bishops and archbishops, news stories and reports about conferences, synods, councils of the clerics, administrative decisions, portrays of the newly elected hierarchs, of clerics with special merits in

[1] *Literatura*, report on the celebration of the National College, reproduced after *Curierul românesc*, December 7, 1833, in „Suplement" of number 9 of *Albina românească*.

[2] "Vestitorul va coprinde: povestiri, anecdote, sentenţii şi tot felul de articole religioase şi morale şi alte înştiinţări din lăuntru şi de afară care se atingde sfera ei; ori au raport cu scoposul care şi l-a pus: de a hrăni duhul religios şi moral ce a caracterizat naţia românească".

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charity activities, correspondences from abroad, reviews and cultural notes signalling the editions of theological, religious and cultural works, also poetry collections, folklore anthologies, features, deceases etc. The structure of the articles is different from the texts of the holy books and the theological lectures by losing the atemporal perspective and by adding concrete examples to the argumentation. The factual elements of the discourse are: statistics, results of a census, lists of parishes and clerics, accounts of the daily expenses of a family, receipts etc.

The use of neologism and the political dimension of the discourse also contribute to the specific of the texts in the religious gazettes. Here are some of the words that reflect this tendency: *naturalmente* - naturally, *activitate* - activity, *repaus* - rest, *involuntar* - involuntary, *afaceri* - bussiness, *limită* - limit, *extrem* - extreme, *absolut* - absolute, *providenţă* - providence, *societate* - society, *a constata* – to ascertain, *drepturi* - rights, *onorabil* - honorable, *facultăţi* - faculties, *individ* - individual, *economie* - economy, *turism* - tourism, *agricultură* - agriculture, *stat* - state, *confraţi* - brethren, *vagabondaj* - vagabondage, *incult* - uncultured, *în detrimentul* – in despite of, *organizarea judecătorească şi administrativă* – the judicial and administrative organisation, *circumstanţe* – circumstances (*Biserica şi şcoala*), *iniţiativă* – initiative, *solidaritate* – solidarity, *alocuţiune* - speech, *eroare* – error, *decret* – edict, *pauperism* – pauperism, *caritate* – charity (*Revista Catolica*), *constituţie* – constitution, *legitimitate* – legitimacy, *subversive* – subversive, *propagă* – propagate, *just* – just, *prelegere* – lecture, *penitenţă* – penitence (*Revista teologică*). These terms coexist with old words and archaisms, some of them still present in the common language and in the books of the orthodox cult: *obârşie* – origin, *foaie* – paper (as newspaper), *tâlcuire* – explanation, *învăţăminte* – moral conclusions, *păţanii* – predicament, *atotputinţă* – almightiness, *cutareva* – somebody, *jidovi* – Jews, *pre* – preposition in the Romanian accusative case, *vârtos* – hard, deep, profoundly, *îndelungrăbdarea* - endurance, *curmă* – cut off, *învăţăcel* – disciple, *cari* – relative pronoun (that, who), *a se lepăda* – to betray, *peripeţioase* – dangerous, *trâmbiţarea* – announcing, *răsbel* – war, *ovrei* – Jews, *poporani* – citizens, *angarale* – obligations, *ţinutale* – regional, *vrăjmaşi* – enemies, *apucături* – bad behaviours, *îmbuibat* – fattened etc.

The preponderance and the proportion of these words depend on the gazette, on the people in charge with its publishing, on the author of the article, on the subject, on the Romanian province and on the Church that publishes the gazette. Thus, a special attention to language can be noticed in *Ortodoxul* (Bucureşti, 1880-1886), *Biserica şi şcoala, foae religioasă şi ştiinţifică* (Piteşti, 1886), *Revista Teologică* (Iaşi, 1883-1887), *Deşteptarea, ziar eclesiastico-literar* (Iaşi, 1882-1886) and *Telegraful Român* (Sibiu, 1853-present days). The Roman-Catholic gazette *Revista catolica* (Satu-Mare, 1885, Baia Mare, 1886-1887, Sisești, 1891, 1903-1905) and the Greek-Catholic *Foi'a basericesca. Organu pentru cultur'a religiosa a clerului si a poporului* (Blaj, 1883-1887) abound in neologisms borrowed directly from Latin and Italian, without taking into account the specific forms of the Romanian language: *baserica* - church, *allocutiune* – speech, *occasiunea* – the occasion, *errori* – errors, *vigilantia* – vigilance, *sanitosa* – healthy, *tumba* – grave, *sacramentu* – sacrament, *santu* – holy etc.

The frequency of the informative articles differs from one gazette to another and even from an edition to another of the same newspaper: from half a page in gazettes with 32 pages (*Foi'a basericesca. Organu pentru cultur'a religiosa a clerului si a poporului*, Blaj, 1883) to two pages from a total length of four pages (*Biserica şi şcoala*, 1886, Pitești).

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The columns containing present-day information are called either "Informaţiuni" (*Biserica şi şcoala*, Piteşti, 1886), or "Avisu", "Cronica contemporana", "Corespondentia", "Literatura" (*Revista catolica*, Satu-Mare, 1885), "Varietăţi", "Literatura" (*Foi'a basericesca*, Blaj, 1883), "Diverse", "Bibliografie", "Notite literare" (*Ortodoxul*, Bucureşti, 1880), or they appear depending on the importance of the reported events, in different pages, without being included in a constant column.

The structure of the news stories, reports and features is the same as the structure recommended by nowadays journalism writing manuals. The main informational content is gathered in the first rows, followed by the contextual information as secondary content. The reports give answers to the 5 W questions: *Who?*, *What?*, *When?*, *Where?*, *Why?* plus *How?*. The source of the information is constantly indicated, as a mark of truthiness and trustworthiness.

Although the reportages are not very frequent in that period of time in the newspapers, they are not completely absent in the religious gazettes. I have identified two of them in *Revista catolica*. "Amintiri din căletorie. Schiţe dintr'un op destinat pentru tipar" ("Memories from a journey") contains description, narrations about various facts and legends, elements of a portrait (important local personalities: priests and archpriests with their accomplishments, monographic and historic data. "Interiorulu basericei santului Petru" ("The interior of the St. Peter's cathedral") is mainly a description from the famous cathedral. One can notice the presence of the writer/reporter in that place from the fact that he reports the feelings, the impressions and the subjective appreciation of the distances and dimensions of the building.

The features may have or not have a connection with the life of the Church and the congregation. When there is not a logical connection, the author of the article draws moral conclusions from the fact. For example, the guilty feeling is the main idea of a feature that reports the auto denunciation of a man suspected with a cruel murder, three months after he had committed it (in *Biserica şi şcoala*). Although it may seem incompatible with the profile of the religious press, the sensationalism phenomenon is not entirely absent from the church gazettes in the XIX century. Although this type of press is not so focused on the informative mission as the laic press, we can still encounter feature articles that report about crimes and social disorders. As a difference from the laic press, the tendency does not appear in reportages, a gender almost absent in the religious press and in course of development in the laic press in the same period of time.

Conclusions

Elements of a journalistic style in the XIX century Romanian religious press can be found in the last two decades of the given period. That time the newspapers and the people in charge with them realize the importance of the press in the life of the Church and its congregation. The aspect is also visible in the program-articles that come before the first editions of the gazettes or together with the first edition of a newly edited gazette. In addition to the moral-religious purpose, in these articles we can read about things that are specific to the press worldwide, for example the informative function and mission that the press has to assume.

On the language level, we witness the same process of the Romanian language development that characterizes the press after 1860: terms in course of form fixing, the simultaneous use of different forms of the same word, tries to urbanize the language through political and administrative neologisms, a process marked by incertitude, looking for solutions and transitory forms.

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