STYLISTIC INTERFERENCES BETWEEN MATEIU CARAGIALE'S PROSE AND POETRY AND THE SYMBOLIST POETRY

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Abstract: *The present paper focuses on the main connections between Mateiu Caragiale's prose and poetry and the symbolist poetry. The symbolist method prefers the evocation and suggestion to discursiveness, totally rejecting the attempt to translate the symbol or to explain its significance. The genuine symbol is fundamentally ambiguous because it can only be associated one meaning.*

Key words*: symbolist poetry, symbol, ambiguity.*

The present paper deals with the main connections between Mateiu Caragiale's prose and poetry and the symbolist poetry. The symbolist method prefers the evocation and suggestion to discursiveness, totally rejecting the attempt to translate the symbol or to explain its significance. The genuine symbol is fundamentally ambiguous because it can only be associated one meaning.

In the literary text a clear distinction is made between those symbols based on spatial or static representations and dynamic symbols, temporal or narrative. The former category includes symbols such as *the seagull*, *the shade*, *the coffin* whereas the latter is made up of such symbols as *the journey*, *the flight*, *the song*, *the shedding of flowers*, *the giving off of a perfume*, etc.

The symbol of *the shade* frequently occurs in Mateiu Caragiale's poems. Thus, it is used in *Intoarcerea invinsului*:

Iar când, sfioasă umbra, prin ceaţa rece-a serii

in *Lauda cuceritorului*:

Dar umbra ta le mohorăşte zarea

including in the title, in *Sihastrul şi umbra*:

Nu sunt om viu, ci umbră, aievea-ntruchipată

in *Singurătatea:*

Cu tâmplele în palme şi-adăst în umbră.

in *Cronicarul*:

Şi-i tremură atunci mâna de patimă, dar când
Răsare printre umbre domniţa cu chip bland

in *Grădinile Amăgirii*:

Va răsări iar umbra cu chip înşelător.

The corresponding adjective *umbroasă* seems to receive the same degree of significance in poems like *La Argeş*:

Zăvoaiele umbroase de-o tristă vrajă pline

and in *Singurătate*:

Umbroasa-le poveste măreaţă se-mpleteşte.

The symbol of *the flight* is used in *La Argeş*:

Un corb bătrân şi-ntinde puternic negrul zbor

and in *Craii de Curtea Veche* in the structure *the white flights of the pigeons.*

In the Romanian symbolism the vegetal symbols rank among the most intensely used symbols. Thus, the *shedding of petals* can be seen as a hint to the passing

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of time, to death, but also to melancholy, to voluptuousness. The symbol of the *rose* is almost obsessively used in Macedonski's *Valţul rozelor:*

Albeaţa lor de trandafiri.

In his turn, D. Anghel lifts the fragile rose and the pink to the value of a symbol:

Ce iertător şi bun ţi-i gândul, în preajma florilor plăpânde!
Râd în grămadă: flori de nalbă şi albe flori de mărgărint
Seninului de zare strânsă, şi-n trandafiri cu foi de ceară.

In Mateiu Caragiale's prose and poetry we can notice the same preference for the floral symbols. We can notice their presence in poems like *Lauda Cuceritorului*:

Când cerul pârguit la zări cuprinde
Purpura toată, şi toţi trandafirii
Răsar şi astăzi roşii flori din glie;
in *Singurătate*:
E aşa de greu amurgul cu zarea-nsângerată
Că-n parc sub teii-n floare ce gem înnăbuşit;
in *Domniţa*.
Ca un potir de sânge un roşu trandafir
in *Grădinile Amăgirii*:
Amara soartă care te-a prigonit cu ură,
Încununându-ţi fruntea cu mohorâte flori.
in *Mărturisire*:
Sufletu-mi e-o floare rară ce muiată pare-n sânge.

In Mateiu Caragiales prose, these floral symbols are far from being neglected. On the contrary, they seem to be even more forceful than they are in his poems. In the descriptions of the main characters' interiors, the abundance of flowers and the overall impression of luxury go hand in hand. In *Craii de Curtea Veche* the love for flowers of one of the main characters mingles with passion.

Defined as one of the main contributions of symbolism to the development of the modern poetry, the suggestion is opposed to the explicit, rational discourse. The suggestion is part of the symbolist theoretic model only if the access to transcendence can be accomplished indirectly: What lies beyond reality is evoked by means of symbols, allusions, ambiguities, ellipses. The most frequent means of producing suggestion coincides with creating ambiguity.

Ambiguity can be defined as a general feature of the language which consists in the possibility of a word, a phrase or a sentence to have two or even more possible interpretations. It is the context that determines the choice of an interpretation on the basis of additional information.

In poetry, ambiguity gives birth to new meanings. The following strategies are commonly used to create ambiguity:

1. Lack of determination, which can be noticed in the usage of the indefinite pronouns and adverbs and of the indefinite articles. In *Remember* the lack of determination is obvious in the very first lines due to the occurrence of the adverbs *undeva* and *cândva*[2], of the indefinite article, which poses a certain distance between the

[2] Sunt vise ce parcă le-am trăit cândva şi undva, precum sunt lucruri vieţuite despre care ne întrebăm dacă n-au fost vis.

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time of narration and the memory of a so-called strange happening, lifting it to the status of a symbol.[3]

2. Uncertainty is expressed in the Romanian symbolist poetry with the aid of the adverbs *parcă* and *poate*. Mateiu Ion Caragiale makes use of the former in *Remember*, but the whole world depicted by the author in his prose is dominated by an atmosphere of mystery and obscurity.

3. The sonorous effects

The symbolists have deeply explored the power of suggestion of sounds, which is fundamentally ambiguous. In the symbolist poems the material side of the language is emphasized by insistently repeating certain sounds, imitating nature sonorities or creating an overall impression of harmony.

Ovid Crohmălniceanu in his study dedicated to Mateiu Caragiale's literary style lays stress on what he calls the particularly musical character of his sentence: *Paşadia disguised a passionate, intricate, dark nature*; *he didn't trust virtue, honour, well at all.* Analyzing these groups of words, the literary critic compares the soft character of such fragments to the delicacy and softness infused in the dancers' hearts by the Viennese waltzes. It is the same literary critic who speaks about undeniable resemblances between Mateiu Caragiale's prose and poetry in general. This musical aspect of the sentence is first made use of at the very beginning of the novel *Craii de Curtea Veche* when the main characters perceive the triviality of the surrounding world more acutely than even and comes back all through the novel. [4]

The author may be said to use different procedures to create atmosphere. The author resorts for instance to diffuse visual elements such as *the smoke*, *the fog*, *the shade* as well as to non-visual elements such as *a perfume*, *a murmur*, etc. All these elements are intensely used in the author's prose, but they are attributed the same level of significance in his poems:

Şi-a ei mireasmă amara cu patimă-ai sorbit (Întoarcerea învinsului)

Spulberată-i fu mireasma de-al restriştei aprig vânt (Mărturisire)

The noun *taină*, the corresponding adjective *tainic* and the adverb with the same form are obsessively used throughout the author's prose, but also in his poems:

Mi-a îngânat stăpâna nu-n file-ngălbenite

Stă-mbălsămată taina măririi strămoşeşti. (Clio)

Şi-n tăinuită culă, ţintind priviri viclene (Curţile Vechi)

Cu ochi a căror taină tu n-ai ştiut pătrunde (Grădinile Amăgirii)

Cu uşa zăvorâta, în dosnica chilie,

În care raza zilei se cerne tainic, lin. (Cronicarul)

Rodica Zafiu refers to the usage of these terms as to the least inspired way to suggest mystery, totally rejecting this method even if minor as well as major representatives of the symbolist current have intensely used it.

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[3] La asta mă gândeam deunăzi seara când răvăşind printre hârtiile mele ca să văd ce se mai poate găsi de ars – hârtiile încurcă – am dat peste o scrisoare care mi-a deşteptat amintirea unei întâmplări ciudate, aşa de ciudată că, de n-ar fi decât şapte ani de când s-a petrecut, m-aş simţi cuprins de îndoială, aş crede că într-adevăr am visat numai, sau că am citit-o sau auzit-o demult.

[4] Tot mai învăluita, mai joasă, mai inceată, mărturisind duioşii şi dezamăgiri, rătăciri şi chinuri, remuşcări şi căinţe, cântarea înecată de dor se indepărta, se stingea, suspinând până la capăt o prea târzie şi zadarnică chemare.

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Mateiu Caragiale's last novel *Sub pecetea tainei* depicts a whole world dominated by mystery. The author masterfully creates an atmosphere of peculiarities and strange phenomena, with characters lacking a definite physical and moral identity, with a doubtful end. The main character's recollections are mixed with irrational things and unbelievable happenings which start with the mysterious disappearance of Gogu Nicolau and unjustifiably keep happening over a period of thirty years. In other words, the adjective *strange* may be used to describe this mysterious disappearance, the widow's serene behavior, and, to a certain degree, all the other characters' behavior.

Artificiality - The symbolist poets may be said to appreciate art and artifice more than nature itself. This priority of the artistic depiction of the wild nature in front of the wild nature itself is striking even in Mateiu Caragiale's prose, particularly in a fragment in *Remember* where the mysterious character is enthralled by a painting showing some leafy trees hiding a castle in ruins. Likewise, art is superior to life. The reader witnesses the replacement of the natural with the artificial. Just like the symbolist poets, Mateiu Caragiale has the tendency to identify natural elements with luxurious objects. Macedonski turns the whole world into precious matter with gold symbolizing light, warmth, colour and fluid state:

Cultura de aur topit
Şi pulbere de-aur pe grâne,
Ciobani şi oi de-aur la stâne
Şi aur pe flori risipit.

In Mateiu Caragiale's prose the author's predilection for luxury turns out especially in those fragments in which he speaks of extravagant interiors full of exquisite objects. Pasadia perfectly matches the aristocratic décor so masterfully described by Mateiu Caragiale. This tendency is as forceful in his prose as it is in his poems:

Dormi dulce somn netulburat
In flori și în dantele
Dormi că ți-au pălit mâinile
În grelele inele. (Dormi)

Mateiu Caragiale seems to have borrowed from Beaudelaire a preference for make-up, for masks, seen as a supreme celebration of the artificial. Nature is deliberately distorted, being often shown in degradation and in ruins. In *Remember*, the main character's constant use of a mask which is at times hideous enhances the reader's feeling of being thrown in the middle of a chaotic world.

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