ORALITY AND ORIGINALITY

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Abstract

Ion Creangă's great art consists in his relation to the language. The expression that best characterizes this oral discourse is "to spill the beans/to give oneself away" ("a-l lua gura pe dinainte"). Creangă creates a world and the instrument of his creation is the word itself, the speech. Elements as orality, dialogue, dynamism, redundancies, puns, paroemiological constructions etc. are marks of his originality.

Keywords: orality, dialogue, dialogism, dynamism, originality

Ion Creangă's epic art was always seen by the critics as extremely vivacious[2], without supplementary descriptions. The writer is able to pass easily from one scene to another, his dialogue is extremely dynamic and his overflowing humour is rendered with joviality. The oral feature of his style and the richness of the paroemiological constructions are also marks of his narrative art. We must also mention the power of portraying by means of a single retort or by means of a significant detail.

Resorting to a linguistic and factual material, ever since the world began, Creangă remains, nevertheless, original and personal: the more "archaic" he is (following some linguistic patterns), the more refined becomes. The narrative art is particularly outlined in Creangă's work and this may also be because the author aims at the later called "pedagogy of reading" (a fact underlined in the foreword of his fairy-tales).

Creangă relates[3] the events with verve, without any sign of tiredness, as if he were in a house with a fascinated audience: "şi după cum am cinstea să vă spun…", "vă puteţi imagina ce vrea să zică a te scălda în Bistriţa" etc. Hence the main feature of his narrative art, the scenic tendency, the oral technique of the "telling". He writes as if he interpreted the text, having pleasure in imitating, parodying, exaggerating, passing from monologue to dialogue, living a part of a character.

Creangă does not contemplate the objects of his world, but communicates with them by means of a dialogue. It is quite normal for an artist and an observer of faces to resort to dialogism, a modality by means of which everything is vivid. Hence, the critics discuss about the dramatic feature of his work (the dialogue – the essential mark of the dramatic – reveals the continuous addressing to listeners; the verve, the picturesque, the extraordinary chattering). Thus it is considered that this dialogism is fundamental, because it is not used up in the exterior dialogues, compositionally expressed. His entire

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[2] In one of his books – *Ion Creang*ă. *Nonconformism si gratuitate* – Mircea A. Diaconu talks about "the vivacity of the events" (Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2002).

[3] We use this verb for the Romanian "povesti", because we think that it is semantically stronger than "to tell".

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work is a dialogue from the very beginning until the end[4]. Creangă lets himself guided by the dialogic intuition (Constantin Trandafir) that allows him to enter the articulations of the world he presents.

"Sliding pleasantly on the slope of popular orality, discrete and modest, Creangă perpetrates a self sacrifice as a writer. Creangă passes with serenity over the paradox lived with the indifference of an author: he writes the orality"[5].

The art of telling consists in a series of "stylistic follies"[6], from puns to phrases that seem natural until they turn unexpectedly into different constructions, from lexical to syntactic[7] and paroemiological constructions etc. All these serve for the same goal: orality.

Creangă went to "the school of popular teller"[8], taking over his gestures, mimic, commentaries and his jokes[9].

The dynamism of the action, the joyfulness and the spontaneity of the story are rendered by means of pluralism of converging mechanisms. Interrogations, ellipses, exclamations, the reader's requirement, direct appeal to characters by changing the grammatical person, even depersonalization give the text an alert rhythm and a vivid colouring. The latter implies a certain detachment of the speaker from himself, but not from the author who remains beside his characters by changing them into their own observers. The use of "dramatic present" is also another means of giving dynamism to the action.

During the speech, pauses can many times underline irony or equivoque (familiar to the author). He makes his characters enter in a competition of jokes, riddles: "ba din tâlcuri, ba din cimilituri, ba din păcălit, ba din una şi de coli până colea" (*Moş Nichifor Coţcariul*). As a matter of fact the critics underline the main quality of Creangă's sentence: the relief, its lively rhythm, its intonation with ups and downs[10].

Popular language is not a common one in Creangă's work, because he changes it into artistic language; hence the stamp of his remarkable originality. Rough expression becomes literary art in his work. Orality is seen by one of his critics – Mircea Moţ – as "a quality of the natural universe itself' and he talks about this quality with the meaning of a "partner" in the dialogue. This dialogue is between "cosmos (created on the oral way,

[4] G. Călinescu talked about the "powerful dialogic structure".
[5] It is a translated quotation from Dan Mănucă, *Ponciful „oralităţii" lui I. Creangă sau despre re-oralizare* in *Convorbiri literare*, 4 (28) aprilie, 1998, p. 14.
[6] According to Vladimir Streinu's syntagm, "pozne stilistice"
[7] "Syntactic cunnings" ("şiretenii sintactice" – Vl. Streinu)
[8] According to Zoe Dumitrescu-Buşulenga ("şcoala povestitorului popular")
[9] "vorbele de duh cele mai şugubeţe"
[10] According to G.I. Tohăneanu "The main quality of Creangă's phrase is the relief. Its sustained and lively rhythm is not familiar with the softness sometimes drawling and equal of the phrase. Intonation is all the time modulated, full of unknown, with ups and downs, sometimes abrupt" (translated quotation from *Stilul artistic al lui I. Creangă*, p. 13).

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through the creator's mouth which makes the word concrete) and its pattern, the writing"[11].

The anecdotical dynamism is a special feature of Creangă's narrative art, outlining the charm of his style. The exceptional and suggestive word, the picturesque idiomatic expressions, the emotional mainspring present in the elements of communication, "amplifications and verbal redundancies" (Ş. Munteanu), the humour and so many other elements lie at the basis of an exquisite narrative art, an art to which we try to underline again the complexity and the refinement.

The spring of his art is found, according to Eugen Todoran, in the author's words, because the distinct charm in life, as well as in his writings resides in the joke which he relates with. He relates everything he sees in the surrounding world, in the confrontation between reality and ideality. The excerpt the critic talks about is from *Povestea lui Harap-Alb*:

> *Zică cine-a zice şi cum a vrea să zică, dar când este să dai peste păcat, dacă-i înainte te sileşti să-l ajungi, iar dacă-i în urmă stai şi-l aşteptţi. Mă rog, ce mai la deal la vale? Aşa e lumea asta şi de-ai face ce-ai face, rămâne cum este ea, nu poţi s-o întorci cu umărul, măcar să te pui în ruptul capului. Vorba ceea: Zi-i lume şi te mântuie.*

Some criteria have recently been established on the basis of which Creangă's narrative art has been outlined. Thus it is talked about the disguises encountered in all of his stories, about the temporal segmentation in two well-delimited parts, about the "road" as an authentic character etc[12].

Creangă's great art consists in his relation to the language. The expression that best characterizes his oral discourse is "to spill the beans/to give oneself away" ("a-l lua gura pe dinainte"). Undoubtedly this does not mean the writer puts labels to simple objects. If it had been like that, Creangă would have been an ordinary writer. But he creates a world and "the instrument of his creation is the language. Instrument and product at the same time, the speech creates itself. It is a self-generating logos. Creangă's humanity is built by means of words and it exists only through words"[13]

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[11] It is a translated quotation from Mircea Moţ, *Ion Creangă sau pactul cu cititorul*, Editura Paralela 45, Piteşti, 2004, p. 12.
[12] For details one can see the chapter "Arta prozatorului român" in Dan Grădinaru, *Creangă*, Editura Allfa, Bucureşti, 2002, p. 389-446.
[13] It is a translated quotation from Dumitru Micu, *Periplu*, Editura Cartea românească, Bucureşti, 1974, p. 11. We must mention the fact that the translations from different Romanian critics belong to us.

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