Reṇu's "rural speech" Hindi in *Mailā āñcal*

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Abstract

The following paper aims to explore the various ways in which Phaṇīśvarnāth "Reṇu" manages to create, through ingenious linguistic escamotages, a spoken Hindi of rural extraction in Mailā āñcal (1954). Through the exemplification of short excerpts from the novel and their comparison with the English rendering, edited by Junghare (The Soiled Border, 1991), an attempt will be made to trace the main linguistic strategies employed by the author, and to comprehend the peculiarities of his linguistic policy. The purpose of this work is therefore to analyze how the author manages to shape the plurality of voices that belong to Merīgañj, the so-called village where the novel is set, through his extraordinary expressive effectiveness that characterizes his Hindi. The analysis is composed of two sections. The first section is an in-depth study of the main characteristics of the novel and its author, with the function of providing the coordinates for the following part. The latter is a study of the linguistic aspects of the literary work and will examine the following categories: (a) onomatopoeia; (b) speech defect; (c) idioms; (d) songs. Eventually, there will be a reserved space for concluding reflections, in which, in the light of the present work, we will try to restore the polyphonic dimension of Mailā āñcal and this specific type of Hindi, created by the author to revive the rurality of Merīgañj's cosmos, here defined as "rural speech".

Keywords: Phaṇīśvarnāth "Reṇu", *Mailā āñcal*, āñcaliktā, "rural speech" Hindi.

Preamble

The village in South Asia is the theme of the seminar held by Professor Luca Maria Olivieri during the academic year 2019/20 at Ca' Foscari University. At the end of the course, my colleagues and I were asked to write a paper that had the village as its subject, declined according to our skills and areas of expertise.

Thus, as a Hindi student, I chose to investigate the theme of the village in Cinema and Literature, paying particular attention to the linguistic component. My research ended when I finished reading Mailā āñcal, Phaṇīśvarnāth "Reṇu"'s first novel, whose main protagonist is precisely Meriganj, a fictional village in Bihar.

In Mailā āñcal, the author resorts to a unique prose style, which makes the text similar to a film script rather than an actual novel. In fact, the narrative proceeds almost as if there were a camera recording the sounds, shapes, and colors of this specific rural environment.

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0. Introduction

The novel is, primarily and above all, a hymn of love that Phaṇīśvarnāth "Reṇu" (4 March 1921 – 11 April 1977)   dedicates to his mother land, as the novel is set in Purniya, the very same District where he was born (Cossio 1989: 7), in the time frame between 1946 and 1948.

The work presents over 300 characters, none of which can be considered the protagonist (Consolaro 2011: 150), since the ultimate protagonist is the village, from which a chorus of voices of its inhabitants arises: personal stories, linked together, whose mutual connection constitutes the story of Merīgañj (Cossio 1987: 6).

The numerous stories and characters are intertwined with all forms of popular expression - plays, festivals, songs, hymns, prayers, rituals, and spells. These are not mere quotation from the oral tradition, but they rather articulate and comment on the action, thus constituting the connective tissue of the novel.

The aim of this paper is therefore to investigate the ways in which Reṇu manages to bring to life the plurality of voices that belong to Merīgañj's cosmos with the extraordinary effectiveness of expression that characterizes his Hindi.

1.   "Mailā āñcal"

Mailā āñcal, "The Soiled Border" in the English translation by Indira Junghare (1991),[1] was published in 1954 and it represents the set off of his career as an author and his consequent fame in post-Independence India.

While analyzing Reṇu's literary work, it is necessary to mention his great predecessor, Premchand (1880-1936)[2] and, specifically, his novel *Godān* (The Gift of a Cow, 1936), since they are both set in a village.

The main differences between Premchand's *Godān* (The Gift of a Cow, 1936) and the book here analyzed are that the village of the latter does not change time and the collectivity of the villagers is more important than a single peasant, struggling under the scorching sun, as described in *Godān*'s Hōrī (Consolaro 2011: 152).

In this way, Reṇu stands out for his ability to take "Hindi fiction […] back to village life, which he depicted […] from his effectively postnationalist vantage point" (2003: 1012). Unlike Premchand, he emerged and developed firstly as a political activist[3] and only afterwards, during the 1950s, he started his

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[1] To access the original text and its English translation, consult the first item in the *Sitography*.

[2] Premchand is known to be the first major Hindi novelist in Hindi. For further information, see Trivedi (2003: 1008-11). See also the last item in the *Sitography*, for access to all of Premchand's writings from the "Rekhta" website.

[3] While Reṇu was studying in Arariya (Purniya District), he took part for the first time at

career as a literate, describing the events following the Independence with disenchantment (Trivedi 2003: 1015). Thereby, both political and social themes are truly significant in his literary works.[4]

1.1 The meaning of āñcal

Accordingly, one could ask what are the peculiarities that make the *Mailā āñcal* an important contribution to the twentieth-century Hindi literature.

To answer this question, we can start from the analysis of the title, that is influenced by a popular poem of Sumitrānandan Pant (1900-1977)[5] reciting "*bhāratmātāgrāmvāsinī*, 'Mother India is a villager'[6] – echoing directly Gandhi's famous assertion that India lives in her villages" (Trivedi 2003: 994; 1014). Moreover, in the Preface, a sort of literary manifesto, Reṇu himself stated: "Yah hai mailā āñcal, ek **āñcalik** upanyās" (let. "this is *Maila Ancal*, an *anchalik* novel"). He then proceeds declaring that the main purpose of his literary piece is an attempt of a characterization as faithful as possible to reality, with its qualities and flaws – "phūl bhī haiṁ śūl bhī, dhūl bhī hai, gulāb bhī hai, kīcaṛ bhī hai, candan bhī, sundaratā bhī hai, kurupatā bhī" (let. "there are flowers and thorns, dust and roses, mud and sandalwood, beauty but also squalor").

By defining his novel with the adjective *āñcalik*, deriving from the world *āñcal*, the author is making a pivotal statement that refers to his literary poetic:[7]

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a demonstration against the British Raj. Since then, he was active in the socialist party of Padma and Benares, where he attended the university. Between the 30s and the 40s, Reṇu met a figure that will be so central during the last years of his life, Jayprakash Narayan, the leader of the socialists of the Congress. During the 70s, he lined up with his leader in the revolt that rise in Bihar against Indira Gandhi's corrupt government and, after the 1977 general election held in March, Renu received at the hospital the news of the victory of the first non-Congress government after the Independence.

[4] After his first novel, Reṇu published a second one, entitled *Parati: parikatha* (1957), a short story called *Julus* (1965) and three main collection of novels: *Thumri* (1959), *Ādim rātri kī mahak* (1967) and *Aginkhor* (Cossio 1987: 32). Finally, the reportages written for the periodical *Dinman* about the great drought and the consequent flood that happened in Bihar in 1967 were published posthumous by his younger son by the name of *Rinjal Dhanjal* (Cossio 1989: 14).

[5] In 1940, Pant published *Grāmyā* (Of the village), a volume of poem (see Pollock 2003: 954, 991, 992-94, 998, 1014)

[6] For the original text and its English translation, go to the second item in the *Sitography*.

[7] From an artistic and intellectual point of view, Reṇu grow up in a stimulating environment that includes the following literary models: the poetic tradition of Mithila, firstly represented by the great poet Vidyāpati (see Pollock 2013: 507, 513; 513 n.17; 556; 522, 527; 505-6, 523-24; 917), connected with the Vaiṣṇava padāvalī literary culture that flourished in the Bangla literary region (see Pollock 2013: 24; 511-14; 506, 508, 524-25; 518-21; 522-28), together with the Nepali Literature. As explained by Kaviraj (2013:

"Reṇu's novel not only marked a return to village India but also inaugurated a new subgenre in Hindi" (Trivedi 2003: 1014). Therefore, it is necessary to explain the term *ā̃cal*, that the McGregor dictionary (1993: 76; 3) defines in this way:

> *ā̃cal* (m): **1**. the border of hem at the end of a sari, or shawl, &c. **2**. the end of a sari, &c. (which usually covers a woman's breast). **3**. fig. breast, bosom. **4**. = *añcal*.
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> *añcal* (m): **1**. the border of hem at the end of a sari, or shawl, &c. **2**. transf. edge. **3**. border region. **4**. region, tract; zone.

As seen, *ā̃cal* is thus both the hem of a *sāṛī*, the traditional female clothing, and the "edge" of a region, by which the liminal sense of the rural area is emphasized, as opposed to the urban context, the city, symbolizing modern India. Since "mailā" means "dirty", and it refers to the "soiled", *mailā ā̃cal* reflect the dust and the mud of the soil. Hence, Junghare chooses to translate *Mailā ā̃cal* into *The Soiled Border*.

In fact, Renu will not neglect or overlook any element, however ignoble, related to the Indian rural world, in aiming to achieve a representation as comprehensive as possible of the village, inspiring many other Indian authors who, like him, began to put into practice this unique poetic.

As Cossio explained (1989: 10), this fortunate claim of the author to capture the nature of his work was adopted by the critics to baptize a new literary current, the *ā̃caliktā*.[8]

The plot starts with the news that an anti-malaric center will be finally instituted in Merīgañj. This leads the author to explain the meaning of the place name in the second paragraph of the first part: the indigo *sahāb*[9] of that area had a wife who died prematurely of malaria; hence, he named the village after her, Mary.

511-14), it is important to understand that modern thinking has the tendency to categorize by regions. For instance, this mentality tends to use categories as "Bengali", "Nepali" and "Maithili" to define a literary culture, while it would be better to perceive this premodern cultural milieu as a single common and shared literary culture, transmitted as such to the author here analyzed.

[8] Since the meaning of *ā̃calik* is related to the local flavor, the English render of this Hindi literary movement could be "marginalism", rather than the current "regionalism", because it is believed that the former is much more effective in returning the nuances of meanings that go beyond the mere rural setting. To deepen, see Cossio (1989: 10).

[9] Junghare (1991:4) called the British "indigo *sahabs*", a respectful form of address. Indigo, a blue dye popular in Europe, was grown by the British in Bihar and "remained always a precarious source of wealth. (…) Market crashes in 1827, and again in 1847" (Metcalf, 2006: 76, 125, 165). See also Sah (1980: 67-79).

Its opening position is meaningful since it has the aim of inviting the readers inside the universe of this specific village and introducing them to an important theme – the traces of the violence and physical abuses perpetrated by the colonials, which constituted the economic power in that rural area. Since the villagers were obliged to never mentioned the original toponym, it fell into malaise, and it was obliviated from their memory.

As already mentioned, one of the most interesting features of Reṇu's *Mailā āñcal* is the fact that Merīgañj is not only the setting, but it also gains the status of absolute protagonist of the novel. From the narrating style point of view, this literary work could be described as multi-voices as a choir.

This specific fictional device enables to create a situation where *all* the perspective – therefore all the inhabitants of Merīgañj – are equally important to the aim of the narration. Then, someone could arise the theory that the socialistic view of Reṇu is applied here in a very special way on the literature dimension: all the characters are on the same level regarding the narration, while all the social injustices are unveiled.

In fact, the theme of marginality of the village's universe is vital in Reṇu's poetic and it is not possible to overstress it. Since the beginning of the book, it is possible to trace it from numerous hints left by the author. For example, the only means of connection between Merīgañj and the rest of India is the road built by Martin *sahāb* that connects the village to the train-station of Rautahat (Reṇu 1954: 13; Junghare 1991: 5). This explains the enthusiasm provoked among the villagers by their first encounter with a radio.

1.2 The inhabitants of Merīgañj

Since there are numerous characters in the novel and the author focuses on social tensions and power conflicts in *Mailā āñcal* (Junghare 1991: viii), it is considered efficient for the sake of the analysis to divide the inhabitants of Meriganj's universe in separate groups.

The first set of villagers is the Indian landowner aristocracy, belonging to the obsolete system of *zamindarī*,[10] and especially Viśvanāthprasād, *tahsīldār* of Raj Prabanga of the Minapur District, that performs both as a tax collector on behalf of the *zamindar* and as a judge of the District Court.

At the opposite end of the ideological spectrum are placed the *homines novi*: a doctor, Praśāntkumār, Baldev Gop and the dwarf Bāvandās, both representing Gandhi's political view, and the socialist Kālīcaraṇ.

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[10] *Zamīndār* (m) derives from the Persian term for "earth, ground; soil" (*zamīn*) and it means "landowner, landlonrd". Hence, *zamīndarī* (f) is the "landed estate; freehold; position or tenure of a zamindar; the system of collecting land revenue through zamindars" (McGregor 1993: 359).

Both the doctor and Baldev are perceived as extraneous from the villagers, with the difference that the latter belongs to the rural dimension too, while Prashant is an outsider that comes from the city. Because of these feelings towards the doctor and of his external point of view, Prashant is an important narrator that will enable the entrance of the reader inside the social dynamics of this village.

Another tool that Reṇu wisely employs in his narration with the intention of displaying the social relationships regarding power, economics and politics intrinsic in this universe, is the fertile set of the *pañcāyat*[11] described in the story. Like the young wrestler Kālīcaraṇ, the author too is born in a poor environment, but he has a high degree of social consciousness, which leads him to convert to socialism. However, Kālīcaraṇ is also destined to succumb into the political game of the parties (Cossio 1989: 8).

Reṇu thoroughly depicted the contingent contrast to that specific historical-cultural context between the old English management system of Mughal origin, and the new currents of thought, such as the supporters of the Congress and Gandhian rather than socialists.

A further important characteristic that governs the life of the village – and that cannot be underestimated – is the issue of the Indian caste system. A good way to introduce this important matter is to quote Reṇu himself (1954: 48-49) and, particularly, how he explained it through the eyes of the outsider Praśāntkumār:

> "Immediately after asking your name, people here ask, ‹‹ what caste? ›› […] Caste was a vital thing. Even those who ignored caste still belonged to one. […] In the city, no one ever asked a person about his caste. Nobody cared what caste people were in the city. But in the village, without caste you couldn't even draw water!" (trad. Junghare 1991: 46). [12]

This obsession with caste division is by no means overlooked by the author who, on the contrary, chooses to highlight how this social aspect is taken to its extreme in the Indian rural area. All human beings are classified into distinctly separate groups that possess their own hierarchy. Without castes, there is no life: breaking these ancient rules and going against the Tradition, literally means not being able to access water and, therefore, dying.

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[11] In McGregor (1993: 586) it is present the following definition of *pañcāyat*: "1. (f) a village council (consisting of five, or more, members), a panchayat: village court or arbitrating body. 2. A caste council (in a village); arbitrators in an intra-caste matter. 3. Meeting of a body (to discuss a particular question); village meeting".

[12] "Nām pūchne ke bād hī log yahāṁ pūchte haiṁ – jāt? […] Jāti bahut baṛī cīz hai. Jāt-pāt nahīṁ mānnevaloṁ kī bhī jāti hotī hai. […] Śahar meṁ koī kisī se jāt nahīṁ pūchtā. Śahar ke logoṁ kī jāti kā kyā ṭikānā! Lekin gāuvṁ meṁ to binā jāti ke āpkā pānī nahīṁ cal saktā" (orig. in *devanāgarī*).

Adherence to caste rules is a source of honor for the village, which prides itself on its plethora of castes. Renu interprets this pride and reports the classes in the second and third paragraphs: at the top of the pyramid, and thus in collusion with each other, are Brahmans, Kayasthas, represented by the *tahsīldār* Viśvanathprasād, Rajput, whose leader is the *ṭhākur*[13] Rāmkirpālsingh and Yśdav, embodied by the self-made man Khelavan.

Going down the social scale, the list continues with the aim of returning to the reader the crowding at the base of the pyramid. As it is possible to read from the Italian translation, there are "poliya, tantrima chhatri, yaduvanshi chhatri, gahlot chhatri, kurm chhatri, brahmani amaty, dhanukdhari chhatri, kushvaha chhatri, raidas" (Cossio 1989: 28).

The prominence of the author is also in the ability to render the forced absurdity of this need for pigeonhole every person that arrives at the village, at whom it is immediately asked the caste, as a label, a certificate of guarantee that enables the inhabitants to judge the newcomer. Even Prashant is not spared from this questioning, arousing amazement and hilarity in him to the point that he replies he belongs to the caste of doctors.

A further fundamental component of the universe of Merīgañj is represented by the *āśram* in which the chief Sevadās, to whom they refer as *mahant sahāb*, lives with his *dāsī*[14] Lakṣmī, the disciple Ramdas and all the guests who are passing by, together with the employees of the monastery.

Eventually, the most marginalized from both a social point of view and a spacial one, since they live outside the village, are the *sānthāl*[15] who, as explained by Cossio (1989: 217, n.4) are a tribe of the pre-Dravidian or proto-Australian group who settled mainly in an area later called Santhal Pargana, in present-day Bihar. Despite the small differences that make one character foreigner towards the villagers, none of those above-mentioned are as despised and marginalized as the *sānthāl* are. Their condition is not limited to social marginalization, but there is a fierce exploitation of their cheap labor, which will lead them to rebellion, inevitably suppressed in blood.

By analyzing the tensions and conflicts that occur between the various social categories enlisted, two important themes arise from the description of this universe's abuses and corruption: social injustices and marginalization.

As far as the *āśram* is concerned, it is quite evident Reṇu's will to deepen the theme of distrust towards religious authorities through several episodes that are enlightening. It is possible to discern the author's will to highlight this mistrust in

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[13] *Thākur* is "an honorific title or form of address" (McGregor 1993: 411).

[14] The *mahant* (m) is "the superior of a monastery", while the *dāsī* (f, from the masculine *dās*) means "a female slave; a female servant; temple servant; concubine" (MGregor 1993: 798; 493).

[15] For further information about them, see Datta-Majumder (1958).

the figure of the *dāsī* Lakṣmī. After the death of all her relatives, left alone in the world, the *mahant sahāb* promised to educate her and to find her a husband when the occasion arose. Obviously, this promise was not fulfilled and, therefore, Lakṣmī became, against her will, the concubine of Sevadās.

Finally, the theme of the very low percentage of literacy and the issue of superstition are also significant and they could be traced since the very beginning, when Reṇu (1954: 16) explains that only a dozen of people could be defined as "literate", if it also included those that could solely do their own signature:

> "In all of Maryganj, only ten men are literate. 'Literate' means anything from being able to write one's signature to being able to balance account books. Another fifteen are learning how to read." (trad. Junghare 1991: 9).[16]

2. Linguistic analysis

The aspect of relevance to the present analysis of Reṇu's *Mailā āñcal* is his extraordinary expressive ability to use of Hindi as a linguistic tool to create the necessary sound-wise prerequisites to invite the reader to become part of this specific rural environment.

The question I will now attempt to answer is: what are the main linguistic features implied by the author to achieve this purpose? To do so, I will employ some examples from the novel itself, that I will compare with Junghare's English translation (*The soiled border*, 1991), since it could be useful to further highlight the author's stylistic and linguistic poetic.

Firstly, as explained by Consolaro (2011: 152), *Mailā āñcal's* Hindi is literary khaṛī bolī, the Sanskritised and literary Hindi of the 1950s, which the author adopts in passages where a certain solemnity is required, as in descriptions of nature or in sequences related to well-educated characters.

On the other hand, for imitating dialogues between locals, Reṇu develops a Hindi register based on rural speech,[17] integrating the following registers: avadhī, maithilī, bhojpurī, and magadhī in Modern and Medieval forms, baṁgla, nepalī, tribal languages, as well as Sanskritised Hindi, Hindustani from bazaar, Urdu, and English.[18]

Thus, even if with an artificial tool, since it is not a proper dialect, the author reaches the suggestion of the spoken language "[…] with selective, authenticating use of the local variant or dialect of Hindi, often with foot notes

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[16] "Sāre Merīgañj meṁ das ādmī paṛhe-likhe hai – paṛhe-likhe kā matlab huā apnā dastakhat karne se lekar tahasīldārī karne tak kī paṛhāī. Nae paṛhnevāloṁ kī saṁkhyā hai pandrah" (orig. in *devanāgarī*).

[17] To deepen Reṇu's linguistic style, see Hansen (1981).

[18] For a linguistic background, look Bass (1974).

supplied to gloss the rare local terms" (Trivedi 2003: 1014). The first sample of a gloss can be seen at the beginning of the second paragraph, where the author consciously chooses *kaniyā*, a word that stands for "bride", but it does not belong to Standard Hindi. On that account, an explaination note is inserted where the reader could find a synonym, *dulahīn*.[19]

By attempting an analysis of Reṇu's linguistic modes and before aiming to deepen them, it is useful to divide them into the following categories: (a) onomatopoeia, (b) mistakes of pronunciation, (c) idioms and common expressions, (d) popular and traditional songs.

Although there are some similarities and differences inherent in this over-mentioned nominal division - for example, pronunciation defects and idiomatic expressions pertain to the dimension of dialogue - the peculiar feature is that *all* of them are linguistic tools that the author uses for the purpose of further characterizing the village of Merīgañj.

2.1 Onomatopea

An example of the first category could be taken from the fourth paragraph, in which the reader is brought to the threshold of the *āśram*, from where chants are heard at dawn. These are accompanied by the sound of the *khañjarī*, a small drum (McGregor 1993: 224), which Reṇu (1954: 22) decides to render in this way: *ḍim-ḍimik-ḍimik, ḍim-ḍimik-ḍimik!* (orig. in *devanāgarī*).

Consequently, when I refer to "onomatopoeia", I am talking about all those words inserted for the purpose of imitating sounds. The example is related to prayer and music; other types of special acoustics that Reṇu employed to render the sounds of the natural dimension in which the village is immersed are animal noises, voices of the wind, raining or thunderstorms, hissing of arrows and spears in the bloody revolt of the *sānthāl* (Cossio 1987:7).

2.2 Speech defects

Both the second and third sets of tools contribute to intensify the authenticity of the conversations more to the reader, because they aim to reproduce factual dialogues between inhabitants of that specific rural area in Bihar.

For this reason, "mistakes of pronunciation" is a broad category that includes both speech defects in spoken language, i.e., the natural changes in pronunciation in informal conversations between native speakers, and mistakes in English, which is not the mother-tongue. The reader is invited to confront the samples from the original text and the English translation in the underneath table:

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[19] *Dulahīn* derives from *dulhan*, meaning "bride, a young wife" (McGregor 1993: 505).

	Reṇu (1954: 10; 11)	Junghare (1991: 3; 4)
1	*jaihinn* (orig. *dev.*)	*Jai Hind!*
2	*ḍisṭīboṭ*	District Board

The first example is taken from the first paragraph of *Mailā āñcal*, in which it is reported that Baldev, as a Gandhian, says "Jai Hind".

What it is interesting – and not completely rendered in the English version – is that in the original one he says '*jaihinn*'. Although grammatically correct, the English translation is graphically and sonorously different from the Hindi version. Thus, the comparison between the two versions enables us to demonstrate Renu's willingness to render the deformation in spoken Hindi.

In the second line, the sub-category "English mispronunciations" is exemplified by *ḍisṭīboṭ*, that is altogether the transcription in *devanāgarī* of "District Board", as it is possible to find in Junghare, and the author's clever way to express speech defects commonly shared between Indian villagers in their attempt to use unfamiliar English words.

2.3 Idioms

As we continue the cataloguing of the expressive techniques employed by Reṇu - and the consequent comparison with the translating solutions used by Junghare - there is a third and wide category dedicated to the idiomatic and folklore expressions.

In the second section, occurs the following idiom: *tīn āne labnī tāṛī,*[20] *rok sālā moṭorgāṛī!* (Reṇu 1954: 12), whose meaning is "drunk on *tārī*, they find even a car approachable". Instead of prioritizing its functions – namely brevity along with rhyming, to be more easily remembered and thus pertain to folk wisdom – Junghare (1991: 5) decides to paraphrase the idiom and therefore she interprets it as: "After drinking three *anna* worth of *toddy* a fellow can imagine himself a big *nawab* ordering around a chauffeured motorcar: ‹‹ Stop the motorcar, you bastard! ››".

2.4 Songs

The last category includes all the different types of chanting, such as the dawn hymn accompanied by the *khañjarī*,[21] already examined in the section on onomatopoeia. The voice of indigenous culture is then spread not only by religious and spiritual hymns, but also by political, seasonal chants and *sānthāl*

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[20] *Tāṛī* is a "fermented juice of the palm tree" (McGregor 1993: 447).

[21] The example above-mentioned about a *prabhātī*, "a song sung at dawn" (McGregor 1993: 662), is reported in Reṇu (1954: 22) and in Junghare (1991: 16).

labor songs (Cossio 1987: 7). As stated by Hansen (1982b: 153-162) in *Mailā āñcal* there are twenty different Maithili song types, an "important means by which Reṇu brings the shape and feeling of traditional literature into his fictional medium."

3. Concluding Thoughts

The already-mentioned comparison between Reṇu's prose style and the film scripts is therefore reinforced by the centrality of the sound component in the multifaceted and polyphonic rural dimension. The audience grasped immediately both the abundance of musical elements in the novel and the multi-voiced narration and, consequently, it is not surprising that 1977 was the year of release of the movie adaptation, entitled Dagdar Babu and directed by Nobendu Ghosh (Junghare 1991: vii).

From a stylistic point of view, the indigenous oral tradition not only generously offers a sample of the local colour to the reader, but it also usefully introduces the following comparison. These songs are usually sung by a group of people, namely a choir, composed by the villagers themselves. If we consider the novel as a single written transposition of the oral culture of that specific village in a certain time span, then all its inhabitants could be seen as choristers. Hence, one of the greatest appeal of the novel could be said to be its "chorality", that derives from its main characteristic: the elevation of the Village as the sole protagonist of the novel.

Finally, from a linguistic point of view, one can agree that this Hindi specification, artificially created by Reṇu but, at the same time, so authentic as to restore the rurality of a Bihar village environment, is a "rural speech" in its own right.

In my opinion, these are just some of the conclusions that can be reached after having studied this author and his most famous work. In any case, I hope I have succeeded in my intent and that I have been able to return to the reader the passion with which I have conducted my analysis.

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