ODOBESCU'S FAIRYTALES. STYLISTIC AND LINGUISTIC ASPECTS

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***Abstract**: This study is focused on the research of the stylistic and linguistic aspects that can be identified in Alexandru Odobescu's fairytales. The texts reveal a specific vocabulary (which combines different dialects, archaisms and other traditional words) and the author's interest in using a lot of figures of speech (especially epithets, comparisons and metaphors).*

***Keywords:** dialects, phonetism, figures of speech.*

Alexandru Odobescu's work is remarked in the history of the Romanian literary language from the 19th century due to the clarity and the equilibrium of the phrase construction, the harmony of the vocabulary and his personal style. The writer was considered "a protector" of the literary language, aspect which was proved through his linguistic studies and artistic writings. Tudor Vianu noticed that "a literary artist uses the language of the people, but also inserts his own style, which was obtained through his unique way of using the vocabulary, the forms and the constructions" (Vianu, 1968: 219).

In order to prove the above statements, I chose for my research three fairytales written by Odobescu: *Basmul cu Fata din Piatră și cu Feciorul de împărat, cel cu noroc la vânat* (extracted from *Pseudo-cynegeticos*), *Jupân Rănică Vulpoiul* and *Tigrul păcălit*. The first one contains the most notable lexical, morphologic and stylistic aspects, but the other two writings also offer important information about Odobescu's style.

1. Phonetics

Studying the biography and the evolution of the odobescian language identified in his three original fairytales, I noticed that although the author was born in Bucharest and lived al his life surrounded by erudite people, he used in his works many regionalisms and other folk elements specific to Moldavia, but also many verbs in the simple perfect tense specific to Oltenia, in order to create a certain atmosphere needed to insert the truth in the story. It can be observed an oscillation between the correct and literary writing and the one influenced by the elements of the people' language.

From a phonetic point of view, the observations are not so many, but where they have been identified, they let the impresssion that the author tried so hard to insert them in order to adapt his written language to the specific speech of the people where the action took place. In the following enumeration the first sound is specific to the actual Romanian language and the second one belongs to Odobescu's writings:

1.1. Vowels:

a = ă: bărbei; a = ea: șearpe; ă = a: paserilor (in the fairytales Odobescu uses alternately the words: *pasări, paserea, paserilor*, but also *pasăre*, which proves the

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alternance between the old language (the written one) and the new language (the folk one); *ă = e: grije, dupe; â = u: vulvoi; e = ă: ţălul; e = i* (closing silent medial *e* to *i*): *butilcă* (in the same text, but a few lines below Odobescu uses the word *butelcă*), *despărţia, rezimaţi, păiajinul, potici, cântice, mierlile, corăbiască, ancorile*; *i = e: aripe, grijele, tinereţelor* – it can be observed the writer's predisposition to forming the plural by adding *-e; î = i: fringhii; o = u: gugumanul; u = o: coprinse* (this example represents an innovation of the speeches from Muntenia) ; *u = ă*: *mulţămită; âi = â: câne*; *ie = e: bătae, trebue, tropăe; jefuesc; voeşte; eşiră*; *io = i: mirlăia*.

1.2. Consonants:

In the flexion of the verbs, the palatal forms with *d, t* or *n*, which are specific to speeches in Muntenia are usually: *să se prinză, să vază, să răspunză, să trimiţă, să vie, să vă spui, spuie; viind, puindu;* adding *d* before *v: advocat; g = c: acăţară*, although a few paragraphs below the author also uses the actual form *agăţat*; *j = ş: şderii;* etymologic *r: pre, preste (*I noticed that Odobescu uses both the Moldavian form of these words, but also the form from Muntenia– *pe, peste*); *s = ţ: danţul z = s: năsdrăvenii, răsvrătitorilor, sbiera, sbârlite; che = chi: chiemă; ochian*; *chi = che: muchea*,

The above examples prove that the author aspired to a uniform language, and the phonetisms from Moldavia and Oltenia were less used compared to the phonetisms from Muntenia (which were considered to be the literary ones). Tudor Vianu explains Odobescu's ability of mixing in his texts the linguistic characteristics from different parts of the country: "Born in 1834, Odobescu was familiar with the old world and he remembered its morals and language, he observed the life of the people and studied the folklore, he read the old chronicles and wrote some philologic articles."(Vianu, *op. cit*.: 219).

A first conclusion over the odobescian style can be drawn from a phonetic point of view: the author focused on promoting a clear language, combined with some folk elements, in order to create a balance between old and modern.

2. The Vocabulary

Odobescu is considered to be an erudite writer with a lot of experience, who improved his vocabulary from multiple sources and this influenced his writing. By analysing the three fairytales, I identified regionalisms (especially those from the lexical field of animals, plants, boyars' titles from the Middle Ages, but also others that cannot be classified after a certain criterion), old words, neologisms (which are fewer in these texts), a lot of proverbs and folk expresions.

By selecting the regionalisms and other folk elements, I noticed that most of them are nouns:

- names of birds and animals (*presure*: a kind of bird having the size of a sparrow; *sfrancioc*: a kind of bird of prey; *dumbrăveancă*: a bird of passage with white and green feathers; *pietrosel*: a bird of passage who lives among the rocks; *sfredeluş*: wren; *botgros*: a small bird with red feathers on the chest and brown feathers on the rest of the body; *ţoi* - nutcracker; *cotei*: a hunting dog with short legs; *pinţă* (reg.): ground squirrel; *şuiţă* (reg.) and *căţelul pământului*: a rodent animal similar with a marmot; *mişun* (reg.): hamster;
- precious stones: *zamfir*; *smarand*, *ghiordan*;

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- plants: *răsură* (wold rose); *troscot* (a plant with a brached stalk and with small leaves); *molifzi*;
- names for the devil and God: *Necuratul; Ucigă-l Toaca; iazma iadului*; *pronie;*
- boyars' titles from the Middle Ages: *jupân, ban, vătaf, aprod, vornic, medelnicer, vechiul* (înv. avocat), *logofăt, postelnic, kir, pârcălab*;
- names for fable animals: *Rănică Vulpoiul, Martin Ursul, Leonilă, Lupu Falcă Lată, Bursucel, Potaie Dulău, Urechilă Iepuraș, Behehe Berbecilă, Măgărilă, Cucurigu Cocoș, Motan Cotoiul*;
- words preserved in the folk literature: *glod; tină* (reg.); *viers; văietări; lângoare; oblânc; prunc; slove; obidă; înfurcitură; soț*; *mlaca* (reg.) (swamp); *muche, poloboc* (barrel), *matroz* (sailor), *taraboanțe* (barrows), *butilcă, șuie* (reg.) (thin), *anevoință* (difficulty), *istorie* (event), *râmător* (pig), *ordia* (army).

Although Tudor Vianu proves in his study about Odobescu's language and style that there are a lot of neologisms in the author's writings, the three fairytales do not contain so many neologisms: *foarte considerat* (very appreciated), *marfă, palmi* (palms), *covertă* (the superior deck of a ship); *îi împută, încântec.*

Analysing the vocabulary through the folk expressions, the phrases and the proverbs used, Odobescu's style gets more singularized and receives the pattern of folk vocality. All these expressions prove that Odobescu knows the singularities of Romanian folklore specific to each area.

Here are some examples of folk expressions and proverbs: *din scoarță până-n scoarță; a-i veni de hac; cu o falcă în cer și una în pământ; a ajunge odată cu zorile; la soare te puteai uita, iar la dânsa ba; se lăți vestea; mâncă și el o bătaie bună; fugi p-aci ți-e drumul; de la vlădică până la opincă; să-i fie țărâna ușoară; năravul din fire nu are lecuire; ce se naște în cap de muiere, într-însul neistovit nu piere.*

In order to conclude over the odobescian vocabulary, it can be asserted that the author always looks for the most appropiate words, so that these should influence the written text; nothing is randomly chosen; all the phrases, the folk expressions, the regionalisms, the neologisms are the result of a long research in the field of Romanian folklore, the ancient and modern culture but also the national history. All these aspects prove that the scholar language is specific to Odobescu's style.

3. The Morphology

The morphologic characteristics of the writer's language are not too different from the actual Romanian language. Still, those which I identified in the three fairytales are carefully chosen by Odobescu in order to make the reader believe that he is reading a text written in the old language.

3.1. The Noun

3.1.1. The Gender

An example of changing the gender is the word *pruncele* instead of the word *pruncii.*

3.1.2. Singular and plural

The noun in the singular *crezământ* was formed by adding the suffix *–ământ* to the word *crede* .

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The noun *anevoință* was obtained by adding the suffix *–ință* to the adverb *anevoie*.

I identified some nouns that obtain the plural from the archaic feminin forms ending in *–i: pârile*; *ancorile; mierlile; frunzile; dragosti; viscolile;* but also from the archaic feminin forms endind in *–e: tinerețelor*; *nevăstuicele*; *grijele;*

The word *catarturi* represents the old form of the word *catarg* and has the ending in *–uri*. The noun *ocaziunile* was formed by adding the suffix *–unile.*

3.1.3. The case

The noun in the nominative *domnul* followed by the proper noun *Stancu Poloboc* claims its morphologic characteristic by indicating the speaker's attitude in relation to the character. At first side, the word *domnul* suggests respect, but being linked to a funny name (*poloboc* = barrel), the initial respect is diminished so that a hilarious atmosphere should be obtained. Odobescu uses the same hilarity in *Jupân Răsnică Vulpoiul*, where almost all the animals have funny names which define their personality: *banul Martin Ursul* suggests the importance of the character who is strong due to its job (the noun *banul*) but also to its original phisical strength (the noun *Ursul*); *Leonilă împărat* reunites the word that indicates the absolute power in the state (*împărat*) and the proper noun obtained by adding the suffix *–ilă* to the word *leon*; this suffix diminishes the character's authority by suggesting that the king of the animals is not such a terrifying leader; the name *Urechilă Iepuraș* is formed by adding the diminutive of the noun *iepure* to the word *Urechilă*, which is also obtained with the suffix *–ilă* in order to define the weak personality of the character; the author uses the technique of diminutive suffix so that he should invent names such as: *Berbecilă, Măgărilă* and *Bursucel.* Odobescu also likes to insert in his text pleonastic words: *Motan Cotoiul* and *Potaie Dulău.*

I registered some examples for the vocative case, which are used with a certain purpose in the text: "Sai, *jupân vornice*, c-au scăpat mieii din staul!" – this is how the fox addresses to the wolf in order to distract its attention from the fight and defeat it; if they were drawn out of the context, the words *jupân vornice* would suggest a polite address, but here they suggest the flattery used to deceive the opponent. In the examples: "*Împărate*! strigă bietul Cucurigu – fă dreptate celui mai nefericit dintre Cocoși" and "*Mărite împărate*, cu lacrimi în ochi cer să mi se facă dreptate!" – the nouns in the vocative *Împărate* and *Mărite împărate* indicate the character's dismay.

The genitive of some nouns is formed by adding *–ei* instead of *-ii*: *inimei, vulpei; șelei; ierbei.*

3.2. The Pronoun

The relative pronouns *carele, cari*, which have the same gender and number as the nouns in the old language, are frequent in the odobescian fairytales, but they are equally replaced with the actual literary form: *care*.

3.3. The Adjective

It can be noticed the author's interest in using a lot of inversions so that the adjective should come before the noun; sometimes the adjective gets the definite article

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of its determinant: *multele mișelii; fericiții miri; scumpul feciorescul dar; multele slujbe.*

3.4. The Verb

I noticed in Odobescu's fairytales a tendency of using a noun or a pronoun in the plural next to a verb in the third person singular: *apucase, el și ai lui....de și mâncase*; *îi dase lacrimile; hototele ce îl podidise; trecea luni întregi; mi se pornise...mințile*; *căpeteniile dobitocești se adunase; boierilor care rămase departe; toate se înstrăinase; se petrecuse lucrurile; etc.* It must be mentioned the fact that this disagreement appears only for past perfect tense verbs, but this is not a rule to be constantly followed in the odobescian writings because the author sometimes uses the actual literary form.

Odobescu likes to mix the present with the past and the future in his writings in order to make the reader feel closer to the related events but without making him notice the changes of time. This is an example: *Mai deunăzi eram la Galați și pentru ca să-mi treacă de urât și să mai aflu câte ceva, am ieșit să mă plimb la port. Norocul a voit ca să întâlnesc îndată pe un vechiu amic al meu pe care de mult nu-l văzusem și să petrec cu dânsul câteva ore foarte plăcute. Amicul meu este un negu țător din partea locului.*

The author chooses his words carefully. In order to preserve the folk language, he sometimes uses the technique of writing the auxiliary before the verb (this happens with present perfect verbs): *lăsat-au*; *da-ți-l-aș*. Odobescu also finds another method of creating the impression of using the old Romanian language by writing the verbs in the passive voice, although in reality, these verbs are in the active voice: *i-a fost ucis pe pruncii* (i-a ucis pruncii).

It is impossible not to notice the multitude of verbs in the gerund when reading the odobescian fairytales. From a stylistic point of view, the writer's interest in using the gerund form it is explained by his intention of conserving the dynamic content of the verb but also of expressing any past, present or future event without mentioning the moment of enouncement. Therefore, there are images that can be created in order to alternate in a quick rythm: "În timpul acesta, matrozii corăbiei şi cărătorii sau hamalii portului, umblau în sus şi în jos, ca furnicile, *scoțând* din magaziile adânci ale pântecosului vas plutitor, baloturi şi butoaie cu marfă, *încărcându-le* în roabe [...] şi *aducându-le*, pe un podișor de bârne" (*Tigrul Păcălit*); "Apucară înspre miazănoapte şi, *trecând* pe la Scărișoară, unei lesne cui scoboară, luară apa Buzăului în sus, tot *cântând* şi *veselind*" (*Basmul cu Fata din Piatră şi cu Feciorul de împărat, cel cu noroc la vânat).* At the same time, the gerund that appears in the subordinate clauses that are written before the main clauses has a polyvalent role, expressing the causality and the temporality simultaneously; on other words, the gerund generates a stylistic ambiguity: "*Vorbind* cu dânsul când de una, când de alta, ne oprirăm în fața unei mândrei corăbii"; "Într-o zi dar, *trăgând* cu vasul la coasta unei insule nelocuite din mările Africei, mi se făcu tare dor"; "iar tovarășul meu, americanul, *văzând așa*, începu şi el să tropăe"; "*cugetând* un minut, se repezi să sară"; "*Văzând* așa lungime de coadă, ne apucarăm s-o înnodăm"; and the examples can go on.

4. Stylistics

The identification of the odobescian stylistic characteristics does not refer only to analysing the used vocabulary, the morphologic aspects or the phrase constructions;

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at the same time it means paying attention to the expresssiveness given by the figures of speech descovered in the texts of the three fairytales. In *Basmul cu Fata din Piatră și cu Feciorul de împărat, cel cu noroc la vânat,* Odobescu writes in a sentimental style and uses a lot of figures of speech, especially comparisons, epithets and metaphors, many of them having the role of emphasizing the characters' most important features. The selection of these expressive words is the result of the fact that this is a proper fairytale. In *Jupân Rănică Vulpoiul* and *Tigrul păcălit* it is noticed a gradual diminution of figures of speech. So, Odobescu cannot imagine a fabulous world without using a lot of:

- epithets: *apele cătrănite; mirosul răcoros al brazilor; cerul limpede și senin; năprasnică detunătură; mii de săgeți luminoase; lumina sclipitoare a văpaielor; ochi dulci, fermecători; grai dulce, cântător; chip luminos; trup mlădios; păr aurit; mândra, albă fată; cu părul de aur; cu ochii de balaur; zâmbet gingaș; ochi galeși și pătrunzători; viers dulce femeies; ochi fermecători; fiori de gheață; scump odor; adânc întuneric; mândră floare.*
- comparisons: *mândru ca strălucitul soarelui la amiezi; blând ca razele line și mângâioase ale lunei; sprinten ca luceafărul sclipitor al dimineței; înțelept ca și întreaga tăria cerurilor; o piatră de zamfir mare și frumoasă, limpede și albastră întocmai ca seninul cerului; o piatră de smarand, mare și frumoasă, de strălucea verde și rămurată ca spicul crud al grâului, ca rodul pământului*; *vii și pătrunzători ca ochii de femeie; o piatră de rubin, mare și frumoasă, roșie și vie, mai roșie decât fraga muntelui, mai vie decât para focului*; *să nu plutească neîncetat ușor ca fulgul pe apă; albă ca spuma laptelui la mulsoare, ca florile crinului la raza de soare; sângele i se încinsese ca focul prin vine; inima-i zbura ca fluturele, dupe lumină; inima-i zdrobită se încolăcea ca crâmpeie trunchiate de șarpe veninos; glodul noroios mai rece decât gheața, mai negru decât ceața*.
- metaphors: *minți răpite de mulțumire; roata aurită a soarelui; para focului; izvor de plânsoare; giulgiu de ger și de întristare; se cască, întunecos și rece, tăcutul, pustiul mormânt*.
- personifications: *glasul munților și al apelor răspundea cu veselul susur al glasului copilei; numai apele, când se clătesc, răspund cu vuiet la gemetele mele*.
- repetitions: *rămăsese departe, departe; se trezi singur-singurel; voinice-voinicele; singuri-singurei; urâtul, urâtul ce pocit; cu încetul, cu încetul; nimeni, nimeni nu veni; destul, destul își închisese ea tinerețele*;
- inversions: *trecu el; sta mărmurit voinicul; scump, alb mărgăritar; fericiții miri; scumpul feciorescul dar; dalbe frumusețI; mijloace o mie; că-ți voi da eu; dulci cântări.*

When talking about the expressiveness of the figures of speech used in Odobescu's fairytales, it can be easily observed that the odobescian fabulous world is dominated by light and dark, colours, animals, nature and all of them create a detailed and even a crowded "painting".

In order to draw a conclusion, one can assert that Alexandru Odobescu's style is unique and it represents the result of a long-term work which combines his biographic and cultural experience with his historic, linguistic and aesthetic interests.

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