

# **„LA IZVOARELE IMAGINAȚIEI CREATOARE”**

**Studii și evocări în onoarea  
profesorului Mircea Borcilă**

BCU Cluj / Central University Library Cluj

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EMMA TĂMÂIANU-MORITA<sup>1</sup>

## BEYOND THE POETIC: EXPLORING THE GENERAL MECHANISMS OF TEXTUAL SENSE CONSTRUCTION

### 1. POETICS AND INTEGRAL LINGUISTICS: MIRCEA BORCILĂ'S TYPOLOGY OF POETIC TEXTS

1.1. Over the course of a research career of more than five decades, Mircea Borcilă has made wide-ranging contributions to the study of language and discourse, many of them setting the foundation for investigation projects carried out by numerous scholars from younger generations. The following thematic areas stand out in this context: an original theory of metaphorical sense creation; in-depth exegeses of Eugenio Coseriu's work; the dissemination of the theoretical outlook of Integral Linguistics, starting from the latter part of the 1980s, in parallel with an exploration of its possible links or interfaces with poetics; the systematic re-valuation of conceptual contributions put forward by Romanian scholars and thinkers such as Sextil Pușcariu and Lucian Blaga, using the broader backdrop of Coserian linguistics. Over the years, Borcilă has taught numerous courses in these thematic areas at Babeș-Bolyai University (Cluj), home of the first Center of Integralist Studies, which he founded in 1998 together with a group of immediate disciples, myself among them. The vast majority of his publications also cover the areas listed above. It is, however, my contention that Borcilă's *most original* linguistic contribution is his typological model of poetic texts (Borcilă 1981, 1987). Paradoxically, this also remains to this day the *least developed* part of his work after the initial proposal was published, and therefore its full potential is still untapped. It is this model that will be the focus of the present paper.

The typological model put forward by Borcilă is grounded in the realm of *the poetic*, with the important note that the Romanian scholar is interested in the core mechanisms that engender poeticity, "at the deep

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level and in the primary moment of the construction of the textual world”<sup>2</sup> (Borcilă 1987: 186) – a level where *the poetic* is not confined to its manifestation as *literary* poetic, but can also be found in other domains of cultural creation, such as the mythical-religious, philosophic-metaphysical and constructive-scientific realms.<sup>3</sup> The privileged place ascribed to literary texts in the process of building and illustrating this model derives from the fact that it is here that all the creative potentialities of language – including the possibilities of creating textual sense beyond the area of linguistic semantics as such – become most poignantly visible, and thus provide both an *analogon* and a touchstone for the identification of such processes in other textual-cultural domains.

This approach is compatible with the reason why literature is privileged as an object of study for Integral text linguistics (cf. Coseriu 1977 [1971]: 203–204; 1981: 110): it is here that we can find the full actualization of all the expressive possibilities of language, it is here that sense-constitutive sign relations and “evocative functions”<sup>4</sup> are realized in a maximal form, while in other discourse modes or text types some of these relations and functions are “suspended” (sublated) or “de-actualized”:

“[...] el empleo del lenguaje en la vida práctica es efectivamente un uso. También podemos decir que el empleo del lenguaje en la ciencia es un uso. Pero no, el empleo del lenguaje en la literatura, que no es un uso particular sino que representa la plena funcionalidad del lenguaje o esta actualización de sus posibilidades, de sus virtualidades” (Coseriu 1987: 24–25).

And, about literary texts:

“Los textos literarios deben valer como modelos para la lingüística del texto, puesto que representan, precisamente, el tipo de textos funcionalmente más rico y porque en los restantes tipos de textos hay que especificar las ‘automatizaciones’ (‘desactualizaciones’) que intervienen en cada caso” (Coseriu 1977 [1971]: 204).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “la nivelul profund și în momentul primar al construirii lumii textului” (all the translations from Romanian originals are mine – E.T.-M.).

<sup>3</sup> On this fundamental issue, see also Borcilă (1993, 1996a: 29, 1997a: 151, 162, 2011).

<sup>4</sup> “Evocative functions (relations)” of the sign actualized in discourse are strategies for the constitution of textual sense which engender a type of semantic plurivalence not to be seen simply as “vagueness”, but rather as “enrichment” of language (Coseriu 1981: 102). For a classification, definitions and illustrations, see Coseriu (1977 [1971]: 201–202, 1981: 68–101, 1987: 25–29).

<sup>5</sup> In the same sense, see Coseriu 1981: 110–111.

**1.2.** Starting from the Romanian poet Lucian Blaga's dissociation of metaphors into "plasticizing (depicting)" and "revelatory", Borcilă (1981, 1987, 1996, 1997a, 1997b) develops this view into a model of the basic "orientations" or "general intentions" of the process of discursive *poesis*:

(A) Poetic texts belonging to the "plasticizing (depicting)" finality aim to enhance and 'revolutionize' perception and re-construct the world in a multiplicity of salient details, taken up from heterogeneous and disparate regions of empirical experience. The textual world thus created is mono-layered, since in it the essence is identical to the (perceived) manifestation.

(B) By contrast, poetic texts belonging to the "revelatory" finality aim to reveal an essence unseen behind appearances and indeed obscured by perceivable manifestations. The textual world thus created will be independent from the structure and laws of the empirical world, and phenomena will only serve to signal or symbolize the existence of a mysterious realm of hidden essences.

Two more "primary criteria", integrating suggestions from Lotman's semiotics of culture and from B. Hrushovski's integrational semantics, serve to further specify these two orientations.

One is the "existential-axiological principle" which governs the process of *poesis*. Borcilă distinguishes a "syntactic" vs. a "semantic" principle:

(a) "syntactic": textual designata are not considered to possess poetic significance in and by themselves, and it is only through their ways of combination that they become relevant in the text;

(b) "semantic": there exist privileged designata endowed with poetic significance in themselves, and it is these particular designata that can function as access gates to a hidden plane of essences.

The last primary criterion is the "model of referential construction" of the textual world, which can be either "iconic diagrammatic" or "symbolic":

(i) "iconic diagrammatic": the text's internal field of reference is analogous to the external fields of empirically experienced reality, thus mono-layered, composed only of perceived or otherwise directly accessible phenomena;

(ii) "symbolic": the text's internal field of reference is dysanalogous to empirical experience, being proposed as an ontologically split world, where symbolically-charged phenomena serve to suggest the existence of a mysterious ontological plane of essences, without, however, revealing its actual content.

These three primary criteria are correlated and yield two text types: “Type A” – the “plasticizing syntactic diagrammatic” and “Type B” – “the revelatory semantic symbolic”. Each of these types can be subdivided into two further sub-types by the application of “secondary criteria”. Thus, in the diagrammatic model, the reconstruction of the sensory-concrete dimension of experience can be done while maintaining coherence (Type A1), or by collapsing coherence (Type A2). In the symbolic model, the re-semanticization of textual units can be effected in a mythical direction, by exploiting the mythological context of a given culture (Type B1), or in a mathematic-axiomatic direction, aspiring towards universal abstract symbols (Type B2). Borcilă characterizes type B2 as “symbolic-mathematic” based on the peculiar poetic technique used by Ion Barbu (pen name of mathematician Dan Barbilian) to conceive his poetry and also theorized in his critical essays. In a wider sense, it can be held to include any type of *axiomatic* semantic strategies, i.e. procedures for the creation of textual sense that draw upon the rational operations and terminological semantics employed in the discourse associated with either the logico-mathematical or the natural sciences.

The four resulting sub-types are outlined in **Table 1**.

<b><i>Modalities of sense construction in poetic texts</i></b>			
“plasticizing”		“revelatory”	
“syntactic” (A1)	“asemantic- asyntactic” (A2)	“semantic” (B1)	“semantic- syntactic” (B2)
(with coherence preserved) e.g. Tudor Arghezi	(with coherence collapsed) e.g. Avant-garde poetry	(symbolic-mythic) e.g. Lucian Blaga	(symbolic- mathematic) e.g. Ion Barbu

**Table 1.** M. Borcilă’s typology of poetic texts

**1.3.** Borcilă illustrates these types with the work of major representatives of 20<sup>th</sup> century Romanian poetry (Type A1 – Tudor Arghezi; A2 – Avant-garde poetry; B1 – Lucian Blaga, B2 – Ion Barbu<sup>6</sup>).

<sup>6</sup> Papahagi (2003: 61) also indicates the non-imagistic (i.e. non-plasticizing, non-depicting) character of Barbu’s hermetic poetry: „Metafora acoperă un spațiu pur, se ancorează în idee și depășește astfel stadiul imagistic” (“Metaphor covers a pure



However, this model is in fact operative as a general poetic typology, apt to explain the specificity of poetic sense construction in different linguistic-cultural contexts as well.

For example, Oana Boc (2007, chapter V) validates this claim by applying the framework to the analysis of Apollinaire's poetic work, which is demonstrated to manifest the plasticizing finality in the variant A1 (the syntactic sub-type), similar to the principle that governs Arghezi's poetry.

For the English-language realm, in Tămăianu-Morita (2012a: 18) some corresponding examples are given, albeit without a detailed analysis, but with succinct explanations meant to help the reader grasp intuitively the nature of the typological distinctions captured by Borcilă's model:

(A1) Walt Whitman, "I Sing the Body Electric", where a sum of enhanced disparate 'accidents' make up the very essence of manhood: "The march of fire-men in their own costumes, the play of masculine muscle through clean-setting trousers and waist-straps,/ The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell strikes suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,/ The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the curv'd neck and the counting; [...]"

(A2) E.E. Cummings, "anyone lived in a pretty how town", where the rejection of traditional rules of combination allows for words to be freely endowed with totally new lexical and categorial valencies, as the following stanza illustrates: "all by all and deep by deep/ and more by more they dream their sleep/ noone and anyone earth by april/ wish by spirit and if by yes".

(B1) Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers", where terms designating the empirical world are re-semanticized and replenished with mythical significance, thereby becoming windows to a mysterious space-time of unchanging essences: "I've known rivers:/ I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.// My soul has grown deep like the rivers.// I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young./ I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep./ I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it".

(B2) William Blake, "The Tyger", where semantically plurivalent lexical units evoke the discourse universes of astronomy, astrology and alchemy, and incantatory cadences suggest a ritual meant to reveal the

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space, is anchored in the Idea, and therefore *goes beyond the stage of imagery*"; translation and emphasis mine – E.T.-M.).

connection between the phenomena and a hidden universal essence: “Tyger! Tyger! burning bright/ In the forests of the night,/ What immortal hand or eye/ Could frame thy fearful symmetry?// In what distant deeps or skies/ Burnt the fire of thine eyes?/ On what wings dare he aspire?/ What the hand dare seize the fire? [...]”.

## 2. CONNECTIONS WITH INTEGRAL TEXT LINGUISTICS

**2.1.** In a series of previous studies<sup>7</sup> I have proposed the idea that, in a functional text typology built on Coserian bases, the typological organization of a genuine text should be understood as the ‘form’ of discourse, i.e. as an array of “formative principles”, in Humboldt’s sense (1988 [1836]: 51–53). Thus, the typological nature of a text reflects the modality in which the *significata* and *designata* of textual units become a signifier for textual sense; the text-typological layer type comprises overarching principles and strategies that govern the process of sense construction and coherently motivate the diverse configurations of all the individual text-constitutive elements.

In a Humboldtian perspective, the notion of ‘form’ is relational. The type of a text will therefore be described on several distinct functional levels. The most basic modalities of sense construction (what Coseriu calls “*Arten von Sinn*”) can be conceptualized starting from Humboldt’s “poetic” and “prosaic” modes of discourse (1988 [1836]: 168–181), perhaps better termed “poetic” vs. “non-poetic”, which delineate a primary layer of typicalness in genuine texts, i.e. what I have called ‘textual form of the first degree’.

While it is true that Humboldt’s description of the “poetic” and the “prosaic” modes is intuitive and non-technical, never developed into a full-fledged conceptualization, the energetic and dynamic view that underlies it deserves serious attention and further systematic elaboration. Thus, with Humboldt, the poetic and the prosaic, as discursive hypostases of language (“phenomena of language”<sup>8</sup>) represent the two fundamental orientations in which the activity of linguistic-intellective creation unfolds.<sup>9</sup> Although their “intrinsic differences” manifest themselves, by way of effect or consequence, in some characteristics or “details” recognizable at the

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<sup>7</sup> Tămăianu(-Morita) 2001, 2006a, 2006b, 2012a, 2014, 2015a, 2016, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Humboldt 1988 [1836]: 168.

<sup>9</sup> “Poetry and prose are different [...] in their *directions* and *means* of operation, and can really never be intermingled” (Humboldt 1988 [1836]: 170; emphasis in the original).

surface of texts, that is in “the choice of *terms, grammatical forms and constructions*”, the separation of the two modes rests upon the unquantifiable essence of “the *tone of the whole* residing in their deeper nature” (Humboldt 1988 [1836]: 171; emphasis in the original).

If the “poetic” is taken to be a characterization at the level of the very first (the most basic) degree in a functional text typology, it follows that Borcilă’s model captures a second-degree (a more specific) characterization, by categorizing the internal finalities of sense construction as “plasticizing” vs. “revelatory”, with all the ensuing details. It is not an overstatement to say that Borcilă’s typology of poetic texts seems to be, so far, the only systematic and comprehensive development of this type of perspective for the domain of the poetic modality, offering theoretical and methodological clarifications for what in Humboldt (1988 [1836]) remains an intuitive account.

**2.2.** Although Borcilă’s 1981 and 1987 studies do not unfold the references to the conceptual framework of Coserian text linguistics, the axes of compatibility and convergence with the bases of linguistic integralism are later rendered explicit and clearly motivated, especially in Borcilă (1997a and 2001). Also, in a recent paper, in the context of explaining the originality of Coseriu’s text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense, Borcilă states:

“In Coseriu’s approach, ‘sense’ is conceived as primarily evolving from a ‘core act’ of semantic textual creativity, in which the signifieds of the language and their potential designations are dynamically and convergently activated in the projection of an emerging (‘possible’) world. This approach to texts has a solid conceptual framework in Coseriu’s definition of ‘modes of discourse’ and in his original theory of ‘universes of discourse’ (cf. Coseriu 2002)” (Borcilă 2021: 146).

A theoretical linkage of Borcilă’s nuclear metaphoricity with Integral text linguistics is persuasively effected by Zagaevschi Cornelius (2005) in her analysis of the strategies of sense articulation in the novel *Luntrea lui Caron* (*Charon’s Boat*) by Lucian Blaga, from the perspective of the configuration of metaphorical textual functions. The conceptual apparatus elaborated by Zagaevschi Cornelius programmatically integrates the approach of text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense (Coseriu 1981), manifested in notions such as *sense articulation* (*Gliederung des Sinns*), *textual function*, *evocative functions of signs in the text*, *textual form* etc., with the perspective of anthropologic poetics in the lineage of Borcilă’s outlook.

**2.3.** At this point in the discussion, two important distinctions have to be made.

First of all, Borcilă's nuclear metaphoricity regards deep-level semantic mechanisms that trigger and then underlie the textualization process.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, Integral text linguistics takes *existing* texts as a starting point, and aims to hermeneutically trace back the intuited sense to the elements of textual expression correlated with them.

Second, Borcilă's model, as already mentioned above (cf. *supra*, 1.1.), aims to grasp the very mechanisms of linguistic and trans-linguistic creativity, whereas Integral text linguistics concerns itself with the procedures for constructing sense in any (type of) text, not only in radically creative ones.

There exists, however, an intersection of these axes of divergence, a focal point where the two theories are entwined – a 'groove' where they interlock: the typology of poetic texts. Its typological criteria reflect principles of sense articulation that can be traced all the way up to the surface of the text.

One aspect from the framework of Integral linguistics that can be brought to bear in this context is the strategy of evocation, especially the evocation of the universes of discourse, as also pointed out by Borcilă in the quote above (*supra*, 2.2.). In Coseriu (1962 [1955-1956]: 318-319), the universe of discourse is defined as the universal "system of significations" to which a discourse (or an utterance) belongs, and which "determines its validity and its sense". Examples of universes of discourse in this acceptation are: literature, mythology, the sciences, mathematics, the empirical universe, regarded as "themes" or "reference worlds" of discourse. If we are to believe Coseriu's own testimony (2002: 39-41), the way he understands and uses the notion of "universe of discourse" undergoes a significant change towards the end of his life. In this study devoted to the "prayer as text", Coseriu first restates the view from 1955-1956 given above (2002: 37-38), and then brings certain "clarifications" and "modifications". One of the modifications concerns the types of universes of discourse. Formerly given in a more detailed enumeration, they are now reduced to only four (types), whose legitimacy is given by their correspondence with four autonomous *modes of knowledge*: the universe of daily experience; the universe of science; the universe of imagination (and therefore art in general); the universe of faith. In a detailed analysis of these two accounts, I have argued

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<sup>10</sup> For an in-depth discussion, see Zagaevschi Cornelius 2005: 54-59.

(Tămâianu-Morita 2021: 239–242) that, with the exception of the status of “myth/ mythology”, to which a separate critical analysis is devoted, the 2002 version is not so much a modification, but rather a systematization of the earlier outlook. Moreover, what is of interest in text linguistics is the function of the universe of discourse (in whatever classification, even an intuitive or a tentative one) in the process of sense-construction. For this purpose, we can safely take into account the original enumeration from 1962 [1955-1956], with the conceptual “clarifications” brought in 2002.

At Level III in Coseriu’s triadic outlook on language, the level of discourse, the function of the *entornos* (“circumstances” or “settings” of speech) needs to be understood as part of a wider operation which links what is said in the text with what is not said, but *is* expressed and understood<sup>11</sup>: the strategy of evocation. The *entornos* are only one type of knowledge components that can be evoked by text-constitutive units. For example, in a given text the proper name “Ulysses” may evoke the universe of discourse of Greek mythology and its associated literary tradition, or the universe of discourse of literature with a peculiar narrative genre (Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*), or both, the former evocative relation being mediated by the latter.

The evocation of *entornos* (including the universe of discourse) is relevant from a text-typological point of view, precisely at the level of textual form of the second degree, where it can serve to highlight strategies pertaining to the “sub-modalities” of sense construction proposed in Borcilă’s model. Thus, for example, the “direction of resemantization” of linguistic units in the revelatory type foregrounds the evocation of the discourse universes of myth and science, while poetic texts of the plasticizing type foreground the evocation of the discourse universe of empirical experience, even if sometimes only to suspend or reorganize its laws and patterns, as in sub-type A2.

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<sup>11</sup> “[...] en todo momento, lo que efectivamente *se dice* es menos de lo que *se expresa y se entiende*” (Coseriu 1962 [1955-1956]: 308; emphasis in the original).

### 3. APPLICATIVE ANALYSIS: SENSE CONSTRUCTION IN A HERMETIC POEM

**3.1.** Let us take as an example a hermetic poem by Ion Barbu (1984 [1930]: 20) entitled “Grup” (“Group”), from the cycle “Joc secund” (“Second game”), built upon a complex nexus of evocative relations of the universes of discourse of science (mathematics and physics), philosophy (Plato) and religion (mystical Christianity).

The original Romanian text and my English equivalence (E.T.-M.), formulated in such a way as to keep as close as possible to the original in its constitutive details, can be found in **Table 2**. Two published translations, one into English and the other into Spanish (see **Table 3**), will be used for purposes of contrastive analysis.

Original text (Barbu 1984 [1930]: 20)	English equivalence & gloss (E.T.-M.)
<p>GRUP E temnița în ars, nedemn pământ, De ziuă, finul razelor înșală; Dar capetele noastre, dacă sînt, Ovaluri stau, de var, ca o greșală.</p> <p>Atîtea clăile de fire stîngi! Găsi-vor gest închis, să le rezume, Să nege, dreaptă, linia ce frîngi: Ochi în virgin triunghi tăiat spre lume?</p>	<p>GROUP The prison is in burnt, unworthy earth [/clay], Of day, the hay of rays misleads; But our heads, should they exist, Ovals they stay, in limewash, like an error [/like a sin].</p> <p>Enough [/So many are] the stacks of left-side strings! Will they find closed gesture, to sum them up, To deny, straight, the line you break: Eye in virgin triangle cut towards the world?</p>

**Table 2.** “Grup” by Ion Barbu – original and English gloss

English translation by Avădanei & Eulert (Drăgan 1973: 62)	Spanish translation by Ivanovici (Barbu 1981: 139)
<p>GROUP Here the cell, the prison, in burnt unworthy earth. The hay of rays is cheating, as if to seem the day; But our heads, if they exist in fact – Remain ovals made of lime, like a mistake.</p> <p>You quench so many hay-stacks! Will they find any completed gesture to sum them up, To deny, straight, the line that you are breaking: Eye in a virgin triangle cut towards the world?</p>	<p>GRUPO Es cárcel calcinada, tierra vil. De día engaña el heno de los rayos; mas las cabezas nuestras, si lo son, ovaes son, de cal, igual que un fallo.</p> <p>¡Tantas hacinas de izquierdos tallos! ¿Podrán hallar el gesto, abreviado, negando – recta – esta linea trunca: ojo en un virgen triángulo hacia el mundo cortado?</p>

**Table 3.** “Grup” by Ion Barbu – English and Spanish translations

We will try to see in what way the typological perspective and concrete criteria from Borcilă’s model can help to elucidate and justify the articulation of sense in this particular text, and in what way they can be linked with the outlook of Integral text linguistics. As far as the latter is concerned, we will use the analytical framework of ‘text-constitutive units’ and ‘text-constitutive procedures/ devices’, developed on Coserian bases and proposed in several previous contributions.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed presentation and extensive bibliographical references, see Tămăianu (-Morita) 2001: 40, 125–133; 2002: 126–150; 2014. For convenience, a brief list is given here. A. Text-constitutive units: (a) Idiomatic signs, ranging over all the strata of idiomatic structuring and comprising all the five types of significata, with the constellation of all their paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations at the idiomatic level. (b) Traditional means for realizing specific textual functions. (c) Previous (fragments of) texts taken up as such and used as raw material for the constitution of a new text. B. Text-constitutive procedures: (a) Evocative sign relations. (b) Textual functions, among which an important role has to be assigned to metaphorical strategies as textual functions, as defined

The key point in the construction of sense in this poem lies in the function fulfilled by the title, which marks the very first step of the interpretive endeavor and overarches all the subsequent constitutive elements.

The lexeme *grup* is discohesive (it is not reiterated in any form, and is not grammatically connected with any sequence of the poem) and discoherent (its significatum has no codified relations with the significata of any other lexical units in the text). However, the apparent lack of coherence can be solved, and the title can be fully integrated with the text via the strategy of evocation.

It must be stressed that what we are dealing with here is an idiomatic significatum *as a text-constitutive unit*. Thus, the unit brings into the text not only its functional status in the system, but also its usage in the various norms and all of its properties in the architecture of the language(s) involved. Furthermore, it also acts as a point of anchorage for multiple evocative relations.

In Romanian, besides its primary use to designate a set of objects or persons which share some characteristics, the word *grup* has two special acceptations: in the universe of discourse of art it designates a group of figures forming a unit in a painting or sculpture, and in the universe of discourse of mathematics it designates a set defined by certain properties, an algebraic group. The English correspondent *group* parallels this organization (cf. senses 7 and 13 in *CDEL*, s.v. "group").<sup>13</sup> Thus, the unit "grup" evokes simultaneously three universes of discourse: that of ordinary daily life, which provides its core meaning, that of art, which brings an extension of the former, and that of science (in this case, mathematics), which puts forth a substantially different variant of meaning.

**3.2.** The evocations of art and mathematics trigger two radically different directions of sense construction.

On the one hand, the evocation of art delineates a concrete line of sense construction, where the "group" is an artistic representation,

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by Zagaevschi Cornelius (2005). (c) Forms of suspending (*Aufhebung*) incongruence and incorrectness through the value of adequacy. (d) Expression "gaps" (*Ausdruckslücke*).

<sup>13</sup> Sense 7: "two or more figures forming a design or unit in a design, in a painting or sculpture"; Sense 13 (*Maths.*): "a set under an operation involving any two members of the set such that the set is closed, associative, and contains both an identity and the inverse of each member". For a technical description of the mathematical concept of 'group' see Gellert et al. (eds.) (1980: 426-427).



specified by other units in the first stanza as an instance of religious (Christian) painting on limewash, or the traces of such a painting on a church or monastery wall (“ars, nedemn pămînt”, ‘burnt, unworthy clay’). It will be noted that in this case the title has an accessory role, merely indicating that the painting *might* have represented a group of human figures, only the sketchy shape of their heads now remaining barely visible (“Dar capetele noastre, dacă sînt,/ Ovaluri stau, de var [...]”; ‘But our heads, should they exist,/ Ovals they stay, in limewash [...]').

The contemplation of this faded painting prompts the poetic ‘I’ to ponder on the limitations of human rational thought (“clăile de fire stîngi”, ‘stacks of left-side strings’), wondering if human beings can ever transcend their unworthy condition (creatures made of “clay”, as in the biblical account) when confronted with the mystery of an all-powerful divinity (“Ochi în virgin triunghi tăiat spre lume”, ‘Eye in virgin triangle cut towards the world’).

The evocation of mathematics, however, delineates a *superimposed* abstract line of sense construction, in which the role of the title “Group” is paramount, because it brings along completely new features of the textual world, not signified or connotated by any other textual unit, while also connecting all the other elements in a much tighter configuration. One might say that the universe of discourse of science is *fully drawn into* the process of poetic sense-construction, as the evocation of “group” brings along sense units that are not expressed by any other constitutive procedure and in the absence of which the process of interpretation cannot even begin.

In algebra, a group is a set on which a law of correspondence is established – an operation of multiplicatory or additive form, which associates any pair of elements from the set with a third element of the set. The set is closed, and contains both the unit-element, and the inverse of each element.<sup>14</sup>

Applied to the textual world, these features of the mathematical group bring forth the following strands of sense:

(1) As a “group”, i.e. a closed, structured and knowable set of designata, the world is to be understood as self-consistent (a cosmos *sui generis*).

(2) The existence of a law of correspondence between designata, either additive or multiplicatory, indicates that the world is algorithmically structured, and therefore also knowable in ordered steps.

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<sup>14</sup> See Gellert et al. (eds.) 1980: 426–427.

(3) The inclusion of the unit-element and of all the inverse elements ( $a^{-1}$  belongs to the set) indicates that the textual world contains its own underlying – one might say ‘holographic’ – unity<sup>15</sup>, has the possibility of self-reflection, and, most importantly, contains the means of its own generation and destruction. It is thus a world in dynamic equilibrium.

These semantic strands do not have any explicit expression in the text, but are all evoked by the unit “group”, and must therefore be considered objectively present in the text, as units of sense correlated with the lexical unit *grup* and the evocative relation anchored in it. Each of these units of sense can subsequently be interconnected with other textual units (lexemes, grammatical constructions), and will ultimately justify the underlying coherence and the sense of the text as a whole.

On this dimension of textual sense, the world described in the first stanza is not a ‘miniature’ scene in the human-scale landscape inhabited by individual members of the human race, but the cosmos in its manifested phenomena: “pământ” of the first line is (the planet) Earth, a prison by virtue of the forces of gravity, and filtrating the rays of light through the ‘misleading’ lens of its atmosphere; the “ovals” are planetary orbits; “the stacks of left-side strings” are left-handed (counterclockwise) topological curves<sup>16</sup> that tend to de-stabilize the world by their exophoric momentum. The last two lines of the poem also allow for an interpretation

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<sup>15</sup> A reflection by the philosopher Constantin Noica, former student of Ion Barbu, can throw light upon the significance of “one”, the unit-element: “[U]nu este felul de a fi al tuturor lucrurilor algebrice, atunci când ele nu sînt. [...] Dacă un lucru nu este, unu este încă și cu el toată lumea. Nimic nu dispare, totul se întoarce la unu. El este a, el e b și tot el z. El este alfa și omega. O lume întregă e în el, toată lumea cantităților e în el. Căci toate sînt în unu, și unu este peste tot.” (“One is the way of being of all algebraic things, when they are not. [...] If a thing is not, one still exists, and with it the whole world. Nothing vanishes, all goes back to one. It is a, it is b, and it is also z. It is alpha and omega. A whole world is in it, all the world of quantities is in it. For all are in one, and one is everywhere.”) (Noica 1992 [1934]: 62, a passage not surprisingly found in Chapter V, entitled “God” – translation mine - E.T.-M.).

<sup>16</sup> Referring to the line „Atîtea clăile de fire stîngi”, Ivanovici, in his *Foreword* to the bilingual Romanian – Spanish edition (Barbu 1981: 32) points out that “knowledgeable commentators indicate that the adjective must be taken in the acceptation it has in geometrical terminology” (translation mine – E.T.-M.). Following up on this lead, we find that in mathematics a left-handed curve is a curve that is not contained in a plane, such as a helix that coils counterclockwise.

in the key of a straightforward geometrical description. The triangle cut by a straight line and oriented downwards (“towards the world”) is the alchemic symbol of one of the four elements that compose the physical world: the element Earth. Thus, the textual world recoils upon itself, closed like a mathematical group, the “unworthy earth” of the first line being balanced by what could be considered its inverse correspondent – not only negative mirroring, but also summation (“to sum them up”), unification, culmination, and transubstantiation into alchemic “Earth”, elevated to the status of a cosmic-foundational element.

What the poetic ‘I’ is pondering upon at this level of sense articulation is not merely the limitation of human life and thought in the face of divinity, but the puzzle of the universe in its very physical foundations, and the question of whether a human mind can ever gain access to pure, all-encompassing, absolute knowledge of the natural universe.

**3.3.** The two superimposed dimensions of sense-construction discussed above can be imagined as defining a vertical axis in the articulation of sense. Next, if we focus on the sequential (horizontal, progressive) constitution of the poem, we notice that its sections actualize a cognitive process in three stages, proceeding from falseness (a surface of deceiving appearances) to truth (an unseen layer of essential energies and configurations):

*Stage 1* (Lines 1–2). Perceptual knowledge, direct and sensory, but erroneous. Its units of expression are the evocation of the Platonic allegory of the cave through the prison of “nedemn pămînt” (‘unworthy clay’), and the characterization of daylight as a chaotic agglomeration of material details in a divergent cluster (or bundle), marked by dispersion and fragmentation.

*Stage 2* (Lines 3–5). Intellectual (rational) knowledge: „clăile de fire stîngi”, the brain hemisphere responsible for constructing rational models of the world, reasoning perfectly articulated by logical connections. This is also presented as misleading and insufficient. The heads are ovals, but their very existence is doubtful: “dacă sînt” (‘should they exist’). The oval shape also evokes the universe of discourse of science, more specifically astronomy, as the ellipse is the geometric shape of planetary orbits, the ‘imperfection’ of which Kepler lamented and initially repudiated. Also, the color white indicated by “var” (‘lime’/‘limewash’) is totally reflective, with no possibility of refraction; the

earthen wall denies translucidity, it is a screen that precludes all penetration.<sup>17</sup>

*Stage 3* (Lines 6–8). Knowledge through mystic revelation or instant enlightenment: to shatter the illusion of plurality and bring the revelation of One (“gest închis, să le rezume”, ‘closed gesture, to sum them up’), by establishing laws of correspondence between all the elements in the textual world. This stage presupposes a transversal gaze, a section that opens up the access beyond the surface of phenomena, to the inner side of things. Divergence is negated, and the perfect shape results – the mystic triangle, a privileged point of ingress to the source of all manifestations, locus of the essential nature of the universe. Thus, “Să nege, dreaptă, linia ce frîngi” (‘to deny, straight, the line you break’) indicates replacing a zigzagged or rugged line with a secant line – a straight shortcut line which is in fact the trajectory of light when it encounters no obstacles such as reflective or refractive surfaces. It is worth noting that the verb “a frînge” also evokes the universe of discourse of Christianity, more precisely the breaking of the bread transubstantiated into the Body of Christ, for communion during the mass. Therefore, Stage 3 signifies going not only beyond rational knowledge, but also beyond knowledge obtained by religious revelation in an ‘ordinary’ sense – that is, *overcoming all that is human*, in order to lift up the mind into a realm of transhuman absolute truths.

Grammatical significata also support the delineation of these three stages of knowledge. For example, in Stage 2 two plural nouns (“clăile de fire stîngi”) suggest that rational knowledge remains anchored in the heterogeneity of empirical experience, whereas the unifying gesture in Stage 3 is, aptly, designated by a noun in the singular (“gest”), determined by the participial adjective “închis” (‘closed’).<sup>18</sup>

As for the predicates, Stage 1 is delineated by static expressions of existence (“E”, “sînt”, “stau”), whereas Stages 2 and 3 are delineated by dynamic verbs (“găsi-vor”, “să rezume”, “să nege”, “frîngi”, “tăiat”), with an emphasis on violent actions, as Ivănescu (in Barbu 1981: 34) also points out – alluding to the formidable intrinsic forces and overwhelming kinetic energy of the universe.

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<sup>17</sup> An inspired choice of words in the Spanish translation highlights this feature of the earthen prison: “cárcel calcinada” (lit. ‘calcined prison’).

<sup>18</sup> By comparison, the published English translation (see **Table 3**) chooses the participle “completed”, which suggests a longer processual span than the virtually instantaneous and forcible “closed”. The Spanish translation infelicitously omits the determinant altogether (“hallar el gesto, abreviado”).

The textual world is thus seen to order itself by virtue of a precise nexus of operations and procedures: force lines that structure a world otherwise amorphous, which *becomes* a group, a domain in perpetual self-structuring, one that continuously defines itself as a group. However, Stage 3, seeing inside the essential nature of all things, remains under the sign of a mere possibility: it is posed as a question without the certainty of an answer.

**3.4.** As the examples discussed above show, the text consistently applies strategies of sense articulation that effect shifts between different levels of sense in privileged text-constitutive points occupied by semantically 'loaded' elements, such as: "pămînt" (clay and Earth) "oval" (shape of human head and planetary orbit), "greșală" (error in a mathematical computation, or sin in the Christian sense), "dreaptă" (geometrically straight and righteous in a moral sense), "Atîtea [...]!" (elliptic phrase that can be interpreted as 'Enough [...]!' or 'So many are [...]!') This is a type of text-constitutive strategy I have defined in Tămâianu (1992) as a "synergy of configurational schemes", by which two or more totally different textual worlds, sometimes even polar opposites, are projected onto the same textual point and coexist in an irreconcilable tension, resulting in an exponentially enhanced effect of poeticity. This type of semantic synergy is similar to the "articulatory" functioning of trans-linguistic (poetic) metaphors, as defined and illustrated by Zagaevschi Cornelius (2005: 127–128), and, in particular, to their "capacity to connect 'vertically' two or more levels of sense construction, generating a plurality of sense values" (p. 175).

The synergic evocation of different universes of discourse through the same textual unit and the innovative use of lexical significata in the direction of a radical impersonalization and abstractization of textual entities are overarching textual strategies that manifest the *symbolic-mathematical* model of referential construction in the *revelatory semantic-syntactic* sub-type of poetic texts, as defined by Borcilă.

#### **4. DISCUSSION: SENSE CONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES AND TRANSLATION**

**4.1.** The astonishing originality of Ion Barbu's poetic work also attracted the interest of Eugenio Coseriu himself. In one of his earliest published papers, Coseriu (1948) undertakes a detailed and rigorous description of Ion Barbu's "language", focusing on the peculiar strategies of linguistic innovation which stand out in Barbu's work and proposing a

basic dissociation of Barbu's lexical and grammatical innovations into a "logical" or "semantic" type and a "stylistic" type. Barbu's (textual) innovations of a lexical and syntactic nature are first classified and then systematically compared with the current norm of Romanian. Coseriu argues that most instances only constitute innovations in relation to the norm, while in fact instantiating systemic potentialities of the Romanian language. Specifically, the principal device of innovation found by Coseriu to be at work in Barbu's poetry is the extension of certain types of uses to other cases, "logically similar", but where the current norm is different. This overarching principle justifies ten syntactic strategies of innovation. As far as lexical strategies are concerned, Coseriu identifies two main categories: (a) the use of stylistically marked words, such as recent loanwords, terminologies of various sciences, dialectal variants etc., and (b) innovations proper, especially changes of signification, again by extension of a particular acceptance to the whole semantic sphere of that word (pp. 49–50).

In the 1948 article, Coseriu's aim is to throw light upon the organization of a language (Level II) into functional levels (conceptualized through the triad norm/ system/ type just a few years later). In Tămăianu-Morita (2015b), I have argued that, if we shift the perspective and examine the relevance of Coseriu's whole analysis for the level of discourse, then the linguistic phenomena analyzed in 1948 with reference to the organization of the particular language can be subsumed to the set of *text-constitutive* procedures detailed above (3.4.). Thus, syntactic innovations derive from a consistent strategy of synergy of configurational schemes and the innovative use of lexical *significata* is effected in the direction of a radical impersonalization of textual entities.<sup>19</sup>

To be sure, the use of mathematical terminology has been mentioned by literary critics, who also rely on Barbu's own explicit poetics. For example, Ivanovici, in his *Foreword* to the bilingual Romanian – Spanish edition (Barbu 1981: 32), points out that "mathematical language gives us the key to the [...] title *Grup*". Borcilă's model, however, places the whole analysis on a profoundly different level: what it unmistakably demonstrates is that *all* of Barbu's linguistic strategies are not mere stylistic embellishments meant to engender striking connotative auras, but necessary semantic mechanisms designed to produce a radical difference in the way textual sense is constructed. From

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<sup>19</sup> It is also in this sense that we can concur with Papahagi's (2003: 61) observation that Barbu's poetic style is "de-humanized" ("Maniera sa poetică este dezumanizată [...]").

the perspective of literary criticism, it seems to me that Papahagi (2003) comes closest to understanding the earnest intent that underlies Barbu's poetic strategies, when he notes:

"He [Barbu] built poetry in the same way he would have built a mathematical system. He looked for its axioms and postulates, raised upon them the rest of the edifice, and even tried to have the laws of that system observed by all means" (Papahagi 2003: 75; translation mine – E.T.-M.).<sup>20</sup>

Along this line of reasoning, we have to go one step further and point out that the poems thus constructed present themselves to the reader as a mathematical problem/ puzzle to be solved, or as an encrypted message to be deciphered with precision, by following systematically a series of procedural steps apt to ensure that *all* the text-constitutive elements are placed in meaningful connections. Nothing must be left pending; nothing seems to be random or superfluous.

**4.2.** One of the clearest expressions of Barbu's views on what the essence of a poetic (creative) text is – what in Coserian terms we would call textual sense and textual constitution in their inextricable relation – can be found in Barbu's statements about translating Shakespeare into Romanian. The basic tenets summarized below<sup>21</sup> can be placed in a direct connection with a Humboldtian energetic and dynamic view on discourse, and are therefore compatible both with Integral text linguistics and with Borcilă's typological model.

Ion Barbu's crucial criticism to ordinary Shakespearean translations published in his time is their "elemental" character.<sup>22</sup> The translator's endeavor, he claims, goes in the direction of "rendering Shakespeare element by element, staying faithful to him in the details", like "the strife of miniature painters"<sup>23</sup> (Barbu 1964: 297). This orientation is questionable, Barbu feels, because it places excessive emphasis on "the accident [=

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<sup>20</sup> "El a construit poezia așa cum ar fi construit un sistem matematic. A căutat axiomele și postulatele, a edificat deasupra restul construcției, a căutat chiar să obțină respectarea legilor acestui sistem, sau s-o impună".

<sup>21</sup> For a full analysis, see Tămâianu-Morita 2012b.

<sup>22</sup> The statements are quoted here from the Addenda "[Despre traduceri din Shakespeare]" in Barbu (1964). All translations are mine – E.T.-M.

<sup>23</sup> "[...] 'elementar' numește aici [...] direcția în care se poartă efortul traducătorului, preocupat a reda, element cu element, pe Shakespeare, a-i rămîne credincios în detaliu"; "osîrdii de miniaturişti".

accidental features] of Shakespeare's work"<sup>24</sup> (p. 307), failing to grasp its "spirit" or "atmosphere", given that "in a qualitative order, the whole does not always equal the sum of its parts"<sup>25</sup> (p. 297). The aim, when translating Shakespeare, should be, instead, to elicit in the reader the same "imaginative rapture"<sup>26</sup> (p. 297) that the original produces. To this end, the translator should faithfully observe the "successions of force fields" in a play, "the impulse, the circuit of discourse", "the mutual relations" and "inner tensions" between a play's "materials" (p. 306), the "dynamic schemata of the speeches"<sup>27</sup> (p. 307). Barbu goes on to specify these general textual requirements through several parameters pertaining to all the structural layers of the text, from the phonetic to the syntactic and semantic, not failing to include the cultural connotations of linguistic units. His own (unfinished) translation of *Richard III* applies and illustrates this view.

**4.3.** How do these dynamic vectors of sense construction manifest themselves in the constitution of a text, and how can they be identified and described in a concrete way? Let us turn to the same poem, "Grup", and the two published translations reproduced in **Table 3**.

What Barbu calls "force field" in a text can perhaps be best understood as the semantic nexus of all the evocative relations anchored in a textual unit, such as a lexical significatum. Consider the unit "pămînt" from the first line. In order to fulfill its sense-constitutive function, the equivalent chosen in the translated text should cover the acceptations of 'soil/ clay' and '(planet) Earth' simultaneously, without reducing the possible interpretations to only one of them. Both the English version and the Spanish version adequately choose "earth" and "tierra", thus respecting the configuration of the original.

More difficult, however, is the case of "greșală" from the fourth line, which in Romanian can designate both an 'error' and (in a somewhat archaic usage), a 'sin' in the Christian sense. Both the English "a mistake" and the Spanish "un fallo" cover only the first acceptation. To be sure, this is an objective limitation arising in the translation process, since in this case the key text-constitutive unit relies directly upon the organization of

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<sup>24</sup> "accidentalul operei shakespeariene".

<sup>25</sup> "suflul textului shakespearian"; "în ordinea calitativă, întregul nu egalează totdeauna suma părților".

<sup>26</sup> "răpire imaginativă".

<sup>27</sup> "succesiuni de câmpuri de forțe"; "zvîcnirea, circuitul discursului"; "reciprocitățile", "tensiunile interioare [dintre] materialele pieselor"; "schema dinamică a tiradelor".



idiomatic significata, which is, in principle, different from language to language, with parallelisms found only in rare and fortunate cases.

The “dynamic schemata” of the text may indicate fundamental components of the textual world – or, rather, the complex interactions between components that build up the textual world. One could examine, from this point of view, the ‘inhabitants’ of the textual world of the poem “Grup”, the actors that exist and act in this world. We will note in the original two actors: (1) a plural (multiple) one indicated by the adjective *noastre* from the phrase “capetele noastre”, the actor that aims to pass from each stage of knowledge to the next; (2) a singular (unique) one implied by the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular of the verb *frîngi*; the various evocations analyzed in section 3.3. suggest that this entity might be a divine principle, one that encompasses (and hides) the mystery that the first agent is trying to unravel.

The English translation maintains the dual configuration (“our heads” vs. “the line that *you* are breaking”), even though, due to the grammatical peculiarity of the English pronouns, the clear opposition plural vs. singular is attenuated. The translators interpolate a phrase that has no correspondent in the original (“You quench”) and drastically modifies the relationship between the ‘Us’ and the ‘You’ of the text, by creating the false impression that the ‘You’ is supportive of the cognitive enterprise of the ‘Us’, when in the original the two actors are placed in clear – even violent – opposition (the closed gesture performed by ‘Us’ is supposed to *deny* the line ‘You’ break, and thus cut through the veil of appearances).

On the other hand, the Spanish translation completely deletes the second agent, the ‘You’, by resorting to a simple adjectival demonstrative: “esta línea trunca” (lit. ‘this truncated/ broken line’). With this choice, the whole “dynamic scheme” of the poem is changed, and a coherent connection between all the elements of the text can no longer be built.

The apprehension of what is lost or, conversely, what is added (interpolated) through the translation process serves to throw into sharp relief the text-constitutive organization and the strategies of sense-articulation in the original text. Therefore, in text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense, translation and translation analysis can be employed as a methodological tool for identifying and ascertaining the mechanisms of sense construction.

## 5. FINAL REMARKS

In this contribution we have explored Mircea Borcilă's typology of poetic texts, proposed in the 8<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and attempted to place it in connection with Eugenio Coseriu's framework of Integral text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense. A basic difference in their respective research goals is acknowledged: Borcilă's approach, rooted in anthropological poetics, aims to capture and justify the mechanisms of a radical – 'inaugural' – creativity through language, whereas Integral text linguistics resorts to analyzing creative texts in order to find in them, in a most concentrated and poignant form, possible strategies of sense-construction in general.

It is perhaps common to imagine *the poetic* as a far-off territory that lies *beyond* the confines of 'ordinary', everyday, practical communication, and is therefore of limited use for linguistic study – even for the linguistic study of texts in general. A model such as Borcilă's typology of poetic texts, however, suggests a very different insight: in fact, it would be more accurate to say that it is the ordinary practical texts that lie *beyond* the poetic, in at least two ways. First, poetic texts put the core mechanism of linguistic creativity on display, as it were – and therefore make for better, more efficient, points of departure in text-linguistic investigation. Second, it is non-creative, routine discourse that strays away from these nuclear and most intense actualizations, by functional reductions and de-actualizations. Therefore, for Integral text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense, the study of creative texts is a gateway to unraveling the general mechanisms and strategies of textual sense construction.

The explanatory potentialities of Borcilă's typology can be exploited, in future investigations, from many different perspectives. For example, the grid of modalities of sense-construction can be applied to distinct areas of one and the same author's work, in order to find their underlying functional unity or homogeneity at the level of the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree textual form.<sup>28</sup> Another possible perspective is an analogical use: the typology of creative texts can suggest ways of categorizing and describing non-creative texts from one and the same cultural domain. If the texts of ordinary daily communication present simplifications and de-actualizations

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<sup>28</sup> An example is found in Tămăianu (2001: 102–111), where a literary and a scientific component of Lewis Carroll's work (*Through the Looking Glass* and *Sorites*) are shown to instantiate the same type of sense-construction modality (B2).

of the functions found in poetic discourse, it might be worth exploring in what way texts for ‘ordinary’ communication in the domain of science (such as texts of dissemination and popularization) compare functionally with creative-constructive texts in their respective fields (for instance, with texts that present a new theory or initiate a new paradigm, texts addressed only to a specialist audience). Again, the grid of sub-modalities of sense construction put forward in Borcilă’s model can provide a consistent framework for comparison and contrast. Last but not least, Borcilă’s typology, with its future applications and developments, can open up paths for interdisciplinary research, aimed at finding deep connections between diverse areas of creative endeavors in given historical periods, or across the boundaries of different cultures.

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**BEYOND THE POETIC: EXPLORING THE GENERAL MECHANISMS OF  
TEXTUAL SENSE CONSTRUCTION**

**(Abstract)**

The present contribution focuses on Mircea Borcilă's typology of poetic texts, which proposes a multi-layered semantic-functional categorization of different modes/ modalities of sense creation. It is argued that, although initially developed with a view to explaining in a coherent framework the fundamental aesthetic differences between the works of several major Romanian poets from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this model is in fact operative as a general poetic typology, apt to explain the specificity of poetic sense construction in different linguistic-cultural contexts as well. Moreover, the relevance of this model goes beyond the range of poetic-literary texts as such. Placed in connection with Eugenio Coseriu's framework of Integral text linguistics as a hermeneutics of sense, Borcilă's model can serve as a gateway to elucidating the general mechanisms of textual sense construction. Both directly and analogically, it provides noteworthy insights, as well as widely applicable analytical tools for justifying the constitution and articulation of sense in all texts, and can thus help to clarify and develop the respective components of Integral text linguistics. These theoretical and methodological aspects are illustrated with a textual analysis on a hermetic poem by Ion Barbu.

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**Key words:** Eugenio Coseriu, Integral linguistics, Poetic text, Text linguistics, Textual meaning, Ion Barbu.