THE EPITHET IN MATEIU CARAGIALE'S PROSE AND POETRY

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Abstract: *Among the various stylistic means that a literary work can resort to, one can say that the epithet is one of the most significant ones, being able to express the writer's imagination and attitude towards life, people and the world as a whole. The present paper aims to outline the main types of epithets which bring their undeniable contribution to the expressiveness of Mateiu Caragiale's prose and poetry.*

Key words: *Epithet, Grammatical categories, Aesthetic categories.*

The history of the epithet is actually the history of the poetic style in an abbreviated form. It is as typical of prose as it is of poetry with the only difference that it is made use of with a much higher frequency in the latter in accordance with the elevated and thoroughly studied style of the literary work. The epithet's main role is either to permanently readapt the nominal significance of the word or to lay great emphasis on a certain trait of the given object. By means of the epithet, the poet „places in a particular aesthetic perspective traits of the objective world, real characteristics, essential or which have become essential, hypothetic as well as real" (IRIMIA, Limbajul poetic eminescian: 41).

Epithets are classified as follows:

a. Tautological epithets which express the same idea as the nouns they accompany. In Mateiu Caragiale's literary creation, the reader can find the following examples of tautological epithets: mâhnire *neagră* (Craii de Curtea Veche), asupra *albei* scânteieri a luceafărului (ibid).

b. Explanatory epithets based on a certain clue able to mention an essential significance of the object or only characterising it in relation with its practical purpose.

Particular attention is given to metaphor-epithets and syncretic epithets. The former presuppose "a parallelism of impressions, their confrontation and a logical conclusion of equivalence" (OANCEA, 1988: 29, citându-l pe Veselovski). Mateiu Caragiale uses the before-mentioned group *mâhnire neagră* – a group which involves the opposition of light and darkness. It also involves the distinction between sadness and joy and the generalization of the epithet in a psychological significance - the black colour as a symbol of grief.

Grammatical Categories of the Epithet in Mateiu Caragiale's Prose and Poetry

1. The noun epithets

a. The adjectival attribute is one of the most frequently used epithets of the noun. Mateiu Caragiale uses the gerundial adjective under the French influence: plăcere *crescândă*. In *Craii de Curtea Veche*, the writer uses adjectives preceded by the

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adjectival article. This procedure is typical of Mihai Eminescu: zideria *cea antică* (Egipetul), bolta *cea senină* (Floare albastră), mâna *cea veche* (Epigonii), firea *cea întoarsă* (*ibidem*), faţa *cea pală* (Mortua est). Similarly, Mateiu Caragiale says *meşterilor cei vechi* (Craii de Curtea Veche).

b. A grammatical category of the epithet is that of the noun epithet in the prepositional case: *vreme de lacrimi* is equivalent to *vreme ploioasă*. Mateiu Caragiale's entire work abounds in examples of noun epithets introduced with the aid of such prepositions as *cu*, *de*, *în*: chip *de ceară* (Craii de Curtea Veche), ochii *de catifea* (*ibidem*), genele *de mătase* (*ibidem*), suflet *de rob* (*ibidem*), o seară *de basm şi de vis* (*ibidem*), puhoiul *de lacrimi* (*ibidem*), izvod *de frumuseţe* (*ibidem*), poleieli *de argint* (*ibidem*), lebăda *de argint* (*ibidem*), câmp *de aur* (*ibidem*), noianul *de armonii* sublime (*ibidem*), noapte *de catifea şi de plumb* (*ibidem*), ulițele *în clină* (*ibidem*), stâlpii *în ruină* (*ibidem*), lume *cu blestemăţii* (*ibidem*).

c. Another grammatical category of the epithet is that of the noun epithet in the genitive case. The writer's literary creation is very rich in such epithets: apanagiul *sângelui* (Craii de Curtea Veche), ananghia *clipelor* (*ibidem*), taina *trecutului* (*ibidem*), tărâmul *visului* (*ibidem*), norii *nebuniei* (*ibidem*).

2. The verbal epithet: the adverb and the adverbial phrase

This category of the epithet is well represented in Mateiu Caragiale's works: pâlpâia *nostalgică şi sumbră* (Craii de Curtea Veche), aşa *minunat* cumpănite (*ibidem*), Ei întinereau *straniu* această făptură (*ibidem*), se desfăşura *fermecătoare* trâmba de vedenii (*ibidem*), flăcările lumânărilor încremeneau *ţepene* (*ibidem*).

3. The epithet at the level of the sentence

The nominal predicate often receives the value of an epithet. When the predicative is an adjective, it expresses a characteristic of the subject just like it would happen with any adjective accompanying it: canalul era *sinistru* (Remember), ferestrele erau *negre* (*ibidem*), priveliştea în partea locului e *cum nu se poate mai blândă* (*ibidem*).

There are cases when the predicative is expressed by a noun and in this situation the copula serves to render the identity of the two terms: Paşadia era *un luceafăr* (Craii de Curtea Veche), Paşadia era *meşter pe pană* (*ibidem*).

Aesthetic Categories of the Epithet

Tudor Vianu distinguishes the appreciative epithet from the evocative one, the former being defined as „the product of a value judgement, that is of that sort of judgement which connects a predicative notion to the subject which mirrors the value of the subject." (VIANU, 1065: 174). Appreciative epithets appear in huge numbers especially in the writer's prose: ruine *semeţe, veninoasă* verdeaţă, troiene *ruginii*, *păgânească* evlavie, *tainicul* freamăt, peisaj *melancolic*, fiinţă *unică şi stranie*, visări *exotice*. Moral epithets are often meant to characterize moral realities: mâhnire *neagră*, vals *domol*, vraja *adâncă*. Mateiu Caragiale also uses physical epithets for moral terms: *adânca* privire, *lunga* încumetare, deşertăciuni *mărunte*, *amara* destăinuire.

The Epithet's Scope and Frequency

An epithet can express a characteristic of an object, this characteristic being able to define the whole class of the object or only the respective object. In the former case, the reader deals with the so-called ornant epithet while in the latter case it is the

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individual epithet that the reader deals with. In Mateiu Caragiale's first novel one can notice the presence of the following ornant epithets: vals *domol*, legănarea *molatecă*, *negre* prăpăstii, *oarbe* duşmănii, ruine *semețe*, and of the following individual epithets: *veninoasă* verdeață, troiene *ruginii*, văpăi *zglobii*, câmpiile *grase, nobil* chip, *bogata* locuință, *bătrâna* grădină.

In his entire creation, the writer displays great preference for certain epithets, some of which persistently recur:

Nobil: *nobil* chip (Craii de Curtea Veche), flori *nobile* (ibid), înfățișare *nobilă* (ibid), *nobila* demnitate a ținutei (*ibidem*), *nobila* amiciție (*ibidem*), inspirații mult *nobile* şi grave (Remember), o gândire *nobilă* (*ibidem*), O *nobilă* tristețe/Adânc întipărită pe chipu-i mult duios (Sihastrul şi umbra);

Dulce: privirea lor *nespus de dulce* (Craii de Curtea Veche), nu scăparăm *dulcei* molimi (*ibidem*), *dulce* păstoraş (*ibidem*), păpuşa *cea mai dulce* (*ibidem*), *dulci* nume (*ibidem*), *dulcegi* zile de vară (*ibidem*), *dulce* aromeală (Remember), amețeala *dulce* (*ibidem*), Dormi *dulce* somn netulburat (Dormi).

Măreț: băutor *măreț* (Craii de Curtea Veche), aerul atât de *măreț* (ibid), ruine *mai mărețe* (*ibidem*), *măreața* privelişte a nopții (Remember), De-atunci cad în ruină *mărețe* curți pustii (Călugărița), În grelele-i veşminte păşind *măreț* şi-alene (Domnița).

Semeț: ruine *semețe* (Craii de Curtea Veche), căutătura-i *semeață* (*ibidem*), ruine *mai semețe* (*ibidem*), trăsături *semețe* (*ibidem*), portul *semeț* (*ibidem*), uitătura vioaie şi *semeață* (*ibidem*), *semeț* avânt (Remember), scriptura *semeață* (*ibidem*), E mic de statură, fățarnic, *semeț* şi crud din fire (Boierul), Îi adumbrea de farmec *semeața* frumusețe (Sihastrul şi umbra).

According to Tudor Vianu, individual epithets are to a certain degree somehow rare epithets as "they awake in the readers' mind the effect of a surprise which enhances the interest and the astonishment with which we go through a remarkable writer's pages." (VIANU, 1965:175). Thus, the phrase *zboruri albe de porumbei* catches the reader's interest due to the astounding association *zboruri albe*. The writer transfers a natural quality of the pigeons to their flight. The reader can also notice the usage of the oxymoron. A *flame* can be defined as "an area of red or yellow burning gas seen when something is on fire" (Dictionary of English Language and Culture: 492); in other words, it cannot be cold. In spite of this logic, the writer uses this noun in combination with the adjective *rece*. Similarly, the phrase *viața tristă de petrecere* involves an oxymoron, the adjective being in clear opposition with the noun which makes the reader think of joy and fun. In the phrase *pulberea fluidă a fântânii*, the noun is in striking contrast with its adjective.

The Relationship of Epithets

One can notice that the paired epithets are juxtaposed, unconnected or connected with the aid of a conjunction: Vals *domol, voluptos şi trist* (Craii de Curtea Veche), căutătura *tulbure şi posomorâtă* (*ibidem*), privirea i se pierdea aiurea, *blândă şi tristă* (ibid), inspirații *mult nobile şi grave* (*ibidem*). When analyzing paired epithets, particular attention should be paid to a special category made up of those pairs in which the first term functions as an adverbial determinative of the second one: aşa *bogat căptuşită* (Remember), o terasă *idilic cotropită* de trandafiri (*ibidem*).

Many of the epithets widely used by Mateiu Caragiale are also vey productive in the works of his predecessors. Such epithets as *dulce*, *lin*, *tainic* (moral epithets or

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epithets with a moral metaphoric usage) are stereotyped epithets endowed by the author with new meanings. When drawing a comparison between Mateiu Caragiale's prose and poetry and Eminescu's poems, one can notice that a great deal of Mateiu's preferred epithets are also explored by Eminescu in many of his poems.

Amar: *amara* mângâiere (Amorul unei marmure), plânge *amar* (Speranța), glas *amar* (La o artistă), lira mea *amară* (Când priveşti oglinda mării), Un plâns *amar* mă-neacă (Strigoii);

Albastru: fluturi *albaştri* (Frumoasă-i), flori ..... *albastre* (Egipetul), ochii ei cei mari *albaştri* (Înger şi demon), fluturi mici *albaştri* (Călin), flori *albastre* (*ibidem*), noaptea lor *albastră* (*ibidem*), seninul cer *albastru* (*ibidem*);

Adânc: *adâncile* ape (De-oi dormi), *adânca* mare (Adânca mare), genunea *cea adâncă* (Scrisoarea a IV-a), *adâncul* mormânt (Auzi prin frunze uscate), în *adânc* suspină (Memento mori), *adâncile* dumbrave (*ibidem*), codrului *adânci* cântări (*ibidem*).

The adjective *alb* is extremely frequent in Arghezi's poems: *albul* tău veşmânt (Psalm), fluturi *albi* cu ochi de aur (Agate negre), luntrea-mi *albă* (Satan), cuiburi *albe,* perini *albe* (Caligula), păstorul *alb* (Potirul mistic), hlamide *albe* (Vraciul).

Semeț and *măreț*, two of the most intensely used epithets in Mateiu Caragiale's literary creation are also widely used by Tudor Arghezi, but in the latter's case, they are more often than not used with an ironical nuance: *măreață* sărbătoare (Până atunci), *semeț* de slavă, slava te-nconvoaie (Şoim de fată), strivit în ulița *măreață* (Chemarea), şi ceața *semeață* e tunsă la piele (Nostalgii).

Simple and Complex Epithets

Epithets can consist of a unique term, representing a unique lexical-grammatical unit or of more terms which, even if they retain a certain degree of independence, equally contribute to express the respective trait. Simple epithets appear in huge numbers in the author's prose and poetry.

Complex epithets consist of several terms more or less closely linked together: Amurgul *rug de purpuri* (Clio), Va răsări iar umbra *cu chip înşelător* (Grădinile Amăgirii). Complex epithets can be made up of two simple epithets out of which the former (expressed by an adverb) is subordinated to the latter (expressed by an adjective): Eu îl privii mai bine. O nobilă tristețe/*Adânc întipărită* pe chipu-i mult duios (Sihastrul şi umbra), o terasă *idilic cotropită* de trandafiri de toate neamurile (Craii de Curtea Veche).

Singular, Multiple and Cumulative Epithets

The author creates his own world, most frequently by means of a unique characteristic. At a close analysis, one can notice that in most of his poems, singular epithets accompany almost every noun and even a great part of the verbs: Căci *uriaşe* stoluri la zări *încremenite*,/Zac norii ce, în pragul genunilor *cereşti*,/ Par pajere-*ncleştate* de zgripțori *din poveşti*/Umbrind cetăți *în flăcări* cu turnuri *prăbuşite*. (Clio)

Multiple epithets represent combinations of inner and outer characteristics: Mişcările-i sunt *line, molatece, viclene*/Şi dulcele-i grai curge *duios şi răsfățat* (Domnița), Frumoasă-am fost odată, *senină, fericită* (Călugărița), o fire *pătimaşă, întortocheată, tenebroasă* (Craii de Curtea Veche). They can be coordinated with the

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aid of a conjunction: inspirații *mult nobile şi grave* (Craii de Curtea Veche) or in constellation: De-atunci cad în ruină *măreţe* curți *pustii* (Călugărița), Muncindu-mi fără milă *sărmanul* trup *uscat* (Lauda Cuceritorului), Dormi *dulce* somn *netulburat* (Dormi), Dormi *rece* somn *ne'nfiorat*, (ibid), Dormi *veşnic* somn *îmbălsămat*. (ibid).

Static and Dynamic Epithets

Dumitru Irimia defines static epithets as "expressing fixed characteristics" (IRIMIA, 1979: 88) while dynamic epithets place characteristics in a perspective of becoming. One can thus distinguish active epithets from passive epithets. The former category comprises epithets expressing traits which are projected outwards: Păşea singur în viață, *nepăsător*, cu fruntea sus (Remember), *somptuoasa* singurătate (ibid), *migăloasa* gățeală (ibid), while the latter appear as a result of concluded processes: Nu-n file-*ngălbenite* stă-mbăsămată taina măririi strămoşeşti (Clio), o terasă idilic *cotropită* de trandafiri de toate neamurile şi fețele (Remember).

Transparent and Transfigured Epithets

Transparent epithets are those epithets which in the present text do not acquire a different meaning from their basic lexical meaning: Ai pângărit râzând altare *sfinte* (Lauda Cuceritorului), o risipă de flori *rare* (Remember), o rouă măruntă de pietre *albastre* (ibid) or from one of their figurative meanings. The author intensely uses such epithets in those lines or passages referring to the spiritual dimension. The epithet *adânc* is repeatedly used with a figurative meaning: *adânca* mea tilburare (Remember), fărâma-i de cer vânăt cu zare *adâncă* (ibid), privirea lui făcându-se şi *mai adâncă* (ibid).

Unlike transparent epithets, transfigured epithets receive a different meaning from their basic meanings: *veninoasă* verdeață (Craii de Curtea Veche), vestigii *umile* (*ibidem*), lacuri *triste* (*ibidem*).

Visual, Caloric and Temporal epithets

The visual aspect is dominated in Mateiu Caragiale's poetry by the epithet *negru*: Când *negrul* văl al nopții înfăşură pământul (Clio), Pogoară stoluri *negre* de groaznice blesteme (Aspra), Un corb bătrân şi-ntinde puternic *negrul* zbor (La Argeş). In his prose, the author prefers the epithet *albastru.*

The caloric dimension is represented by the epithet *rece*: La sânu-i *rece* să te poată strânge (Lauda Cuceritorului), Ascultă vântul *rece* în apriga-i mânie (Sihastrul şi umbra), o *rece* sudoare (Craii de Curtea Veche), but also by its antonym *caldă* : Apoi la vatra *caldă*, pândi-vom blânda clipă (Sihastrul şi umbra).

The temporal dimension is represented by epithets which share the idea of remoteness: Stă-mbălsămată taina măririi *strămoşeşti* (Clio), Ea în negru-i fund ascunde înecate *vechi* cetăți (Sihastrul şi umbra), E-o cântare-*ndepărtată* ce visări apuse plânge (Mărturisire), *Vechi* suflete apuse, mult mândre, mult înalte (Singurătatea), frumusețea muzicei *vechi* (Craii de Curtea Veche).

In conclusion, the study of the category of the epithet requires a lot of attention, being handled with great art throughout Mateiu Caragiale's prose and poetry.

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