

Those Last Days... Reflections upon an Apocalyptic Text from 18th Century Transylvania

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Abstract: There is large evidence concerning a dynamic circulation of apocryphal literature in eighteenth-century Transylvania. These texts are characterised above all by a variety of types of writings and of themes. The End is recurrently approached in its immediate meaning of death as well as from an eschatological point of view. The latter is also the major theme of an unpublished text, part of a miscellany, copied most likely in north-western Transylvania in 1761 and entitled: *Istoriia pentru naşterea lui Antihrist şi pentru perirea lui şi pentru judeţul lui Hristos*. Therefore, this study intends an analysis of its content, integrated within the wider discussion about apocalyptic literature through an evaluation of the whole manuscript. Its investigation is justified by the fact that sources of this kind can unveil specific expectations to which all copyists' efforts are put forth, while *marginalia* might offer information about their reception as a cultural product. Nonetheless the image of Antichrist and the story of its future coming are topics insufficiently researched by Romanian scholars concerning Apocrypha. Which are the narrative sequences of this text? What other writings, canonical or not, are similar in their contents? What particular elements can be identified? Which are the other texts this manuscript miscellany consists of and how do they assemble to create a unitary discourse? All these are questions that lead to preliminary observations regarding this unpublished source and to which I will try to answer in the present paper.

Key words: Apocrypha, manuscript miscellany, Antichrist, Vision of Daniel, moralistic discourse

Rezumat: *Acele ultime zile... Reflecţii pe marginea unui text apocaliptic din Transilvania secolului al XVIII-lea.* În Transilvania secolului al XVIII-lea literatura apocrifă se bucură de o circulaţie dinamică, iar textele vehiculate se caracterizează prin varietate: una a scrierilor în sine, alta a temelor pe care ele glisează. Sfârşitul, atât în înţelesul său imediat, ca moarte, cât şi ca sfârşit al lumii, revine mereu.

Acesta devine o temă majoră a unui text inedit provenind dintr-un miscelaneu, copiat la 1761 – cel mai probabil în zona nord-vestică a Transilvaniei –, intitulat: *Istoriia pentru nașterea lui Antihrist și pentru perirea lui și pentru județul lui Hristos*. Drept urmare studiul de față propune o analiză asupra conținutului său, iar, prin raportare la manuscrisul din care face parte, o integrare în discuția mai largă asupra literaturii apocaliptice. Studiarea lui se justifică din perspectiva faptului că fiecare astfel de manuscris vorbește despre un orizont specific de așteptare pe care copiiștii urmăresc să-l satisfacă, în timp ce însemnările marginale pot oferi informații despre receptarea lui, așadar despre intenționalitatea unui produs cultural și despre impactul acestuia. De asemenea, imaginea lui Antihrist și povestea legată de venirea sa au fost destul de puțin aprofundate în cercetările românești asupra apocrifelor. Care sunt secvențele textului? Ce alte scrieri, canonice sau nu, cuprind pasaje similare? Ce elemente particulare pot fi identificate? Care sunt celelalte texte cuprinse în același miscelaneu și cum se articulează ele într-un discurs unitar? Sunt întrebări ce conduc spre observații preliminare asupra acestei surse inedite și care își găsesc răspunsuri în această lucrare.

Cuvinte cheie: apocrife, miscelaneu, Antihrist, Viziunea lui Daniel, discurs moralizator

‘Therefore repent because you do not know when the hour of death will come’.¹ This are the closing words of an Apocrypha copied during the second half of the 18th century in the north-western part of Transylvania. Even if it is a typical sequence it summarizes the content and the theme of an entire category of sources: the apocalyptic and eschatological Apocrypha. The last days, either of the World or of each and every person, are both themes of permanent reflection for mankind. History shows not only the amplitude of this phenomenon, but also its particularities. Consequently, the general and vague image can be surpassed and it can be understood that preoccupations for such aspects are not only an attribute of great thinkers but also of ordinary people, of those silent individuals whose voices are hardly accessible to the

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¹ Cluj-Napoca, ‘Lucian Blaga’ Central University Library (cited from now on as BCU Cluj), Ms. 4390, ff. 19v. - 20r.

historians. As their voices are barely perceptible, they can rather be inferred than clearly heard.

An answer about how these themes took shape in their minds is made accessible, among other things, by such texts diffused in rural areas and which, most likely through a public lecture of the priest, came to have an effect on the collective imagery and mentality.² The message disseminated through these channels has even greater chances to succeed within an ambiance characterised by religiosity, extensively influenced by folklore, and in which the clergy has authority and is revered. In addition, clergy's involvement makes also comprehensible the second strong idea of the short passage quoted at the beginning: the need of repentance. More than a theme, it represents the key for one of the main functions of apocalyptic and eschatological writings, the ethical function.

In 18th century Transylvania the apocryphal literature enjoys a dynamic dissemination and the spread texts are characterised by variety: in what concerns both the writings and the themes. *Istoriia pentru nașterea lui Antihrist și pentru perirea lui și pentru județul lui Hristos* [The History for the Birth of Antichrist and for His Death and for Christ's Judgment], an unknown text included in Manuscript 4390 from 'Lucian Blaga' Central University Library's collections, is just a sample from this category of sources. Since Apocrypha, as a genre, were not thoroughly studied in Romanian historiography, specific texts of this kind were even less approached. Interest in apocalyptic and eschatological themes exists and seems to be increasing, manifested mainly in the case of the most popular apocryphal writings. There is a tendency to open discussions concerning the content of these writings³ and to

² An interesting and well-argued discussion regarding the mechanisms of written culture and their complementarity with orality in early modern Central Europe, focusing on the case of Hungary, is offered by István György Tóth. The author questions the use and usefulness of books with religious content in a rural and illiterate or poorly literate world, but he also insists on the fact that despite this situation the written material did influence beliefs or religious ideas. István György Tóth, *Literacy and Written Culture in Early Modern Central Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2000), pp. 47-95.

³ Timotei Oprea expresses the intention to study this issue, in his book. However, the result is a very general discussion about the Jewish origins of apocalyptic themes and about their development through Christianity. Also the analysis of the manuscript discovered by him does not succeed to surpass a flat descriptivism. Timotei Oprea, *Rai și iad în cultura populară românească. File de apocalips (secolele XVIII-*

contextualise them through analogies with visual representations, as products of the same folk culture.⁴ Still, the image of Antichrist and the stories about his coming are unexplored. The contributions of Cristian Bădiliță⁵ are among the few researches undertaken on this topic. But his approach is related to the domain of biblical studies and of early Christianity and his interests focus on Christian texts in the form they were originally written, not on their spread or subsequent local copies. Contemporary imagery of The End of the World, current reinterpretations and revisitation of some writings which are not accepted by canons of the Church and the revival of apocalyptic beliefs in the past decades are all aspects that offer relevance to this paper.⁶ Nonetheless, they are a proof that the diffusion and the perception of this specific type of sources and of these themes have psychological, social and cultural effects.

Consequently, the present study intends to offer an analysis of the aforementioned text's content and also to integrate it within the larger discussion on apocalyptic literature. Which are the sequences of the text? What other canonical or non-canonical writings contain similar passages? What particular elements can be identified? Which are the other texts of the same manuscript and how do they assemble to offer a

XIX) [Heaven and Hell in the Romanian Folk Culture. Files of Apocalypse (eighteenth to nineteenth-centuries)] (Buzău: Alpha MDN, 2005).

⁴ Cosmina Berindei, *Imaginarul eschatologic în iconografia românească, Morfologia eschatologiei în cultura populară românească* [Eschatological Imagery in Romanian Iconography. The Morphology of Eschatology in Romanian Folk Culture] (Cluj-Napoca, [s.n.], 2009).

⁵ Cristian Bădiliță, *Manual de anticristologie. Studii, dosar biblic, traduceri și comentarii* [Handbook of Antichristology. Studies, Biblical Influences, Translations and Commentaries] (București: Vremea, 2001); *Metamorfozele Anticristului la Părinții Bisericii* [Metamorphoses of Antichrist as viewed by the Church Fathers] (Iași: Polirom, 2006).

⁶ Often, the works on this subject, particularly those belonging to North American historiography, are motivated by contemporary developments which are also analysed. A recent synthesis that opens new directions for research deserves to be mentioned within this context: John J. Collins (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (Oxford, New York, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 2014). Other similar approaches are those of Malcom Bull (ed.), *Teoria Apocalipsei* [The Theory of Apocalypse] (București: Meridiane, 1999); Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End. Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, 2nd edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998) and Bernard McGinn, *Anti-Christ. Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with the Evil* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1994).

coherent message? These are some questions that lead to preliminary observations on this specific writing and to a better comprehension of a whole typology of sources.

As the title makes it clear, the text focuses on two major themes: the coming of Antichrist and the Last Judgment. They also represent the two main sequences that can be divided in shorter passages to better understand the way in which the story is articulated. It starts with a description of a kingdom which is devastated by all sorts of calamities during *those last days*, culminating with the birth of Antichrist. All these disasters seem to be the result or at least to follow the death of the king, who leaves behind a pregnant widow. Their daughter will rule for fifty-five years, but it will be a time of sterility during which only the barley will bear fruit.⁷ It is an image that reminds of the *Parousia* signs, as it could be a symbol for drought and famine. Soil's infertility and the lack of fruitage perfectly reflect the character of people whose souls do not generate good deeds.⁸ This is the context in which the Antichrist will be born, through his incarnation from the young queen. The sequence is worth discussing in detail, because it represents one of the main particularities of the texts and it leads to interrogations about possible filiations. Antichrist's conception is produced through the smell of some foam with flowers getting out the mouth of a songbird.⁹ In the attempt to find possible analogies some elements seem to be distinctive and can be defined as clear symbols of a cultural code which is understandable for the audience it addresses. The allurements of that girl through a song and the deceptive beauty can easily be associated with typical features of Antichrist as they are described in the New Testament, especially in the Second Epistle of John. Cristian Bădiliță returns to the Greek text of the Bible and analyses in great detail the original term used to designate this

⁷ 'În zilele acei fete nu va fi altă roadă numai orzul va rodi', BCU Cluj, Ms. 4390, f. 12v.

⁸ 'Iacomi și cu năraav (sic!) nestătoriu și răi', *Ibidem*, f. 13r.

⁹ 'Atuncea va veni o pasere foarte frumoase care nime nice o dată nu va fi văzut nimica așa frumos pre această lumea. (...) și va începe a cânta cântări frumoase care nu să va mai putea pomeni și cântând paserea vor cură niște spume din gura paserei întru care spume va fi mistuit Antihrist. Iară fata cea de împărat va zice: aduceți un blid de aur și-l puneți să pice spumele în blid. Și văzând fata spumele cu flori și frumoasă va zice: aduceți-mi blidul să-l sărut și să mirosesc aceale flori frumoase. Și vor aduce ei blidul cu spumele paserii și îndată ce să va pleca față să serute blidul cu spumele aceale și din mirosul spumelor să va zămisli în fata aceia Antihrist'. *Ibidem*, f. 13v.

deceptive character (*planos*), concluding that it expresses Antichrist's fundamental trait.¹⁰

Unsurprisingly, the second motif that can be traced is the supernatural or unnatural conception, as the birth of Antichrist was perceived as an exceptional phenomenon. For example, a manuscript that has been published in 1994 under the title *Antihristica*, in an edition which unfortunately does not give details about its localisation and dating, outlines different beliefs spread over time about this subject. Among others, it mentions that Antichrist will be born by a virgin, similar to Christ, but as a son of evil, that he will be conceived through an unnatural sexual relation or that his mother will be a whore.¹¹ These ideas are to be found in another text named *Semnele venirii lui Antihrist* [The Signs of Antichrist's Coming]. Some copies of it were produced in the South of Transylvania, at the end of the 18th century and today they are part of the Romanian manuscripts collection of Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest.¹² Moreover, the themes of the virgin mother and that of miraculous births are common both in mythology and folklore, legends of this kind aiming to determine the supernatural origin of founding heroes, kings or great religious characters.¹³ Nonetheless, another recurrent motif is the kiss, as an instrument of incarnation. If the portrait of Antichrist is generally an antithesis of Christ's image there can also be traced a parallelism between this kiss and the one exchanged between Joachim and Anna or Joseph and Virgin Mary, perceived as symbols of conception.

However, the metaphors of the beautiful singing bird and of that foam with flowers are not so clear and common. Precisely these elements offer specificity to this text and might represent a good starting-point to determine the filiation and possibly a proper identification in the amorphous mass of apocalyptic and eschatological Apocrypha, with all their versions and variants. The only analogy that can be found is the Vision of Daniel, but not the canonical text of the Old Testament.

¹⁰ Bădiliță, *Manual de anticristologie*, p. 15.

¹¹ *Antihristica: semnele venirii lui Antihrist, învierea morților și înfricoșata judecată*, [Antihristica: Signs of Antichrist's Coming, Rising of Dead and Last Judgment], ed. Valentin Micle (Bistrița: Vâlcea, 1994), pp. 66-68.

¹² Bucharest, Romanian Academy Library (from now on B.A.R. Bucharest), Romanian Manuscripts collection, Ms. rom. 2325, Ms. rom. 2489, Ms. rom. 4975.

¹³ Jean-Paul Roux, *Regele - mituri și simboluri* [The King. Myths and Symbols] trad. Andrei Niculescu (București: Meridiane, 1998), p. 92.

Wilhelm Bousset in his work concerning the legend of Antichrist and its tradition refers to Eugen Kozak's contribution on biblical Apocrypha from the Slavic world.¹⁴ The latter author shows that a version of the Vision of Daniel has been preserved and even printed in South Slavonic (Serb) and in Russian, version which corresponds with the Greek Apocalypse of Daniel.¹⁵ Kozak also mentions a *Narratio de antichristo* whose summary includes a prediction of a famine and the reign of a virgin queen who receives the Antichrist as a bird.¹⁶ Furthermore, Wilhelm Bousset underlines the idea of a virgin queen and makes a connection with the rule of a widow described in the Armenian and Greek apocalypses of Daniel.¹⁷ The *History for the birth of Antichrist...* evokes both the virgin and the widow, fact that supports the hypothesis of such a filiation.

The second major sequence of the text refers to the rule of the Antichrist, but as a preamble it illustrates his appearance – a matter never neglected by all the writings concerning his coming. The grotesque description clarifies the manner in which these writings' audience came to visualize and to mentally represent the evil. The Antichrist will be born as a seven years old child, his face will be dark, his hair will look like arrows, his right eye will be like a morning star and the left one as a lion's eye, his mouth will measure a cubit, his teeth and his soles will also have exaggerated dimensions and his nails will look like sickles.¹⁸ His entire appearance will be asymmetrical and wild. This passage introduces elements which reverberate from the biblical Book of Revelation (13, 2), respectively some features of the Beast from the sea,

¹⁴ Wilhelm Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend. A Chapter in Christian and Jewish Folklore* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1896), p. 69.

¹⁵ Eugen Kozak, 'Bibliographische Uebersicht der biblisch-apokryphen Literatur bei den Slaven', *Jahrbuch für Protestantische Theologie*, 18 (1892):139, online version available at http://idb.ub.uni-tuebingen.de/diglit/jpth_1892/0133?sid=d40143e3d_6188c8bfccce99163439a01, accessed on 14 March, 2015.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 153.

¹⁷ Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, p. 70.

¹⁸ It is important to mention the original Romanian description as the translation may alter some nuances. Also it will be a term of further comparison: „și când va naște va fi ca un prunc de 7 ani și va crește mare și vederea feții lui va fi neagră și părul capului va fi ca niște săgeate, căutătura îi va fi sălbtecă, ochiul dreptul va fi ca o stea de dimineață, iară stângul ca de leu, iară gura lui de un cot, iar dinții lui de o palmă și unghete ca niște seceri, talpele lui de două palme, iară în fața lui va fi scris Antihrist.” BCU Cluj, Ms. 4390, f. 14 r-v.

and from other Apocrypha, such as the Apocalypse of Ezdra, the Armenian Apocalypse of Daniel or the Apocalypse of Elijah. This is not a simple coincidence. These ideas were circulating in the area and during the period I study those who copied manuscripts and compiled miscellanies were most likely familiar with such beliefs. A fragment from the Apocryphal Apocalypse of John preserved in *Codex Martian*,¹⁹ a similar manuscript miscellany copied during the 17th century presumably in the North of Transylvania, stands as a proof. The portrait presented here is not only similar, but quasi-identical. Despite some linguistic differences, a single detail about Antichrist's eyelashes is added and his fingers, not his nails are described as similar to sickles.²⁰ If a hypothesis of interpolation might be hazardous to make based on this argument only, at least it is certain that the image of Antichrist, retold in the same form, was able to create a pattern in the collective mentality. The emergence of these two texts in the same geographical area makes comprehensible the manner in which elements of traditions and myths that are rooted in ancient times cross centuries, being transformed into cultural clichés.

The similarities are to be identified also in the sequence that refers to the rule of Antichrist – a deceptive reign of evil which manifests its power apparently to the benefit of people (he raises the dead and performs healings) in order to lure them. There are missing, however, the miracles related to nature and cosmos, frequently encountered in other apocryphal apocalypses.

Chapter XI of the Book of Revelation mentions the presence of two witnesses, presumed to be either Elijah and Moses or Elijah and Enoch as some traditions identified them.²¹ Apocryphal writings are those which nominates the last pair – they are present in Pseudo-Efrem, Pseudo-John, Pseudo-Hippolytus, Syrian Apocalypse of Ezdra, different

¹⁹ This fragment is published by Nicolae Drăganu who also discussed its provenance and dating. Nicolae Drăganu, *Două manuscrise vechi: Codicelul Teodorescu și Codicelul Marțian* [Two Ancient Manuscripts: Codex Teodorescu and Codex Marțian] (București, Leipzig, Viena: Socec&Comp., 1914), pp. 229- 231.

²⁰ The original Romanian text: 'vediară feței lui iaste negră întunecată și părul capului lui iaste ascuțit ca săgețile, gînele lui sămtu ca de ursu, ochiul lui cel dereptu iaste ca o ste alaltu-i iaste ca de leu, denții lui sămptu de o palmă degetele lui sămtu ca nește seceri, talpa piciorului va fi de unu cotu, iară în fața lui scrise va fi Antihristu'. *Ibidem*, p. 230.

²¹ Bousset, *The Antichrist Legend*, p. 203.

versions of Apocalypse of Peter and some others.²² From this point of view, the *History for the birth of Antichrist...* stands out. In this writing the characters are John the Apostle and Elijah. Their confrontation with Antichrist involves actions similar to those presented by other texts, but their conduct is distinct – here they are consecutive and not simultaneous. During the first confrontation John asks Antichrist to prove his divine origins by reviving stones, test which cannot be passed.²³ In a comparable way, the Beast from the earth uses his supernatural powers in order to reach his goal of alluring people to worship him and one of the miracles he performs is that of instilling stones with life. In the apocryphal text, John is the one who revives the stones through divine intervention. Then he rises back to heaven followed by Antichrist who is expected by angels and crashed again on earth in an Eastern city.

Once returned to earth he takes the appearance of a big snake, similar to the dragon of biblical Apocalypse. God sends Elijah from heaven to confront the devil with his thunders and lightings.²⁴ Two key-moments can be distinguished in their fight: the attack on Antichrist and then the attack on Elijah and his death. The first scene, in which the snake or dragon is split into two parts: one of which dies,²⁵ reminds of the Seven-headed Dragon from the Book of Revelation and of the episode that describes ones' head death. The second scene is part of the common tradition which recounts the death of those two witnesses. Following the victory of Antichrist the entire world is set on fire ²⁶ – another recurrent theme of this literary genre. Analogies can be found in the Sibyls, a composite Judeo-Christian scripture, which stresses that when the power of the Antichrist will reach its peak, a searing power, a strong fire, will come out from the sea on the earth, and will destroy him. Even more relevant is that the writing of Hippolytus of Rome, *De Christo et Antichristo*, a real treatise on Antichrist composed in the 3rd century AD, the author enumerates twelve points about the coming of

²² Lorenzo DiTommaso, *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), p. 87.

²³ 'tu diavole zici că ești Dumnezeu. De vei face pietrile să fie vie eu încă voiu creade în tine. Iară Antihrist nu va pute face să învie pietrile'. BCU Cluj, Ms. 4390, f. 15r.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 16r.

²⁵ 'și-l va trăsni de-l va rupe în doao părți, o parte va muri, iară o parte va rămânea vie'. *Ibidem*, f. 16v.

²⁶ 'să va cutremura tot pământul și să va aprinde din toate laturile'. *Ibidem*.

the Antichrist, including the burning of the world.²⁷ This analogy deserves to be mentioned, because a text entitled *Cuvânt a Sf. mucenic Ippolit, papa de Roma, pentru sfârșitul lumii și pentru Antihrist și pentru a doao venire a Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos* [Word of St. Hippolytus, Pope of Rome, for the End of the world and for the Antichrist and for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ our Lord] circulated in the Romanian Provinces during the 18th century.²⁸

The last important sequence of the text concerns the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. The narration is somehow typical as it reiterates common symbols of apocalypse. It mentions the angels which will trumpet from the four corners of the earth, the extreme natural events, such as earthquakes, meteor showers or eclipses, but also the resurrection of the dead, and nonetheless the divine judgment which will take into account neither rankings and hierarchies, nor kinship. Only the good and bad deeds will determine the eternal place for each soul. The end adds an original element which brings an optimistic note: after the final judgment, God shows once again his mercy. Watching the punishments of sinners in Hell, He addresses to John the Baptist and tells him to ask anything he wants. John and Virgin Mary will pray together for people's forgiveness. The Salvation is promised with the single condition of repentance. The intercession of these two saints seems to be a narrative replication of the iconography of *Deisis*, visual representation which is always present in the scenes of the Last Judgment. Moreover, the way this passage ends resembles with the literary technique used in sermons – elements of rhetoric and orality followed by moral exhortations that also reveal a possible aim of this writing.

Based on the analysis of the text's content, two interim conclusions can be outlined. On the one hand, it becomes clear that the text operates with a widespread language and cultural code, perpetuating old ideas, well-known and seen as commonplaces in a number of apocalyptic apocryphal writings. Their simultaneous diffusion makes mixtures intelligible. On the other hand, it is possible to identify more precisely the textual tradition of this story, through some particular elements, especially the ones concerning the origin and

²⁷ Bădiliță, *Manual de anticristologie*, p. 30.

²⁸ B.A.R. Bucharest, Romanian Manuscripts collection, Ms. rom. 2102, Ms. rom. 4241, Ms. rom. 5385, Ms. rom. 5457.

conception of Antichrist. The writing presented by Eugen Kozak under the title *Narratio de antichristo* seems to be identical with the text discussed here; all sequences coincide, even those which do not have any correspondent in other Apocrypha. Still, this information is insufficient, given that Kozak does not discuss the textual tradition. However, his conclusions are important because reveal the presence of the same writing in the Slavic world.

If other episodes leave room for interpretations, the sequence about conception guides us to a single source: the apocryphal Daniel literature. The discussion becomes even more complicated because of the many existing versions,²⁹ but as analogies are only possible with variants derived from the Greek Apocalypse of Daniel also known as *Diegesis Danielis*, thus this filiation is the most probable. This text also describes the appearance of Antichrist in a similar way. Unfortunately, there are no other common particular elements, even if general aspects coincide. The current state of research does not allow finding the archetype or any other specific sources of this text.

Therefore questions about the presence of this writing in the 18th century Transylvania can be formulated. Suggestions for an answer emerge by investigating the presence of some similar texts. For the moment, the only identified writing for the area of Transylvania, entitled *Vederia Prorocului Danil pintru vremia cea de apoi șã pentru Antihrist* [Vision of Prophet Daniel for the End of Time and for Antichrist], is to be found in a manuscript dated in the last decade of the 18th century, preserved at the Union Museum from Alba Iulia. The codex has been studied and partially published by Timotei Oprea.³⁰ The collections of Romanian Academy Library also contain copies which were diffused in

²⁹ Lorenzo DiTomasso devotes an entire chapter to the apocalypses attributed to Daniel discussing the preserved manuscripts, their editions, but also the actual content of these writings while trying to explain the connections between them and the survival of ancient traditions. The content of four versions offers substantial analogies: The Seventh Vision of Daniel (probably a translation of a Greek apocalypse from the early Byzantine epoch although the text survives only in the Armenian language), *Diegesis Danielis* (better known as the Greek Apocalypse of Daniel), *The Vision of the Young Daniel*, *The Last Vision of Daniel*. Lorenzo DiTomasso, *The Book of Daniel*, cap. III *The Apocryphal Daniel Apocalypses*, pp. 87-224. It is noteworthy that all these writings have much more elaborated contents and only their end corresponds to the story told by the *History of the birth of Antichrist*...

³⁰ Oprea, *Rai și iad în cultura populară*, p. 51.

Wallachia.³¹ This fact together with the information offered by Eugen Kozak about the presence of this writing in some Serbian manuscript³² suggests a south Slavic channel of transmission. The situation is not clear enough because the copies of Daniel Apocrypha from Wallachia are dated after the manuscript preserved in Cluj. In order to find a more precise answer, further research should examine the amplitude of the spread of these Daniel apocryphal apocalypses in the whole Romanian territory through a systematic investigation of all collections, as there might be found other copies which, similarly to the one presented here, do not mention any authorship or any other clue for a quick identification.

Some explanations might also be traced in connection with other texts referring to the coming of Antichrist, copied in the same area and chronological period. As already mentioned, *Semnele venirii lui Antihrist* [Signs of Antichrist's Coming] is a writing preserved in Transylvania in three copies, two of them as independent manuscripts³³ and one as part of a miscellany.³⁴ A similar text is to be found in the Library of the Orthodox Mitropoly from Sibiu.³⁵ When describing them, Meda Diana Bârcă considers *The History for the Birth of Antichrist* as a copy of this writing.³⁶ A careful analysis shows that her identification is not accurate as the content of the *Signs* seems to be a shorter version of Thomas Malvenda's treatise *De Antichristo libri undecim*. The writing also

³¹ B.A.R. Bucharest, Romanian Manuscripts collection, Ms. rom. 4270, *Vederea prorocului Daniil pentru vremea de apoi și pentru Antihrist*; Ms. rom. 1432, *Vederea carea o au văzut pr<o>rocul Daniil pentru vremea de-apoi și Antihrist*

³² Kozak, *Bibliographische Uebersicht...*, p. 153.

³³ B.A.R. Bucharest, Romanian Manuscripts collection, Ms. rom. 2325, *Pentru a doua venire, pentru înfricoșata judecată și semnele venirii lui Antihrist*, copied in 1773, at Răsinari, Sibiu, 126 ff.; Ms. rom. 4975, *Semnele venirii lui Antihrist*, copied by Radu Duma cantor at the Church of Schei from Brașov, cca. 1780-1790, 126 ff.- as suggested by Mihai Moraru, Cătălina Velculescu, Ion Chișimia, *Bibliografia analitică a literaturii române vechi* [Analytical Bibliography of Old Romanian Literature] (București: Editura Academiei RPR, 1976-78).

³⁴ B.A.R. Bucharest, Romanian Manuscripts collection, ms. rom. 2483, *Semnele venirii lui Antihrist*, ff. 67;

³⁵ Sibiu, The Library of the Orthodox Mitropoly, Ms. 97, *Seamnele venirii lui Antihrist și ale sfârșitului veacului din scripturile dumnezeiești dovedite*, 1799-1800, 139ff.

³⁶ Meda Diana Bârcă, *Carte și societate în Transilvania secolului al XVIII-lea. Manuscrise de cărți populare românești*, [Book and Society in the 18th century Transylvania. Manuscripts of Romanian Folk Books] (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2002), p. 73.

circulated in Moldavia and Wallachia, seven other manuscripts being preserved in the collections of Romanian Academy Library from Bucharest,³⁷ some of them mentioning in the title that are translations of a text published in Russia by Iavorschi in 1703, precisely the work of Malvenda. Along with them in the extra-Carpathian area some manuscripts contain a similar writing assigned to Hippolytus. Summing up all this information, it seems that there was a significant interest for revealing the mystery which surrounds the end of the world and the Antichrist himself as an eschatological character. Although it does not clarify the way in which the text analyzed in this paper arrived in Transylvania, this context offers a clue surrounding the reasons of its arrival.

Another aspect which deserves to be studied is the purpose or the function of this text. The description of the whole manuscript and the information about its diffusion and content are the most relevant in order to understand if and how the contained writings articulate a homogeneous discourse, which was the target audience and what was its impact. As initially mentioned, the copyist of this manuscript began his work on the 29th of December 1761, date noted on the first page together with his name in an abbreviated form, Ioan Mold.,³⁸ usually completed as Ioan Moldoveanu.³⁹ The annotations indicate some other names: Lender Deorde, Ioan and Văsălica Pop, who also specify the place of their provenance: Boiu Mare,⁴⁰ a village situated in the Solnoc Interior county, nowadays in Maramureș. Other notes represent writing exercises, transcriptions of some lines, usually the last ones on a page, on the margin. These together with the important number of names are proofs of the owners or readers of this manuscript and of its use. If the codex is written in Romanian with Cyrillic alphabet, there is also an annotation that uses the Latin script. It seems to be the draft of a letter addressed to Pavel Szathmary Nagy, from February 1844.⁴¹ On another page a different hand wrote with a pencil 1864.⁴² These two dates help us determine the period during which the manuscript was used – at

³⁷ B.A.R. Bucharest, Romanian Manuscripts collection, Ms. rom. 2164, Ms. rom. 2195, Ms. rom. 2989, Ms. rom. 3164, Ms. rom. 3371, Ms. rom. 5731, Ms. rom. 5919.

³⁸ BCU Cluj, Ms. 4390, f. 1r.

³⁹ Bârcă, *Carte și societate*, p. 229.

⁴⁰ BCU Cluj, Ms. 4390, f. 3, ff. 30v. - 34r., ff. 52v. - 54r., ff. 69v. - 70r., f. 75v.,

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, ff. 96v. - 97r.

⁴² BCU Cluj, Ms. 4390, f. 133r.

least until the half of 19th century which means a century of circulation and/or a century of reading.

The content of this miscellany is generous regarding both the number of the writings assembled together and their genre. It includes texts like: *Întrebări și răspunsuri* [Questions and answers] (with substantial references to the Genesis, the fall of man, the occurrence of devil and his identity, the first death on earth and the life after death), The Apocalypse of the Holy Mother of God, the Parable of the Unicorn from the novel *Barlaam and Josaphat* (that has strong accents on repentance, being a warning on the pleasures of this life which distract man from caring for the afterlife), the Parable of the Vineyard present here under the title *Pentru omul care nu face fapte bune* [For the man who does not make good deeds], *Archirie and Anadan* (a moral story of Assyrian-Babylonian origin), another writing about the twelve dreams of a king named Sahancu about the end of time, explained to him by a philosopher, but also some lyrics and sermons for funerals (with the same emphasis placed on repentance and on the request for the man to always think of death). Therefore, the dominant theme regards the End. On one hand, some of the texts reveal how the end of world and the afterlife will be like; on the other, some have a moralistic tone and try to correct and to guide Christians to live an earthly life without sins for an afterlife without punishments. Given this context, *The History for the Birth of Antichrist...* seems to contain a discourse of an authority which wants to inoculate the fear of death and of the Last Judgment in order to assure the control and enforcement of discipline, rather than a message which responds to a curiosity regarding eschatological themes.

The lack of an explicit authorship in the title or in the text, the existence of some particular elements in its content and the rarity with which this writing is encountered in Transylvania suggested the need for its identification, for finding analogies and possible filiations. Thus, starting from these clarifications new research opportunities are opened. The two texts from Transylvania that seem to originate in the Visions of Daniel suggest a poor diffusion and a minor importance of this writing compared to other more frequent Apocrypha. Nevertheless, their study is worth undertaking because it can clarify aspects regarding the spread of this category of apocryphal apocalypses and of Byzantine Apocrypha more generally. The preservation of a Greek version, entered in Transylvania most likely from the Slavic world, raises questions concerning the channel of such texts' diffusion, crossing large areas, and

the connections of Transylvanian orthodox Christians with those from the extra-Carpathian regions. But it is also a proof of a wide and continuous spread of the writings assigned to Daniel from the moment of their creation until the Modern times.

As Cristian Bădiliță claims, the emergence of the myth of Antichrist is due to a triple meeting between mythology, Scriptures and history.⁴³ I would go a step further and add that the propagation and the development of this myth reiterates this triple meeting and texts like the one analysed here can be sometimes surprising because of the mixture of images and symbols coming from a variety of sources. And still the person who took care of copying the manuscript or the one who commissioned the copy more likely did not have the consciousness of these sources; the important matter was the ethical message. Therefore, another meeting can be revealed, a meeting between histories: the history of a myth, perpetuated by such texts and transformed over time, and the history of those who were receiving the myth. Zamfira Mihail, in an article concerning the research on apocryphal literature from south-eastern Europe, draws the attention to the opportunity of publishing and studying such writings from a double perspective: that of the original contributions added in some cases in the process of transcription and diffusion and that of a horizon of expectations which determined the decision to copy a text.⁴⁴ Looking at the *History for the Birth of Antichrist...* from this double perspective a certain originality is noticeable in the manner in which images and elements coming from many sources assemble. Secondly, the manuscript as a whole, through its predominantly eschatological theme seems to indicate a horizon of expectations, a coherent discourse which aimed at condemning sins and exhorting to repent for the eternal salvation.

⁴³ Bădiliță, *Manual de anticristologie*, p. 42.

⁴⁴ Zamfira Mihail, 'Les apocryphes - perspectives des recherches sud-est européennes. La prospection Roumaine', *Revue des études sud-est européennes*, XLVI, nr. 1-4 (2008):78-79.