

## РЕЦЕНЗУВАННЯ І АНОТАЦІЇ

**Милосав Ж. Чаркић**, *Стих и језик*: Београд: Међународно удружење Стил; Институт за српски језик САНУ, 2013, 642 стр., ISBN978-86-82873-37-2 (МУС)

The present monograph was written by the outstanding specialist in stylistics and poetic language **Miloslav Ž. Čarkić**, the famous editor of the highly respected scholarly journal STIL and the author of the book *On Poetic Language* (Beograd 2010) which, in fact, forms a forefront of this representative, analytical and semantically detailed, elaborate volume. It is even more compact than the preceding one which consisted of ten more or less autonomous chapters dealing with crucial problems of the state, status and development of poetic language. I can just repeat the word used in my review of the preceding Čarkić's book that there are only a few specialists who so systematically as Čarkić analyze these problems linked to the linguistic aspect of verse theory.

The author divided his work into three main chapters completed by English conclusion (summary), list of abbreviations, quoted literature, index of names and subjects.

In its very beginning there stands a substantial general explanation of the principle theses of the work. The author assumes that linguistics as the study of language structure in general includes poetics as its integral part. He quotes the works of various of his predecessors including not only Russian ОПОЈАЗ and the whole formalist school (Shklovsky, Jakobson), but also A. A. (O. O.) Potebnya with his *Thought and Language* (1862) which became the real basis of the considerations about the relations of the language, spiritual activity and the poetic language. He did not omit the Russian symbolist poet and theorist A. Bely and, of course, the founder of the historical poetics A. Veselovsky not speaking about the French semiological-structuralist school headed by Roland Barthes.

The poetic text cannot be properly understood without taking into account the significance of its linguistic layer (e. g. the phenomenological stratification of the literary work by R. Ingarden, "the layer of sounds and sound patterns and characters of a higher order; the layer of

semantic units: the meaning of individual sentences and the meaning of whole sentence structures; the layer of schematized aspects through which various objects described in the literary work are manifested; the layer of the objects described, which manifest themselves in the international circumstances created through sentences").

The author of the evaluated book stresses the generally accepted fact that the literary work has been realized in language and existed only through language being filled with the poet's personal poetic content. The language of the poetic work contains both the conventional, generally understood, meanings and the new or newly created, innovated poetic meanings. When the author tried to define the specificity of the verse itself he speaks about a strictly organized language segment, a condensed poetic discourse with a specific graphic, as well as a specific rhythmic and sound organization. Though he deals with this aspect later on, nevertheless I would prefer to define the verse, as the Czech theorist of verse Josef Hrabák put it, as an entity *sui generis* which cannot be identified neither with the word or a word group nor with the sentence or a compound or a complex sentence with a specific syntax patterns. Based on the very definition there are rather the three components: the verse represents the specific phonetic-phonological, graphic and syntactic-semantic entities. I also would not accentuate the music/musical quality of the verse, rather the "beau arts quality" derived from Muses (visual arts and music): therefore the quality of the verse is linked not so much with music though with its phonological quality which is close to the musical one, but still different (J. Hrabák: *Úvod do teorie verše*. SPN, Praha 1978, and other editions, J. Levý: *Problémy srovnávací versifikace*. Olomouc 1963, see also a methodological unit for the teachers of elementary schools: I. Pospíšil: *Tajemství verše*, CERM, Brno 1995).

The second basic starting point of Čarkić's reflections concerns the function and role of repetitions in the poetic language and the language of the verse as such: which is – according to him – grounded in a large number of repetitions: the repetition of sounds and sound sequences, rhyming sound clusters, stressed and unstressed syllables, compositional elements etc. One objection: though the frequency of repetitions and their key-role in the formation of the poetic language of

the verse is dominant, it also occurs in prose and dramatic texts – the same concerns the figures and tropes.

When the author constitutes his main theses on the immanentist presuppositions, he states that the poetic language implies a certain degree of paradox, combining maximum organization with maximum informative value. The co-existence of two extremes in a literary (poetic) text is possible owing to the existence of two conflicting tendencies: towards automation and towards disautomation.

Thus, the main task the author states is to discover the underlying pattern of the substance of the verse as such rooted in the quality of the poetic language as a specific type of communication containing both the ordinary means of everyday interpersonal contact and the specific reflection of the man-and-the-world complex, the language as a specific tool how to understand and to grasp the world or cosmos and the position of man in time in their complexity.

The important aspect of the author's *opus magnum* is the verification on the material of Serbian poetry since the spiritual, medieval verse up to Serbian modernism.

There are, however, two more questions: first, the degree of generalization of such a research limited to the national and language material, second, the Serbian spiritual (religious) poetry is linguistically heterogeneous with a substantial layer of Old Church Slavonic contaminated with the traces of spoken Serbian language and the continual synthesis gradually going on to modern Serbian both everyday and poetic language. Another problem consists in the fact that it would be necessary to distinguish more strictly the language of various kinds or genres of literature (*genera*), their common denominators (*loci communes*, *topoi*) on the one hand and their gaps and contradictions on the other.

In spite of this, the complex, imposing and inspiring research of M. Čarkić represents the most elaborate attempt at the new definition of poetic language in general and the language of verse in particular. His general assumption are being illustrating by an array of immense, vast Serbian material in a huge span of time since the Middle Ages up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first chapter Српска духовна поезија (Serbian Spiritual Poetry) includes five sections: "Pletenije sloves" [Word Weaving or

as I would say "interlacing" which is commonly used in American and British English in various meanings]; Homoiarkton and Homeoteleuton; The Models of Rhyme; Dichotomies and The Structure of Acatlist. According to the author the Serbian religious poets used the "pletenje sloves" style, thus confining themselves within the bounds of the word. They made use of the sound figures that did not reach the level of the word: *assonance, alliteration, the assonance-alliteration relation, homoiarkton, homeoteleuton, paronomasia, rhyme, the etymological figure*, or otherwise used whole words producing: *anaphora, epiphora, anadiplosis, symploce, polyptoton, internal lexical repetitions, composite lexical repetitions* – thus producing a dual effect. By means of repeating identical sound structures which was realized by connecting words with the same beginnings or endings (sometimes with both), the words, regardless of their positions in the context, came into direct contact with each other and were catenated into complex (occasional) signs, which could only function in the given contexts [...]

The sublimity and expressiveness of the style of "*pletenje sloves*" derived from the religious inspiration used in writing and speaking which, being essential elements of human spirituality, could in no way be commonplace or ordinary." (see the author's English summary).

As the "pletenje sloves" was typical of the whole Orthodox Slavonic world, it should be useful to confront this research with the book by Světa Mathauserová (Древнерусские теории искусства слова. Univerzita Karlova, Praha 1976).

The main result of this part of his work consists in the fact that he demonstrated the permeation of various sound patterns, i. d. rhyme, alliteration and other phonic qualities. He even showed the different area and contextual realisations of the sacral language of spiritual, poetry. This part of his research is closely connected with the role of the language as in ancient sacral texts including Old Hebrew (Tóra, Old Testament) containing the enigmatic substance of the language (magic, numerology) as a cipher which needs to be deciphered.

The author is completely right if he assumes that one of the aims of the poetic language including the language of the verse is to demonstrate its sacral functions isolating it from the everyday communicative reality, to show the language as a powerful tool of a

deep grasp of existence. He is also right if he connects the medieval spiritual poetry with that of Romanticism (though the double structure of the medieval Serbian is evident) and Modernism as all the three developmental epochs were mutually connected based on the estrangement as a tool of a more profound understanding of man and his world. The two epochal streams, however, stand aside: realism and postmodernism. While realism accentuated the minimising of the interval between art and reality, postmodernism confronted the literariness and reality: literature (*belles lettres*) and art in general are based on a chain of repetitions, on intertextuality. But the difference between the mentioned periods and streams and those ones (as there is also realist and postmodernist poetry) is not immense. The main aim is the same: to fill the gap between language and reality, to minimize the interval between them (in Czech context of the 1970–1980s it was the so-called Šabouk's team which dealt with this), to revitalize the poetic language on the basis of reality itself (e. g. the prosaisation of poetry) and to restore the past language layers. So there is another task for future researchers to involve also realism and postmodernism, possibly the *avant-garde*, if we take it into consideration as a poetically independent and autonomous phenomenon, into a complex analysis: realist and postmodernist poetry does exist and though it proclaimed rather non-poetic theses it represented only another method of how to develop the language of the verse further. Čarkić masterpiece is the analysis of the acathist with all the Serbian contextual circumstances.

In the second chapter dealing with Serbian Romantic poetry it is characterized by the following words: "As a result, a great reversal occurred in Serbian poetry as well, as poets switched from the undefined, unregulated, non-standardized Slavic-Serbian, to the folk language, standardized by Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, so that the language of Serbian romantic poets was filled with phonological, grammatical and lexical forms which had for centuries lived with the Serbian people, in Serbian oral verse and prose creations. This change was significant, because Vuk's language was going to become the basis of the Serbian standard language which has survived to this day, but it was also significant to the peoples newly formed by separating from the Serbian people: Croats, Bosniaks (Bosnian muslims) and Montenegrins. This chapter also includes

five articles: *Phonometaplasms, Verb Phonometaplasms, Noun Phonometaplasms, Interjections* and *Vukovian Poets*."

Čarkić analysed the poetry of B. Radičević, J. Jovanović Zmaj, Đ. Jakšić and L. Kostić. One of the most attractive parts of his research concerns Serbian interjections in poetry: "Interjections are a very frequent part of speech in Serbian romantic poetry.

It is therefore small wonder that all or most verse lines of a stanza begin with the same interjection, or that a single interjection recurs several times over one or two successive verse lines." So, the usage of interjections in Serbian romantic poetry serves the author as a litmus paper of the boundary between common and poetic language.

The third chapter deals with Serbian modernism. Here the author cannot omit the idealist and neo-idealist philosophy as a source of this poetry including *Ornamental Phonic Structures, Anagramming, Stress and Rhyme, The Distortion of Adjectives* and *Topic, Form, Content, the titles of subchapters of the final part of the book*. The material for this study was represented by the poetry of J. Dučić, M. Rakić, V. Petković Dis, S. Pandurović, and A. Šantić.

The poetry of those poets – due to Čarkić – contained several types of aesthetic information conveyed by ornamental phonic structures, the most prominent being the following: *hedonistic information, code-verse information, phono-motivational information* and *textual cohesion information*.

Čarkić's phenomenal book represents an array of textual analyses trying to synthesize the linguistic, poetological, stylistic, comparative, semiological and – as an understatement – a philosophical conception of the language of the verse as a key to a more detailed and elaborate understanding of poetry as a means of grasping the totality of human existence. Though he should take into account more books and studies from various fields of humanities and from the verse theory in different languages especially, which is, of course, extremely difficult and even utopian, his approach gave immense results. I would even say that the theory of the verse language might be divided as "before and after Čarkić": his knowledge of literary style enabled him to demonstrate that the literary and linguistic studies form one continuous space.

In the context of contemporary verse research Čarkić's book represents the book of the supreme quality. His perfect knowledge of poetry in general and Serbian poetry in particular confirm him one of the leading world experts in verse investigation.

On the grounds mentioned above, I fully recommend this very important book to be published in the nearest future as a substantial contribution to the gradual and permanent process of the cognition of the poetic language in general and the language of verse in particular.

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