Bulletin of the *Transilvania* University of Braşov
Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies • Vol. 9 (58) No. 1 – 2016

Representation of History in American and Romanian regional newspapers

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The paper analyzes the way in which history is represented in local newspapers in the Appalachian and the Western Carpathian regions, areas which have similarities in terms of economy and culture. It starts from the assumption that newspapers represent the world and reinforce the community's beliefs and values, thus providing social consensus. The paper attempts to identify differences and similarities related to the way in which local and national historical events are presented in such newspapers. The concepts used for the analysis are lexical choices, dialogism and argumentation.

Key-words: *local newspapers, history, lexis, dialogism, argumentation.*

1. Introduction

Newspapers have several important functions in a community, among which mention should be made of reproducing the values of a community, helping its members to reach social consensus, and reinforcing their beliefs or values (Richardson, 2007); this is why the study of newspapers can help us to better understand the way people relate to their world, in terms of social, political, cultural or moral values.

By studying in a comparative way the on-line newspapers published in two mountainous regions – the Appalachians in the United States of America and the Western Carpathians in Romania, this study aims to identify similarities and differences in terms of the way in which history (local and national) is represented in these two regions, as well as the way in which the journalists try to persuade their readers to adopt a specific position. The reason why these two regions are compared is that they have several common features, such as geographical characteristics, natural resources, and breathtaking landscapes; they also have their specific economy, culture and history, traditional crafts and festivals; their inhabitants are hard working, proud of their community, honest and friendly

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1.1. Theoretical framework

The concepts used for the analysis of the articles are: lexical choices, dialogism and type of rhetoric. The lexical selection operated by the journalist can be analyzed in terms of nouns (for example their origin – Latin or otherwise), adjectives and adverbials used to describe people, events, activities or actions, and rhetorical tropes, defined as deviations from the ordinary meaning of a word (Richardson 2007, 65), which can be metaphors, personification, hyperboles, etc. Dialogism refers to the sources used in the article or the quotations provided (Fairclough, 1995; Richardson, 2007). According to Aristotle rhetoric can be concerned with the present (epideictic), past (forensic) or future (deliberative), each presenting in a positive or negative light events, actions, or people. In terms of strategies, they can rely on ethos (appeal to the arguer's personal character), pathos (appeal to emotional states) or logos (appeal to reason) (Richardson, 2007).

1.2. Selection of articles

The articles are taken from on-line newspapers published in the two regions under study. For the American newspapers, the state was West Virginia and the newspaper was The Hur Herald, while for the Romanian ones, the districts were Bihor and Cluj (there were fewer on-line newspapers and that is why two newspapers were selected, namely Ziarul 21 and Făclia). The period chosen was May 2015 to August 2015.

The total number of articles selected during this stage was 23. There were already similarities and differences to be noticed at this stage in terms of quantity (there were more on-line American newspapers), newspaper organization (in the American newspapers the historical articles were grouped under the heading People, Humour and History while in the Romanian ones they were under the section Restitution, Culture or News), and topic of articles (the American newspaper included many articles on historical buildings, old lifestyle, personal memories while the Romanian ones included more articles on historical personalities and national events, the latter having a more instructional character).

The next stage was to search for common topics, and I classified the articles under the following categories: local historical buildings and museums, local historical events, and national historical events considered from a local perspective. Finally, I selected an American and a Romanian article for each of these three topics.

2. Article analysis

The articles studied below are grouped according to the topic and are analyzed considering lexical choices, dialogism and type of argumentation.

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2.1. Local historical buildings and museums

2.1.1. The US article

The American article is entitled "Calhoun Historical Society Museum and Stump Hotel (rear)" and was published in the Hur Herald, on June 5, 2015.The article announces the opening of the Calhoun Historical Society's museum and history center in Grantsville, an event that coincides with the Calhoun Wood Festival. It also presents the other project of the Historical Society, namely the Heritage Village. The last part of the article indicates that these efforts are difficult to make because of lack of funds, a situation which is counterbalanced by the continuous efforts of the Historical Society's members.

The lexical choices of the journalist suggest continuous work – "the group's latest project"," members contribute endless hours of labor keeping history alive". The efforts of the society make it possible for the visitors to become acquainted with "artefacts, photographs and documents" belonging to the early families of Calhoun, these displays being "changed throughout the year". All these points to the commitment of the local population to their history.

There are no quotations in the article, the only voice heard being that of the journalist.

The type of argumentation is epideictic as it refers to the community's present efforts of keeping history alive and the mode of persuasion is a combination of pathos and reason as all the achievements are an indication of the community's success.

2.1.2. The Romanian article

The Romanian article is entitled "Urnă pentru sprijinul Casei Memoriale 'Iuliu Maniu' pe scena din centrul Zalăului" [Urn on the Stage in the Centre of Zalău for helping the "Iuliu Maniu" Memorial House]. It was published in Făclia on August 3, 2015. The article is an appeal for assistance - it invites people to donate money for the restoration of the house of this important political leader of Romania. This fund raising campaign is organized during the local festival that celebrates the Days of the Zalău citadel, the urn for the donation being placed in the town centre.

The lexical choices indicate the political and civil values with which this politician is associated and which should be also promoted by the people asked to donate money: "oamenii cu spirit civic, care încă mai cred în valorile naționale" [people with civic spirit who still believe in national values],or "Salvați Istoria Națională, Salvați Casa lui Iuliu Maniu din Bădăcin" [Save National History, Save Iuliu Maniu's House in Bădăcin], which is the slogan of the campaign. The article appeals to Romanians living both in Romania and outside it.

The type of argumentation is pathetic as it appeals to the readers' feelings.

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2.1.3. Conclusion

The two articles have a common topic – local historical buildings and museums and the difficulty of keeping them in good condition. The appeal is nevertheless different – both articles appeal to feeling - but the American one also appeals to reason and presents the efforts made by the local society.

2.2. Local historical events

2.2.1. The American newspaper

The article "'Paths of Glory Lead but to the Grave' – Ms. Prudence's Burial Ground of Calhoun Pioneers" was written by Bob Weaver and published online in The Hur Herald on May 5, 2015.

It is written in the memory of the early settlers who came "down The Fork", people who established their home in the area, who lived, fought and died there. Their memory is brought back by the journalist's walk in the Minnora Cemetery, described as a "Who's Who of southern Calhoun". Many of these people do no longer have descendents in the area now. The settlers are presented as extremely brave and hardworking people, who found a refuge in the region. Some of them were of Melungeon descent, people of mixed blood – "native American, European, middle eastern and black" who "were widely mistreated by land owners on the eastern coast and driven into the mountains of Virginia, Tennessee and Kentucky". Bob Weaver tells their story of "constant struggle from year to year".

The words used to describe these early comers to the area indicate bravery – "rebels of southern Calhoun in the Civil War", toughness "sturdy people", and values related to the way of living: "They wanted a peaceful place, hidden from those who trespassed against them."

The article, which can be read as an elegy dedicated to these people, includes several voices. The early settlers' voices are suggested by the words written on their tombs – the article includes several pictures of some of the settlers' graves whose inscriptions tell their story:

> "early comer Joseph Knotts (2806-1855) was a member of the Gilmer Co. Court and married Mary "Polly" Arnold" or "Peter Connoly rests here, the grandson of Dr. George Connoly and husband of Jane McCune, his grandfather settled on Sier Run about 1825".

These epitaphs give the impression that the readers now know and therefore, can better understand and appreciate these people. The article also includes literary quotations from George Bernard Shaw about remembering and Thomas Gray's *"Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard"*, which allude to the legendary character

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of these people and bring to mind human fate: ambition, homely joys, grandeur, power, beauty… "all that wealth e'ver gave/Awaits alike th'inevitable hour/ The paths of glory lead but to the grave".

The article is a philosophical comment on human destiny – people have a short life and are quickly forgotten. The past and the present are presented in opposition and so is life in the city and in the country – "country people use to spend a lot of time remembering the deceased", which in cities no longer happens. The other opposition is between the permanent character of people's lives in the country, as contrasted to the transiency of modern life:

> Many of Calhoun's surnames in the cemetery have disappeared from the census roster, to be replaced by moderns who are more transient, moving from place to place, state to state.

The type of rhetoric is forensic as the topic of the article is mainly the past while the mode is pathos as the article appeals to feelings of nostalgia and melancholy.

2.2.2. The Romanian article

The Romanian article is entitled "Sărbătoarea de la Crucea Iancului" [The Celebration at Iancu's Cross] and was published in Făclia on July 14, 2016. The topic is the celebration of Avram Iancu who fought for national independence 167 years ago.

The lexis includes adjectives that remind the readers of the importance of the event – "pe aceste semețe piscuri legendare*"* [on these legendary mighty peaks], "eroism şi jertfă pentru salvarea libertății naționale" [heroism and sacrifice for saving national freedom] as well as loaded words such as "genocidul şi exterminarea românilor din propria lor țară" [Romanians' genocide and extermination in their own country].

The event is presented as having high significance: "Evenimentul de la Fîntînele, în măreția sa legendară, a încărcat, cum nu se putea mai bine, încă o pagină de mare cinstire pentru acest ținut plin de istorie" [The event from Fîntînele, in its legendary grandeur, has written, in the best possible manner, another page that deeply honors this land full of history]. The enemy is presented in a metaphorical way "victoria împotriva agresorilor maghiari, care vroiau să pună…talpa şi pe teritoriul Apusenilor, ținut bogat în lemn, aur şi alte zăcăminte ale solului şi subsolului" [the victory against the Hungarian aggressors who wanted to set their… foot on the Western Carpathian region too, an area rich in wood, gold and other natural resources]. Adjectives with positive connotation are also used to describe the show presented on the occasion – "cunoscuta noastră solistă de muzică populară… cu vocea blândă şi sufletul plin de poezie" [our famous folk singer, with her kind voice and poetic soul], all these choices indicating the importance of the event.

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The journalist quotes the national hero, who urged his followers to fight in order to preserve their national character: "La împlinirea celor 167 de ani de la îndemnul Crăişorului Avram Ianu 'Sau punem pumnul în pieptul furtunii sau pierim'" [On the occasion of 167 years since Prince Avram Iancu's summons: "We either fight the storm or perish"].

The argumentation is forensic as it presents a significant event in Romania's past, combined with epideictic as the article describes the way in which the past is honored now. The strategy is pathos as the journalist resorts to the readers' national pride and logos as illustrated by the long lists of people attending the event (administrative officials, priests, and almost 15 thousand participants from several districts) and the way in which it is celebrated – a variety of high quality performances.

2.2.3. Comparison

The comparison between the two articles indicates that in the American article the emphasis is laid more on the local community members that lived in that region, namely the Melongeons, and their contribution to the development of the area. The emphasis is on their personality and way of life; in the Romanian article the emphasis is on the Transylvanian hero who set an example of bravery and love for independence not only to the people in the region where he fought but also to those in the entire country. The type of argumentation is in both cases forensic combined with epideictic and the type of argument is pathos – the emphasis being on melancholy and human fate in general in the American article and on the greatness of past deeds in the Romanian one.

2.3. National historical events presented from a local perspective

2.3.1. American newspaper

The first article is entitled "My Father, Abe Lincoln and I – A Story for the 4th of July", written by Jeanne Wilson and published in The Hur Herald on July 4, 2015.

The topic of the article is the journalist's memories of her father celebrating America's National Day, her father's life and the way in which it becomes part of the country's life.

It is a homage paid to America and her greatness considered in terms of her people.

The lexis abounds in colours that remind the reader of the American flag – red white and blue: its [the journalist's native town] "flag-decked streets reminded me of another Fourth of July when America had bloomed with red, white, and blue", the

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flowers her father planted in the garden ...”the geraniums, petunias, and larkspur gleamed red, white and blue”, the cushions on the porch – “Tan cushions on the porch swing were replaced with those of the appropriate color”, the mail box which her father ... “dressed in a clean white coat with red and blue trim, while the American flag waved to those who passed”; her father’s coffin was draped with the flag and adorned with “one crystal vase of red, white and blue flowers”, all suggesting her father’s love for his country.

The country is also described by means of modifiers having positive connotation – [the journalist’s father] “treasured America’s gifts of freedom and opportunity”; America’s beauty is suggested by the complex description of the country in terms of natural beauty, political institutions and citizens: [I]…”saw the sprawling land of mountains, valleys, rivers, the institutions secured by America’s freedom, the lives built on her strength” while her people’s hard work is alluded to by a long list of verbs that cover a wide range of activities – “[I] saw the people who had fought and died, pioneered, invented, written, prayed and sweated to sustain” .

The voices that are heard in the article are that of the journalist who recalls her father and the way he celebrated the Fourth of July. The narrative is written in the first person and the article reads like a short-story which combines personal memories with comments on human fate and the country’s history.

Another voice quoted in the article is that of her father who, in his turn quotes, or rather misquotes, Abraham Lincoln:

> “A man is only as old as he makes up his mind to be “, he [my father] said misquoting Lincoln….A man is only as healthy as he makes up his mind to be” my father said as he prepared the ground for seed.

Her father also quotes other American personalities such as Jefferson and Carver …” to keep his children straight”. Jeanne Wilson hears her father’s voice after he dies when he joins his voice with hers in saying “A man is only as happy as he makes up his mind to be.” Another quotation is from the Bible “mine eyes have seen the glory”, this being a reference to the values upheld by the journalist’s father. The last quotation is the one the journalist sees on the back window of a car which reads “Honk if you love America”, which suggests the love that all citizens have for their country. All these quotations emphasize the values presented in the article - patriotism, respect for the country’s history and important personalities, the strong link between the past and the present; they also point to the idea that people are in charge of their fate and life.

The rhetoric is forensic as the article describes the life and values of the journalist’s father while the strategy is pathos as the description is filled with love and admiration.

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2.3.2. The Romanian article

The Romanian article, written by Ada Durlan. is entitled "414 ani de la uciderea lui Mihai Viteazul, comemorați la Mânăstirea Mihai Vodă" [414 years since Michael the Brave's killing commemorated at Mihai Vodă monastery]; it was published in Ziarul 21, on August 9, 2015.

The article describes the festivity honoring Michael the Brave, the first Romanian ruler who united the three Romanian countries.

The lexical choices indicate the part Michael the Brave played in Romania's history: " marele voievod" [the great voivode', "eroul național al tuturor românilor şi simbolul Unirii Principatelor Române" [the national hero of all Romanians and the symbol of the Union of the Romanian principalities], "bravul voievod" [the brave voievode], "simbol al luptei pentru unitate" [symbol of the fight for unity] or "figură centrală a trecutului istoric" [main figure of the historical past]. The adjectives also suggest the significance of his achievement – "unitatea statală pe care o moştenim ne-a adus recunoştința față de actele eroice şi jertfa patriotică a anului 1601" [the state union which we have inherited has brought our gratitude toward the heroic deeds and patriotic sacrifice of the year 1601] or *"*o aspirație fundamentală a poporului român" [a fundamental aspiration of the Romanian people]. His killing is presented as a vile deed "domnitorul Mihai Viteazul a fost asasinat mişeleşte*"* [King Michael the Brave was basely murdered]. The language used by the journalist has a religious character – "la ceas comemorativ" [at this commemorative moment] "să aduc pomenire" [to commemorate] as well as an archaic one as emphasized by the long quotations from Michael the Brave.

There are several voices in the article – the journalist's who emphasizes the periodical feature of this event "la fel ca în fiecare an pe data de 9 august" [as every year on August 9], then the voice of the mayor of the village where Michael the Brave was killed, the thoughts of Nicolae Iorga, a famous Romanian historian, and the words of Michael the Brave himself. Most of the article includes the mayor's speech, who presents historical facts and interprets them and who also quotes Nicolae Iorga for the more significant moments:

> "Mihai Bravu avu prilejul să-şi scrie cu sabia în mână strălucita sa epopee. Multă măreție şi mult avânt sunt cuprinse într-însa, căci această adâncă tragedie omenească trezeşte mândrie de partea poporului roman" [Michael the Brave had the possibility to write his brilliant epic with the sword in his hand. It includes much greatness and ardor, since this deep human tragedy awakes pride in the Romanian people].

Finally, Michael the Brave's words are quoted to suggest fundamental Romanian values – patriotism, sacrifice for one's country and hospitality: :" Pe acest pământ, oricine vine ca prieten e binevenit, cine va ține seama de asta – bine, cine nu îl vom

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primi cu sabia" [On this land whoever comes as a friend is welcomed, who will take this into account, good, who doesn't we will welcome by sword] and "Până ce nu îmi vor arunca pământ peste ochi, nu voi înceta să lupt." [Until I am laid in my grave I will not cease fighting].

The argument is a combination of epideictic and forensic as the article is concerned with historical events which are considered from a present perspective; the strategy is a combination of pathos, which predominates, and logos- pathos as Michael the Brave's sacrifice is presented and logos because of the king's deeds and words, which are now honored by a wide variety of people attending the ceremony – officials, priests and common people who came in huge numbers.

2.3.2. Comparison

The comparison of the two articles indicates a different approach to the event presented – namely a highly personal one for the American article, where the journalist recalls her father, whose life represents an example of patriotism and whose description brings to mind outstanding American political personalities while in the Romanian one the perspective is more official, as mainly administrative, cultural or historic personalities are quoted. The type of rhetoric is epideictic in both, the journalists appealing to pathos.

3. Conclusion

The analysis of these six articles suggests similarities and differences between the articles.

In terms of lexical choices, it appears that the American articles are closer to literary texts (narratives or personal memories), while the Romanian ones include a higher number of tropes (personification and metaphor).

The quotes in the articles indicate that there is a higher number of sources in the American ones, which include a variety of voices – family members, historical and literary personalities, religious sources, while in the Romanian ones the quotes are more frequently belonging to official sources.

The argumentation in both is of an epideictic nature, as the topics are all related to the past while the strategies used appeal to pathos in both and to reason in more American articles.

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