

G. CĂLINESCU'S ACTIVITY IN POLITICAL JOURNALISM AFTER WORLD WAR II (LINGUISTIC AND STYLISTIC ASPECTS)

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In this article, based on texts written between 1945 and 1965, we aim to study the way in which the writing of G. Călinescu, known as a great stylist of the Romanian language, metamorphosed and adapted within communist political journalism. Our approach is not a groundless charge or moral judgement¹ but, on the contrary, we have tried to identify the stylistic survival strategies adopted by the writer in a period that was formally and culturally fettered by the severe restrictions imposed by the wooden language.

While reading some political articles written by G. Călinescu², I found that, although they followed the general tendency of ideological mystification and propaganda which dominated the epoch, a unique, personal style was preserved in most of these writings. We start from the idea that the great writer stubbornly avoids the constraints of the wooden language, and then naturally we wonder: have these writings a style of their own?

A first observation is that the author ignores the fundamental patterns of the wooden language, constantly writing in the first person, and thus avoiding the dictatorship of „noi”/”we”. In this respect, Françoise Thom emphasizes the fact that the pronoun „eu”/”I” actually disappeared from the wooden language, while the second person pronoun does not occur at all. Although „noi”/”we” becomes pervasive, it always sends to the same referent, which designates the unity of the people, of the party

¹ In this respect, see Adrian Dinu Rachieru, *G. Călinescu – un estet cinic?*, in „Limba română”, Nr. 9-12, Anul XXIII, 2013 (www.limbaromana.md); Nicolae Manolescu, *G. Călinescu, publicist*, in „România literară”, Nr. 35, 2006 (www.romlit.ro).

² We have consulted the volume of G. Călinescu, *Texte social-politice, 1944–1965*, București, Editura Politică, 1971; all citations are collected from this work.

and of the government and opposes the pronoun „ei”/ “they” which denounces the reactionary forces (Thom, 1993: 43).

In our brief analysis, we will present some specific elements of Călinescu’s language used in this type of writing, mixed in an almost prolix language, since it has dual references (cultural references, as well as proletcultist references) that struggle between the author’s talent and the ideological obligation. The articles were selected according to some major ideological and propaganda themes dominating the cultural space of the epoch, which occasioned the stylistic agony, even cultural death of some significant interwar writers (Sadoveanu’s case best illustrates it): the theme of the leader hero (the portrait of a communist personality); the theme of the endangered homeland (condemning the imperialist war and the glorification of international peace); the theme of the socialist construction (industrialization and collectivization).

If the portrait of Lenin (*V. I. Lenin*, „Naiunea”, 1949), exclusively achieved with cultural references, is stylistically neutral and Călinescu writes somehow trivially on a topic that generated terrible stylistic exaggerations at the time („Lenin a fost profesor în sensul maxim al acestui cuvânt”, 151/ “Lenin was a teacher in the maximum sense of the word”; „cap de logician, cu fruntea unui Socrate”, 151/ “the head of a logician, the forehead of a Socrates”; „om al cărilor”, 152/ “a man of books”) the article written for Groza (*Dr. P. Groza*, „Naiunea”, 1946) is more interesting. The portrait of this opportunist politician of transition, who contributed to the instauration of the communist regime in Romania, is encomiastic from the first lines, in the style of Călinescu’s novels, performing detailed physical descriptions (like those of Balzac) with narcissistic projections, of positive characters: „cel mai larg, cel mai franc zâmbet pe care l-am văzut vreodată” (99–100)/ “the widest, most sincere smile I have ever seen”; „capul angulos, umerii lai, pieptul umflat, toate par scoase de pe columna traiană” (100)/ “angular head, broad shoulders, big chest, all seem taken from Trajan’s Column”; „Hainele noi ori întoarse îmi stau impecabil, susinute de un piept magistral de atlet” (100)/ “The new or not so new clothes are perfectly supported by the impressive chest of an athlete”; „rezistența sa fizică este scandaloaasă” (100)/ “his physical strength is scandalous”; „un sportiv, un filozof al vitalității” (101)/ “a sportsman, a philosopher of vitality”. Excess is also betrayed by the so-

called “bad metaphors”³: Groza is „un granit lustruit” (100) /“a polished granite”, while his smile is „o adevărată explozie de raze peste o dentiie solidă” (100)/“a real explosion of rays over a solid dentition”. To obtain a maximum compositional effect, Călinescu uses stylistic inadequacy by applying an erroneous linguistic code (cf. D’L, 2005: 23, 260) that does not match the moral and intellectual quality of the character he describes: „Modelul îndepărtat, foarte transfigurat al oratoriei d-lui Groza este vorbirea lui N. Iorga, adică proiectarea personalității într-o confesiune ingenuă, din care s-au demontat abil coloanele aparente ale retoriei” (101)/ “The far away, transfigured model of Mr. Groza’s oratory is the speech of N. Iorga, i.e. the projection of the personality in an ingenuous confession, from which the apparent columns of rhetoric were skilfully disassembled”.

Moreover, the author introduces or even forms rare and specialized neologisms in order to refine the image of a character of compromise that did not impress by finesse: „profesionist al unei *marcobiotice*⁴ inteligențe” (101)/ “a professional of a *marcobiotic* intelligence”; by allusion, his bourgeois past is suggested by the use of a word taken from the terminology of card games: „D-l Groza voie’te a insinua că viaa sa chiar are un decurs dialectic în care *capotele*⁵ sunt organice ’i trăite” (102)/ “Mr. Groza wants to insinuate that his life really follows a dialectic path where *blows in card games* are organic and lived”. Finally, the portrait has a sudden drop of style, Groza being hyperbolized and acquiring mythical dimensions by national-historical nouns spelt with initial capital letter: „În vremurile cele mai grele din istoria ării noastre era nevoie de un Român, ’i încă ’i mai mult de un Dac” (102) /“In the hardest times throughout the history of our country we needed a Romanian, and even more, a Dacian” or directly called „un Decebal imberb” (100)/“a beardless Decebalus”.

³ According to the opinion expressed by Françoise Thom, the bad metaphors specific to the wooden language are the semantic associations “which are not based on a real analogy and, consequently, do not observe adequacy” (Thom, 1993: 73).

⁴ The word coined by Călinescu after *marcă* ‘stamp’ (*marcofilie* “collecting and studying postage stamps”) and *biotică* ‘biotics’, “a branch of biology which deals with the study of various qualitative aspects of living organisms”; in other words the “marcobiotic intelligence” refers to the intelligence imprinted like a stamp by the person of Groza. Călinescu conceals his flattery by a newly coined word, which is not at the reader’s hand.

⁵ ‘*Capot*’, n., in card games, a blow when a player does not take a trick.

The theme of the endangered homeland has, as a rule, a dual approach: the condemnation of the imperialist war and the glorification of international peace (*Război războiului* ‘War to war’, “Contemporanul”, 1949; *Docherii ideilor* ‘The dockers of ideas’, “Contemporanul”, 1950, *Ziua muncii și a păcii* ‘The day of labour and peace’, “Contemporanul”, 1952). Călinescu writes such texts, alternating the refined expression and the wooden language. For instance: „Cum? Abia am scăpat de meteorologia sinistru luminoasă a bombardierelor și va trebui să ne scobim din nou adăposturi în pământ? Nu mi-am ascuit creioanele ca să devin reporter de război, ci am să cânt munca rodnică a plugarului și a nituitorului. Vreau zgomotul tonic al păcii, nu fluierul nebun al sirenei” (163)/ „How? We have just escaped the sinister light of the meteorology of bombers and we’ll have to dig shelters again? I haven’t sharpened my pencils to become a war reporter, but I’m going to sing the fruitful work of the ploughman and of the riveter. I want the invigorating noise of peace, not the crazy whistle of the siren”. There appears now the negative rhetoric too, expressed in words borrowed from the register of negative semantics for branding the Western “enemy”: „Pentru noi au venit apoi mizeriile victoriei occidentale” (162)/“For us, there came the miseries of Western victory”; „Ceea ce clocesc savanii de pe emisfera occidentală în laboratoarele lor păzite cu sârmă ghimpată...” (163)/ “What scientists hatch in their Western labs guarded with barbed wire ...”. We have rarely found bad metaphors in these texts. For example, an article is entitled *Docherii ideilor* ‘The dockers of ideas’, Călinescu explaining the semantic association as follows: „Ca niște adevărați docheri care lucrăm în porturile unde sosesc ideile, să refuzăm și noi descărcarea strigătelor de război” (167)/ “Like real dockers who work in the ports where ideas are coming, let us refuse to unload cries of war”. In many other cases, the writer makes unusual semantic associations: „Însă într-o vară, o havană⁶ uriașă începu să treacă pe deasupra Bucureștilor și să arunce proiectile” (161)/“But one summer, a huge cigar began to pass over Bucharest and throw projectiles”. The description of the harmony of work and international peace is performed by Călinescu in the idyllic view of communist propaganda, but the means of transcription is through an admirable cosmopolitan picture, a genuine stylistic and linguistic synthesis where we find metaphors, epithets,

⁶ The word refers to the zeppelins used during World War I.

comparisons, the enumeration of names of peoples or natives in combination with traditional occupations or professions, the introduction of exotic toponyms etc. We will reproduce this passage in full: „Sub falfăirea drapelului roșu vor defila... zulușii care se târăsc pe pânțele în minele înăbu'itoare de aur de lângă Johannesburg...; mecanicul din pieptul vaporului care, dogorât de fusul înfierbântat al elicei, nu cunoaște răcoarea și albăstreala talazurilor; negrii de abanos culegând bumbacul alb; lucrătorii din gropile de pucioasă de la Agrigent care nu pot mirosi din pricina sulfului floarea portocalilor sicilieni; brazilianul care, sub maiestatea copacilor, dă cep cu burghiul sevei de cauciuc; argăsitorul trăgând pe nas duhurile pieilor tăbăcite; docherul londonez încovoiat sub baloturi într-o pădure de macarale; javanezul care răsuțe frunza îmbălsămată de ceai; muncitorul din uzinele americane din care avioanele ies ca fluturii cu cap de mort; malaiezul stând cu tălpile în mla'tină spre a semăna orezul; liftierii, împiegaii de birouri și magazine din Chicago care nu văd niciodată apropiatul lac Michigan; pescarii în cămăși de piele și botfori din apele de nord care curăă și sarează, clătina de furtună, grămada peștilor încă plesnind din cozi pe fundul bărcii; sondorul care scoate din pământ geysere negre de ie; muncitori de tot felul, toi cei care au un patron și vor să scape de asuprirea lui” (167–168)/ “Under the red flag ... the Zulus will march, crawling in the stifling gold mines near Johannesburg ...; the driver in the chest of the ship who, burnt by the heated propeller, doesn't know the cool and blue colour of waves; the ebony black men picking the white cotton; the sulphur pits workers in Agrigento who cannot smell, because of the sulphur, the blossom of Sicilian orange trees; the Brazilian who, under the majesty of trees, drills the rubber out; the tanner smelling the stench of tanned leather; the London docker, bent under the bales in a forest of cranes; the Javanese turning the embalmed tea leaf; the worker in the American factories of which planes come out like skull butterflies; the Malaysian standing with his feet in the swamp to sow rice; the lifters, the service officials in Chicago who never see Lake Michigan that is so close; the fishermen in leather shirts and top boots in the north waters that clean and salt, shaken by the storm, the pile of fish still slapping their tails on the bottom of the boat; the driller who gets black oil geysers out of the ground; workers of all kinds, all those who have an employer and want to escape his oppression”.

The last important theme concerns the eulogy to the socialist industry. In such an article (*Un imn al muncii în cinstea congresului* ‘A labour

hymn in honour of the Congress', "Contemporanul", 1955), Călinescu describes the metallurgical plants "23 August", thus creating a kind of narrative technique and an apparently scientific style by agglomerating technical terms, which induce the impression of the industrial development superiority of communist Romania as opposed to capitalist societies. The excessive use of numbers and technical details is another means of achieving the superlative in the wooden language, to demonstrate through manipulation and false propaganda, the superiority of the communist economic system in comparison with the capitalist economy (Mihai, 2009: 211). We have selected a few paragraphs where this style, specific to impersonal expression, is combined by Călinescu with surprising, anyway successful figures and constructions (note that cultural references are diverse): „Buloanele, cu câte un ’urub la fiecă capăt, seamănă cu niște tibii monstruoase” (180)/“The bolts, with a screw at each end, look like monstrous tibias”; „Nu se turnau piese pentru compresor, dar ceea ce se înfăptuia acolo ajuta la înțelegerea fazei embrionare a fătului metalic” (180)/“They were not turning compressor parts, but what was done there helped to understand the embryonic phase of the metallic foetus”; „Întâlnim un morman de lingouri de fier ca niște batoane de ciocolată care se vor lamina, prefăcându-se în tablă ori sârmă” (182)/“We find a pile of iron bars like chocolate bars that will be laminated and transformed into sheet or wire”; „E o fiertură clocotitoare și fluidă ca zeama fierbinte de dulceaă” (184)/“It’s a seething fluid like the hot juice of jam”; „bravul fabricant de dulceaă de oel” (184)/“The brave manufacturer of steel jam”; „Topitorul mânuie’te un linguroi cu găvanul cât un ceaun potrivit, scoate cu el supă de foc curat care împrăia un roi de scânteii mărunte ca piperul pisat. Bineînțeles, un piper de aur!” (184)/“The smelter handles a large spoon like a ladle, a suitable pot, he takes out clear fire soup that splashes a swarm of tiny sparks like crushed pepper. Of course, golden pepper!”

These articles represent a didactic political discourse, but they are achieved in a superior way. In other words, they lack the specific ritual of the wooden language and the formal stereotypy generated by several genetic marks of the wooden language (cliché, emphasis, euphemism, bad metaphor⁷), which are devoid of any stylistic expression. Călinescu’s

⁷ Although we have found all these constructions in Călinescu’s articles, their low frequency is insignificant from a statistical point of view and they cannot be taken into account while formulating conclusions.

texts deny the fundamental rule of the wooden language, namely that the writings of this type do not betray their author⁸.

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АКТИВНОСТТА НА ДЖ. КАЛИНЕСКУ В ПОЛИТИЧЕСКАТА ЖУРНАЛИСТИКА СЛЕД ДВТОРАТА СВЕТОВНА ВОЙНА (ЛИНГВИСТИЧНИ И СТИЛИСТИЧНИ АСПЕКТИ)

Драгош Влад Топала (Крайова, Румъния)

Целта на статията е да се изследва начинът, по който изящният стил на Дж. Калинеску се променя в комунистическата политическа журналистика, като се базираме на текстове, написани между 1945 и 1965 г. Подходът ни не е безпочвено обвинение или морална присъда. Вместо това се опитаме да идентифицираме лингвистичните и стилистичните стратегии за оцеляване, които употребява великият писател, когато използва „дървения език”.

⁸ “If we regard style as a personal mark of each individual on language, then we can easily characterize the communist discourse as non-style. No paper, no article drafted in the wooden language betrays its author, except perhaps a work of Stalin and Lenin” (Thom, 1993: 68).