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SOME RHETORICAL ASPECTS OF THE NOVEL
THE BRIDGE ON THE DRINA

Their fates were so intertwined that they could not be imagined separately and could not be told separately. Therefore the story of the foundation and destiny of the bridge is at the same time the story of the life of the town and of its people, from generation to generation, even as through all the tales about the town stretches the line of the stone bridge with its eleven arches and the kapia in the middle, like a crown.¹

All definitions of rhetoric, from the oldest ones, those of the Greek and Latin classics, to the most recent, those of the Belgian group μ , orient their focus upon the recipient of communication, upon the listener, reader, viewer, i.e., the audience. All creators of these definitions agree that the rhetorical intention is to influence one's audience for whatever reason, to whatever purpose, in whatever manner. Every unit, every structure, every process in a work of art, in our case, a novel, which is directed at the reader and whose intentional and unintentional, conscious and unconscious function is to influence him, can and should be understood as a unit, structure and process with a rhetorical function.

When one talks about art expressed through language, for our purpose the most useful model of speech, that is, verbal communication, is the widely known and already classical sixpoint model constructed by Jakobson.²

Each of his six elements has its primary function: the sender an emotive one; the message a poetic one; the recipient a conative one; the context a referential one; the contact a phatic one; and the code a metalingual one. Since rhetoric is aimed at the recipient, we are interested first of all in the conative function, which we shall rename and call the rhetorical function of language in literature. It is important, however, to pay attention to the fact that the above mentioned functions are only the primary functions of each of the cited elements and that each of them can also have other, secondary functions. In our instance, this means that each of the remaining five elements may have a rhetorical function, too, which in a literary

work is, in fact, usually the case.

If we cast a generalizing glance upon the works of art which a tradition considers to be good, and take into consideration the impression and influence they exert on the reader — for that is precisely what interests us here the most — then we can say that, in addition to other common traits, they also share the following: consciously or unconsciously, they engage our intellect, our feelings, sensations and senses, our system of morality and our spiritual being. The literary critical rhetoric which strives for fullness and wishes to be global and effective ought to be in a position to account, at least to a certain degree, for some of these characteristics. The traditional study of literature usually explored the surface aspects of style, poetics and rhetoric (mostly tropes and figures), despite the fact that the subliminal, that is, below-the-threshold, subconscious elements and structures are very often the real ones and produce far more powerful rhetorical effects upon us, whether we perceive that or not.

This work represents an attempt to analyze only a few, whether or not potentially subliminal, elements and structures which also perform a subconscious function. Taking into consideration that very frequently we do not know whether or not the writer built some of them in (because even the writer himself often does not know this), the only thing that can be done is to hypothesize which of these elements and structures subconsciously affect us, the readers. The study of rhetoric in literature always involved the exploration of tropes and figures as one of the central rhetorical means. It is not the intention of this work to explore them because, as I already mentioned, they are often the surface portion of the text and its message, that is, easily ascertainable, and because their influence is most frequently deliberate on the part of the author and conscious on the part of the reader. What the reader does not easily detect, however, and therefore perhaps experiences only in-depth, is the use of certain tropes in several functions in the sense in which Jakobson said that signs are most effective when they are simultaneously iconic, indexical and symbolic. Such a multifunctional use of tropes would be worthy of investigation in our novel as well. For instance, the last syntagm of the *motto* of this article, "like a crown," is a trope of comparison, but it also functions as a metonymy-synecdoche, because the crown, that is, the gate (*kapija*), is a part of

the bridge, and both are a part of the people who are a part of the bridge. In fact, the main trope which dominates, which is omnipresent and upon which the whole novel is based is a metonymy synecdoche. Likewise, I shall not pay attention here to types of dialogues, which constitute an important part of the rhetorical means.

A native reader, who belongs to the standard dialect, can notice at the very outset of his communication with the novel both the indicated (marked) structure of the syntagm of the name of the novel and the term employed for the bridge. If the novel's title followed the expected norm of the Serbo-Croatian language, it would be *Most na Drini*, just as impoverished as it is experienced by a foreigner in a translation into his language. The original title, however, is richer, because, besides the normal denotation, it also carries several important connotations. In other words, its rhetorical structure first of all makes us notice it, pay attention to it, and, eventually, reflect upon the reasons for such a structure and for the synonym of *most* actually used. Starting, therefore, with the very name of the novel, the writer suggests to us that what is involved here is not one-dimensional language but an artistic text with several levels. The syntagm of the novel's title immediately draws us into its forthcoming content which alone can answer our potential, initial questions: why the indicated structure and why the word *ćuprija* and not the word *most*? One of the writer's duties is to draw attention to himself and his work, which he successfully does, and his narrator will answer our questions later in the text: the novel's name is an exact quote taken from the people, and the word *ćuprija*, as a metonymy synecdoche, partially represents the Moslems, a group of the novel's protagonists. Likewise, there is another subliminal structure which is built into the vocal dimension of the name and which is exceptionally important for the interpretation of the relationship between the author and the narrator. Namely, as noted by Kolja Mićević², Andrić had to write this novel because his very name is anagrammatized in its very title.

NA DRINI ĆUPRIJA
I. ANDRIĆ

Leaving aside the problem of the novel's genesis, this paranomasia at the very beginning of our contact with it suggests a metonymy/synecdoche as the novel's overall and fundamental trope. As one can see, here the writer's very name is anagrammatically echoed in the most direct manner in the sound of the novel's title. Since everything in a work of art is interdependent and interrelated, functional and significant (and especially in this novel with a pronounced poetic dimension!), our interpretation may be that the author is telling us that he is a part of the novel and that we must keep this in mind. Because the modern theory of literature distinguishes in principle between the author and his narrator, this marked subliminal structure seems to suggest that in our case this distinction should not be made: the writer and the narrator are one and the same. A confirmation of such an analysis can be found (as we shall see later) in both the narrator's use of personal pronouns as well as the author's biography. The complete anagram *ANDRIĆU PRIJA* (*ANDRIĆ IS PLEASED BY*) does not contradict the proposed analysis but adds a greater semantic richness to this subliminal structure: *I. ANDRIĆU PRIJA NA DRINI ČUPRIJA* (*I. ANDRIĆ IS PLEASED BY THE BRIDGE ON THE DRINA*).

The next factor to which attention should be paid at the very outset of the novel is the narrator, that is, his style, his choice of material and his attitude toward the reader.

The first eight paragraphs of the novel — about three and a half pages — contain a scientifically factual and measured, relatively detailed description of Višegrad and its surroundings in a style prevalent in geography books. A careful reader can notice this with ease because he could have expected a somewhat different style in a work of literature. The expectation of a certain stylistic norm is exactly what the narrator is counting on. The marked style of the novel's beginning compels the reader to start thinking of the problems he is reading about and about the manner in which they are presented, i.e., it forces him to cooperate with the narrator. The reader at the same time cannot resist the impression that he can and ought to believe so objective a storyteller.

Since the bridge on the Drina at Višegrad is the novel's main hero, all attention is concentrated on it. Another bridge, in the same small town, on the river Rzav, is also mentioned, but only parenthetically and for the same reason for which writers sometimes mention sec-

ondary characters only in dependent clauses. The reader understands such a message with ease.

After describing the bridge, the narrator begins to speak also about other, human heroes of the novel, addressing us, in passing, as well: "On the bridge and its *kapia* (gate), around it or in connection with it, unfolds and develops, as we shall see, the life of the man from the *kasaba*."³ It is important to observe that the narrator not only has us in view in his activity but even includes us in it.

Together with people the novel also begins to include legends, that is, the "non-scientific" part of its content, about the history of the bridge and its construction and, through a description of the beliefs of Christian and Moslem children, also the first information about Christians and Moslems, two groups of the novel's protagonists and antagonists.

The description and narration still give the impression of scientific objectivity, but the content of certain themes is legendary. The readers are left with no alternative but to accept these descriptions and comments as the only truth and the narrator's choice of themes as the only natural one under the given conditions.

Even when, for example, he talks about the legendary black Arab who permanently lives in a gloomy hall within the bridge and about the asthmatic drunkard Hamid who died on the bridge, because he allegedly saw that black Arab and therefore had to die, the narrator is endeavoring to explain his death in a scientific manner, saying that Hamid, "drunk to the point of unconscious stupor, was caught by the night here, on the bridge, under the open sky, in a temperature of -15 C ."⁵ What can be more scientific and factual than the omniscient narrator's specification of so precise a temperature? Our conclusion is, naturally, that Hamid froze to death in the excessive cold. Such is, therefore, one of our ways of cooperating with the storyteller.

His main rhetorical intention at the outset of the novel is to create the impression in the reader's mind that what he is reading is the real (historical) truth: then, that the narrator is an objective witness we can trust, that he speaks in our name, and that we can surrender to him as a guide through the history of the bridge, the people around it, and all the important events that took place with them and among them.

Every apostrophizing of the reader, more or less direct, is one of the rhetorical acts. When the narrator, talking about the gate as the most important point on the bridge for the life of the small town, says: "And when one becomes acquainted with the local life and ponders it well, one has to tell oneself. . . ." he, the narrator, in a certain sense, gives us, the readers, the privilege of actively participating in the life of the townspeople and of the bridge, and very subtly draws us into his creative laboratory, diminishing the distance among us, the readers, the narrator and the people and events of the novel. For in the narrator's phrase "And when one. . . ." that "one" also includes us, the readers. When we read we in fact usually do not even feel how the narrator manipulates us and draws us both intellectually and emotionally into his narrative web. (Most probably, the above quotation, as far as the narrator is concerned, was given quite unconsciously in relation to the analyzed subconscious effect which it can have on the reader.) Using that phrase "And when one. . . ." that inclusive form of the third person singular (which actually ceases to be the third person and begins to function as an inclusive plural), the narrator is beginning to regard us, beyond our awareness, as his cooperators, that is, he influences us, even unbeknownst to us, to think so ourselves.

In such a manner, the narrator not only disarms us as potential critics from the outside, from another, distant world, but also equalizes us, so to speak, with himself. What can be more flattering to our psyche than that? Naturally, after that, we eventually surrender to him.

After the scientifically objective, neutral and potentially omniscient narrator who is, by the nature of things, removed from us and unknown, we suddenly begin to feel close to him as a living being with whom we shall henceforth share our opinions, feelings and other experiences. The only thing that remains is for the narrator to call us in the first person (whether singular or plural) and to address us with a directly inclusive pronoun in plural. Precisely that is what we get in the following paragraphs.

Having tried with success to include us — more or less, consciously or not — into the circle of the narrator — novel — reader = reader/cooperator, cooperator, and to equalize and unite us again more or less with himself, the narrator most directly includes even himself into the historical protagonists of the novel — a fact we

perceive and now find already quite psychologically satisfying. According to the above model, the narrator here makes use of the emotive function for rhetorical purposes: he influences us by drawing attention to himself. Actually, such support from the narrator is necessary to bring us still closer to one another, to free us from every doubt as to the total fictitiousness of the novel which we continue to read as both real history and a real historical novel written by a direct witness of certain events and member of the tradition about which he writes. Such sentences of the narrator as, for instance, "And how many of ours, in the course of centuries and a series of generations, sat here through dawn or dusk or the hours of the night when the whole starry firmament imperceptibly moves over one's head! Many, so many of us sat here. . . ." have precisely such a function. Already in the next section, the storyteller returns to the expected, normal and neutral style, that is, speaks only as a witness and not as a participant as well. He is talking about the burghers of Višegrad when he says: "Their town is in a favorable location. . . ." merely to remind us again, after a page, at the opening of another chapter, and quite naturally, that we are still participants in the problems of the novel's content.

The second chapter begins with the words: "Now we should return to the times. . . ." The use of the pronoun of the first person plural is not due to reasons of simple "rhetorical plurality," but to rhetorical reasons in the sense of the analysis proposed here. This "Now we should. . ." reminds us of the already read and helps us to become aware, if possible, of what was earlier suggested to us only subconsciously — to accept our intimacy and cooperation with the narrator. Clearly, the main reason for all this is his desire to bring us psychologically to a state of mind that would enable us to empathize with the heroes of the novel. Having by means of a fine manipulation converted us to his side, and feeling certain that we shall remain present as cooperators of his action, the narrator can henceforth leave us alone and continue his neutral narration as a historical witness of the bridge and the people of the small town.

The future builder of the bridge -- who is otherwise, through the bridge, always synecdochically present in the novel -- was taken away from Bosnia to Istanbul as a ten-year-old *acami-oglan* (tribute-boy). For every storyteller that wants to influence his reader's emotions (and that is one of the main activities of a good rhetorician)

there is no more ideal opportunity than the use of a forcible abduction of children, in this case of ten-year-old boys, from their parents and relatives, and first of all their mothers. Who would not take advantage of such a chance in order to win the reader over even more intimately?! The tragedy accompanying the abduction of the boys is very predictable and no justification for its description is necessary: we, the readers, would accept the description of that event as something most natural. But our quality storyteller, who now speaks even in our name, does not satisfy himself only with the above mentioned logical justification: he gives this event, emotionally traumatic for all of us, a far more important artistic function, by integrating it into one of the main (or even the main?) reasons for the building and construction of the bridge. The tragic experience of the boys' separation from their loved ones and the lived-through misery of parting, along with the description of other, accompanying events, remained indelibly engraved somewhere in the depths of the bridge's ideal builder. "As a physical discomfort somewhere within himself — as a black stripe which from time to time cuts for a second or so the chest in two and causes strong pain — the boy took along his recollection of this place. . ." and "all that lay down and settled into that physical discomfort which remained in the body since that November day and which later never completely left him, despite the change of his way of life, faith, name and homeland."¹⁰ There is no doubt that at the end of the novel's second chapter, where this is talked about, we, the readers, are aware of all the interconnections and that we, too, like our hero — the bridge-builder — are beginning to feel some sadness in our hearts. The storyteller has done his job well not only as a psychologist and artist but also as an effective realizer of the rhetorical function of communication in which we are participating.

It was mentioned above several times that our storyteller is a so-called omniscient narrator. But the creator of that narrator, our celebrant Ivo Andrić, knows that he must not exaggerate in the degree of credibility of his narrator's omniscience, because the writer must always keep in mind even the "ideal" reader, that is, the one who knows what is and what is not believable and possible. This is why the writer of this historical novel will devote much less textual space to earlier events of the bridge and around it than to the latest ones. About two thirds of the novel's text are apportioned to the events

of the last thirty-five years, and only about one third to those of the remaining three hundred and sixty-three years. This means, on the average, that each of the first three hundred and sixty-three years takes up little more than one third of one page of the text, and each of the last thirty-five years about eight pages. Such an attitude of the writer of a historical novel toward the material he is working on is both honest and logical and psychologically and artistically justified: this is why we, the readers, believe the narrator the more, take him the more seriously, appreciate him the more and identify the more closely with the events, problems, people and their feelings, all of which is, of course, the very intention of our great writer.

In a certain sense, our novel has three principal heroes: first of all the bridge, then the people around it and, naturally, Alihodža Mučević, as the representative of one of the small town's "oldest and most prominent"¹¹ families. For, after all, "more than anyone else, they consider themselves called upon to watch over the bridge, and are somehow responsible for its fate, because the bridge, at least architecturally, was a component part of the great religious endowment (*vakuf*), which they (once V.M.) administered."¹² That the bridge is the principal hero of the novel we know not only from its title but also from the way the author treats the structure. *Inter alia*, of the possible forty-eight opening and closing passages of the twenty-four chapters of the novel the bridge is not mentioned directly, indirectly or metonymico-synecdochically only in some fifteen or sixteen of them (seven or eight times in the opening and eight times in the closing passages of chapters). Just as, normally and in the nature of things, the beginning and the end of the novel are rhetorically full of additional meaning, so the beginnings and ends of chapters are also repositories of special rhetorical features. When the main hero, the bridge, is mentioned in the two thirds of the opening and closing passages of chapters, we, the readers, willy-nilly, develop within ourselves a certain rhythm of expectation that the bridge should be mentioned at the beginning and end of chapters. The logic of the presence and absence of such references is very clear: it is left unmentioned only in periods in which the narrator concentrates his narration upon events beyond the bridge. The only and most important exception occurs in the last chapter: the description of the last twenty hours or so of the life of the bridge is given through the description of the last twenty hours or so of another hero of the

novel. Alihodža Muteveliç, whose fate, as we also see at the end of the novel, is inseparably bound to that of the bridge: when one of them expires, so does the other.

The novel offers a great wealth of other rhetorical schemes worthy of mention and elaboration which affect us even unconsciously, but I shall end with only one of them. One has the impression that the narrator is restraining himself from providing frequent emotional and reflexive descriptions of nature, but when he does it, these descriptions are — although uncommonly restrained and objective — real flights of poetry, imagination and feeling. If the function of rhetoric is to utilize synesthetic effects to satisfy more than one of the senses, to influence feelings, including the esthetic ones, to stir and touch us emotionally, and, through all of these, also to influence our thoughts, then the following passage from the seventh chapter does precisely that:

The day's warmth still beat up from the stone terraces but with the twilight there was a cool refreshing air from the water. The middle of the river shone, and near the banks under the willows it turned a shadowy dull green. All the hills around were reddened by the sunset, some strongly and others scarcely touched. Above them, filling the whole south-western part of that amphitheatre which could be seen from the *kapia* were summer mists of continually changing colour. These mists are among the most beautiful sights to be seen in summer on the *kapia*. As soon as the daylight grows strong and the sun leaps up, they appear behind the mountains like thick white silvery-grey masses, creating fantastic landscapes, irregular cupolas and countless strange buildings. They remain thus all day long, heavy and unmoving above the hills surrounding the town which swelters in the sun. The Turks who in early evening sat on the *kapia* had those mists always before their eyes like white silken Imperial tents which in their imagination evoked vague shapes of wars and forays and pictures of strange and immeasurable power and luxury, till darkness extinguished and dispersed them and the skies created fresh magic from the stars

and moonlight.

Never could the wonderful and exceptional beauty of the *kapia* be better felt than at that hour on such summer days. A man was then as if in a magic swing; he swung over the earth and the waters and flew in the skies, yet was firmly and surely linked with the town and his own white house there on the bank with its plum orchard about it. With the solace of coffee and tobacco, many of those simple citizens, who owned little more than those houses and the few shops in the market-place, felt at such times the richness of the world and the illimitability of God's gifts. Such a bridge, lovely and strong, could offer all this to men and would continue to offer it for centuries to come.¹³

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¹Ivo Andrić, *Na Drini Čupriji*, Sabrana dela Iva Andrića, Udruženi izdavači, Beograd 1981, knjiga prva, p. 29.

²Roman Jakobson, "Lingvistika i poetika," LINGVISTIKA I POETIKA, Nolit, Beograd 1966, pp. 289-295.

³Obaveštenje o parafraziranom komentaru Kolje Miševića dobio sam od profesora Londonskog univerziteta Dušana Puvčića 31 maja 1985. (I obtained the information about the paraphrased commentary of Kolja Mišević from Professor Dušan Puvčić of the University of London on May 31, 1985).

⁴Andrić, p. 12, emphasis mine.

⁵Ibid., p. 14.

⁶Ibid., p. 18.

⁷Ibid., p. 18, emphasis mine.

⁸Ibid., p. 19, emphasis mine.

⁹Ibid., p. 21, emphasis mine.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 25 and 26.

¹¹Ibid., p. 135.

¹²Ibid., p. 136.

¹³Ibid., pp. 113-114.

¹⁴The English text of the motto and the concluding quotation come from pages 21 and 96-97, respectively, of Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina*, translated by Lovett F. Edwards, New York, the Macmillan Co., 1959.