

Non-Verbal Communication and the Dramatic Text: an Analysis of the Didascalía in the Play *A Lost Letter* by I.L. Caragiale

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The study of dramatic texts encounters difficulties arising from the specific features of their communication model. The theatrical performance is characterized by multiple media: the messages are meant to be transmitted by means of multiple codes, linguistic as well as non-linguistic. The multimedial character of the performance is obvious, but what is there to say about the written text, the playwright's work?

This dramatic text is conveyed only by the verbal code, but it cannot be conceived without taking account of its possible *mise en scène*. Moreover, the playwright has in mind an ideal, typical performance. This finality of each play, the performance, leads to the differences between dramatic texts and other text types. Dramatic texts have a particular structure, which consists in two kinds of discourses: the characters' lines and the didascalía.

Didascalía have been traditionally regarded as a less meaningful discourse compared to the dialogue, which formed "the core of the play" or "the main text". These stage directions usually have a negative definition: they are text fragments that cannot be verbalized during the performance. This broad definition includes some elements with a key role in the organization of the text: the title, the secondary title, the *dramatis personae*, the marking of acts, scenes and speakers, the stage directions that are connected to or replace the lines. Didascalía have, therefore, two functions: one – in the internal communication system of the play, in regard to the fictional utterance, the other one – in the external communication system, in regard to the scenic enunciation¹. Discussing Anne Ubersfeld's point of view, Sanda Golopenția asserts that, from the perspective of pragmatics, didascalía have an indexical function, connected to the verbal exchanges that form the play².

The multimedial character of the play is expressed by the importance of the non-verbal messages in the conversational events of the play. The lines and the didascalía should both include cues about the characters' conduct, such as, in real life, taking part in a discussion implies the simultaneous use of diverse codes and channels.

The attention paid by the playwright to the non-verbal constituents and to the stage movements is often revealed by the quantity of the didascalía and their dissemination throughout the text. The dramatic text needs a holistic approach, including data from various fields of study: history of literature, pragmatics, non-verbal communication, literary anthropology. The result would be a more accurate understanding of the author's

¹ Anne Ubersfeld, *Termenii cheie ai analizei teatrului*, Iași, Institutul European, 1999, p. 31.

² Sanda Golopenția, Monique Martinez-Thomas, *Voir les didascalies*, Paris, Ophrys, 1994, p. 23.

manner to imagine the characters, their relationships, even the final performance. An analysis of the non-verbal messages included in the didascalia may tell whether the text is performable or not.

This study is based on the play *A Lost Letter*, chosen because of its abundant stage directions. Our aim will be the analysis of the non-verbal messages mentioned in the stage directions, paying attention to several types of non-verbal communication: *proxemics* – the study of the individuals' positions in space, *kinesics* – the study of gestures. Paralinguistic details and elements regarding facial expressions will also prove their significance for the understanding of the text.

Stage directions have a semantically varied content, which has led us to operate a segmentation, in order to isolate units of content. We have named „infra-didascalic unit” the guideline inside of a stage direction that refers to a single non-verbal message (i.e. a single gesture, movement, touch, vocal cue a.s.o.). The meanings of infra-didascalic units will be related to the characters' lines and to the didascalia expressing emotional states.

The language humour is widely represented in Caragiale's play, but the non-verbal context is also important; the non-verbal communication is carefully designed in all of Caragiale's plays. Extra-linguistic responses substitute, complete or contradict the speech and can even serve a meta-communicative function, by offering a key for the correct interpretation of the dialogue. Behavior is a means for characterization and every main character of the play has some particular features.

In contrast to another famous Romanian playwright of the time, Vasile Alecsandri, Caragiale's main characters are not defined by a single gesture, a recurrent kinesic trait. They send instead series of concordant non-verbal messages and thus reveal their psychological life. There is no specific gesture, but gesturality regarding Tipătescu's body language: he is nervous, becomes quickly annoyed and has a disposition towards violent, brisk movements, that he can hardly ban. Cațavencu's portrait benefits from the various paralinguistic didascalia concerning the tone, the rhythm and speed of the speech, especially when he declaims his discourses. Trahanache is portrayed by means of slow, calm gestures. A kinesic leitmotif is more obviously used for secondary characters. Dandanache's amnesia is expressed by the „jingle bells” gesture. The Drunken Citizen's behavior is the expression of his drunkenness (hiccups and hesitations), but these responses are accompanied by the voting sign, a mark of his quality as a voter.

It has already been mentioned Caragiale's preference for couples of heroes, one of whom brings to light the other one: Dumitrache – Ipingescu, Leonida – Efișița, Farfuridi – Brânzovenescu, Pampon – Crăcănel. In the comedy *A Lost Letter* we notice the joining of characters with different kinesic behavior during the same scene. This strategy underlines the particular traits of each character. Tipătescu and the policeman Pristanda form an asymmetrical couple, due to the status difference, clearly marked in the first didascalia of the first act. The policeman maintains a certain distance from his master – “*standing near the door, leaning on his sword*”³. The subordination of the police to the political authority is thus obvious from the beginning, during the discussion about the flags bought by Pristanda. This sequence functions as a parenthesis and makes Pristanda delay his narration. The humour arises from the prefect's responses, that

³ “(...) în picioare, mai spre ușă, stă rezemat în sabie”.

would have been unexpected in a real-life context: he smiles, then laughs, although he is perfectly aware of the policeman's theft. Pristanda is caught in this trap and for a brief moment he has the authentic reaction – “(forgetting and laughing): A real theft! (immediately correcting himself, naive) What do you mean by theft, sir...?”⁴ He censures his conduct then and the verbal exchange goes on complementary. Pristanda brings forth arguments to prove his innocence by using two different strategies: firstly, he pretends to be not guilty, then he shifts to an “additive” strategy and speaks too much and too quickly, in order to avoid Tipătescu's intervention. The prefect's reproach – although mild – establishes the policeman's real position: he becomes “*humble and naive*” (“*umilit și naiv*”), a mere servant.

The prefect has proved here his readiness to forgive, but during the play his impulsiveness becomes manifest, especially if he encounters locutors with a different temper. The scene when Trahanache reveals him Cațavencu's plot is based on the technique of intertextuality (very frequent in Caragiale's plays and consisting either in a narration inserted in the verbal exchange or in the loud reading of a newspaper article or letter). Caragiale's characters who read or tell a story have less kinesic didascalism than their listeners. There are no illustrators⁵, kinetographs⁶ or pictographs⁷, no mimetic gestures that could have had a role in Trahanache's story, because the reader's attention is focused on Tipătescu. His utterances are brief most of the times and create an echo effect, since he repeats his partner's words.

“Trahanache: ... Who was the letter from?

Tipătescu: From?

Trahanache: From the honourable gentleman Nae Cațavencu.

Tipătescu: From Cațavencu?

(...) Trahanache: ... Guess whose and addressed to whom?

Tipătescu (*barely controlling his emotion*): Whose? Whose, uncle Zaharia?⁸”

These short utterances are counterbalanced by the hero's exaggerated mobility. His nervousness grows, his gestures become “excessive signals” and therefore harder to conceal. Tipătescu walks up and down the room, in a rage, fists clenched in an aggressive attitude that precedes his words: “I'm going to shoot him! I'm going to burn him down!”. Clenched fists are an “action-projector” or an anticipatory kinetograph.

⁴ “(uitându-se pe sine și râzând): Curat condei! (luându-și numaidecât seama, naiv): Adicăte, cum condei, coane Fănică?...”

⁵ Gestures that have a meaning only if they are accompanied by a verbal explanation.

⁶ A class of illustrator gestures that describe movements.

⁷ Illustrator gestures that describe shapes and outlines.

⁸ “Trahanache: ...De la cine era răvășelul?

Tipătescu: De la cine?

Trahanache: De la onorabilul d. Nae Cațavencu.

Tipătescu: De la Cațavencu?

(...) Trahanache: ... Ghici a cui și către cine?

Tipătescu (de-abia stăpânindu-și emoția): A cui? A cui, nene Zahario?” (I,4)

⁹ The name is proposed by Jürgen Streeck and Mark Knapp in their study *The Interaction of Visual and Verbal Features in Human Communication* (1992) and it refers to a gesture that expresses visually the action intended by the speaker. It occurs in the transition space between the utterances, before the speaker

The character's efforts to control his reactions fail sometimes. The discussion involving Tipătescu and the two members of his party, Farfuridi and Brânzovenescu, starts with the former's fake signals, in order to achieve an introductory verbal exchange according to the etiquette code. This ritual sequence of greetings is undermined by the two characters' aside utterances and their contrasting opinions on Tipătescu's facial expression. The lack of an explanatory didascalial concerning his facial display maintains the uncertainty and increases the humour:

“Tipătescu (*coming from the left, upset and struggling to look composed*): Welcome, welcome, honourable!
 Brânzovenescu (*aside*): He's pale!
 Farfuridi (*aside*): How he has turned red!¹⁰” (I,6)

Tipătescu tries to underrate the discussed topic and to treat it as being derisive (“*with a forced laugh*¹¹”), but his non-verbal attitude is corrected by Brânzovenescu as improper for the serious problem they are facing. A competition goes on between Tipătescu and the couple Farfuridi – Brânzovenescu, at first only at a verbal level, then in a concrete but mild manner: they wrest the printed leaflet from each other. The news determine the prefect to end the discussion suddenly, without any corrective ritual exchange: „*he walks over to the table and rings the bell*¹²”.

Confronted with Cațavencu, Tipătescu appears from the beginning to be in an aggressive mood. His behavior represents the typical attitude for an individual preparing for a fight: he frowns, his fists are clenched, he does not move for some time, “*staring at Cațavencu*¹³”. This behavior can be explained from an ethological point of view: animals that are ready to engage in a fight first take a good look at their enemy.

While their discussion is in progress, Tipătescu sends more and more aggressive signals. Cațavencu makes the opening movement by excusing himself for his arrival at his political opponent's home. Tipătescu's first two utterances are spoken aside: it is a tactic silence, in response to the locutor's attempt to tackle the problem. It shows both his dislike for this undesired guest and his struggle to control himself. At the same time, the silence means an overlooking of the social requirements that a host should meet the guests warmly. The silence is counterbalanced by gestures. Tipătescu “*has stamped his foot impatiently*¹⁴”; foot-signals are hard to conceal and thus they are a reliable sign of excessive nervousness. At the non-verbal level, Tipătescu fights against Cațavencu and tries to gain advantage. During the first part of their exchange, Tipătescu wins: he approaches slowly, threatening and forcing the other to sit down:

verbalizes his/her intentions. We have preferred the name „anticipatory kinetograph” in order to show its connection with the subclass of kinetographs described by Ekman and Friesen.

¹⁰ “Tipătescu (*venind din stânga turburat și dându-și aer silit de degajare*): Salutare, salutare, stimabile!

Brânzovenescu (*aparte*): E galben!

Farfuridi (*aparte*): Ce roșu s-a făcut!” (I,6)

¹¹ “*Râde silit.*”

¹² “*merge la masă și trage clopoțelul.*”

¹³ “*(...) măsurând din ochi pe Cațavencu*” (II, 9)

¹⁴ “*a tot bătut din călcâi cu impaciență*” (II,9)

“Cațavencu: (...) (*Tipătescu offers him a chair, he rejects it gently.*) Thank you!
Tipătescu (*the same*): Sit down, please, sit!
Cațavencu (*the same*): Thank you!
Tipătescu (*staring at Cațavencu and grumbling*): Well, sit down!...
Cațavencu (*who has retreated a little, finally gives up and sinks down on the chair rather unwillingly*): Thank you.¹⁵” (II,9)

Tipătescu thus succeeds in changing the spatial arrangement completely, as an individual who sits down is less menacing and his/her action area diminishes. This proxemic rearrangement favors the prefect, because Cațavencu retreats, Tipătescu sits down close to him and this unwanted closeness unnerves the enemy. Tipătescu has entered his locutor’s intimate territory, instead of keeping a “near” or “neutral” distance. Tipătescu’s discourse includes an unexpected movement in a blackmail situation: he admits that the letter is genuine and, in effect, his guilt. Cațavencu acknowledges this assertion with a vague movement – “(*gesture*): Oh!¹⁶” The vague didascalia allows the interpretation of the movement as an expression of surprise, but also of contentedness. Tipătescu prefers to react ironically (“Forgive me for offending you...”). The next sequence is based on apparent behavior since both speakers feign their reactions. Tipătescu talks to his guest “very politely”, Cațavencu pretends to be naive. Tipătescu breaks off twice, every time when Cațavencu starts delivering his usual pompous speech. His gestures show impulsiveness again (“*stamps his foot*”), but also a good knowledge of his oponent’s hypocrisy and, in the end, of the political life.

One gesture is used by both speakers, in turns. In the beginning, Cațavencu says: “[...] I like playing the game briefly, briefly. (*Cutting gesture*)¹⁷”, which is exactly the opposite of what he intends to do, because he is fond of long, bombastic phrases. Tipătescu repeats this movement and it does not express sincerity either, but lack of patience: “(*nervous, stamping his foot*): I beg, honourable, once again... (*clearly*) what do you want from me in exchange for that letter? Briefly! Briefly! (*he repeats Cațavencu’s cutting gesture.*)¹⁸”

In the internal communication system of the play, Cațavencu’s behavior includes a series of “dispreferred marked seconds¹⁹”: the successive rejections of Tipătescu’s offers. The rejections are milder by non-verbal means – “*smiling and gently*”, “*the same*”, “*Cațavencu smiles with a denial gesture*²⁰”. These responses surprise his partner, but they are “preferred unmarked seconds” for the reader. Cațavencu refuses

¹⁵ “Cațavencu: (...) (*Tipătescu îi oferă jețul, el îl respinge ușor.*) Mulțumesc!

Tipătescu (*același joc*): Ia poftim, mă rog, ia poftim!

Cațavencu (*același joc*): Mulțumesc!

Tipătescu (*privind țință la Cațavencu și cu tonul mârâit*): Pofitim de!...

Cațavencu (*care s-a cam retras puțin, cedează în sfârșit și cade pe fotoliu cam fără voie*): Mulțumesc.” (II,9)

¹⁶ “(*gest*): A!”

¹⁷ “(...) Mie-mi place să joc scurt, scurt. (*Gest de rețezare.*)”.

¹⁸ “(*impacientat, bătând din călcâi*): Mă rog, onorabile, încă o dată... (*răspicat*) Ce-mi ceri d-ta în schimbul acelei scrisori? Scurt! Scurt! (*repetă gestul de rețezare al lui Cațavencu.*)” (II,9).

¹⁹ Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, *Conversația – structuri și strategii. Sugestii pentru o pragmatică a românei vorbite*, București, All, 1999, p. 51.

²⁰ „zâmbind cu bonomie”, „asemenea”, „Cațavencu surâde cu un gest de refuz”.

minor benefits and continues the blackmail because he wants to be elected as a deputy. The display of a jovial attitude, of smile or laughter has an ethological reason: these facial expressions are meant to appease the enemy²¹. Tipătescu's interruption, caused by his losing of patience and expressed by his standing-up is related to the main part of their verbal exchange ("what do you want from me"). Cațavencu pretends to accept the challenge, but when Tipătescu is completely out of himself with anger, he "*rushes across to the window*", "*(trembling, he shouts outside the window): Help! Come! The vampire's killing me! The murderer prefect! Help!*"²² The two heroes' traits are clearly outlined during this scene: Tipătescu is too impulsive and tactless (as his friend, Trahanache, describes him) while Cațavencu is coward, hypocrite, but skillful in concealing and mastering his reactions. Cațavencu's rule of conduct is "The purpose excuses the means", as he justifies his actions in the preceding scene.

Cațavencu represents the demagogue, hypocrite politician also portrayed by Vasile Alecsandri. Caragiale's hero is better individualized mainly by means of various paralinguistic infra-didascalic units. The vocal features are significant, because a politician needs talking skills, not necessarily any knowledge. Caragiale describes a world where only the form of the messages matters, instead of their content or meaning. The first didascalia concerning Cațavencu ("*in a sententious tone*"²³) announces his portrait as a politician who talks only nonsense and uses clichés presented as general truth.

The entire play is actually a description of the long fight between members of two different political parties in order to achieve political power and electors. This fight takes a particular shape in the third act: it is focused on the problem of speaking, of uttering discourses. Caragiale's politicians strive for their right to speak, listeners always send turn-requesting cues, while speakers fight back to maintain their turn. These characters lack intellectual or moral instruction but that does not prevent them from requesting the right to speak, from overlapping and contradicting each other. Each politician struggles to prevent his opponent from speaking: a silent enemy does not represent a menace, since he loses the opportunity to persuade the voters.

Cațavencu's insincerity is revealed in his first scene by his easiness in changing his manner of speaking: he changes topics as well as displayed emotional states because he actually believes in nothing. Nevertheless, this trait is admired by the public and Pristanda's comment expresses approval: "What a great trickster! (*he exits, secretly looking with admiration at Cațavencu*)"²⁴ (II,7). The contrast between Cațavencu's non-verbal conduct and his words appears in his discussion with Tipătescu, when he makes the "cutting gesture": "I like to play the game briefly". This is exactly what he is not going to do because he begins a discourse about a politician's duties three times before he finally tackles the main topic, the blackmail. The "cutting gesture" is preferred, according to recent studies, by politicians because of its threatening expression: the speaker uses his/her hand as if it were a weapon²⁵.

²¹ Konrad Lorenz, *Așa-zisul rău. Despre istoria naturală a agresiunii*, București, Humanitas, 2005, p. 209.

²² "*se repede la fereastră*", "*(tremurând, strigă la fereastră în afară): Ajutor! Săriți! Mă omoară vampirul! Prefectul asasin! Ajutor!*"

²³ "*sentențios*" (II,7).

²⁴ "*Mare pișicher! (iese, aruncând priviri furișe de admirație către Cațavencu.)*" (II,7).

²⁵ Peter Collett, *Cartea gesturilor. Cum putem citi gândurile oamenilor din acțiunile lor*, București, Ed. Trei, 2005, p. 126.

The greatest number of kinesic, haptic and vocal didascalia can be found in the third act of the play. There are almost 122 vocal infra-didascalic units here, which means a half of their total sum. Vocal stage-directions are a tool for portraying two characters: Cațavencu and Farfuridi. The former is a victim of his passion for speaking, the latter – a victim of the breaks caused by his listeners.

The evolution of the political meeting, from its beginning to the end, is a humorous imitation of formal political reunions. The winner is the orator who shouts louder, therefore the most frequent didascalia for Cațavencu is “*shouting*”. The didascalia for the other members of his party belong to the same semantic area: “*rumour*”, “*protests*”, “*with force*”²⁶. (The politicians’ vocal exaggerations are subjected to irony, hence the newspapers’ titles in Caragiale’s plays: “The Roar of the Carpathians”, “The National Patriot’s Voice”).

Words have lost their significance and gestures lose their meanings. Trahanache’s gesture of ringing the bell is his mark, but it is a sign of authority that has no longer value. Not only that he cannot control the rumour and the interruptions, but he is himself interrupted, although he presides the meeting. The entire reunion does not go on according to objective, impersonal rules; Trahanache’s actions regarding Farfuridi, the orator, are very emotional:

“Trahanache (*to Farfuridi, sweetly, rising and leaning over his table towards the dais*): Honourable... I believe it won’t be wrong to move on to 48...”

“Trahanache (*rising and placing, over the table, his hands on Farfuridi’s shoulders, softly*): If you love me, honourable, do me this favour, let’s move on to the referendum... the assembly’s wish!”

“Trahanache (*even more imploring*): Let’s move on to the referendum!...”²⁷

The vocal guidelines are completed by forms of touching that should be suppressed in an official setting: placing his hands on the speaker’s shoulders, making him turn from the dais. Besides the familiar note, these touches also have a control function: the president imposes upon the speaker how to organize his speech. Farfuridi’s positions are improper for a true orator – “*turning his back to the assembly and his front to the president*”²⁸.

Farfuridi’s discourse begins exactly with his request of being allowed to speak (“Allow me!” / “Dați-mi voie!”) and with a self-adaptor (he drinks water), which becomes this hero’s leitmotif. By the use of self-adaptors, he breaks his own stream of words, exactly when he should have gone on. He appears to prepare himself all the time for an important piece of oratory that is never uttered. Farfuridi tries to maintain his turn by adapting his rhythm of speech (“*slowly, as if he began telling a story*”²⁹), but this manner of speaking does not suit the discussed topic and his oponents’ paralinguistic features (“*All discussions and interruptions are done in a lawyer-like manner, very*

²⁶ “*strigând*”, “*rumoare*”, “*protestări*”, “*cu putere*” (III, 1).

²⁷ “Trahanache (*către Farfuridi cu dulceață, ridicându-se peste masă către tribună*): Stimabile... eu gândesc că nu ar fi rău să sărim la 48...”

(...) Trahanache (*sculându-se și punând, peste masă, mâinile pe umerii lui Farfuridi, mângâietor*): Dacă mă iubești, stimabile, fă-mi hatărul... să trecem la plebicist... dorința adunării!...

(...) Trahanache (*și mai rugător*): Să trecem la plebicist!...” (III, 1).

²⁸ “*întorcându-se cu spatele spre adunare și cu fața la președinte*” (III,1).

²⁹ “*rar, ca și cum ar începe o poveste*” (III,1).

*lively and in a pricking and voluble tone*³⁰). Farfuridi lacks his enemy's versatility and slyness, thus his vocal features are ridiculized: "All (*in a chorus, in his tone*): Twenty-one precisely... (*rumour and protests*)³¹". The discourse is predictable and the listeners are already familiar with it. The members of Cațavencu's group repeat Farfuridi's words, conducted by Cațavencu. Farfuridi loses all those little battles and gives up to all of Trahanache's requirements, "resigned". Farfuridi cannot gain the audience's esteem and is forced to ask the president, who represents the authority, to his rescue.

The humour of these interruptions lies in their timing: the speaker is interrupted before he can express his opinion, exactly when he sends „intention signals”, communicating his wish to talk: "*rushing*", "*strongly beginning the sentence*"³². Cațavencu uses similar signals (he rises and shouts) so that he can cover the other orator's lines. Farfuridi's behavior contradicts visibly the laws of rhetoric, since an orator should control himself completely at the beginning of the speech and give way to emotions only in the end. Farfuridi is led by emotions long before he manages to utter the final sequence of his speech. The repeated self-adaptor³³ (he wipes his face with a handkerchief) is the result of a physiological reaction that is usually allowed only when the speaker has finished.

The humorous effects of the play are not simple or merely connected to the bodily area and limited to the mismatch between the use of self-adaptors and the formal context. Farfuridi's reactions complement the lack of logic of his entire discourse and replace other gestures (as ideographs³⁴) or signals that would have emphasized the most important parts of the speech. Not one ideograph is mentioned during his utterances as there are no coherent ideas that could be translated visually. On the contrary, this discourse is rich in pauses and "fumlings"³⁵ are commonplace. These elements either have an explanatory role, expressing the speaker's attempt to communicate a message ("That is I mean", "that is no exaggerations", "I mean" / "adică vreau să zic", "adică nu exagerațiuni", "vreau să zic") or are addressed to the listeners ("you understand", "allow me"/ "mă-nțelegi", "dați-mi voie"). Non-verbal fumlings may be considered the choking, the gulping, the gesture of wiping his face but these elements do not mark the logical units of the speech because there is no logic in it. Only one illustrator, a "baton"³⁶ appears, performed by Trahanache, not as a proof of authority but to show the rhythm of the speaker's flow of words.

Cațavencu's behavior is suggested by the didascalia "*with lively gestures*"³⁷). Liars usually tend to suppress their responses in order to avoid being caught, but Cațavencu is a special case. He must be the center of attention and therefore uses gestures to gain the audience's interest and to increase his persuasive ability. Another persuasive tool is his tone (he speaks in a "rhetorical" tone), an important turn-

³⁰ "(Toate colochiile și întreruperile se fac avocățeste, cu multă vioiciune și cu tonul înțepat și volubil.)" (III,1).

³¹ "Toți (*în cor, cu tonul lui*): Douăzeci-și-unu fix... (*rumoare și protestări*)." (III,1).

³² "Iuând vânt", "cu tările începând frază" (III,1).

³³ Gesture that helps the body adapt to a certain situation or that is connected to a physiological reaction.

³⁴ A subclass of the illustrators that are used while speaking in order to mark the flow of words.

³⁵ Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, *op. cit.*, p.77.

³⁶ A hand movement used to show the speaker's authority and to impress the listeners.

³⁷ "gesticulând viu" (III,1).

maintaining cue that serves its function: “people begin to notice that he perorates and little by little they gather around him...”³⁸ Farfuridi tries to have his revenge and makes some replies but Cațavencu finally wins by interrupting him in a “barking” tone. While the discussion progresses, the hostility between the two groups that represent different political parties can no longer be concealed.

Cațavencu’s speech proves his masterskill in displaying fake reactions: first he requests permission to speak “modestly” and Trahanache also displays here a false benevolent attitude. The orator prepares his presentation long before he actually begins talking, first of all by means of his long reply to Farfuridi from the previous scene. Now he is “passing through the gathering with self-confidence”³⁹. The kinesic description is very precise: he puts down his hat on the pulpit, drinks some water, takes out a pile of papers and newspapers, wipes his forehead. This is a strategy to gain the listeners’ interest before the beginning of the utterance. His kinesic behavior functions as an incipit and only the verbal incipit is delayed while the visual performance, consisting of these movements, is already going on. Cațavencu knows how to insert an emotional blackmail among his utterances, how to feign an emotional state – “he fights obviously against the emotion that seems to overcome him”⁴⁰. This speech also contradicts rhetorical principles because of the improper facial expression: he cries before uttering a complete coherent sentence. His behavior and words complement each other. Cațavencu “chokes with tears” when he speaks about his country, although he is interested only in his personal benefits.

In contrast to Farfuridi, Cațavencu seems to enjoy the feedback of an ideal audience. The rhythm of his words is not marked by Trahanache, the president, but by the members of his group with their applause. Their approval is not a normal feedback for the speaker’s ideas because it comes easily almost after every word. Cațavencu’s hypocrisy is unveiled by his ability in changing quickly the emotions displayed (“in a sudden, lively and barking tone”⁴¹) and by the technique used to unnerve his enemies. He speaks “(briefly and very curtly): Yes, yes, yes, three times yes!”⁴² in order to increase the effect of his words and to stop a possible reply coming from an oponent. He reinforces then the impression of self-confidence by measuring his success: he glances beamingly through the assembly.

The first part of his speech goes on without any arguments as the his fans’ breaks do not mean a menace for Cațavencu. The Drunken Citizen’s arrival represents the first time Cațavencu loses contact with the audience, he turns to the president and asks for support. The Drunken Citizen’s coming back, with the help of Farfuridi’s group, makes Cațavencu lose temper – he is “roaring”. This reaction is repeated, even more violently, once the nominee’s name is finally announced. Cațavencu passes from the previous relaxed appearance to frantic movements – “jumping”, “with a huge gesture”⁴³, a deictical movement used to accuse the president himself. Being also nervous, Trahanache answers by using another uncontrolled gesture – “flings the bell on

³⁸ “publicul începe să ia aminte că perorează și se grupează încet-încet în jurul lui...” (III,3).

³⁹ “trece cu importanță prin mulțime...” (III,5).

⁴⁰ “luptă ostentativ cu emoția care pare a-l birui” (III,5).

⁴¹ “cu tonul brusc, vioi și lătrător” (III,5).

⁴² “(scurt și foarte rețezat): Da, da, da, de trei ori da!” (III,5).

⁴³ “sărind în loc”, “cu un gest colosal” (III,7).

*the table extremely upset*⁴⁴”. Cațavencu displays an aggressive attitude as if he were a cornered animal – “*raging, he rushes from the middle of his group to the platform, fists clenched and shouting restlessly*⁴⁵”. The fight that has been carried on only at a verbal and vocal level becomes physical. All the characters let their hostility become manifest and cease to behave according to etiquette rules.

Comedies distinguish from dramas, regarding the intensity of touch. A physical fight is only a minor event and the end brings back the joyful ambiance as it has already been noted that comic characters do not undergo spectacular changes. The humour of the play *A Lost Letter* arises also from the contrast ensued from the antipathy expressed during the play and the happy ending. Former political opponents become friends and perform touchings that communicate positive emotions and mutual bounds – “*They all kiss each other, moving around Cațavencu and Dandanache, who hug in the middle*⁴⁶”.

The plays written by Caragiale express the advancement of the Romanian playwriting in regard to the communicative potential of non-verbal messages. Romanian dramatic texts from the second half of the 19th century have little didascalism and most of the times they represent characters coming and going, the loud speaking of a line or aside utterances. Caragiale is conscious of the importance of non-verbal behavior for the humorous effects and his stage directions range from proxemic games to vocal cues that are specific for a character or for a certain context. The importance of the non-verbal messages is an innovation for that time and it proves the playwright’s concern regarding the performability of the literary text.

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⁴⁴ “trântind clopoțelul pe masă în culmea indignării” (III,7).

⁴⁵ “spumând, se repede din mijlocul grupului său la tribună, cu pumnii încheștați și zbierând febril” (III,7).

⁴⁶ “Toată lumea se sărută, gravitând în jurul lui Cațavencu și lui Dandanache, care se strâng în brațe, în mijloc” (IV,14).

**Nonverbale Kommunikation und der dramatische Text:
eine Analyse der Didaskalien in der Komödie
Ein verlorener Brief von Ion Luca Caragiale**

Die nonverbalen Elemente sind ein wichtiger Teil eines dramatischen Textes auf Grund ihres Beitrags zum Kennzeichen der Gestalten. Unser Artikel analysiert die Bedeutung des Benehmens der Hauptgestalten in der Komödie *Ein verlorener Brief*. Mehrere Kanäle der nonverbalen Kommunikation werden behandelt: Proxemik oder interpersonelle Distanz, Gestik, Mimik und stimmliche Merkmale. Wir benutzen den Namen „infra-didaskalische Einheit“ für den Teil einer Regieanweisung, der ein einziges nonverbales Signal beschreibt. Die Analyse des Theaterstückes zeigt, wie die Komik aus der Interaktion der verbalen und nonverbalen Komponenten entsteht.

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