Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov • Vol. 2 (51) - 2009
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies

HUMOUR AND ITS FACETS IN GERHARD HAGERS: "AMUSEMENT FROM THE SUPREME COURT"

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Abstract: *The purpose of this article is to stress the main idea that humour is not an isolated phenomenon within a certain nation, personal or professional background. Humour is an attribute of life and lifestyle everywhere and occurs where one least expects it: within the Supreme Court and has therefore an even more spectacular effect. It uncovers human flaws but it also does not ignore its virtues, it does magic on the simplest events and changes routine situations in a second . Humour teaches, fades the most ridiculous outbursts, and relaxes the imminent protocol behaviour. Its facets, means of expression, occurrence are further described in this article.*

Key words: *humour, amusement, Supreme Court, facets of human behaviour, means of expression.*

1. Hager Gerhard, *Doctores Jures* and also a Human, a Humorist

„Where there are humans there is humour. Where humour is there are people" (Hager 183). That's how Hager ends his humorous stories and sets implicitly humour as a sine qua non condition of the human being, of human becoming, of the human existence generally. Should these statements apply as a judgement or as wisdom of a person inclined to humour? Holding an office at the uppermost court of law, serious writing of non-fiction books does not exclude humour and the cheerfulness with Dr. Jur.

He concludes his successful pleading for humour with a clear comparison which uncovers his literary and writing skills. „I hope, I have managed to prove that humour prospers even in the holy halls of the highest Court of Law, maybe a little bit in secrecy indeed due to the dignity of the institution, like the truffle, but as well as the latter, it is not of bad quality" (Hager 183). The author confesses he must keep some humorous stories to his personal joy to himself. How should one remain earnest about the subject and report on humour without further imagining the most cheerful and most spectacular humorous stories? I beg your pardon, with „criminal smiling", as the author clearly distinguishes it in an unusual counterpointing comparison in his quality of amused, connoisseur.

2. Nations, who are more or less Inclined to the Humour?

Prejudices about the Germans dare to impose generalisations of the following of

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the kind: the Germans are rather poorly disposed to laughter and hence to a humoresque attitude towards life and creation. „It is difficult to understand Germans with their way of taking matters very exactly and seriously“ (Weber 118).

Dr. Hager is a born Austrian. Austrians are described over and over again as the Italians of the Germans: ”(...) the Italians with their contagious cheerfulness.“ (--) “when I think constructively, positively, I long for harmony and joy, so I will certainly attract similar people and I shall be attracted to these(...)“ (Weber 118). „This law“, the law of attraction, „is also valid for the spiritual exchange between people. It is also applicable for the company climate in a company, for the society environment or also for the internal state, the prevailing basic mood of a whole nation.“ (Weber 118). However, starting from the fact that one understands by humour a something human – personal, wouldn't it be rather inappropriate to conclude that the reality of the humoresque be confined to the Matrix of certain nation and to speak of nations that are more or less inclined to the humour? Especially now, under the flag of the European Union from a political point of view and in the context of the modern „cultural relativism“ (Patapievici 40), it would rather be less correct, and hence less precise to oppose the periphery to the centre, the universality to the regionalism, when discussing the problem of the identity. Humour is in particular something human: “there is no special way, no manner for being a human being, all are equally legitimate (all equal, all different)” (Patapievici 41) „it gives no kind(way), person privileges no possibility (opportunity) to be, all ways of life are as legitimate(justified)“ (Patapievici 41).

3. Some Facets of Humour

To tell the truth, few of us expect the appearance of humour in the imperial institution of the permanent post of a privy councillor of the Supreme Court. Any form of cheerfulness is subdued for the most by the saying: “After the laughter there is crying.” Malicious pleasure can be also hardly imaginable as a malicious mode of expression, as a side effect of humour. Humour, healthy humour, is an attribute of humanity and not of inhumanity.

It is rather difficult: „to connect the image of fusty walks, elder men (“to old wrecks”), dusty act situations and eternal dignity„ (Hager 7) with a scene of the cheerfulness. It would be quite relaxing and at the same time astonishing to encounter here numerous “relatives” of the worthy Till Eulenspiegel. However, since every court accommodates its fools and jesters, Hager proves that applies also to the Supreme Court:” every single one has lot of jokes, background humour and spiritual (mental) elasticity” (Hager 7).

Humour and humour-releasing situations with the Supreme Court are as unexpected as a glove serving as a headgear. They seem to be set in the wrong place, however, are therefore the more delightful.

The breathtaking development of an apparently usual, common situation in the exercise of such office, the astonishing element apply as causes of movement, as triggers of the humoresque. How one can become a victim of renovation work, how a privilege turns out as treacherous, how taking the wrong cap from a common clothe stand can convey „the impression of an outworn material shower cap” (Hager 122), is presented by Hager as a surrogate of the embarrassing appearance on the court day. Thereby, tension is achieved by „retention of steadfast seriousness” (Hager 122) on the „coached faces” of the senate members, on the face of the advocate

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general. Earnestness will be maintained in spite of obvious acknowledgement of the amusing appearances in court, behind the falseness and mere appearance of the negotiations hall of the court. Earnestness smiling boils underneath, that is released only after the exit from the Hager gives the final touch to the anecdotic occurrence by confessing to the general entertainment, that the incident must have occurred by chance in the carnival.

To remain close to of the issue of "hat dimensions" I could not resist to refer to an anecdote about Goethe and bring it to recollection. Goethe wittily understood to explain the reason for wearing a sordid hat, an aspect that was under comments and attention of an admirer, as a symbol of his uniqueness and of his innate intelligence." It is not my fault," said Goethe, „I have looked around, and however, none fitted me. It must mean that people are not focussed on big heads in Dresden" (Ebersbach 96).

Hager consciously plays clearly with portrayals of bad luck and luck anticipating our expectations. And he achieves that by switching bad luck with luck and luck with bad luck. Making use of specialised terms in the criminal law domain and laxly using the specific court language there to related, Hager humorously depicts the rather unpleasant situation that many court councils and advocate generals are confined to in the renovation needing palace of the central law courts. These had found no „dear vice president" „one to accepts as a subtenant in his antechamber for the rebuilding period" (Hager 120). Under these circumstances, it was necessary to further work on the subject. Hager, "putting on a good face for bad game" explains the reasons humorously without refraining to use typical specialised field related law terms : "As the law-breakers could not bear responsibility, despite of best intentions, by the temporary cessation of their criminal activity , the amount of work not decreasing, so the simplest solution, to simply stay at home was unfortunately not considered" (Hager 120-121). If there is not a mistakenly switched hat that contributes to the comedy, then it is an overheated furnace that tempts a colleague to fall asleep. The President of the Supreme Court will receive a culinary gift by an unnamed, noble donor. Thus, a gift walnut brioche comes under suspicion of being poisoned. "This beautiful piece seemed to be made for destruction. This idea did not allow the President to relax. As the cat around hot porridge, he slipped in concentric circles with ever-smaller radius around the delicacy until he completely surrendered to it, slicing out a piece and biting into it. Then he waited for his death "(Hager 90). Human weakness, physical peculiarities, flaws, differences between male and female are highlighted with remarkable wit We are witnessing a didactic farce, the colleagues play on a Senate President who repeatedly arrives too late. His "precipitated appearance" was the well-known to his colleagues. "The president came, impetuously opened the consulting room door to his trial hall and in a routine started to utter his apology as he (...) noticed the empty room" (Hager 52). This shocking, teachings opinion of his colleagues prevented him from ever being late again. From a pedagogical perspective it is humour as "signs of human maturity by suffering (...) that is closely related to wisdom and equally closes with humility. Humour is laughing humility, within which we not only recognise the "fools" but also the loving ones and the kind-hearted ones" (Educational lexicon 95). Even the precious formulations of a colleague, style exercised that intimidated everyone are proved to be total nonsense, because he himself is not able to explain the complicated sentences he uses.

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Young and old will not be spared in the Palace of Justice if they bring along humour: foreign guest workers, clever, racing drivers, temporary female guards that allow them to be bribed with beef and hair-curlers. Hager is not economical with funny events. The technical progress, foreign criminals, the venerable imitation and repetition of gestures, become object of amusement.

Female members of the criminal court council who miss the mirror at their workplace, the absence of which, the previously exclusively male colleagues had not even noticed, triggers funny comments about the appearance of the men. A President of the Supreme Court, "with skin and bones addicted to the opera, there was virtually no criminal case, that did not remind him of an opera plot" (Hager 83) is an occasion for funny hints. So, Hager is announced he should be sitting on the train in half an hour and he, the President, will sing for him the entire Carmen audition. That is all part of the vivid, human dimension of the Palace of Justice. People are the same everywhere, although some institutions such as the Supreme Court have its own bizarre, rather incomprehensible rules. One such rule is that of an absurd idea of an imaginary visit. Candidates for the higher posts are hereby "committed to their idea of visiting people that they know for more than twenty years" (Hager 14). It was not planned that one may come in a predicament as a newcomer to intricate networking of rooms and desks of the Palace of Justice, as Hager himself experienced. That one may be walking with similar-looking colleague and they accidentally imagine a second time encounter with the Senate president was not foreseen. The hidden burst into laughter was not planned as a Senate President, a god-like being, suddenly utters, as whistling in The Magic Flute a "Back!" doing this however with the explanatory statement: "You were just here, you Siamese twins! "(Hager 19). Sayings, phrases in common language use such as: "To encounter him is very difficult, at eleven not yet at twelve no longer" or "never visits your prince if you have not been called for!" (Hager 16-17) let us again recognize the humour-loving people and not the "God" of Latin expressions specialist.

4. Conclusion

Regardless of the area of living and action, either belonging to the Supreme forums and councils or to simple people, human attributes are similar. "People and communities come to differentiate more in the area of imagery than in that of real life" (Boia 8). We can not live without differences, more, we tend to bring them to the fore. "Thus, we build ourselves and the Other, in a somewhat caricatured manner" (Boia 7).

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