The Archaeology of the Text

Abstract

A philologist bent on studying the monuments of written culture seems to be related, in many ways, to an archaeologist. Bygone eras captivate them in equal measure. Discerning the beginnings, the origin of things becomes an obsessive theme both for archaeology (in Greek, *archè* signifies "beginning") and for philology, representing the very *raison d'être* of these disciplines. Ancient texts are not mere amorphous relics buried in time, but they enclose in themselves the irrefutable arguments attesting the process of becoming that literature undergoes, as well as of the hatching of literary language. The latter does not overlap with the language of actual fiction works, but has a much broader, integrating scope, being, in Iorgu Iordan's well-known words, "the clothing of all human cultural products".

Like an archaeologist, a philologist aims to probe the successive layers that overlapped in the genesis of texts from the medieval or early modern periods, to undertake an in-depth exploration that will give him the opportunity of discerning new information on the authenticity or authorship of these texts, revealing elements on the dating or location of lesser known or controversial writings. For the philologist, the return to the reality of the text, manuscript or original print represents a prerequisite for the integrity of his hermeneutical approach. According to Léon M.J. Delaissé, the illustrious scholar of medieval illuminated manuscripts, the so-called archaeological observations on a written work are but a preliminary stage that must accompany the philological investigation itself. Of course, textual criticism is not limited to the descriptive, codicological or paleographic levels, which are nonetheless implicit in any rigorous examination. Beyond external bibliological data, a philologist will permanently resort to typological analyses or synthetic evaluations, to historical-cultural or linguistic study, which will enable him to dissociate and compare the defining characteristics of ancient

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writings, whose difficulty remains a continuous challenge. The archaeology of the text can therefore acquire complex philological connotations; hence, the motivation behind the title of this book.

Divided into two sections, *Textual Delineations* and *Portrait Sketches*, this volume comprises a series of contributions on old Romanian literature, approached from a philological perspective, in the narrow sense of the term.

We devoted, first, adequate space for research on books that are representative of religious discourse: beyond their theological and liturgical dimension, these writings had a founding role in the Romanian culture, changing the linguistic paradigm and introducing the national language in church. There is an overview of the main versions and editions of the *Gospel* and of the *Missal* transcribed into or published in Romanian since the sixteenth century, of the models and sources underlying the translations, the filiation of the texts and, last but not least, the manner in which these books led, from the mid-eighteenth century on, to the establishment of supra-dialectal linguistic norms in all the Romanian printed texts.

The parallelisms between the significant passages that we have consistently highlighted allow for a comparison of the convergences and divergences between texts of the same kind, these elements supporting the demonstration. Thus, the nuclei of a theological-philosophical language that tended to become entrenched in Romanian have been identified in the seventeenth-century versions of the *Parimiar* (a collection of Solomon's Proverbs). With all the literalness of the translation and composite character of the language in the 1760–1761 version of the *Vulgata*, the biblical text translated Petru Pavel Aron is a unique document of Romanian spirituality in the Enlightenment Age. To the same ideational vein belong the myriad calendars containing a veritable movable encyclopaedia or the *Menaion* editions from Râmnic, in whose prefaces there appeared surprising connections with the writings of the French Enlightenment thinkers. Finally, we examined the posterity, not devoid of editing inconsistencies, of a book of rustic songs published in Cluj in 1768, which conceals genuine lyricism behind an almost impossible spelling.

Our final textual "delineations" focus on I. Budai-Deleanu's poetic writings, which we edited in 2011. After overviewing the history of the text and critiquing the editions accomplished so far, we selected and commented on several contexts with amendable

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lections, which sometimes altered its authenticity. The only conclusion that can be drawn from this is that the restitution of a work in its real dimensions requires a permanent return to the manuscript, a re-reading of the original text, allowing for an interpretation of the spelling in as accurate a manner as possible.

The second section of the book includes a small gallery of portraits of several "ancientists", as the researchers devoted to the study of Romanian writings from the past ages are usually called. These are more or less well-known figures such as A. Lambrior, Grigore Crețu, M. Gaster, Nicolae Drăganu, Al. Procopovici, Mario Roques, Ștefan Ciobanu and Ștefan Paşca, some of them having linked their fate to the Romanian Language Museum, founded by Sextil Puşcariu in Cluj nine decades ago. The towering effigy of Nicolae Iorga – seen here exclusively as a literary historian of encyclopaedic formation, a scholar equally fascinated by ancient and modern literature – dominates the above-invoked philologists. We have embraced the idea that the portraits sketched here should not be encomiastic or just curricular, but capable of capturing, as accurately as possible, which of the theories they advanced have endured, which of their ideas have found confirmation in our time, as well as which of them have become obsolete. This, in fact, amounts to rethinking a possible critical history of Romanian philology.

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