



The first half of the 20th century was stimulated by different artistic experiences, characterised by complicated structures, a new and surprising language defined by philosophical anxieties, and a very modern technique. This is the context in which Bacovia emerges as a symbolist poet, still possessing a kind of "expressionist sensibility with a preference towards metaphysics, as the critic Ion Sinoț states.

Bacovia's first volume of poetry, *Lead* appeared in 1916, in the brink of World War, under somehow unfavourable conditions, by means of a public fund collection initiated by C. Banu, Ion Pilat, D. Davidescu and Adrian Maniu and his last volume, *Poems*, appeared in 1957; over the entire activity, Bacovia proved himself being a writer possessing a modern vision and technique, permanently experimenting a new vision (passing through symbolism, expressionism, modernism and vanguardism).

His work, though monochrome and monotone, is based on a contradictory structure; that's why the poet caused polemics and different attitudes, right from his onset, being regarded with a deep admiration by some of his colleagues and with a considerable circumspection by others. Most of the critique regarding Bacovia's work, especially referred to the particular technique used in the construction of the imaginary universe, a technique based on a relatively small number of figures of speech, obsessively repeated, in a clear attempt to deepen the feeling of existential anguish.

Surprisingly, Bacovia's universe was characterised in controversial ways, and there are common conclusions referring to obvious facts such as: the austerity and the simplicity of the poetic means, the frequency of the mechanic processes, the cohesion to a background existentialism exploited both symbolic and expressionistic.

The contradictions in the critical perception can be detected in the very poetic technique field. This attitude is undeniably starting with Calinescu's and Lovinescu's contradictory opinions and moving towards the inventories of the lexical level made by Ion Caraion or Sanda Golopentia. The essence of Bacovia's universe becomes, thus, ineffable, always approximated and only apparently understood.

"A poet of poets", as he was called by Adrian Maniu, Bacovia was encouraged and appreciated, at his beginnings, mostly by his generation fellows (Macedonsky, Cezar Petrescu, Ion Vinea) while the critique met him with reluctance.

According to Calinescu's pretty sharp and sometimes unfair appreciation, Bacovia is nothing more than one of the less important exponents of the Romanian literature, a minor poet, a unique and extravagant figure of the époque, very dependent of the French patterns whose poetry was strangely deprived by any poetic artifice, like any other ordinary and skill lacking poetry. Though, it is exactly

the artifice that strikes you and gives its value, after all. Actually, as a whole, it is a transplantation, so close to imitation, of the French symbolism.

Lovinescu considered Bacovia's poetry as a stream coming from a suppression of the words. The critique consider that the poet applies the principle of Verlaine aesthetics: "Prends l'eloquence et tords-lui son cou". Lovinescu considers that this rhetorical refuse is the source that generates the expression of the most ordinary mood; it is the poetry of a mobile kinaesthesia, a created one which refuses to intellectualise, to spiritualise. Instead, George Calinescu notices that it is exactly the artifice that gives the real value of Bacovia's poetry.

Though the two opinions do not exclude one another, it is necessary to underline their obviously impressionistic basis. What Lovinescu (and Serban Cioculescu, as well) considered a profoundly animal kinaesthesia, the secretion of an ill being, as dampness is the tear of wet walls, Calinescu considered being the value of a great, modern and actual poetry.

Many synthesis, monographs, studies and articles have been written since Bacovia's debut and he was called, on turns, monochord, conventional, artificial, rudimentary, refined, eminescian, mecedonskian, symbolist, decadent, expressionist, existentialist, though Bacovia himself refused any labelling.

In fact, Bacovia is a little bit of each, in a continuously new and intriguing creation. In his work, we find sincerity and fake, true feelings and lie, honesty and masks, spontaneity and dramatisation as well.

Nicolae Davidescu notices the honesty which is, in his opinion, the secret of Bacovia's originality, the spontaneity, the specific landscape, the extraordinary capacity to create amazing symbols out of the most ordinary poetic resources.

Starting with Crohmalniceanu, going on with Dumitru Micu, one can notice a reconciliation with the old opinions and a new argumentation in support of the poet's originality and modernity, who is analysed from new perspectives, as a great poet, as an anticipator.

Bacovia takes symbolism themes which he integrates in his work, inside a new, personal vision, by means of a new language, which brings completely new suggestions.

In his work *Romanian Modernism*, Dumitru Micu dedicates an entire chapter to Bacovia who is considered to have anticipated Kafka, Artaud, Beckett, Camus, by writing a disguised anti-literature, camouflaged, hidden under conventional literary strategies, and undisguised. The volume that marks this moment is "Bourgeois stanza".

The critique considers that, more than a non sterile style, Bacovia uses a subtle parody of the sterile style. That's why his language is so simple, repetitive, scanty; it does not excel in variety and size. Bacovia uses current terms, unliterary forms, poetic artifices, plain rhymes and obsolete words.

Another important aspect of Bacovia's poetry, emphasized by Dumitru Micu, is that Bacovia is the first poet for whom the corrupted existence, the ordinary, the plain and the prosaic has become a permanent, almost unique source of inspiration.

From the very beginning, Bacovia stirred the interest of the critics, a fact that places him among the great writers. When dwelling with a great creation, it is normal to experiment different reactions. It is exactly the significance of these opinions that will offer us a starting point in our attempt to shape the real, complex and profound sense of the Bacovian universe.

Mihail Petroveanu is quite surprised by the positive, almost overestimated criticism of Bacovian creation which belongs to the sensational. Such a small creation, so unequal as thematic and expression invention, competes with Arghezi's, Blaga's or Barbu's creation, in editorial emulation, in critical passion, in popularity.

From Mihail Petroveanu on, who dedicated Bacovia an excellent study, a new phase begins and the poet is regarded as an incontestably modern and valuable one. The critic states that Bacovia surpassed symbolism, coming across expressionism, existentialism, and the literature of the absurd. Further critics, though, showed that the Bacovianism is hard to define not only at the level of impression and of the echo to a critical conscience, but also in statistics. In his book about Bacovia, *The never ending end*, Petru Ion Caraion underlined the predominance of the verb on a sample of 50 poems: the accent of this poetry, its virulence and its miracle should not be searched too far. The verbs that Bacovia uses are almost the ones and the same, but they have the strength of a hammer that causes damages, by hitting, on and on, in the same spots or on the same directions. The most frequently used verb is "to be" (337 occurrences), followed by "to cry" (68 occurrences).

Sanda Golopentia emphasized, on a rigorously statistical basis taking into consideration the affiliation or the non-affiliation to the dominant semantic spheres of the work, the high frequency of the noun. This part is predominant both as variety (50,34% of the vocabulary) and as frequency (44,5% of the text). As far as the verb is concerned, its variation is considerably reduced (19,5% of the vocabulary) but it is so often used that it comes to represent 25,12% of the length of the text.

In his excellent study, Ion Caraion (though highly subjective as the critic is accompanied by the poet), succeeds in creating the portrait of a great poet, a poet of the nothingness, of the end that accompanies the beginnings. He proposes to the reader a reversed reading of some poems (*Scenery, Autumn sunset, Seldom, Alone, Night, Balley, Sleeping, Autumn nerves* - a total of 100 poems), in order to demonstrate that they cope with the aesthetic criteria, against the classic patterns, similar to some "object-poems".

The attempts to decipher the Bacovian core supposed, beyond impressionism or statistical research, a structure analysis, that started with micro-texts, symbols, significant sentences, stylistic

and ontological analysis, (see the one made by Mircea Scarlat in “A History of Romanian Poetry”, Vol.II), interdisciplinary or biographical researches.

In *Bacovian Alternatives*, a study by Alexandra Indries, the author uses some excellent stylistic researches, proving the existence of some force-lines that ensure the internal unity of Bacovia’s poetry. She admits that Bacovia is a great poet, characterised by a striking modernity of an expressionist nature.

In *The Poetry Game*, Ion Pop speaks about the irrelevance of analysing the artistic means in Bacovia’s work. A deep knower of vanguard and symbolism, he tries to simultaneously analyse the figures of speech and the pale emotion that characterise the bacovianism. The mechanisms of bacovian images seem out of the specific atmosphere, artificial. The multi-reference specific to the modern poetry is to be traced in Bacovia’s poetry, too.

The multiple reference subsequently sends to a monotonous and morbid outer universe and to a similar inner one, but with an never ending range of nuances and vital sensibilities.

When defining the bacovian universe, they will underline a recurrence of motifs. The inner space of bacovian poems is a space of the periphrasis, by means of which, the poet maintains the natural of the poetic speech, on the edge between the told and the untold, on the line where the speech becomes material.

Through his simple but deeply profound discourse, Bacovia imposes himself (despite some negative critical opinions), by radical innovations that moved the route of the poetry from traditionalism towards modernism.

Though Bacovia’s work is of short dimension (six volumes of poems during his life, and another one after his death), many large studies, reviews or monographs were written; besides, the poet was not left out of any history of literature (even though he was not always praised), because Bacovia is considered a Column of the Infinite in Romanian poetry, as he is one of the first really modern writers in our literature. His lyric, (mostly symbolist), constitutes a remarkable progress in the sense of the culture of form, of meaningful expression, and in the research of the artistic psychology.

The thesis *George Bacovia – The Stylistic Universe* tries to decipher the bacovian poetic language, to identify and interpret its particularities, those language characteristics that identify and define the value of a great poet.

I considered as necessary the composing of a paper to approach the bacovian poetic language from a stylistic point of view, starting with the first volume, in its different hypostasis, a paper which could value a fresh and vary material, a material that is still appreciated and read.

Bacovian creation is fascinating because it captivates the reader with its annoying simplicity, the transparency of its meanings, with the craftsmanship used in creating the poems – true works of art, real musical masterpieces, though when repeatedly read, they can produce melancholy and anguish.

The repetition, expression of an inner emptiness, the whole network of parallelisms, the perfect rhymes, the poor vocabulary (expression of a tendency to abstracting), the specific punctuation, the musicality and the chromatics are, all of them, brands of bacovian lyrics.

By studying Bacovia's work, I not only studied the figures of speech and the poetic technique, but I also tried to underline the poetic message that burst out the entire work, because a mere analysis of the stylistic means does not suffice.

Bacovia's poetry (whose originality is shadowed by sadness and decomposition), can only be analysed by means of figures of speech, most particularly by means of figures of construction, because, for this poet, the repetitions are as important as the words in themselves. The thesis is structured on chapters: Chapter I – *Bacovian Innefable, the characteristics of the poetic language*; Chapter II – *Critique perception*; Chapter III – *Stylistic universe, Final remarks*.

The first chapter, *Bacovian Innefable, the characteristics of the poetic language* is dedicated to the poetic work and follows the poetic evolution (though some of the critics talk about an involution of the creations, starting from the third volume), and the metamorphosis of the bacovian poetry from symbolism towards expressionism.

The thesis *George Bacovia – The Stylistic Universe* starts with a short presentation of the poet's work, together with some biographical coordinates, because, in Bacovia's case, more than in the others', the reference to the context that made possible and stimulated his personal experience can be beneficial for a better understanding of the text.

His theme universe is not new, being in fact, common to his entire generation; it is also present in the symbolist lyrics from 1900; it isn't new nor of the modality of expression, neither the technique of the different types of repetition, in which he was preceded by Macedonski, Minulescu and other symbolists.

Completely new is the unique tone of his poetry, which is the result of a complete fusion of all the elements of sensibility, expression, inspiration, united as a whole in a work characterized by an unusual artistic purity and a great emotional impact.

The chapter *Critique perception* is a synthesis of the reactions the critics of the bacovian work had. As we talk about the work of a great poet, it is normal that it produces very different attitudes, fact that is a further confirmation of its value.

In this chapter, I tried to see how did the critic finally succeed to confirm the value of Bacovia's work, because it is both the positive and the negative criticism that kept the poet in the public attention.

Many studies were written about Bacovia; he was considered a symbolist by some (Lovinescu), a romantic (P. Constantinescu), an expressionist (Ov. Crohmalniceanu, I. Negoitescu, L. Ulici), a predecessor of the theatre of absurd and of the post-modernism (Marian Popa, L.B. Ierler, Mircea Cartarescu), an existentialist (Mihai Cimpoi, Dinu Flamand) or a decadent (V. Fanache). Despite all these labels and the classifying that is difficult to be done, it is undeniable that Bacovia is a unique and distinct phenomenon in the Romanian literature.

Every new volume brings a new stylistic formula, Bacovia recreating a new style: symbolist, post-symbolist, expressionist, existentialist, after every important moment of his life. He deeply transforms the poetic language, remodeling the basic structure of the poem, especially in the syntactic field.

If we examine the creation from the point of view of the innovation and diversification of the poetic language, we cannot talk about an involution, but of an evolution marked by the continuous need of renovation, of purification.

Mircea Scarlat doesn't believe in the involution of the bacovian creation, considering that the poet did not change dramatically after his first volume, as he remained the same, while the poetic modernization aligned to his poetry. The change of the symbolist convention is seen as a dissolving that unwillingly goes in the direction of the post-symbolist poetic modernity.

The cause of this dissolution is the exhaustion of the creative power, announced by Bacovia himself in the poem "Autumn Notes", where he expresses the pain of not being able to create any more verses, situation that makes him the saddest person in the town.

The largest part of the thesis consists of the chapter *Stylistic universe*, dedicated to the stylistic analysis of the bacovian lyrics from all the volumes because, no matter the phase of creation to which they belong, Bacovia's poems contain innovative, amazing and surprising elements that fully deserve being identified and analysed and I tried to identify these very elements of novelty in the bacovian lyric.

As long as a restrictive examination of the artistic means is not relevant in itself, it becomes necessary as a first step in the attempt to enter Bacovia's poetic universe. It is necessary to underline the function of the repetition, the variety of the figures of speech, its final role and the fatality of the unchangeable mechanism in order to define the concept of repetition.

The predominance of a certain figures of speech is never hazardous, as it is responsible for

shaping a certain obsession, a theme or different styles, for different periods in the diacrony of the same work.

I will try to classify and to comment different figures of speech, insisting on the figures of construction. I will underline the involution of the bacovian work, by the disappearance of certain figures of speech and the usage of some new ones, as a consequence of a language rupture and of abandoning the formal parallelism, starting with *Yellow sparkles* and *Comedies after all*.

In the chapter dealing with phonetics, I emphasized the importance of the figures of speech in the bacovian lyrics. From the phonetics point of view, the first chapter is the most melodious, as it is marked by symbolism. Bacovia the poet is doubled by Bacovia the musician (the poet was playing the violin), who prays sounds more than anything in the world.

In the Romanian symbolism we can distinguish more types of sonorities, in which Bacovia's inner music has a distinctive sound, completely different from Minulescu's chansonnette. Autumn, with its funeral role of generating cries, is the one that creates the unmistakable sound of bacovian poetry.

Phonetic elements are often organized in such a manner that their usage, more or less willingly, generates the musical harmony and expressivity of the verses. In the last volumes, there are situations when the approach to the spoken language is, in fact, a support for the poetic idea, and the poet uses deviations of phonetic nature, most of the aphaeresis, syncopes, apocopes that are useful as long as they facilitate the musicality of the verses.

The first thing that we notice when reading bacovian poetry is the sound effect of the verses. The depressive, spleeny state of mind, suggested by bacovian sonorities becomes stronger when the deep meaning of the words is deciphered. The sound and the meaning are the two aspects that form a complex and profoundly meaningful whole.

A separated chapter is dedicated to the figures of construction, from which the repetition (specific to the first volume) and the ellipsis (that is present in the last volumes) are specific to the bacovian lyricism.

I underlined the frequency and the importance of the mechanical procedures for the poetic structure. The repetition is a special instrument in improving the poetic significance. Inside syntactic constructions of various sizes, the repetition shapes a special form, full of significance and with consequences that cannot be ignored in the developing of the poetic idea.

The repetitions, the refrains in the variants are combined with a certain inner longing for the dark dark, troubled areas of the conscience, for primary stages, by approaching closed and dramatic themes. These are elements that transform Bacovia's work in an exceptional and surprisingly vibrant one.

The repetition, as a figure specific to bacovian poetry, has a circle trajectory, always returning to a fundamental idea or to a key-word, in order to strengthen and underline in.

The structure of Bacovia's poems is surprising through a special feature: traditional verses and modern verses, free of any construction pattern. The poems with verses grouped in quatrains are, usually, symmetrically organised, with a great attention for measure and rhyme, and alternate with creations in which the care for form is completely abandoned.

The last bacovian texts seem broken, the words are chaotically arranged, in an aleatory order; the syntax abandons all the rules.

The brake of the parallelism between the semantic and the syntactic structure of the verse and the prosodic structure is a characteristic of many creations. The freedom in the poetic expression composition is at its full, that's why Bacovia is one of our first modern poets and one of the most original, as well.

The last chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the semantic figures, to the tropes themselves, less numerous than the syntactic figures but with spectacular values for the artistic expressivity and for the poetic meaning.

The epithets are not very varied in significance, being orientated towards the depression and sadness. Special stylistic effects are obtained by means of synaesthetic epithet, preponderantly used by symbolists.

I noticed the dominance of the adjective epithets: the epithet "sad" occurs in 40 sequences. The park, the people, the seasons, the music, the objects, the poet himself are all sad; the lovers are even sadder, the fog is sad, the room is sad and quiet, the street lights are sad, the skating rink is sad, the light bulbs are sad, a sad girl died, a lira plays a sad song, even the sighs are sad.

In "Autumn Notes", the poet confesses that he is the saddest in the town. The source of his sadness is not only the autumn that occupies the city and the soul, but also the pain of not writing any verse, pain that betrays the hard process of writing poems.

The insight of the neologism epithets is a mark of the language modernity, besides the intertextual references, the technique of collage and the quoting. The neologisms are used to recreate a city environment and to resonate with its atmosphere, as well as to ally to the new aesthetic which implies a new scenery and a fresh language.

The neologism epithets are very obvious in the last volumes.

Among the tropes, the metaphor is the most representative, overcoming the functionality of the epithet, which is frequently implied in its semantics. Both the epithet and the metaphor interfere with other figures of speech, achieving figurative mixtures. In bacovian lyric we meet personifying comparisons, metaphoric comparisons, synaesthesia metaphors.

One of the bacovian rhetoric aspects is the irony, an important element that saves the creation from being boring, by means of underlining the states of lack of balance, despair, deep sadness.

The irony appears in the entire symbolist and expressionist poetry, mixing, in an amalgam, the soft banter, the allusion, the rallying, the sarcasm, behind which serious problems of the reality are hidden.

Life with its perpetual monotony, permanently incites the ironic comment. All the fine, ordinary aspects of the provincial life are not presented from a tragic perspective but with an ironic attitude.

Irony saves the world empty of dreams, initiating a state of cruel normality, in which human hypostasis are mocked or bantered. Being convinced that symbolism expresses a new sensibility, George Bacovia rejects the sentimental approach on poetry and tries to catch aspects of the direct reality, uncensored, and free of clichés.

The new symbolist poetry asks for new techniques, such as the free verse which is embraced by Bacovia, too. This is a new discovery of the modern poetry which releases the old rules and imposes a new breath.

In such conditions, the metaphor, with its great suggestive force, with its extraordinary capacity to create poetic worlds, disappears almost completely from the bacovian poetry. Dumitru Micu notices the lack of the metaphors and considers that Bacovia wrote a poetry of mere representations, yet, so hallucinating.

They can say that the simplicity of the poetic discourse is the one that brings subtlety to this poetry. A simple, rough language, completely spontaneous, gives the impression of a lyric confession, as if the poet would talk to the reader.

George Bacovia is a great poet, a national one, because, similar to Eminescu, or years later to Nichita Stanescu, he managed to change the way of writing poetry, introducing a new language, a new attitude towards the word and a new vision of the world. His works are not about a real, living world but about a world hidden in the abyss, coming from hell, as Manolescu states. Dumitru Micu stated that Bacovia not only descended to hell but brought the readers with him as well.

Assiduous, shy, permanently marked by everlasting neurosis, living in a wretched town, Bacovia is an unusual character, buried in a total darkness, haunted by his own fears, diseases and sufferings.

Bacovian poetry is the expression of the modern consciousness crisis, in a world that is torn by contradictions, incapable to offer saving solutions. Bacovian work, charming, original, endowed with talent, redeems Bacovia the poet from Bacovia the man, raising him from his insipid and suffering world into a world of eternal values.

From the first volumes, up till now, numerous synthesis, monographs, studies and articles were written, and Bacovia was called, on terms, monochord, conventional, artificial, rudimentary, refined, eminescian, macedonskian, symbolist, decadent, expressionist, existentialist, though Bacovia refuses any labeling.

The reason for which I chose this theme is tightly connected to the incontestable actuality of the bacovian lyric. The author is still surprising and inciting, especially for the young readers, as his works bring a new expression, completely different by the Romanian literature from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

An inventory of the figures of speech present in Bacovia's poetry is useful in order to demonstrate the share of a certain figurative level (in Bacovia's work, the figures of construction are preponderant), but also to try a different appreciation of the poems which are analysed from different perspectives: impressionism, statistics, structural and ontological.

Bacovian poetry, very novel in the époque, and extremely disputed, rejected by some of the critics because of its modern discourse, continues to be surprising through the interest it rouses and through its continuous force of reconstruction, renewing and fascination.

Despite the different classifications and framings, in a certain current or in a certain formula, Bacovia belongs to the symbolism and to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due both to the stylistic and thematic novelty and to the quality of the poetic language.

George Bacovia is an anti-sentimentalist (Gh. Grigurcu), an anti-poet (N. manolescu), a winner (L. Raicu), a Brancusi of poetry (M. Scarlat), a great poet (this is a later appreciation), right because of his actuality, of the force of suggestion that different levels of the language hold, of the well-known and specific strategies of fulfilling the expressivity (repetitions, alliterations, refrains, the figures of construction in general).

The poet does not change radically along his literary activity, he is stable in ideas and in attitude, (if we refer to the bacovian spleen as a perpetual state), writing a single poetry, touched by the stigma of death up to the depth of his being.

In an interview by I. Valerian, bacovia confesses that poetry represents a sort of playing with the life, a dangerous game in which one can very seldom loose.

In "Bacovian alternatives", I. Indries places Bacovia in a collision point, placed between the two types of discourse – symbolist and expressionist. The symbolist discourse is based on circularity (with circular metaphors, refrains, etc) while the expressionist discourse is based on discontinuance (discontinuous phrases, ill-assorted words, exclamations, metonymies) as an expression of an exacerbated existence.

Dumitru Micu considers that Bacovia becomes an expressionist by the extreme thickening of the shocking quotidian, by the over-sizing of the terrifying atmosphere.

Bacovia's work, disputed, loved or rejected, never ignored, surprises with its freshness and modernism. I illustrated, with ample fragments quoted from Bacovia's lyric, every found aspect, always underlining the stylistic and aesthetic values. I used as material for my research not only the first volume, which is considered the most representative, but all his volumes, including the posthumous ones.

With this introduction in the Bacovian work, I intended to emphasize that, in the inventory of the figures of speech, the percent of occurrences is not as important as it is the meaning direction that is outlined by their reflexive usage inside a poetic universe that is both so different from one volume to another, and compact by using the same, almost obsessive themes and some predominant figures of speech.

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