

## STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN I.L. CARAGIALE'S JOURNALISTIC WORK

**Simona GALATȚHI, Research Associate, PhD, "G. Călinescu" Institute for Literary History and Theory, Romanian Academy, Bucharest**

*Abstract: The journalistic work of the Romanian greatest playwright was generally over-evaluated by the literary critics who were focused to identify the literary merits of the respective texts. They ignored an analysis meant to be done with the instruments of rhetoric and argumentation. Undoubtedly, I.L. Caragiale was highly interested in the political life of his time, and therefore an applied research on the corpus of texts represented by his political articles must be welcomed. The present study focuses on the identification of the persuasive strategies that I.L. Caragiale uses to get the reader's attention, to keep him interested in reading his articles and eventually convince his reader of his own ideas or political convictions. It also aims to use the discourse analysis, as a qualitative method, in order to identify the discursive contextualization of the writer's political ideas. The findings of the research offer a clearer picture concerning the characteristics of the political discourse in a specific historical context, as provided by I.L. Caragiale's texts.*

*Keywords: Romanian literature, rhetoric, argumentation, political journalism, discourse analysis.*

Literary criticism dealt to a rather little extent with the rhetorical strategies used by the greatest Romanian playwright, Ion Luca Caragiale (1852-1912), in his texts, generally, and so much the less in his political articles. Today, with the emergence of Neo-Rhetoric, the researchers have become aware that there is an inherent rhetoric behind all discourses, especially behind the institutionalized ones, such as the political, journalistic or advertizing/commercial discourse. "In an increasingly global world, the fields of politics, business and media are possibly the most important in terms of influencing our views of the world." (Dam 2008 : 4). These were important, undoubtedly, in I.L. Caragiale's time, too, and such an analysis applied to a well delimited corpus of Caragiale's texts, such as the ones reflecting the author's political concerns, is obviously required by itself. The critic Șerban Cioculescu, issuer of Caragiale edition of 1938, has the merit of having structured this writer's journalistic works into political articles and dramatic chronicles.

This article intends to discover the persuasive strategies used by the journalist Caragiale in his political articles in order to attract his readers, to keep their attention alert while reading and to convince them regarding his own ideas and to change their behavior.

He used the method of discourse analysis, being particularly interested in the rhetoric perspective on the text. The discourse analysis is derived from T van Dijk methodology (Dijk 1988 : 167-187) and in this case the unit of analysis was the pre-defined "persuasive structures" of the texts.

The article [... *Some moderation...*] (Caragiale 2001 : 170-172) uses analogy as a rhetoric procedure: a political situation is placed in analogy with the subject of a play from

Paris. As in many of his articles of this type, Caragiale aims at the liberal C.A. Rosetti. This time, in the imaginary dialogue he engages in with the latter, Caragiale takes his readers on his side by using the first person, plural: “[Mr. Rosetti] should listen to a disinterested advice from us: to go to the theatre...” This persuasive strategy, thoroughly analyzed with its strong and weak points by Fahnestock and Secor (Fahnestock 1990 : 332-349) by which the journalist builds his article using the pronoun “we” is frequently to be found with Caragiale. Moreover, in order to impose his convictions upon his readers, Caragiale often states: “we think...”. In his article *The Liberals and Conservatives* (Caragiale 2001 : 175-178) he starts by defining a problem in terms generally accepted by the wide public (i.e. the existence of two parties excluding each other), then emphasizing, by opposition, various opinions: one placed under the sign of the authority’s argument, as belonging to Mr. C.A. Rosetti, “he most competent person in the field of political fight”, the other one belonging to political dilettantes who “think that...” and, finally, the idea meant to be proven in the article and imposed to the readers, introduced with “**We** (my underlining) think that...”. The argument is based on the statement of facts, after which, in order to keep the reader’s attention, Caragiale interrupts the statement and emphasizes: “But there is another problem in question”. The sentence is marked graphically, single on a row (see Preda 2006 : 115-140). In the same article, Caragiale resorts to rhetoric figures, such as euphemism (“C. A. Rosetti, as an eminent political man”) and repetition on two levels – resuming the initially presented idea and repetition of certain words in order to obtain an intensifying effect (“Mr. C. A. Rosetti is therefore very close to the truth, when he says that the two parties are two hostile bands and that the Conservative Party is an internal Plevna. He is very close to the truth, as she knows that he works day and night himself to produce this result.”). The end of the article presses on the pedal of moral standards which the reader knew in the past, being their supporter in the present, and draws the final conclusion which Caragiale wants to inoculate in his readers’ mind: Rosetti is a *loser* (“So, then, C. A. Rosetti lost the game.”).

This sentence, representing the conclusion-end of the article, which the Ancients called *refutatio* in the structure of the oratorical speech (Bidu-Vrânceanu et alii : 440-441), observes the pattern of the ending formulae used by the author. It looks like Caragiale is building his arguments having refutation in mind. Many times, he keeps a round structure of the article: in the end he returns to the idea present at the beginning of the text.

Two interesting texts are published as *Thursday Chronicle*. The first one used what Fahnestock calls the “*Ego* of personal experience”, as persuasive strategy in which the narration of that experience becomes the origin of his argument: something that happened to him or put him on the track of a conclusion. In *Thursday Chronicle (I) [Monday evening, leaving from Iași...]* (Caragiale 2001 : 602-605), Caragiale intends to convince his readers of the importance of “consistency in politics” of which the Conservative character is capable (the embodiment of Caragiale’s political convictions in this case). Consistently, we notice in Caragiale’s articles the use of a persuasive structure *in exordium*, targeting the so-called *captatio benevolentiae* (Florescu 1973 : 82). Therefore, after 2-3 paragraphs, Caragiale starts a dialogue with his readers, most often addressing them directly, resorting to the addressee being resorted in order to keep the latter’s interest in reading the text, as in the case of *Thursday Chronicle (I)*: “I bet none of you can guess what we heard being said to u ...”. Afterwards the author does not start his narration immediately, but he postpones the moment

– strategically – increasing the tension and the public’ interest with formulae of the following type: “This guy is phenomenal.” Then, there comes another *intermezzo* describing the author’s experience (“We all stood and watched in full holiness”), in order to introduce other **two** (my underlining) subsequent exclamations (“What a charming intelligence and what an unyielding character! Ah!”) and, finally, to formulate the idea of the article: “firmness, unyielding of character, here is the sign of integral natures”. Observing the classical pattern of the rhetorical construction (Sălăvăstru 2010 : 273-297), *naratio* and *argumentation* follow: Caragiale puts his characters in action, in a descriptive paragraph, and again he addresses his interlocutor, repeating the topic of the article. The argumentation is meant to impose the exemplary character (the politically consistent Conservative), and it consists of in the illustration of the impact this character has on the author by narrating his dream on the train (i.e. again the description of a personal experience, the persuasive use of the *Ego*). The readers are expected to sympathize with the author for what he has experienced personally, “and that sympathy is likely to be extended to his thesis” (Fahnestock 1990 : 333).

The *Thursday Chronicle (II)*. [*Have you ever had the imprudence...*] (Caragiale 2001 : 607-609) opens with an *exordium ex abrupto*: the idea that the “Liberals are as inept as wicked” is introduced from the beginning into the dialogue with the readers. “Have you ever had the imprudence to state (this... – my note)?” From the very beginning the reader is hooked, and then Caragiale is just practicing the art of keeping him interested following the same scheme: attention-drawing emphasizes, such as: “Now, let’s see”; then the play of “echo-like” questions and answers: “Did he do it? – he did it... / What’s left to him facing the victim’s stubbornness, the righter, the more dangerous?” Then the answer, formulated in rhetorical questions, followed by inflamed exclamations, in a formula in which the argument/narration alternates with the exclamation, which keeps the (imaginary) dialogue with the reader going, which emphasizes the journalist’s (amazement) reactions. Of the rhetorical figures, in the *Thursday Chronicle (II)*, Caragiale selects comparison: thus, he puts his character in relation with Shakespeare’s Macbeth.

This article is worth remembering also for the use of another persuasion method, namely the one by which the argument includes the revelation, step by step, in a somehow self-referential manner, of the logical mechanism applied by the journalist in his approach. The reader is made a partner in the journalist’s argumentative approach and thus, he is made loyal, his attention is maintained for reading:

“The Collectivists, it is known, **had once intended** (my underlining) and promised to abolish one of the country’s Metropolitan Churches and declare the one in Iasi the only Metropolitan of the Romanian Autocephalous Church. **Eh!** (my underlining) The people noticed that they could not keep their promise in this respect and, as they had been against two chairs, they **thought as follows** (my underlining): as we cannot have only one Metropolitan bishop, we won’t have two either – we shall have *three*. [...]

**Anyone can imagine** (my underlining) how legitimately impatiently are we looking forward the messa... Well, you have seen the message.

No; **the Collectivists are phenomenal!** (my underlining)

**While I was bothering for them** (my underlining), they were finding the means ... [...]. The end of the article is spectacular: a P.S. like a T.V. news offering a (long expected) denouement and an epilogue. But not before “checking the contact” with the reader: “All

these, *by the way* why, do you think? / *By the way*, Ghenadie's question. / Thus all complicated problems are simplified under an intelligent government."

The article *Decadence* (Caragiale 2001 : 599-602) notes the theorization of the rhetoric principles which Caragiale keeps under control and illustrates in his writings: "logics and meaning" represents a small, insufficient part of a successful speech, he says, the value of the speech being given by the "courage, impetuous flush and especially by the daring syntax of the unforgotten classical orators", materialized in numerous exclamations, we add. "I do not ask the orator to enlighten me – I ask him to warm me", I.L. Caragiale states and we find here the creed and stake of his articles of political journalism, and, in my opinion, it is from this perspective that we must look for their value. In a somehow romantic manner of stating the problem, in which the past appears bright compared to the disappointing present, the orator's ideal image is projected: a character full of pathos, boasting, dropping the candleholders, breaking the tribune, cuts his hand in the chips of the broken glass, finally, a character capable of tearing his arm off his shoulder "in a supreme patriotic gesture". "The orator must come to the tribune as angry as a lion and, when he shouts *Brooother!* make me, his brother, jump from my place. He must not say anything from the tribune: (and here we remember Cațavencu from *A Lost Letter*, who, we understand now, is the embodiment of the orator worthy of all our esteem, according to his creator, not of the mean politician we have grown accustomed to associate with the character due to the various literary analyses and stage interpretations). There follows an enumeration of what the orator must do: "he must make me hot; he must make me perspire; he must not give me time to reason; to puzzle me; to make me stagger without giving me time to breathe; to blow my brains against the walls of my head by enormous jumps of sentences, even illogical, even absurd ones, stupid ones if necessary, but warm and spontaneous ones, till he puzzles me, till he makes me grind my teeth and shout like mad: Long Live the People!" Among the persuasive strategies, we can also remark the use of rhetorical questions ("Is this opposition? Are these opposition meetings? [...] Where are the classical times of Roman Liberalism? Where is Slatineanu Hall...?" etc.) and of (sometimes indignant) questions: ("Just listen to the jokes and witty remarks when you are in opposition!").

I.L. Caragiale finds it quite handy to use the fake dialogue in his articles, dramatizing situations or attributing replies to the reader. This multiplication of voices implied a superior persuasive force. (Cvasnîi Cătănescu 2006: 71).

I.L. Caragiale is a direct witness of the period of rising and asserting of modern Romania. He "lived in a passionate stage of national history, a period when Romania was built, as a national modern state, when the recorded progresses were huge, rightly, not in the world of the oppressed village, but especially in the one of the towns and, above all, in that Bucharest which had become Little Paris. [...]. The Union, the reforms of Cuza's reign, which continued during the reign of Charles I, the latter's ascent to the Throne of Romania, independence, the proclamation of the Kingdom, but also the uprising of Ploiesti in 1870 and the anti-dynastic movement, as well as the uprisings of 1888 and especially 1907 also belonged to the great writer's great moments lived directly, as well as the political turmoil of his time, the uncertainties of the first decade half of Charles I's reign, the governing of Lascăr Catargiu of another half decade, the long governing of Ion C. Brătianu and then the governmental rotation." (Berindei 2003: 187). Of the historical events evoked by Caragiale in

his articles we note: the reference to 10 May, the Day of Monarchy, mentioned in the article *Nihil Sine Deo*, the peasants' uprisings of 1907. *From spring to autumn. A few notes*. Many of the political characters of that time are, of course, reflected directly in the political articles: C. A. Rosetti, the politician most often targeted by Caragiale, *Take Ionescu*, *Lascăr Catargiu* and *Alexandru Lahovari* (whom he admires without any reserves), *Dim A. Sturdza*. All of them are examined / evaluated from the point of view of their oratorical art, a major criterion in defining a true politician in I.L. Caragiale's opinion. "The renowned orator" Alexandru Lahovari is appreciated his discourse like the "avenging whip of right judgement and of true feeling". The technique of his oratory is watched and described in detail: "his speeches used to start simply and often even with difficulty; his statement was cold; his argumentation was reduced to a few slow and stressed sentences; but, at a certain moment, with a daring imagination, the orator sudden rises to a fabulous height; then, immediately, another image and another rise; and, from an image to another, the horizon used to widen, corresponding to a vertiginous ascent. Thus, rightly, the old comparison for a great orator was applied to him, too: his speech resembled an eagle's flight, that comes off the ground so clumsily and helplessly, but, a few moments later, floats so proudly and majestically under the blue vault of the sky, far up, above the mountain peaks." (Caragiale 2001 : 686). Caragiale considers that "Lahovari was, maybe, our first and, certainly, last orator of the rigorously classical type" and he appreciated that "his eloquence developed in an old school, where pupils are rarely to be found today (...)" (Caragiale 2001 : 686-687).

The portrait drawn for *Take Ionescu*, a portrait of the ideal orator, illustrates once more the attention paid by un Caragiale to this art and his thorough concern in this direction: "There is something specific in his speeches, as with all great orators, a personal note that defies any method, the comfortable, correct, smart sentence; exquisite clarity and no trace of affectation; all these in a truly literary Romanian language. But beside the exterior, mechanical part, he has got the inner, passionate part, the personal note, which is most important for an orator. With him, the vehement blasters, the tendency of the common-sense which often fights in a revolted manner, the spontaneous cruelty of the wronged justice is very rare. But inner violence, all concentrated in the strature of the exposition and argumentation, boils in his speeches. With him, the argumentation works like a pair of tongs which, having seized, tightens, little by little, coolly, without any haste. But with a cruelty which constantly grows, grows, until crushes." (*Take Ionescu*, Caragiale 2001 : 731-732) We can notice the distinction emphasized by Caragiale between what Aristotle used to call *logos*, here expressed by the clarity and correctness of the language spoken by the orator, but also the structure of the exposition and argumentation and *pathos*, which shows how "inner violence boils". We can also note Caragiale's appreciation of the lack of affectation in the speech.

In connection with the aspects concerning language, we must also mention the role of these political articles in the establishment of the political language in Romania of that time and the fact that they are integral part of a political discourse which was present in the pages of the newspapers of that period. "Almost all our political terminology was fixed and distributed by means of the media of the XIX century, even if some of these terms have an older history and will undergo deep semantic modifications in the subsequent ages" (Chișu 2008 : 91). Therefore, it is a contextual discourse, which preserves specific terms, sometimes



present even in the titles of the articles: *ultimatum* (from *Delicate Diplomacy*), *Reaction*, “national question” (from *The Backstage of the national question*) or *Elections Procedures*. The political language which can be felt as present in the texts is in close connection with the ideology to which the author of the articles resorts: i.e. the ideology of the Conservatives and of the Liberals.

### Conclusions:

We are not referring so much to theatricality to the use of the spoken art in Caragiale’s journalistic text, as it was said so often, since Paul Zarifopol onwards. There is no longer the tendency towards the conversational, characteristic of the political speech generally (Zafiu 2012). Caragiale consciously used persuasive strategies in writing his political articles to lure his readers, proving to know well the oratorical techniques, of rhetoric as a whole. He uses the same persuasive techniques in his plays, too, with the only difference that the reader, in the context of the newspaper articles, the latter is replaced by a character in the play, whose attention and participation in the act of communication is permanently tested (e.g. Efimița in *Conu’ Leonida față cu reacțiunea*). But this is already another story...

I.L. Caragiale’s rhetoric in his political articles is not inherent to the text, as it most often happens today, but “at sight”, attentively built by a master of persuasive strategies, by a declared admirer of – what he himself calls – “the great art of oratory” (*Literature and Politics*, Caragiale 2001 : 656).

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