Neagoe Basarab's Teachings to His Son Theodosie constitutes the first major work of literature to appear on Romanian soil. Attributed to the Walachian voievod who reigned between 1512 and 1521, the text has been hailed as an "encyclopaedic" creation, a treatise on Christian ethic and orthodox mystic belief, on political theory and diplomacy, on military strategy and tactic, and an anthology of didactic texts for the use of a future ruler, all in one.1 Written in Church Slavic, the literary language of Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, the Teachings had—as so many medieval compositions before it—an adventurous textual life: it survives today in a full version in Romanian (translated from the Slavic, possibly by Udriște Năsturel, in 1635), in a fragmentary manuscript in the Slavic of the original (that appeared unexpectedly at the end of the nineteenth century and is now to be found in the National Library in Sofia, Bulgaria), and in an early Greek version of its second part (possibly contemporary with the author). Though conceived in the learned koine of the area in medieval times, the work came down to us in the vernacular idiom in fact most appropriate to its origin and its content—namely Old Romanian—and it is mainly in this language that we receive today the message of its princely author. Habent sua fata libelli.

Whether "encyclopaedic" or not, the Teachings is undoubtedly an impressive piece. First of all, by its size: in the best manuscript of the Romanian version, mss. 109, now in the library of the Cluj branch of the Romanian Academy, there are 273 leaves (the manuscript comes from the library of Ștefan Cantacuzino, ruler of Walachia between 1714 and 1716), while the text of the modern edition cited above comprises pages 125 to 343. Second, by the tone: the author bestows his recommendations and advice with dignity and poise, and an unerring sense of what is becoming for a ruler and for a ruler's entourage. Interested in conveying to a naive youngsters what makes his destiny different from that of his peers, the authorial voice never lets its interlocutor forget that he is to be in a class by himself and that what may be tolerable in common people's behavior might not be and probably will not be

in his. Impressive, ultimately, is the ambitious scope. The *Teachings* embodies a massive ideological endeavor, quite specific in formulating precepts of a princely and feudal ethos in certain chapters of part II, but rather prolix and apparently unfocused in part I, where a good deal of space is spent retelling Biblical stories or retracing Emperor Constantine's exemplary career. Though somewhat unnerving at times because of this imbalance, the composition of the work—which periodically seems to get out of hand and sprawls in all directions—has a certain grandeur. Most of all, it has an intriguing character: one wonders after awhile whether this imbalance is symptomatic of an undeclared purpose that may both inform and transcend the otherwise legitimate effort to teach one's heir how to follow in one's own footsteps, the avowed intention of the writing.

Most of the scholarly work the *Teachings* has inspired so far has to do with establishing its authorship, date of composition and sources. The traditional debate on the *Teachings* 'authenticity' opposed those scholars who considered Neagoe Basarab the real author of the work (N. Iorga, S. Pu?cariu, D. Popovici, V. Grecu, G. Câlinescu, Petre Ş. Năsturel, I. C. Chi?limia) to those who attributed the work to a religious figure, possibly a monk, writing after Neagoe's time (in the second half of the sixteenth century, for P. P. Panaitescu; in the seventeenth century, for Demostene Russo). A more recent twist taken by this debate is due to the Greek scholar Leandros Vranoussis who, in 1970, bestowed upon Manuel of Corinth (active in Constantinople between 1480 and 1530) the honor of having fathered the work. His views were rebutted in 1972 by G. Mihăilă who, basing his arguments on a minute comparative study of the versions extant in Slavic, Romanian, and Greek, demonstrated convincingly, in my view, that Manuel of Corinth could have been the *Teachings* translator into Greek or, eventually, its copyist in the manuscript discussed by Vranoussis, but by no means its author.2

The indispensability of this erudite research with respect to a text so distant in time and so different in intertextual connotations from our own modern literary tradition goes without saying, and we should feel gratitude towards those scholars who undertook this arduous and often thankless enterprise. One wonders, however, whether sufficient justice has been done in