

A LANGUAGE OF COMIC IN THE TRADITIONAL REPERTOIRE OF NOMADIC PUPPETEERS

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Abstract: The performances of Czech and Slovak nomadic puppeteers should be understood in the broader context of the activities of nomadic theatrical societies from Italy, Germany and Holland in the territory of former Czechoslovakia at the turn of the turn of the 17th century. They came with a repertoire referring to European literary tradition (Doctor Faustus, Don Juan), hagiography (Saint Genoa), etc. These plays have gradually undergone the process of folklorization and domestication. This was reflected e.g., in the inclusion of characters of domestic provenance (folklore types of peasants) in the character of the main protagonist (Gašparko), but especially in the language and language comedians. The repertoire of the most famous families of nomadic puppeteers comprised a corpus of several dozen plays, which they passed on from generation to generation mainly through oral tradition.

The issue is that the numerous written evidence about this kind of repertoire found in a lot of archives largely consists just of information on performing puppeteers, places of their business and the lists of plays they used to perform. Apart from the fragmentary memories of some people who can still remember, there are no written records of scripts of plays. Therefore, this article uses a unique authentic transcript of 28 plays from the family repertoire of the Anderle puppeteers' family from Radvaň narrated from memory and recorded in 1972 by the puppeteer Bohuslav Anderle (1913 – 1976). This study presents an analysis and synthesis of language comedy in the traditional plays of the Anderle family, a group of nomadic puppeteers representing three generations who performed in Slovakia from 1909 to 2008. The sample used for this study was drawn from their repertoire.

Keywords: puppet theatre, nomadic puppeteers, traditional repertoire, Gašparko, comical, laughter, language and speech

Puppet theatre represents a distinctive aesthetic phenomenon within the European cultural and artistic tradition. The diversity of manifestations of this kind of theatre, the ways of its performances, repertoire, etc. bring with them (especially in the first half of the 20th century) unclear classification and terminology. In our domestic (Slovak and Czech) language area we mean the traditional puppet theatre, popular puppet theatre, the theatre of nomadic puppeteers, etc.

Concepts of “high” or “low” culture are problematic in a discussion of traditional puppetry, and in the present study they are used fairly broadly as convenient labels rather than absolute categories. The distinction between “high” and “low” culture is a particularly nineteenth-century phenomenon and corresponds to the growing awareness that the poorer classes had a culture of their own which did not necessarily correspond to that recognised by the governing classes (McCormick & Pratasik, 2004, p. 9).

The first English comedians arrived in Europe at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries (Bartoš, 1963). The term comedians may have semantically pejorative tinge but in reality, it referred to nomadic groups of musicians, actors, singers, magicians, jugglers, tightrope walkers, etc. who often performed with visual attractions of various panopticons, panoramas, mechanical theatres and characters, and eventually with puppets. Apart from their own puppet and amateur theatricals, from the beginning of the 20th century, nomadic puppeteers in Slovakia began founding the so-called entertainment establishments with amusement park attractions (carousels, shooting galleries, swings, etc.). The locals referred to them as:

komediant (komédijant, komedijant, komiédant, komendijant, komendant) ... komediáš (komédijáš)¹ (Ripka & Buffa, 1994, p. 807).

The theatre of nomadic puppeteers in Czechia and Slovakia follows the mode of performance of previously mentioned nomadic theatrical troupes, which used to arrive in Central Europe from the west of the continent (Bartoš, 1963).

Marionette troupes were family businesses and this was important for their economic viability. The most common constitution of a troupe was husband and wife, their children, if any, and one or more assistants (McCormick & Pratasik, 2004, p. 29).

The best-known puppeteers in Slovakia were the Stražan, Dubský, Anderle and Nosálek families. The nomadic puppet theatre repertoire is usually

¹ In the English translation, I give the original text in cases where the comic image is based on semantics (i.e., translatable meanings). I have sacrificed the original nuances of form and content of the text because the essence of the comic has remained. In cases where the comic image is based on the language, its onomatopoeia, on the collocation of native words and words from other languages, I keep the original text in Slovak.

made up of plays inspired by European literary tradition (*Ján Doktor Faust*, *Don Juan*), plays of the lives of Saints (*The Life of St. Genoa*), plays inspired by antic mythology (*Hercules*), historical plays (*Battle of Biela hora*), plays from the period of the national revival (*Merry Collier*), plays related to the deeds of Slovak national heroes (*Jánošík*), etc. In addition to the repertoire taken over from the European and Czech theatrical tradition, at the beginning of the 20th century nomadic puppeteers started to introduce domestic repertoire, originally intended for drama theatre. Nomadic puppeteers had a relatively extensive repertoire of plays that were preserved within the families mainly through oral tradition. Only exceptionally did they have hand-written notebooks, or printed scripts of plays.

The core of this work, targeted at language comic in the plays of nomadic puppeteers, is formed predominantly by the repertoire of the Anderle family from Radvaň. It consists of the body of 28 plays which had been tape-recorded by heart by the puppeteer Bohuslav Anderle (1913 – 1976) for his son, the puppeteer Anton Anderle (1944 – 2008) in 1972. The digitalized version, transcript and reconstructed version of this recording was published in an extensive text ... (Hamar, 2010). From the point of view of the issue and alongside the anthologies of the Czech repertoire (Bartoš, 1952; 1959), this work presents the most extensive documentation of the traditional repertoire of nomadic puppeteers in Czechia and Slovakia. The existing authentic recordings enabled the author to transcribe and reconstruct the paralinguistic phenomena, onomatopoeia, rhythm and expressive tone of the spoken text.

The language comic in the plays of nomadic puppeteers is part of the structure of the comic image of syncretic character. This means that from the very and eventually acknowledgement of a dialect when saying texts (mainly by characters from rural environment). Three hundred years ago it was even possible to mention the inclination towards the home language (naturally, the nomadic troupes of puppeteers tried to make the domestic audience understand them) but this is a different story. However, lots of Czechisms serve as a good example of such "assimilation" as they were preserved in the repertoire of nomadic puppeteers in Slovakia until the 20th century thanks to the historically inseparable Czech and Slovak tradition (e.g., the names themselves: *lútky – bábký* [puppets], *lútkové divadlo – bábkové divadlo* [puppet theatre]).

The comic of characters is based on the basic typological classification of characters in the traditional puppet theatre. Traditional puppet theatre ranks among the dramatic genres built upon certain conventions (Bogatyriov, 1973, p. 117). This means that a viewer knows from the very first appearance of a characters on the stage what to expect from them, what kind of deeds and properties will characters be defined by, or what kind of language they will use. This semantic level of characters naturally involves the expected sympa-

thies or antipathies for characters and their deeds. A viewer knows immediately who the villain is and who the hero is, who funny is and who evokes fear.

beginning we must be aware of who is speaking, what is being said and how it is being said. Who is speaking is suggested by the comic quality of the characters. What is being said will be learned from the situational comic and from the context of goings on at the stage, while how it is being said presents the verbal comic itself. Naturally, all the three kinds of the comic - character, situational and verbal comic are interconnected; they overlap and transcend.

Historically, the traditional European repertoire of nomadic puppeteers underwent the process of folklorization in its domestic environment, thus applying in this division the complexity or syncretism of artistic and non-artistic forms of folklore. This means that there are no strict borderlines between the comic of characters, situations, or the verbal comic but all the three categories are ultimately a syncretic part of the same (in our case the comic) image. What exactly does the process of folklorization introduce into the repertoire of nomadic puppeteers? It is mainly puppets – characters from the vernacular background (peasants) dressed in stylized folk costumes; local names and facts (e.g., local geographical names, specific local events and specific people); folk songs inserted in play scripts; use of popular phrases, proverbs and sayings,

The simplified character classification will be illustrated by Jung's² theory of archetypes (Jung, 1998) in which he mentions, among others, archetypes of a wise old man, a hero, a divine child, but predominantly the archetype of the character of a trickster – a fool (Jung, 1998, p. 277). This archetype represents a psychological concept of the central comic character of Slovak (Gašparko, Gašpar) and Czech (Kašpárek, Kašpar). In traditional puppet theatre, before we move over to the situational and verbal comic of this character, it is necessary to point out the visual image of Gašparko as a puppet as it is closely related to the comic of his character. The comic of Gašparko's character is enhanced by his grotesque body concept. All preserved historic puppets of Gašparko (up to the mid-20th century) look like a boy with an image of an old man (youthful face, but a face with beard and moustache). This visual effect represents the principle of a grotesque carnival body concept in which two bodies merge into one (Bachtin, 1975, pp. 239-286). Youthful playfulness, naivety, impudence, irresponsibility, and reckless courage (paradoxically also fear and cowardice) share one body with wisdom, foresight, and life experience of an old man.

Other comic characters included mainly folklore types from vernacular environment, the simpletons Škrhola and Trčko³. It was mainly the character

² Carl Gustav Jung (1875 – 1961). Swiss psychiatrist, founder of analytical psychology.

³ In Czech linguistic environment Matěj and Kuba, uncle Škrhola, or just Škrhola.

of Matej Škrhola⁴ that represented an integral part of comic scenes in many plays. Škrhola symbolized lower social class and the influence of folklore was most demonstrated particularly in this character. He was dressed in a folk costume, spoke in a dialect, and used vernacular phrases. He was a typical representative of *vox populi*. More than using his brain, he brandished a stick, but he was brave, had a good heart and was always in good mood.

It is quite understandable that an individual who, when compared to us, puts too much effort into their physical performance and too little effort into their mental performance is found funny, thus making our laugh in both cases represent our own sweet superiority which we appropriate over them (Freud, 1991, p. 134). Comedy begins right at the point where a stranger fails to impress us (Bergson, 1993, p. 64).

The so called⁵ ranks among the best-known scenes in the traditional repertoire of nomadic puppeteers. It can be identified in an almost identical form in the final scene of the play *Ján Doctor Faust* (Hamar, 2010, pp. 391-415) or the play *Don Juan* (Hamar, 2010, pp. 61-88). In both plays, Gašparko and Škrhola are guarding their Master (Doktor Faust or Don Juan) from devils.

The development of comic dialogue is the main feature of these scenes in which there is maximum relationship between the puppeteer, the characters and the audience. Some of the comedy is purely physical, such as the way in which Kasper⁶ constantly runs around his master and changes the focus of both thought and action, even drawing Don Juan along in his wake, or when he is pushed and sits down on the ground or sticks his bottom in the air. The ghost, a skeleton with a hat and cloak and the tendency to float a little off the ground, has a cavernous voice and clacking jaw. Its attempts to fly away with a wildly kicking Kasper, whom it finally has to drop, are especially comic (McCormick & Pratasik, 2004, p. 176).

Don Juan is exhausted after his wanderings through the woods. He and Gašparko drop in a deserted inn and they want to go to bed. However, in his dream a devil flies in. Don Juan gets scared and asks Gašparko to watch over him for a reward. Gašparko agrees but after the devil flies through the bedroom, he gets scared and refuses to go on guarding Don Juan who advises him to invite the woodcutter Škrhola to take over the guard. Škrhola accepts and begins to guard. Marching up and down the inn, he is guarding. One after another, devils and the Death fly in. In the end, after the fight with Škrhola, devils and the Death take Don Juan to Hell.

MATEJ: An-cvaj, an-cvaj, an-cvaj, an-cvaj...⁷

⁴ In some plays also Matej Krepči, Matej Čierny, or just Matej.

⁵ Guarding.

⁶ Gašparko (author's note).

⁷ In German: Ein, zwei.

DEVIL: Brrr!

MATEJ: Čô? Čo chceš?

DEVIL: Brrr!

MATEJ: No Ťen vrč, vieš, aĽe ak Ťa opál'im Ťín špacírštokon, tak sa smiechu nezdržíš, no.

DEVIL: Brrr! Uhni z cesty!

MATEJ: Čo ti je? Hybaj sem, nech Ťa vidím! He. Ukáz sa, no, no! (Hits the devil with a stick.)

DEVIL: Brrr! (He flies away.)

MATEJ: No len hybaj, hybaj, hybaj, hybaj, hybaj, no hybaj! No pod'! No vidíš, už nepríde,

lebo sa ma bojí. Hehéj, ja Ťa naučím, neboj sa, veď ja som slúživ u ajnunzibcich infant'eri regimente⁸... (Death approaches Matej from behind and lifts him.)

MATEJ: Hí! Jáj, jáj, jáj, toto je, já! (Death drops him and Matej falls down.)

DEATH: (Calling to Don Juan.) Čo sa necháš strážiť? Hodina tvoja odbila, pôjdeš s nami!

DON JUAN: Čo?! Jaj, ja sa dám na pokánie!

DEATH: Neskoro! Hodina tvoja prichodí!

DEVIL: Brrrrrrrr! (Carrying Don Juan between them, they fly to the hell.) (Hamar, 2010, pp. 87-88).

The situational comic is demonstrated through comic sketches in the form of intermezzo, interlude or digression. The comic usually springs from ordinary situations unexpectedly caused by the comic character. The sketches make no semantic shifts within the context of the play, they rather represent what Immanuel Kant⁹ wrote about the comic:

Laugh is an affectation from a sudden turning of the thrill of expectation into nothing. (Kant, 1975, p. 142).

In one scene of the play, Don Juan calls Gašparko to come and help him immediately. Gašparko does not feel like helping his Master, so he lingers claiming that he is getting dressed. Off stage, he is commenting on everything, announcing that first he puts on his coat, then the trousers, vest, shirt, and eventually his underwear. Astonished, Don Juan asks him why he is putting on his clothes in reversed order. At last, Gašparko runs out informing his Master that he has had an accident: instead of putting his leg in his trousers, he had put it in a pot with lime.¹⁰

⁸ In German: Einundsiebzigstes Infanterieregiment.

⁹ Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804), representative of German classic philosophy and aesthetics.

¹⁰ The original texts contain lots of digressions, repeated dialogues, etc. However, as far as the topic is concerned, to quote the full-text as recorded and reconstructed would be disturbing. The texts have therefore been shortened to emphasize the substance of the comic images, including linguistic comic (author's note).

GAŠPARKO¹¹: Len pockajte, pane, uz aj bezím, len co si obleciem kabát, nohavice, vestu, koselu a spodky.

DON JUAN: No kto to kedy videl, obliekať si najprv kabát, nohavice, potom vestu a tak košeľu a spodky?

GAŠPARKO: Pane, nekricte tak!

DON JUAN: Čo sa ti stalo?

GAŠPARKO: No co sa mi stalo? No co som mal vopchať nohu do nohavice, ja som ju vopchal pod posteľ do vápenného hrnca (Hamar, 2010, p. 62).

Of course, the situational comic is based on the goings on at the stage and the context of the dramatic text. However, at times the situational comic can spring from an impulse coming from the "outside". The above-mentioned process of folklorization comprised also topicality and improvisation targeted at local culture, local characters, etc. During their travels, puppeteers used to stay at one place for several days. They had to prepare the stage and tent at the village green, park their trailers, prepare benches for the audience, promote the performance, etc. Puppeteers travelled along familiar routes, so the villagers knew them. When they arrived at the destination, the 'principal' (usually the head of the family in the role of the theatre manager) tried to learn about comic events that he could use in some of their plays. The puppeteer Bohuslav Anderle (1913 – 1976) remembered such a story told to him by the locals before a performance of their theatre at Utekáč¹². In the village, during a pig-slaughtering feast, a farmer had almost killed his relative instead of the pig. Anderle incorporated this domestic scene in the situation comic in the play with puppets performed the following days (Hamar, 2008, p. 40). His brother Jaroslav Anderle (1916 – 1982) then remembered that this scene used to be performed at Utekáč long after the man who had almost killed the other man had long been dead too (Hamar, 2008, p. 43).

The discovery that we have the power to ridicule somebody opens the sources of unsuspected gain of comic pleasure and gives rise to highly advanced technique. It is equally easy to ridicule oneself as others (Freud, 1991, p. 130).

The situational comic overlaps with the verbal comic because apart from contexts, comical situations arise predominantly thanks to scripts as the main action bearers on the stage. The verbal comic is represented by language and speech. Similar division is recognized in modern linguistics thanks to Ferdinand de Saussure's¹³ work *Course in general linguistics*¹⁴. Saussure recognizes

¹¹ One of the elements of Gašparko's language comedy is the principle of turning over the correct pronunciation of sounds – sibilants in accord with the carnival principle of the 'reversed world', i.e., Gašparko uses the so called 'sharp sibilants', 'c, s, z' instead of the 'blunt sibilants', č [tʃ], š [ʃ], ž [ʒ] and vice versa.

¹² Utekáč – a village in the district of Poltár (Malohont region).

¹³ Ferdinand de Saussure (1857 – 1913). Swiss linguist, founder of linguistic structuralism and semiology.

language (langue) and speech (parole) (Saussure, 1996). This division acquires a specific character just within the theatre of nomadic puppeteers. This takes us to the issue of text interpretation which is not to be encountered in the theatre of "live actors". The elementary questions of verbal comic are:

What is being said and how is it being said?! In drama theatre, roles are divided and actors perform their characters in one key. This suggests that the idea of how the character speaks is clear to the viewer from the beginning of the performance till its end. However, in the nomadic puppet theatre actors (usually one or two) manipulate with several (often more than ten) puppets. Each puppet – character represents features which must be expressed by the puppeteer through his voice or expressiveness of his vocal expression, e.g., if the character is a man or a woman¹⁵; if the person is old or young; whether the character belongs to an ethnic minority; whether the person represents nobility or whether they are lowly; whether the character is infernal (Devil, Death), etc. One or two puppeteers must thus be able to use a multiple range of voices by which they define the way of speaking of individual characters.¹⁶

Paralinguistic and extralinguistic factors have their importance in speech as do articulation anomalies in the form of comical pronunciation of sounds (Brouk, 1941, pp. 20-21), etc. Typical for Gašparko's speech is the carnival principle of turning his speech "upside down". Gašparko softens the non-softened consonants, while on the other hand he ignores the softening mark used in normal speech.

In bigger towns, girls love meeting by a well or by a brook to collect water. Many come there and keep gossiping for a long time until making their masters angry. Now, I will go to a well and will be waiting there until some girls arrive (Hamar, 2010, p. 166).

In his speech, Gašparko often uses interjections and non-lexical means of speech to emphasize the expressive character of his performance, e.g.:

Trřřřřramtamtam, tamtamtam, tamtamtamtam ... Jajajajáj! ... Nóóóóó ... (Hamar, 2010).

The articulation particularities of evidently comic effect also include lisping or stuttering. In connection with the carnival comic, Bachtin points at Schneegans'¹⁷ note on stutter according to which there is no doubt that:

¹⁴ The book is compiled of Ferdinand de Saussure's lectures. It was published after his death in 1916.

¹⁵ In accordance with the nomadic puppeteers' tradition, puppet theatre used to be performed by men only and they had to take on women's characters as well.

¹⁶ For more details on this issue see: Rusko & Hamar, 2006.

¹⁷ Heinrich Schneegans (1863 – 1914). German writer and author of *Geschichte der grotesken satire* (1894).

... a stutter is play acting a childbirth. He is pregnant with words that he cannot deliver. (Bachtin, 1975, p. 243).

The comic of stutter is undeniable (Brouk, 1941, p. 22). Moreover, in a puppeteer's performance it is play-acted because it is not his real speech defect. Such an example is the character of the moneylender, Nikodémus in the play *Návrat do domova*¹⁸ (Hamar, 2010, pp. 292-324).

NIKODÉMUS: Ja som, prosím, ru-ru-ru-ru-ru-ku, ruku, prosím, ruku, ruku, ruku, ruku, ruku, ruku, prosím! ... Ja s-som Nik-Nik-Nik-Nikodémus. Pán Nikodémus, pán Nikodémus, Nikodémus, Nikodémus (Hamar, 2010, p. 306).

In the traditional repertoire of nomadic puppeteers, characters of other ethnicities appear too (Roma, Hungarians, Germans, Jews). Their speech is directly related to established popular stereotypes which also embrace the stereotypical ideas of their speech. They can thus be encountered when telling jokes in which some of the protagonists belong among the so-called strangers. If the character is of German or Hungarian ethnicity, it is natural to find in their speech Hungarian or German words (often garbled). The changes in strangers' articulation are emphasized by actors also through exaggerated intonation. The Slovak language in the extract is marked by ignorance of the language.

IŠTVÁN¹⁹: Hytila ten legéň²⁰! Hí! Megajčák, megajčák! Te, te, te, bitang! Hytila ho, hytila, hytila!... Ty bola hospodár, ja kázala robila a ty neprišla. Ja dala dvadsaťpäť lieskova palica a ja za, zavrela mit gondol, te, te, te mitang, te gazember²¹! (Hamar, 2010, p. 472).

A Roma's speech is represented by denasalized voice, i.e., as if the character were speaking with blocked nose. Typically for the Roma phonetic inventory, some vowels are aspirated (pánovia – phánovia; ako – akho). Words from the Roman language can also appear in scripts.

RAJNOHA: Rome, kde si, Rome, tu ti drakukučiny porazine tute, Rome!²² (Hamar, 2010, p. 608).

A Jew's speech phonetics is influenced by the Yiddish dialect. Voiced sounds are pronounced as unvoiced e.g., "d" as "t". When striving to imitate Yiddish, characters lisp or frequently mispronounce German words.

WEISS: (Enters stage. Bows) Guten tág vinšin, guten tág vinšin, guten tág vinšin, her generál, guten tág vinšin! ... Herr generál, ich komen zí, ja som sa prišiel.

¹⁸ Homecoming.

¹⁹ He contorts Slovak and Hungarian.

²⁰ In Hungarian: legényi.

²¹ In Hungarian: gazember.

²² Drakukučiny porazine tute rome – a curse in the Roma language meaning: May cancer kill you, you Gypsy. In Roma: Raka chudes porazinel thut roma.

Zind zı zó herclich, zind zı zó gute. Visen zı, herr general, di unzere lojte zó arm, zó arm. To nemá kajn zicher, to nemá kajn krejcér²³ (Hamar, 2010, p. 307).

Articulation deviations are often encountered when pronouncing difficult, mainly foreign words. Even here, the altered articulation or mispronounced words have comical effect. Their origin may either be dialectological or caused by ignorance (Brouk, 1941, p. 26), e.g.:

škurnaj²⁴, šrank²⁵, špádia²⁶, vio²⁷, aveňjú²⁸, bildung²⁹, iudikabeles³⁰, igromantika³¹, kod'ila³² etc. (Hamar, 2010, pp. 653-655).

Mispronunciation may cause various word deformations and changes in their meaning, or reversions³³ e.g.:

duch – dub, nemecky – menecky, grobian – Florián, rytier – trychtier, knieža – ježa, turnaj – škurnaj, dukát – buchnát, na pravici – na rajnici... (Hamar, 2010).

Bergson³⁴ recognizes two types of the comic. One is expressed by language. It can be easily translated into other languages. The other type of the comic is the one that is created by language (Bergson, 1993, p. 52).

The other comic is usually impossible to translate. It owes its form to sentence construction and words selection. It does not make statements through language about specific abstractedness of people or events. It underlines the abstractedness of the language itself. It is the language itself that becomes comical (Bergson, 1993, p. 52).

Using dialect may also be defined as articulation deviation (Brouk, 1941, p. 25), particularly with rural characters. For the Anderle troupe, such was the simpleton Škrhola. He spoke in central Slovakian dialect (the Anderles came from Radvaň³⁵). In the play *Kuranto and Špádolino* the robbers want to hang

²³ Contorts German with an expression in German language: Guten Tag wünschen her General. Ich kommen sie Sind zu herzlich, zins sie so gute. Visen sie her General, di unsere Leute so arm. Kein sicher, kein Greizer.

²⁴ Tournament (mispronounced).

²⁵ Rank, order, brotherhood (mispronounced).

²⁶ Champagne (mispronounced).

²⁷ Travel, march (Lat.).

²⁸ Street, avenue (Engl.).

²⁹ Education, upbringing (Ger.).

³⁰ You'll be sentenced (Lat.).

³¹ Wizardry (Greek).

³² Mare (mispronounced).

³³ Reversal, reversal of the meaning of words.

³⁴ Henri Bergson (1859 – 1941). French philosopher, representative of philosophy of life.

³⁵ Today part of Banská Bystrica.

He who fights with sword, by sword he will perish! (Hamar, 2010, p. 72).

Latin sentences:

Elementum et festum Plutonem ut a páris sidore plemenem⁴⁸ (Hamar, 2010, p. 395).

Rhetoric figures or exclamations are frequent too:

Thus, I have the honour to part with you/to say goodbye! (Hamar, 2010, p. 166).

Oh, thank you, dear God, for ever I'll worship and hail you! (Hamar, 2010, p. 347).

The speeches of noble characters become prominent mainly in long, philosophizing monologues which usually open a performance (e.g., in the plays *Don Juan*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Prince Oldrich*, *Count Ruthard* and others). Such is the monologue at the beginning of the first act of the play *Ján Doktor Faust* (Hamar, 2010, pp. 391-415). Faustus is pondering over the futility of his life. Even though he has acquired top education, he is unable to help his grandfather. He generalizes his disappointment and projects it to all mankind as nobody is satisfied with their status, everyone seeks more importance. This way of thinking later makes Faustus sign his deal with the Devil.

FAUST: (coming out to the stage) Look for luck in your job! Everyone has their bit of luck, everyone has them lucky planet. The only thing is to take advantage of the right moment. And yet, I, Ján, Doctor Faust/us of Milan, have been so highly schooled that I can call myself doctor. However, not doctor of Medicine or doctor of law, but doctor according the scripture. But what is the point of my studies as I am not able to support my elderly father at all? When I ask a peasant: "Are you happy with your status?" he replies: "No! I'd rather be a squire." I ask a squire: "Are you happy with your status?" He says: "No! I'd rather be a baron." Baron to earl, earl to prince, prince to king, king to emperor... Everyone wants to climb higher and higher, and I should be left just with my being a doctor? No! No way. I must try something better (Hamar, 2010, p. 391).

At first sight, this is not verbal comic. However, the contrast between the presented noble style and the substance of the traditional puppet theatre performance makes these speeches sound comical.

Enumeration is a frequent stylistic procedure used in the plays of nomadic puppeteers to achieve the effect of language comic. It is used almost exclusively in speeches of comical characters (Gašparko, simpleton Škrhola and others). When, for example, Gašparko criticizes Don Juan for sending him to deal with unpleasant matters while never having invited him to join him when he was wooing Dona Karolínka, he enumerates all situations and occasions.

GAŠPARKO: When you used to go to Karolínka, you were always cooked, baked and fried there. You would go there in the morning, evening, for lunch, be-

⁴⁸ Corrupt cursing of the king of the underworld, Pluto in Latin meaning: I curse your primacy and fame equally as Pluto full of stars (Elementu met festum, Plutonem ut paris sidere plenem).

fore midnight, after midnight, before noon, in the afternoon. You know? But you never invited me along (Hamar, 2010, p. 63).⁴⁹

Similar scene is used when Gašparko is welcoming customers in his restaurant enumerating everything on offer and all the way the food can be prepared.

GAŠPARKO: Welcome. What would you like to order? You can get everything here: hot, cold, warm, roast. Goulash, pork stew, Moravian cabbage. You can have pork with dumplings and stewed cabbage, or soup with pasta, you can get cabbage soup, vegetable soup... Well, O.K., now tell me how you want it – hot, cold, warm? And after that – what colour. And now tell me, do you want much paprika, little paprika, much pepper, little pepper... (Hamar, 2010, pp. 646-647).

Enumeration emphasizes the comical effect when Gašparko uses derogatory expressions by which he addresses Don Juan's father, Don Peter (of course "daringly" never before Don Peter leaves the stage).

GAŠPARKO: He, no, no, ty starý cibulák, ty polapenkár, ty cesnakár, ty korytožer, ty trhan, ty sklban, ty niktos! (Hamar, 2010, p. 69).

Gašparko often uses the enumerative technique when welcoming the audience, e.g., at the beginning of the second act of the play *Knieža Maximilán*⁵⁰ (Hamar, 2010, pp. 118-140).

GAŠPARKO: A pekne vítam a este raz vítam a este raz vítam. A vítam všetkých – starých, mladých, veľkých, malých, všetkých dohromady (Hamar, 2010, p. 123).

In the play *Hrob dvoch zamilovaných*⁵¹ (Hamar, 2010, pp. 206-233), simploton Škrhola enumerates everything he can do (plough, dig, sow, prepare fodder for the cattle, cut wood, etc.).

ŠKRHOLA: Lebo ja viem robiť, vieš? Lebo ja viem orať, ja viem kopať, ja viem siať, ja viem žať, ja viem sečku rezať, ja viem drevo rúbať, ja viem hnoj kydať (Hamar, 2010, p. 218).

In the play *Kuranto and Špádolino* (Hamar, 2010, pp. 141-163) he enumerates different aspects of Adleta's physical beauty.

ŠKRHOLA: Hí! Tfuj, tfuj, tfuj, bohďaj si ťi skazu zala, jej, tá je pekná, hehe. Juj, aká je vyšprincirovaná a napudrovaná a nakulmuvaná ako ondula trvalá ... (Hamar, 2010, p. 149).

⁴⁹ Baked, cooked is an idiom used to describe that someone is a frequent guest somewhere. English alternative would be "living in someone's pocket". In Slovak: "Varený, pečený". Adding "smažený" (as fired) is Gašparko's comical addition to highlighting the idiom, by adding another process from the kitchen environment. Simultaneously, Gašparko uses inappropriate stress in each sentence.

⁵⁰ Prince Maximilian.

⁵¹ A Grave of Two Enamoured.

In other place he enumerates all food and drink his wife had prepared for him when he went to guard a meadow, how he ate and drank everything and eventually, how he went to sleep in the hay.

ŠKRHOLA: Well, my wife cooked nice dinner for me, scrambled eggs from 40 eggs. And a poppy-seed bun from three kilos of flour, butter itself. And she even gave me a one-litre bottle of spirit so that I wouldn't be hungry and thirsty. I also took tobacco and matches and set off, to guard. I sat down in a haystack and ate half of the scrambled eggs. Then I drank half of the bottle of spirit, ate the bun and lit my pipe. But then I pushed my cap into that haystack. The cap was followed by my vest, after the vest came the shirt, then the trousers, boots and then I was inside in my entirety. I calmed down at last and went to sleep (Hamar, 2010, p. 150).

Word distortion does not create comical effect just within an articulation anomaly of one word. It may become a principle of the language comic within a wider space of a script. Such is a dialogue in which Earl Belengardo tries to make Gašparko take an oath of allegiance to him. Gašparko is ordered to repeat the words of the oath after Earl Belengardo. However, Gašparko keeps distorting the text, he pretends to be hard of hearing, naïve and stupid. By repeating the distorted text, Gašparko substantially alters its meaning.

BELENGARDO: Skladám prísahu...

GAŠPARKO: No, prekladám priešadu...⁵²

BELENGARDO: Prísahu!

GAŠPARKO: Prísahu.

BELENGARDO: Ja pristupujem...

GAŠPARKO: Ja pri stĺpe jem.⁵³

BELENGARDO: Pristupujem!

GAŠPARKO: Pristupujem!

BELENGARDO: Za verného byť...

GAŠPARKO: Zoberme ho, budeme ho biť!⁵⁴

BELENGARDO: Verného!

GAŠPARKO: Berme ho!

BELENGARDO: Vždycká bojovať...

GAŠPARKO: A keď treba, utekat⁵⁵ (Hamar, 2010, p. 102).

The misunderstanding pretended by the comical character represents the principle of such distortion.

⁵² Pun: I'm taking my oath – I'm planting a seedling.

⁵³ Pun: I'm getting nearer – I'm eating by the pillar.

⁵⁴ Pun: I must be faithful – We'll beat him.

⁵⁵ Pun: Always keep on fighting – Run when it's necessary.

Through misunderstanding, practically each person gets involved in the sequence of events that concern them, of which they have a clear idea, and to which they direct their words and deeds. Each sequence of interest to individual characters develops in its independent way. At a certain moment, however, they meet under such circumstances that the deeds and words of one character may completely suit the other character. That is the source of their error, the ambiguity. The ambiguity itself is not yet comical though. It becomes such only after being manifested by the time concordance of two independent phenomena (Bergson, 1993, p. 50).

Comical characters often like using misunderstandings, or, more precisely, feigned misunderstandings. Such is the scene in which Gašparko has been sent by his Master, Don Juan to ask his father to lend him money. Don Juan's father, Don Péter, tells Gašparko that he will not lend any money to his son. Eventually he gives him 15 mites (grajciarov)⁵⁶ to buy two ropes. One for Gašparko and one for Don Juan to hang themselves on. However, thanks to a pun (seba – teba⁵⁷), Gašparko interprets this message in such a way that it is Don Juan who should hang himself on both ropes and that Don Péter never mentioned Gašparko.

GAŠPARKO: Naozaj mu nedáte nič?

DON PÉTER: Tak na, dám. Pätnásť grajciarov.

GAŠPARKO: A na čo to bude?

DON PÉTER: To bude na tú veľikú rodinnú hanbu. Nech si tvoj pán kúpi dva štrangy.

Na jeden nech obesí teba, na druhý seba. Aby som sa vás dvoch, vy pekelné potvory, z tohto sveta striasol!

GAŠPARKO: Ako to? Na jeden teba a na druhý šeba?

DON PÉTER: Nie! Na jeden nech obesí teba! Rozumieš? A na druhý seba!

GAŠPARKO: No, na jeden šeba a na druhý teba. Ja mu to poviem (Hamar, 2010, p. 69).

Gašparko conveys this piece of information to his boss, Don Juan, with a completely different meaning. He gives him the little change, but Don Juan thinks that it is a tip given to Gašparko, who tries to explain that it is all the money Don Péter sent to Don Juan:

GAŠPARKO: Aby ste si za tých pätnásť grajciarov kúpil dva štrangy. Na jeden aby ste sa obešil vy, na druhý ty, a o mne nepovedal ani slova.

DON JUAN: Ako?

⁵⁶ Very low value, in today's money just few cents. In German: Kreuzer. It was used as a smallest coin in the Habsburg Monarchy in the second half of the 19th century.

⁵⁷ Yourselves – yourself.

GAŠPARKO: Ešte vám to raz poviem. Za tých pätnásť grajciarov aby ste si kúpil dva štrángy. Na jeden aby ste sa obesil vy, na druhý ty, cize na jeden šeba, na druhý teba a o mne nepovedal ani slova.

DON JUAN: To povedal môj otec?

GAŠPARKO: Tak ako ma pocujete (Hamar, 2010, p. 71).

In the play *Gašparkova cesta do Ameriky*⁵⁸ (Hamar, 2010, pp. 164-178), Princess Florentína is asking Gašparko what his name is. Gašparko pretends a misunderstanding as well as naivete and his own stupidity. However, from the defining features of this comical character we already know that Gašparko is fully aware of the pretence.

FLORENTÍNA: What's your name?

GAŠPARKO: Whose?

FLORENTÍNA: Yours.

GAŠPARKO: Mine?

FLORENTÍNA: Yes.

GAŠPARKO: Yes.

FLORENTÍN: I'm asking you what your name is.

GAŠPARKO: Whose?

FLORENTÍNA: Yours.

GAŠPARKO: Mine?

FLORENTÍNA: Yes.

GAŠPARKO: Yes.

FLORENTÍNA: Don't irritate me!

GAŠPARKO: I'm not irritated. You are irritated.

FLORENTÍNA: What's your name?

GAŠPARKO: The same as my father's.

FLORENTÍNA: And your father's?

GAŠPARKO: The same as mine (Hamar, 2010, p. 167).

From the point of the script strategy, such scenes suggest superiority.

The theories of superiority (predominance, precedence) are based on the assumption that the cause or the substance of the comic stems from gaining dominance over the other person in the form of a mockery of the adversary (Borecký, 2000, p. 45).

Superiority can be also encountered in comic images related to swapping the roles.

We suspect that the usual comedic tricks – periodic word or scene repetition, symmetrical mutual role swapping, geometric development of deceptive role swapping and many other tricks - may draw their comic strength from the same

⁵⁸ Gašparko's trip to America.

source, whereas the art of a vaudeville author, can present an individual mechanical particle of human action while the outer aspect of probability, i.e., the seeming flexibility of life, is preserved (Bergson, 1993, p. 27).

After one scene in the first act is over, Don Juan (Hamar, 2010, pp. 61-88) is leaving the stage. He asks his servant Gašparko to lead the way. However, Gašparko keeps changing the direction of their exit. Once he goes to the left, then to the right, and so it goes for ever. Gašparko constantly finds reasons to change the direction. Once it is water, then unstable footbridge, then mud. He goes on changing the direction while at the same time he is trying to decide whether to wade the water or go through the mud. Gašparko the servant suddenly turns his position into that of superiority by commanding his Master, Don Juan. The comical image occurs through the method that Bergson called inversion. Inversion occurs when actors' roles get reversed (in this case the servant becomes the master) so the viewers are suddenly confronted with a "reversed world" (Bergson, 1993, pp. 48-49).

DON JUAN: So, go ahead and I'll follow you!

GAŠPARKO: Well, come sir! (Leaving to the left.) Bang, bang, bang... (Halts.) Sir!

DON JUAN: Yeah?

GAŠPARKO: We can't go this way.

DON JUAN: Why not?

GAŠPARKO: It's far this way.

DON JUAN: Let's go the other way then! (Leaving to the right) Bang, bang, bang... (Halts.) Sir, we can't go this way either!

DON JUAN: Why not?

GAŠPARKO: The water has been washed away by the foot-bridge over there.

DON JUAN: Ah, you fool! You mean water washed away the foot-bridge?! Or the bench!

GAŠPARKO: The bridge water or water the bridge, it's all one to me, we must go this way! (Leaving to the left.)

DON JUAN: Well, let's go this way!

GAŠPARKO: No, sir, let's go that way!

DON JUAN: Why?

GAŠPARKO: We'll jump over that water.

DON JUAN: So, we shall!

GAŠPARKO: And fall in there and get drowned! I'd rather we go this way. (Leaving to the right.)

DON JUAN: Let's go then!

GAŠPARKO: Listen, there is lots of mud everywhere. Let's go through the water! (Leaving to the left.)

DON JUAN: Well, through the water!

GAŠPARKO: Or through the mud!

DON JUAN: Or through the mud!
GAŠPARKO: Or through the water!
DON JUAN: Or through the water!
GAŠPARKO: Or through the mud!
DON JUAN: And why do you keep dragging me around? Why are you making a fool of me?
GAŠPARKO: I'm not making a fool of you; I only want to say that I have never seen a servant going before his master (Hamar, 2010, pp. 64 – 65).

This scene illustrates one other common tool of classical comedy, repetition. What is, according to Bergson, the main comical effect of repeating words?

Generally speaking, there are two elements inherent in comical repetition of statements – suppressed emotion that erupts as a spring, and an idea that enjoys the repeated suppressing of that emotion (Bergson, 1993, p. 41).

In one scene, the bogus Earl Belengardo (Hamar, 2010, pp. 89-117) makes his servant Gašparko take an oath of allegiance to him. Gašparko should repeat the oath after Belengardo. Gašparko repeats it word for word which means that he always repeats all Belengardo's words too.

BELENGARDO: You will repeat after me.
GAŠPARKO: Well, all right.
BELENGARDO: So, start!
GAŠPARKO: So, start!
BELENGARDO: Not that!
GAŠPARKO: Not that!
BELENGARDO: I didn't order that!
GAŠPARKO: I didn't order that!
BELENGARDO: What are you gabbing on?!
GAŠPARKO: What are you gabbing on? What I was ordered! (Hamar, 2010, pp. 101-102).

In the play *Ženíchovia*⁵⁹ (Hamar, 2010, pp. 274-291), simpleton Blažej repeats the words he is to deliver as a message from Stotník to his loved one, Lojzička.

STOTNÍK: You will repeat after me!
BLAŽEJ: You will repeat after me!
STOTNÍK: I didn't order that.
BLAŽEJ: I didn't order that.
STOTNÍK: Are you dumb or what's wrong with you?
BLAŽEJ: Are you dumb or what's wrong with you?
STOTNÍK: Stupid, shut up, or I'll beat you! (Hamar, 2010, p. 282).

⁵⁹ The Grooms.

The language comic of the plays of nomadic puppeteers abounds also in popular etymology. Evidently, this is a legacy of the historic activities of these theatrical troupes in the territories of the inter-ethnic Austro-Hungarian monarchy, and later in the former Czecho-Slovak Republic. That is why most such words are marked by Hungarian, German or Czech language.

It sometimes happens that we tend to distort the words whose form and meaning we do not know quite well, and their usage sometimes sanctions these deformations (Saussure, 1996, p. 201).

The language of nomadic puppeteers had to be intelligible to audiences. This is one of the reasons of folklorization and of the tendencies of foreign nomadic theatrical troupes' transition to the language of the natives. It is thus probable that vernacular etymology was used also in common spoken language. We will mention at least some of such expressions found in the traditional repertoire of the Anderle family:

ataléria⁶⁰, cajdrnožka⁶¹, citírovat⁶², čušpajz⁶³, execírovat⁶⁴, fikátor⁶⁵, háger⁶⁶, haile knaile⁶⁷, hapatieka⁶⁸, hosti hír⁶⁹, hiňenrauch⁷⁰, kašamrdn⁷¹, kerd ajch⁷² (Hamar, 2010, pp. 653-655).

According to Saussure, vernacular etymology is close to analogy. In vernacular etymology, it can be deformation or word distortion, however it is rather an interpretation of misunderstood forms through the forms that are familiar to us. In analogy, therefore, we assume that the old, original form has been forgotten while in vernacular etymology we are concerned with interpreting the old form.

Hence, vernacular etymology operates under special conditions thus applying to rare, expert or foreign words adopted imperfectly by users (Saussure, 1996, p. 203).

⁶⁰ Cavalry, military cavalry (dist.).

⁶¹ Clothes, habits.

⁶² Call, bid.

⁶³ Meal served with meat, feed, side-dish.

⁶⁴ Military exercise.

⁶⁵ He who can cut a head off well (expr.).

⁶⁶ Hunter, jaeger (Ger., dist.). In German: jäger.

⁶⁷ Holy spring (Ger.). In German: heilige quelle.

⁶⁸ Medicine, apothecary (dist.). In German: apotheke.

⁶⁹ Guests are here (Ger., dist.).

⁷⁰ General (dist.), smoked (Ger.).

⁷¹ Humblest servant (Ger., dist.).

⁷² About face (Ger.). In German: nach hinten gerichtet.

Vernacular etymology is identified even in the names of characters appearing in traditional plays of nomadic puppeteers, such as shoemaker Sebastián Podrážka⁷³ in the play *Merry Shoemaker* (Hamar, 2010, p. 362); brigands Lumpáček⁷⁴, Darebáček⁷⁵ and Lajdáček⁷⁶ in the play *The Purloined Gašparko* (Hamar, 2010, p. 529), or armourer Štítonoš⁷⁷ in the play *Prince Maximilán* (Hamar, 2010, p. 118).

Language comic is part of script strategy manifested in the plays of nomadic puppeteers through its syncretism. Simply put, it means the overlapping of several contexts and principles participating in the definitive comic image of the characters, language, and situations. When discussing the taxonomy of the comic, Vladimír Borecký⁷⁸ mentions its four main directions: irony, humour, absurdity and naivete (Borecký, 2000).

Irony represents conscious focus on the object or, in extreme form, against the object, another person, etc. Its goal is mockery, grimace, grim or ridicule through which the subject achieves the feeling of superiority (Borecký, 2000, p. 40).

Here is the example of Gašparko negotiating the terms of his service at Don Juan's who gives him a permission to kill the first villain he will meet. Gašparko takes it literally and starts beating Don Juan because he knows that Don Juan is a villain:

GAŠPARKO: Wow, fifty ducats⁷⁹, I'll go with you, under the condition that you let me kill the first skate I spot. Let's go then.

DON JUAN: I'll gladly let you do that.

GAŠPARKO: (Starts beating Don Juan.) Catch him, catch him!

DON JUAN: What are you doing, what are you doing?!

GAŠPARKO: What am I doing, what am I doing? But you let me do it (Hamar, 2010, p. 74).

Humour, according Borecký represents:

Ironic mockery undergoing self-reflection, i.e., at first it relates to one's own person and ridicules others and only secondarily they act through the prism of self-mockery. (...) Humour transcends simple self-identification within the autonomous morality that accepts others (Borecký, 2000, pp. 40-41).

⁷³ Sebastian Sole.

⁷⁴ Villain.

⁷⁵ Rascal.

⁷⁶ Slacker.

⁷⁷ He who carries the shield.

⁷⁸ Vladimír Borecký (1941–2009). Czech psychologist, philosopher, and the comic theoretician.

⁷⁹ The ducat was a gold trade coin that was widespread throughout Europe since the Middle Ages.

Such is a scene in the play *Don Juan* in which devils and the Death take Gašparko's Master Don Juan to hell. Gašparko laments his Master's fate but has his own new plan.

GAŠPARKO: No aspoň voľaco si dostav za to, ze si neuvartuvav môjho pána. Pane, pane, prečo ste vy len tak zle robiv? Co teraz ja si mám pocat? Ale ja viem, co spravím. Pôjdem do Paríza na políciu, prihlásim sa a poviem, co sa stalo, a hotovo. Ták, pane Boze, skoda bolo pána, aj keď to boví huncút, ale predsa boví len dobrý clovek. Tramtamtam, tamtamtam... (Hamar, 2010, p. 88).

According to Borecký, in absurdity, autonomy is overcome by authenticity (Borecký, 2000, p. 41). Such form of the comical can occur e.g., through uncritical interpretation. Don Juan sends his servant Gašparko to find a pub. He wants him to climb up a tree for better view. However, Gašparko interprets it as if he were supposed to look for a pub on the tree.

DON JUAN: Climb up some tree and look down and around to find out if there is a tavern somewhere near so that we could get something to eat and drink for our money!

GAŠPARKO: To hell with you! Who has ever found a tavern up on a tree?

DON JUAN: I didn't say up on a tree! Climb up a tree and look down!

GAŠPARKO: It's the same as to stand and look at a tree (Hamar, 2000, p. 75).

The absurd comic is represented by the following utterances:

... keď mi ujdete, ja vás zabijem⁸⁰... (Hamar, 2010, p. 105); ...dva rázy namočiť a raz vytiahnuť⁸¹ ... (Hamar, 2010, p. 525); ... rum zabil a fľašku vylial⁸² ... (Hamar, 2010, p. 379); ... A čo pani Macejova vie, ako kravy vajcia nesú a kury doja?⁸³ (Hamar, 2010, p. 200).

Borecký claims that naivete represents the ignorance of the comical:

The subject creates the comic unawares. It thus becomes the object of laughter of others to whom the comic is obvious (Borecký, 2000, p. 40).

Naivete (authentic or feigned) is one of the dominant features of the situational comic of which Gašparko is the protagonist. Pretending stupidity, naivete, as well as untamed audacity (mainly to his superiors) is characteristic of Gašparko. Such is the moment when Don Juan hires Gašparko and is preparing for the confrontation with his rival – brother Don Filip:

DON JUAN: But we will go there at eighth hour!

GAŠPARKO: Who we?

DON JUAN: Well, the two of us!

⁸⁰ After you run away, I'll kill you.

⁸¹ Immerse twice and pull out.

⁸² He broke the rum and spilled the bottle.

⁸³ Mrs Macejova doesn't know how cows lay eggs and hens give milk?

GAŠPARKO: Me too?

DON JUAN: Yes! (Hamar, 2010, p. 63)

However, authentic naivete is encountered in the opening scene of the play *Hlúpy Kubo na hodách*⁸⁴ (Hamar, 2010, pp. 464-487), when a mother is sending her son away on a journey into the world to find a job. Kubo, however, does not understand why he should go away as the world is everywhere around.

KUBO: Mum, do you really want me to leave?

KUBOVCOVÁ: Not to leave. Go and find a job!

KUBO: But where?

KUBOVCOVÁ: In the world.

KUBO: Well, and where is that world?

KUBOVCOVÁ: Well, everywhere you look.

KUBO: So why should I look around, I can pretty well stay at home, cannot I?

KUBOVCOVÁ: Child, but we are poor.

KUBO: But it's not my fault that you are poor? (Hamar, 2010, pp. 464-465).

The naive is usually based on the actions of other people who take the place of another person in the comical:

The naive originates when someone overcomes a barrier as for them it is non-existent, that is when it seems to them that they can overcome it effortlessly (Freud, 1991, p. 125).

The dialogue between the simpletons Škrhola and Trčko is comical. They are talking about a killed animal while they are not able to agree what animal they have caught. Trčko thinks that a fox is a bird and he does not know birds, he only knows frogs and mice.

TRČKO: Brother, look, they cut off that beautiful hare's tail!

ŠKRHOLA: Yow, brother, brother. I knew you were stupid, but not this stupid!

Where did you ever see a hare with a tail? It's a fox!

TRČKO: A fox? Well, I don't recognize birds, just frogs and mice (Hamar, 2010, p. 113).

The theatre of nomadic puppeteers represents a specific phenomenon. At least one evident active presence, expansion and popularity in the Slovak territory from the first half of the 20th century until sixties of the 20th century is related to broader theatrical, ethnological, aesthetic, anthropological, social and political discourse that has failed to meet with greater response in the current critical and theoretical reflection. Simply said, ethnology has not been interested in this kind of theatre because it moved it to the field of theatrical science. Theatrical science, on the other hand, harboured the impression that

⁸⁴ Stupid Kubo at a Feast.

this field belonged to ethnology. However, the theatre of nomadic puppeteers is not a folk theatre! It is not reflected even in such fundamental studies like the works of Piotr Bogatyriov (1973) or Martin Slivka (2002).

The role of the comic and laughter in the theatre of the nomadic puppeteers is both critical and reformatory:

Laughter emphasizes and longs to put right everything that is rigid, complete, mechanical, everything that is the opposite of the flexible, changeable, lively, free and creative. In this sense it represents a social gesture, an agent who scolds, humiliates and shames an individual who is unable to flexibly adjust to social life due to his eccentricity. ... Laughter is beneficiary and curative because it is coldly rational, insensitive and even bad (Bergson, 1993, p. 9).

The syncretism and the comic of this kind of theatre, the connection of the language comic and the way of interpreting the speech of characters, its contact with the audience, improvisation, etc. represent a unique phenomenon. The blending of all principles of the language comic and comic imagery which this text talks about are also original. We often find several comic principles and images multiplying the comic effect accumulated in one short sketch.

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