

The Cup of Death in the Apocryphal Literature and Its Iconographic Traces in the Romanian Area

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“To analyse a symbol rationally means to peel an onion in order to find an onion.”
(Pierre Emmanuel)

AT THE beginning of the 18th century, books had fallen – as Nicolae Iorga puts it – “into the hands of *the commoners*, who read them passionately, kept them carefully, loved them exceptionally”.¹ They – merchants, low-ranking boyars, pages, village priests, teachers, etc. – were mainly interested in the moralizing narratives or stories about the life of some famous characters, included in the widely circulated books that crossed the Romanian area, in miscellanea first “multiplied” by copyists paid for this very job, and then by prints. The notes that the readers or the transcribers left on some of the read pages help us follow today the trajectory² of the manuscripts from one owner to the other and reconstruct some of the essential events of their lives.³ And they were not the only beneficiaries of the wisdom enciphered in the popular books, given that these ones were often the object of public “community” readings, as Ion Heliade Rădulescu testifies in *Dispozițiile și încercările mele de poezie* [*My Moods and Attempts of Poetry*], evoking a crowd gathered on a Sunday day in the courtyard of Kretzulescu church in Bucharest, to enjoy Alexander the Great’s adventures in the performance, *à haute voix*, of a benevolent literate.

Popular books acted therefore like a catalyser, meant to bring together the literates’ and the illiterates’ universes. A loud reading in the middle of an audience started to represent a given form of sociability, mentioned many times in the notes written down on manuscripts. At the same time, the popular books contained all the overlapped layers that the copyists created on the long way since the moment the writing had entered our culture to the variant copied in the manuscript in question. Removing or adding fragments changed the text so much that each copy actually looked like a new “edition”.

Inside this important collection of popular books, to which the Romanian of the past had a direct or mediated access, one could isolate a corpus of apocrypha belonging to the typology of *ars moriendi* and to the eschatological literature. These came to outline a philosophy tinged with Christianity on the death of the righteous and of the sinner, on the soul's travel from earth to heaven, as well as on the definitive delimitations of the organization of the afterlife (the separation of the areas for the righteous and of the damned respectively, in the toponymy of the *post-mortem* universe). Their message joined in a fortunate way that of the funerary homiletics, of religious iconography or folk creations, all of them trying to familiarize the mortal with the arcana of death and with the difficulties of the passage.

The Apocalypse of Abraham

FROM THE first man who passed away to Abraham so many generations followed one another, humanity crossed an exterminating flood, and yet accepting death has not become an “acquisition” of Eve's descendants. The episode of patriarch Abraham's death reveals the human being's fundamental lack of appetite for a serene passage. *The Apocalypse of Abraham* was probably written in Hebrew in the 2nd century A.D., and soon translated into Greek, from where it entered the Slavonic literatures, which preserved quite well the text and circulated it. The complete variants of the apocrypha include two distinct parts: a *narrative part* (*midrash*), telling Abraham's childhood in the house of his idolatrous father and his conversion to monotheism, and an *eschatological part*, describing the mysteries of the sky and the fate of the fallen world, the meeting between Abraham and archangel Michael and between Abraham and Death.

The problems of filiation and circulation of this text – one of the oldest and most widely circulated apocrypha in the Romania area – were discussed at length by Emil Turdeanu, in his work *Apocryphes slaves et roumains de l'Ancien Testament* (Leiden, 1981).

The oldest Romanian variant of the text is preserved in *Codicele Sturdzan*⁴ [*The Sturdzan Codex*], a miscellany that received this title from B. P. Hasdeu, kept in the collection of manuscripts of the Library of the Romanian Academy (LRA), under the call number ms. rom. 447 and edited integrally in accordance to modern philological criteria, by Gheorghe Chivu, in 1993. The analysis made by Emil Turdeanu on the apocrypha led to the hypothesis that the model of this first Romanian variant would come from the Serbian area. The other translations (among which the 3 manuscripts in M. Gaster's library, from 1750, 1777 and

1813), more developed than the version included in *Codicele Sturdzan* and mainly dating from the 18th century, were considered copies after Greek versions.⁵

The short variant of the apocrypha, situated after the watermark examination⁶ in the span 1580-1591, only contains Abraham's meeting with archangel Michael, his housing and boarding in the xenophile's house, Isaac's premonitory dream and the patriarch's ascension to the skies, where he will meet his ancestor Adam, torn up between the joy and the sadness of watching the souls' trajectory towards Heaven or Hell: "*This is the first made man. Now, when he sees righteous souls going to Heaven, then he rejoices. When he sees the souls of the sinners going to tortures, then he sheds bitter tears and says: 'Oh, my sons, how you have sinned!'*"⁷

The episode placing Adam at the crossroad between Heaven and Hell can also be found in an eschatological writing of Byzantine origin, *Viziunea călugărului Macarie [Monk Macarie's Vision]*.⁸ The roads' demarcation is retaken, at a visual level, in the scenes of the *Last Judgment* (representing, in parallel, the pains of the damned in the *River of fire* and the light on the believers' faces, often grouped according to the type of Christian pains and missions they practiced during their lives: the group of martyrs, of hermits, of prophets, of hierarchs, etc.) or in the representations of symbolic nature, inspired by a scriptural passage (*Matthew* 25: 32-33), where the *sheep* (the righteous) are separated from the *goats* (the wicked).⁹ The bad and the evil ways are often described in ritual chants meant to offer the defunct a symbolic "map" of the universe he is going to cross towards the "other world".¹⁰

The complete versions of the apocrypha – like the one edited by Mihai Moraru, with ms. rom. 76 (Comşa, 80), dating from circa 1750 and preserved in the collection of the Library of the Romanian Academy, the Cluj-Napoca branch – also include other sequences with an eschatological or thanatological tinge: Abraham's journey to heaven (an occasion to see the two doors that the righteous and the wicked enter, separately¹¹), the witnessing of psychostasia and the Last Judgment, then the encounter with Death (first "*beautiful and bright and pious*"¹² and then "*with the signs of grim thief*"¹³). The *topos* of the two antagonistic faces of Death could also be found in a manuscript including the text of the confrontation between the Hero and Death, copied at the beginning of the 19th century (1811) in Moldavia. The fragment in ms. rom. 3644 LRA takes a quotation from St John Chrysostom, on the antagonism between the death of the righteous and that of the sinners, according to the model frequently used in the funeral homilies or speeches: "*Men, you should know that the death of the righteous is rest, of the nobles – consolation, of the thieves and sinners who fast from their sins it is joy; death for debtors is redemption, for those who cry it is consolation and salvation. And as for the rich, for the unmerciful, for the conceited and for the sinners, it is grim and unmerciful.*"¹⁴

In *Apocalipsa patriarhului Avraam* [*The Apocalypse of Patriarch Abraham*] edited by Mihai Moraru, the two modalities to present Death define the two extreme poles, of beauty and of awful ugliness. The first face, with which he¹⁵ approaches the patriarch, is so nice and bright, that he resembles an angel: “*And such a smell came to him, with such prayers and exquisiteness, that he thought this was archangel Michael*”.¹⁶ The impressions that this apparition creates are all superlative: “*the bright beauty of the sun*”,¹⁷ “*the propriety of people and the beauty of grace*”.¹⁸ But the true face of Death is impossible to stand. Like an ancient Gorgon, he takes off the “*ornaments of beauty and grace*”,¹⁹ revealing his condition of hybrid monster, the result of interbreeding that pertains to the field of the fantastic: “*... and his face turned into an iniquitous one, of wild beasts, like the head of a dragon in seven ways and his face in fourteen faces of fire and like a wicked awful man, and with faces of fast asps and of greedy lions, and like a weapon of fire and thunder, and like a sea wave, and like a valley with water that comes so quickly and like a three-headed dragon that is very wild.*”²⁰

In a manuscript previous to the one that we have cited from above (datable from before 1700), Death himself solves the “mystery” of the two faces with which he approaches people, according to the condition of their souls: “*To he who is righteous, I go kindly and nicely, and to he who is wicked, I go with anger, with all of his sins.*”²¹

In the Romanian manuscript 76 (Comşa, 80) LRA of Cluj, dating from circa 1750, Death makes his presence felt by the agency of a symbol that G. Durand includes in the *schema of the fall*: the cup with which he entices his victims. The importance of the relation between the macabre character and the adjacent object is underlined in the text by the very words that the character chooses in order to reveal his identity: “*And Death said to Abraham: Verily I tell you: I am the topsec [the poison]²² of death, the chalice.*” (f. 65^r)

The Cup of Death

PART OF the images suggested in the *Apocalypse of Patriarch Abraham* find their correspondence in other literary creations, in the folklore or in the religious iconography, underlining the predilection of the pre-modern Romanian culture for certain motifs with an illustrative role. Among them, the *cup of Death* (the “*chalice*”, as it appears in manuscripts, the *doctored cup* of the *Lives of the Saints* of Dosoftei) is inscribed in the vast inventory of objects and representations of the popular imaginary. Andrei Paleolog quotes the explanation included in a “philosophical” parable that could have influenced the spreading of the literary and iconographical model in question: “*Death is a cup that each*

man ought to drink.”²³ A note from 1814, on a manuscript kept in the collections of the LRA presents the *great passage* in similar terms: “*And he who reads this should recollect that to all of us the grave is a door and the death is a cup, that each man will drink and the grave door, we will all enter.*”²⁴

Another miscellany in the same collection of the Romanian Academy includes, between two fragments of apocalyptic literature – *The Apocalypse of Abraham* and *The Apocalypse of the Mother of God* – a “word of wisdom” about death and the two opposite destinations that the soul might take after the “body returns to earth”: “*And if you did some good / Happy you will be / As the Lord blesses you / And bestows on you good things / As He will bestow on you a tree and a bed / And the Heaven of delight (...) / And if you did no good / Then hell will have you / And forever in pain you will be / With Judas you will dwell / Among the awoken worms / For this prepared in advance.*”²⁵ In these verses too, the moment of the separation between the soul and the body is symbolized by the “poisoned cup”. An early mention of the symbol in a Romanian text appears in a fragment of the <*Thoughts at death’s door*> in that eschatological “library” that is closed between the covers of one manuscript – *Codex Sturdzanus*: “*Then that bitter cup of death is brought for him to drink; then his soul is released ...*”²⁶

Also in the *Legend about Adam and Eve*, present in several Romanian manuscripts from the late 18th and the early 19th century,²⁷ in independent versions or as a fragment included in the *Palia istorică*, the passage is presented by the agency of the metaphor of the drink that Death proposes. In this text, Abel’s murder and the awareness of his disappearance become a revelatory prelude and a warning as for the death of the self: “*And from that moment, he went to see his son’s body, Abel, everyday. Then he saw the body withered and rotten: then he wept even more and understood that that bitter cup of death he ought to drink too.*”²⁸ (our emphasis – C. B.)

The ritual of the communion with the liquor of the end is also mentioned by the abigail of Saint Basil the New, Theodora, in her description of the last threshold of life, in *Jitiia și vederile ciudelelor preacuviosului părintelui nostru, Vasilie* [*The Life and Miraculous Visions of our Venerable father Basil*] – one of the most famous hagiographic legends of the European Middle Ages: “*After that, they filled a cup. And what it was I did not know. And they gave it to me to drink. And, so help me God, it was so bitter that the very moment my soul parted from the body.*”²⁹

The popular belief is also referred to by Tudor Pamfile in *Mitologia românească* [*Romanian Mythology*]: “*To others, Death gives a cup – the cup of death – for them to sip a bitter poisoning drink. (...) ‘If a man tastes it, his days are ended. If he does not taste it willingly, he will make him drink from the cup unwillingly.’*”³⁰

N. Cartoian quotes a funeral lamentation that seems to have borrowed the image from the *Legend of Abraham*: “*In the evenings, for a week / Death has walked*

*around / With a wine cup in his hand. / To raise it to (Such) / And when (Such) has tasted it / His teeth clenched in his mouth.*³¹ Sometimes, using tricks, Death makes the man to ask of his free will to taste the fatal drink: “- *What is it, Death, you have in the cup? / I have some seven-year-old wine. / - Give me some to taste! / And when tasting from the cup / He hiccupped three times / And there and then he died.*”³²

The painters who adorned our wooden or wall churches might have had in their minds this association between Death and the cup with which he lures his victims, as they did not hesitate to put in the macabre character’s hand a chalice of different shapes and sizes. An interesting fact is that the painting manuals of the time – the notebooks with models or the *hermeneias* – did not offer suggestions in this direction. In the traditional *hermeneias*, Death did not appear as an independent element, but as a fragment in an ampler scene, like the *representation of the life of the true monk*³³ or *the image of the vain life of this world*.³⁴ With his never-failing scythe (sometimes with the sand-glass, but never with the chalice), Death finds his place in the representation of other parables as well, like the one of the *barren fig tree*³⁵ or that of the *evil servants*.³⁶

The notebooks with models that were preserved do not offer images of Death holding the cup as an instrument meant to bring forth the separation of the soul from the mortal’s body. *Caietul de modele al lui Radu Zugravu* [*Radu Zugravu’s Notebook with Models*] proposes the *scythe* as an identifying instrument of Death (in the 4 images where he appears – 3 mounted on a horse and 1 on foot – the character holds a scythe).

A 1780 manuscript (ms. LRA 3110, ff. 45-46^v) underlines the same juxtaposition of the macabre character and the object as an identification mark: “... *as this is the death’s manner, and you can see how painters paint death and represent him not with weapons, like other saints, but with a scythe behind him, to reap the people on earth, as we can see the scythe reaping.*”³⁷

Neither the illuminated manuscripts, as a matter of fact very few compared to the diversity and abundance of the western collection, include many representation of the death’s chalice. We only managed to identify by now one single case: the manuscript with black pen drawings put down on paper in the mid-17th century³⁸, by father Flor, teacher at the school of the “Sf. Gheorghe Vechi” church of Bucharest. On one of the pages (f. 38^v) appears a representation of the omnipotent Death. The central position in the background of the composition and the verticality of the macabre figure, contrasting with the peripheral position and the bending of the bodies presented while falling, indicate the hierarchical relation between the three characters. The crowned man falls right in the blade, while the young one – probably the son of the man wearing the crown, as far as we can see from the adjacent text – is tied with some kind of chain to the Death’s left arm. The scythe and the chalice that he holds outline the idea of a multitude of

ways in which life can end. The four lines under the miniature accentuate the distance between the *ante-mortem* and the *post-mortem* condition of the figures: “Glorified was the father and wise was the mother, / But there is no trace of them in the whole country / Death has crumbled them both / And the glory with the sons in the earth has crumbled.”

The researches made in the field in Walachia and Transylvania since 2000 to now have revealed a series of faces of Death endowed with the scythe and the chalice (in one single case, at Bărbătești, in the county of Vâlcea, the spectre is presented only with the cup, without the scythe).

In a trio of calamities, near *Plague* and *Sloth*, *Death* exhibits his implements on the narthex western wall of the wooden churches of Orțâța (commune of Oarța de Jos, county of Maramureș), Corund (commune of Bogdand, county of Satu Mare) and Ulciug (Cehu Silvaniei, county of Sălaj). The composition similarities between the scenes are probably due to the implication of the same artist in the decoration of several worship monuments. Ioana Cristache Panait assumes that the paintings decorating the worship establishments of “Sfinții Arhangheli” in Orțâța and “Nașterea Maicii Domnului” in Ulciug would be the work of the same talented anonymous artist.³⁹

In a less common representation for the Romanian iconography, Death in the painting of the church of Titești (county of Vâlcea), wearing a costume reminiscent of that of the medieval chevaliers, is surrounded by a panoply of weapons, has a mace hanging at his belt and a cup in his left hand. This variety of “cutting” objects owned by the one who reaps the lives can also be found in popular books of eschatological nature. Here it is, for instance, the description of the end of Theodora, the abigail of Saint Basil the New, in the hagiography that imposed in our popular culture the motif of the *aerial toll-houses*: “And the grim death came (...) And all kinds of weapons he had: such as sword, knife, sickles, axes, files, saws, arrows, adzes, hatchets, gimlets with which he works in so many ways.”⁴⁰

We meet similar variants of the skeleton with the scythe and the chalice at two establishments painted (at least as far as the scenes we are interested in are concerned) by Stan of Rășinari. When we enter the worship house of Mesentea (commune of Galda de Jos, county of Alba), the sight abides on the southern wall of the room under the belfry, captivated by a skeletal presence (“*The Grim Death*”, as the accompanying legend tells), with a scythe in his left hand and a beautiful cup in his right, preparing to offer, at any moment, the bitter communion of the end. A few years before, the painter had represented in the exterior paintings of the church of “Sfânta Treime” in Sibiel (county of Sibiu) a smaller Death placed, as a sign of submission, down at Christ’s legs.

A “dancing” variant of the skeleton, endowed with the mentioned implements, was intended by the painters Oprea from Poplaca and Panteleimon to accompany

the believers in the Holy Liturgies of the “Cuvioasa Paraschiva” church of Tălmăcel (commune of Tălmăciu, county of Sibiu).

On the north facades of the wooden churches of “Sfinții Voievozi” in Busești (commune of Nadanova, Mehedinți county) and “Înălțarea Domnului” in Cloșani (commune of Călugăreni, Gorj county) which are painted on the outside – nowadays in advanced decay – one can still guess the outlines of the character holding with one hand the scythe and with the other the cup.

Repainted in the 20th century, the church of Tăuți (county of Cluj) conserves in the narthex, right near the entrance door, a pretty much stylised image of the spectre with a sword (instead of the scythe) and the poison cup. The image most likely takes over the old model outlined by Dimitrie Ispas from Gilău and his son Ioan, the painters who had decorated, in 1829, the establishment.

The frightful face of death, intended, as we have shown above, for the sinners’ ultimate dread appears at two of the churches of Vâlcea, painted late, in the second half of the 19th century. At Opătești, the demonic spectre with claws and horns wears on the shoulder a bag with the cutting instruments and the scythe in one hand, while with the other one he hands to a dying man a cup from where flames seem to emerge. At Bărbătești (village of Iernatic), the silhouette of Death seems to merge, in terms of colours and not only, with that of the devils come to take the damned soul. Both adjacent inscriptions attest the sinner condition of the one condemned to disappear: “The *Death of the unmerciful riches*” (Opătești) and “*The sinner’s death*” (Bărbătești-Iernatic).

An inscription that seems to articulate the idea of equality in front of the end – “*Everybody’s death*” – accompanies the image of the oversize skeleton that holds the scythe and the chalice in the nave of the establishment of Maiorești in Mureș, transported in 1934 at Sinaia, and from 1951, in the complex of the monastery of Techirghiol.⁴¹

“*The cup of death*” does not miss from D. Cantemir’s *Divan*... either, presented in its opposition with the “*cup of life*”, to strengthen, it seems, the idea of inversely proportional relations between appearance and essence, differently seen with the bodily and with the spiritual eye respectively.⁴²

The whole eschatological literature – which crosses the Romanian area in miscellanies mainly in the late eighteenth century – reveals the preoccupation for the context of the earthly end, but also for the pilgrimage of the soul towards an eternal land, whether light or dark, according to the smaller or the bigger weight of sins with which it leaves the stage of this world. The recirculation, by editing them first of all, of the apocrypha that represented the favourite reading of the middle-class Romanian society at the beginning of the modern period could also contribute in the understanding of the frescoes whose emergence they significantly determined. Since 1884, Moses Gaster called the attention on this

aspect, in one of the public conferences given at the Romanian Athenaeum: “Just like the Egyptian hieroglyphs could not be read until they knew the language in which they were written and the conception that gave birth to them, in the same way the paintings of the Romanian art will remain unread hieroglyphs until we will know the language in which they were written, until we will know the fantasy that led the artist’s hand. The *Apocrypha* and the legends, here is where the artists drew their inspiration from in their conceptions.”⁴³

Text and image remain indissolubly related, they complement and highlight each other, in an illiterate society in its majority, where the message was meant to reach the receiver by any accessible channel. The copyist’s freedom is like that of the painter: they both move in between the frontiers of some prescriptions of the genre and of the models they observe, managing however to “evade” quite often, managing to transgress the limit and to offer variants of a personal sensibility on the topic.



Notes

1. N. Iorga, “Faze suflatești și cărți reprezentative la români. Cu specială referire la legăturile «Alexandriei» cu Mihai Viteazul” (12/25 May 1915 session), *Analele Academiei Române*, tom XXXVII, *Memoriile Secțiunii Istorice*, 55.
2. *Ibid.*, 54.
3. The authors of the notes “say their names, tell their problems, relate what seems to them important to remain in the successors’ memory, they write history: discreetly and unknowingly at that time, but so relevantly for the generations to come”, *apud* Mihaela Gheorghiu, “Universul lectorilor și al lecturilor în secolul XVIII. Cine, cum și de ce citea?”, *Xenopoliana. Buletinul Fundației Academice «A. D. Xenopol» din Iași*, 1-4 (2004), 96.
4. For philological details regarding the dating, location, filiation and the copyists of the texts included in the miscellany, see *Codex Sturdzanus*. Philological study, linguistic study, editing and index by Gheorghe Chivu (București, 1993).
5. See N. Cartoian, *Cărțile populare în literatura românească*, I (*Epoca influenței sud-slave*), Alexandru Chiriacescu (ed.) (București, 1974), 110-114.
6. “Studiu filologic” (“Datarea”), in *Codex Sturdzanus*, ed. cit., 49-50: “Attested by Al. Mareș in many documents of Transylvania issued between 1581 and 1583, but processed, most likely, after 1580 (the oldest attestation dates from 8 January 1581), the Cluj paper with a watermark variant identical with the one traced from pages 79 and 80 of *Codicele Sturdzan* circulated between 1580 and 1591. The copy of the *Death of Abraham* and of the second variant of the *Homily on Easter Day* was therefore made, as far as it seems, in this span of time.”
7. <Abraham’s Death>, in *Codex Sturdzanus*, 279.

8. A. Timotin, “La littérature eschatologique byzantine et post-byzantine dans les manuscrits roumains”, *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes*, 1-4 (București, 2002), 156.
9. Representations of the scene where archangel Michael, armed with a fire sword and the scales for the weighing of souls, separated the *sheep* from the *goats* can be found in the painting of the churches of Schitu Matei (county of Argeș), Ciungani, Roșia Nouă and Șteia (all in the county of Arad), etc. On the eastern facade of the porch of the church in Schitu Matei, one can read the inscription “*Archangel Michael when they separated the sheep from the goats that is the righteous from the wicked*”, meant to explain the scene.
10. Constantin Brăiloiu, “Ale mortului” din Gorj [“Death rituals from Gorj”], excerpt from *Muzică și Poezie* (București, 1936), verses 211-226.
11. See ms. rom. 76 (Comșa, 80), dated circa 1750, in the collections of the Library of the Romanian Academy, the Cluj-Napoca branch, *apud* Mihai Moraru, *Studii și texte*, II (București, 2005), 91.
12. *Ibid.*, 96.
13. *Ibid.*, 97.
14. Ms. rom. LRA 3644, f. 147^v, *apud* Mihai Moraru, *Studii și texte*, I (*O carte populară necunoscută: Viteazul și Moartea*) (București, 2005), 46.
15. In Romanian, the noun “death” is feminine and most of its painting representations have obvious feminine features (breasts, prominent thighs and long hair). In the Romanian folklore, *Death* (like other calamities – *Plague*, *Cholera*, *Hunger* – by the sides of which it often appears in the religious iconography) is marked by femininity (usually appearing as an old woman). In specialized literature, we can find at length debates on the relation between the gender of the noun “death” in different languages and the way in which this apparently irrepresentable entity was mentally and visually represented.
16. *Apocalipsa patriarhului Avraam*, ed. cit., 96.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 97.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Ms. rom. 5318 LRA, f. 64^v, *apud* Mihai Moraru, *Studii și texte*, II, ed. cit., 103.
22. *Topsecul* (Rom., *poison*) is a regressive derivate of the archaic popular verb *a topseca*, usually used in disenchantments, with the meaning of “to poison”, “to envenom”. For details, see *Dicționarul limbii române. Serie Nouă*, tome XI, part III (letter T) (București, 1983), 421.
23. *Pilde filozoficești din grecește* (Vălenii de Munte, 1909), *apud* Andrei Paleolog, *Pictura exterioară din Țara Românească (sec. XVIII-XIX)* (București, 1984), 57.
24. Ms. rom. LRA 1631, f. 207^v, *apud* G. Ștrempel, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești*, II (București, 1983), 21.
25. Ms. rom. 44 LRA, f. 108^r.
26. <*Cugetări în ora morții*>, *Codex Sturdzanus*, 262.
27. From the 18th century: ms. rom. LRA 469, 2183, 3275, 3813, 4104, 5047, 5054, and from the 19th century: ms. rom. LRA 1255, 2158, 5299, cf. Mihai Moraru, *Studii și texte*, II (*Vechi legende apocrife*) (București, 2005), 30-31.

28. *Palia istorică*, in *Cele mai vechi cărți populare în literatura română*, IV, philological study, linguistic study and edited by Alexandra Moraru and Mihai Moraru (București, 2001), 110.
29. Ms. rom. 100 LRA, Cluj-Napoca branch, f. 51^r, *apud Cele mai vechi cărți populare în literatura română*, Ion Gheție and Alexandru Mareș (eds.), IX, *Viața Sfântului Vasile cel Nou și Vămile văzdubului*, philological study, linguistic study, glossary and edited by Maria Stanciu-Istrate (București, 2004), 155.
30. T. Pamfile, *Mitologie românească* (București, 1997), 322.
31. N. Cartoian, *op. cit.*, I, 114.
32. Ion H. Ciubotaru, *Marea trecere. Repere etnologice în ceremonialul funebru din Moldova* (București, 1999), 259.
33. Dionisie din Furna, *Carte de pictură*, transl. by Smaranda Bratu Stati and Șerban Stati (București, 1979), 243.
34. *Ibid.*, 247.
35. *Ibid.*, 159.
36. *Ibid.*, 159-160.
37. Ms. LRA 3110, ff. 45-46^v, *apud Ștefan Lemny, Sensibilitate și istorie în secolul XVIII românesc* (București, 1990), 135.
38. Ms. rom. LRA 2344, dated 1747, illuminated with miniatures in black pen, due to father Flor, teacher at the school of the “Sf. Gheorghe Vechi” church in Bucharest in the second half of the 18th century, signed on f. 6^v of the manuscript with Latin and Slavonic letters – “*popa Floria*” [*father Floria*] – and on f. 62^v, “*ier(ei) Fl(o)rea d(a)sc.*” I. Barnea thinks this is the oldest of the manuscripts signed by father Flor, out of 9 autographed manuscripts and 3 attributed to the same copyist even in the absence of the signature. See I. Barnea, *Un miniaturist român din secolul XVIII: Popa Flor* (București), 2-3.
39. Ioana Cristache-Panait, *apud Marius Porumb, Dicționar de pictură veche românească din Transilvania (sec. XIII-XVIII)* (București, 1998), 439.
40. *Viața Sfântului Vasile cel Nou și Vămile văzdubului*, philological study, linguistic study, glossary and edited by Maria Stanciu-Istrate, *Cele mai vechi cărți populare în literatura română*, Ion Gheție and Alexandru Mareș (eds.), IX (București, 2004), 155.
41. See Ioana Cristache-Panait, “Un monument transilvan în Dobrogea”, *Studii și cercetări de istoria artei. Seria Artă Plastică*, tome 32 (București, 1985), 78-87.
42. Dimitrie Cantemir, *Divanul sau Gâlceava înțeleptului cu lumea sau giudețul sufletului cu trupul*, text edited, Greek version translated, comments and glossary by Virgil Căndea (București, 1990), 14.
43. Moses Gaster, “Apocrifele în literatura română”, lecture given at the Athenaeum on 5 February 1884 and published in *Atheneul Român. Conferințe Publice* (București, 1884), 260-261.

Abstract

The Cup of Death in the Apocryphal Literature and Its Iconographic Traces
in the Romanian Area

In the present paper, we are interested in the relations that could interweave, from a symbolic object (*the cup of Death*), between three levels of expression of the imaginary: *apocrypha*, *popular culture* and *religious iconography*. The idea originates in the attempt to bring to light, as part of a colloquium dedicated to Emil Turdeanu's memory, a series of apocryphal texts that he dealt with at length: we refer, first of all, to the *Legend of Patriarch Abraham*.

Keywords

apocrypha, religious iconography, Death, popular culture, the cup of Death