Some Textual Functions of Metaphors
in the Novel *Luntrea lui Caron* by Lucian Blaga

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Abstract: This paper considers some aspects of metaphor as a creative process at the level of text, based on E. Coseriu's integral linguistics of text and the theory of metaphor developed by M. Borcilă on the basis of integral linguistics and inspired by elements of Lucian Blaga's views on metaphor.

We apply the typology of metaphors as outlined by M. Borcilă in an approach based on integral textual semantics, with an initial distinction between *metaphor in language* (I) and *metaphor in text* (II), followed by a distinction between two types of metaphor of textual 'sense': *signifying* or *linguistic* (IIA) and *trans-signifying* or *trans-linguistic* (IIB).

Based on the ideas of 'text constitution' and 'sense articulation' we propose that some *trans-linguistic* metaphors in Blaga's novel *Charon's Boat* (*Luntrea lui Caron*) may function at different levels of 'sense articulation': (a) as elements of 'text constitution' (as 'individual', 'local' metaphors), and (b) as textual devices or strategies of 'sense articulation'.

Keywords: Eugenio Coseriu, Mircea Borcilă, integral text linguistics, metaphor, 'sense articulation'

1. The integral perspective on metaphor

Our research of text functions of metaphors in the novel *Charon's Boat* (*Luntrea lui Caron)*[1] is based, primarily, on the study of *textual sense*, as understood in integral linguistics, developed by Eugenio Coseriu. This theoretic framework provides the

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[1] For a comprehensive presentation and discussion of the theoretical framework, as well as more detailed analyses, see Zagaevschi Cornelius 2005.

foundation for the theory of metaphor as activity, as *speech in metaphoric mode*, developed by the linguist and poetician from Cluj, professor Mircea Borcilă, by, firstly, understanding language as a *fundamentally creative* cognitive activity, and secondly, by postulating *the functional autonomy of the level of textual sense*. In his conception of *metaphor* from an integral perspective, using elements of Lucian Blaga's outlook on metaphor[2], M. Borcilă outlines a complex structural-functional view of the double domain of functioning of the metaphor: (1) the *linguistic* domain and (2) the *trans-linguistic,* cultural domain.[3]

In this view, *speech in metaphoric mode*, in its major outlines, includes *creativity in language* and extends into *cultural creativity* in its maximal sense. *Linguistic creativity* will include the **'signifying'**[4] **or** *linguistic* **metaphor** and the whole dimension of language as *enérgeia*, creation of significations and (re)filling linguistic concepts with intuitive content at every moment of speech, constituting a specific form of creativity in language. The process by which the linguistic 'horizon' is overcome towards and into the domain of cultural (poetic) – *'trans-linguistic'* – creativity will always start from within this sphere of linguistic significations and is, therefore, logically 'post-linguistic', rather than 'pre-linguistic'. The approach of the integral study of textual sense will follow the process of sense articulation or sense-construction starting from the text units, which are already

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[2] Blaga 1969b.

[3] Borcilă 1995a, 1996, 1997, 2000, 2002.

[4] The term *'signifying'* indicates its correlation with *signification* as the type of meaning which corresponds to the historical level of language in Coseriu's triadic model of the levels of language. For the English version see Tămâianu-Morita 2016: 169.

(objectively) constituted, and constructed from *significations* and *designations*.

Metaphoric creativity viewed from the integral perspective can manifest itself at each of the three levels of language: the historical level of a certain language, the universal level of speech in general, and the individual level of text or discourse[5]. Here we have attempted to look at *metaphors in text*, with their specific way of functioning, distinct from *metaphors in a historical language* - as metaphors in the tradition of a certain language - and *metaphors at the level of speech in general*.[6] M. Borcilă considers that some approaches in the study of metaphor which view it from the angle of indirect reference to the 'world' (by establishing an analogy between the two terms of the metaphor) are, in fact, situated at the *universal* level of language, of speech in general, and represent studies of metaphors from the *designation* point of view.[7]

The function of the universal level of language is to orient towards the designation of a certain segment of reality, while the individual level of text/discourse will aim towards world interpretation and, in its maximal form – 'world' creation. We will consider the metaphors at historical and universal levels of language as 'pretextual' or **metaphors in language** (type **I**), and we assume that they constitute themselves into 'material' or 'expression' for textual sense units or categories. **Metaphors in text** (type **II**) create textual sense, their function is not to

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[5] Coseriu 1999.

[6] On the distinction between metaphors at the historical and universal levels, or what Coseriu terms "metaforas motivadas linguisticamente" (achieved through lexical incorrectitude) and "metaforas motivadas extralinguisticamente" (that defy the norms of our knowledge of extralinguistic reality), see Coseriu 1991a: 160-161 and 1991b: 207; also Coseriu 1989.

[7] Borcilă 1997, 2002.

designate a new shade of experience, that hasn't been expressed before (a function that would belong to the metaphors in language), but to interpret the world and to reveal a side of it that refers to the 'mode of experience' and, in its maximal form, to create 'worlds'.

Metaphors in language (**I**) describe (re-describe) the world, while metaphors of textual sense (**II**) "say something about the world" (the 'text world'). Metaphors of sense are viewed as exponential manifestation of cultural creativity in and through language, and as such they are subdivided into two categories: the *signifying (linguistic)* metaphor (type **IIA**), which functions according to the same principles as the metaphors in language, and the ***trans-signifying (trans-linguistic)*** metaphor (type **IIB**) which functions according to the 'poetic' principle, that leads the metaphoric process towards a transgression of everyday experience into a new possible 'horizon'.[8] This new 'horizon' does not keep the experiential world as a reference point, but leaves it behind and creates a new system. In poetic texts this system will be a creation of universal possibilities of being.[9] According to M. Borcilă, the 'conversion' of significations and designations 'in language' into signifiers for a textual sense that goes beyond them (Coseriu's *double semiotic relation* in text/discourse[10]) supports the inclusion of the radical aspect of *semantic transgression* of the experiential horizon that characterizes the 'mechanism' of metaphoric creation in poetic texts.[11]

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[8] Borcilă 1987a, 1995a, 1995b, 1997.
[9] See Blaga's distinction between the "plasticizing" (depicting) and "revelatory" metaphors in Blaga 1969b.
[10] Coseriu 1997; see also Tămâianu-Morita 2016.
[11] Borcilă 1997: 161, also 1995a.

The study of the textual functioning of the ***trans-linguistic/trans-signifying*** metaphor in a text is made possible by opening up the domain of investigation from the linguistics of the text towards a semantics of the text, as proposed by M. Borcilă. Text linguistics does not propose to study the poetic text in its aspects of radical and absolute creation, but as a place of maximal manifestation of language.[12] It starts from *text constitution* and aims to explore the premises of sense articulation in general. It is *poetics* (in Borcilă's acceptation [13]) which will follow the development of a poetic text, through specific semantic strategies, in the semantic space of world creation. The space where these two meet is offered by an *integral text semantics*, which aims "to capture the impact of the process of poesis at a maximal level of the possibilities of textual sense".[14]

2. Sense articulation and the levels of sense

Coseriu's theory of *sense articulation*, as a component of text linguistics, includes the possibility of an architectural organization of levels of textual sense[15], conceived by analogy with the internal organization of the historical level of particular languages in Coseriu's triadic model of language levels. We applied his suggestion with regards to some text elements that, although scattered throughout the text, can still be contiguous in a certain dimension of textual sense, by looking at a possible 'text isotopy'

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[12] Tămâianu 2001: 178, note 31.

[13] Borcilă 1994, 1997.

[14] Borcilă 1994: 34, translation mine.

[15] "Spitzer dice in verità, di tanto in tanto, che certi fatti, constatati in un punto del testo, sono contigui da un nesso essenziale con altri fatti che compaiono in un punto completamente diverso del testo. […] Sarebbe giunto altrimenti a riconoscere che una dimensione del senso, che compare nel testo, non necessariamente coincide con il senso dell'intero testo o addirittura dell'a intera opera dell'autore." Coseriu 1997: 153-154.

in the phenomenology of the metaphor of **the journey** in the novel *Charon's Boat (Luntrea lui Caron)* by Lucian Blaga.[16] Some aspects of our findings will be shared here. In our opinion, the identification of the levels of sense articulation in a specific poetic text benefits considerably from the study of textual functions of metaphors (including metaphor as *textual device* which functions at higher levels of sense articulation), because metaphoric text phenomena, especially the *trans-signifying* ones could present sense values activated simultaneously at different sense levels, and becoming access points, 'bridging' elements or 'semantic connectors' between these levels. The issue of the nature and identification of the levels of textual sense construction will be equally difficult to the issue of postulating a unitary 'discovery procedure' or algorithm for sense interpretation. Textual sense is constructed/articulated differently in different types of text[17], and its internal organisation is not homogenous across different text types. Thus, in a poetic text it may fulfil its highest degree of possibilities through 'world creation'. In our study of the novel *Charon's Boat (Luntrea lui Caron)*, when discussing how metaphors were instrumental in configuring certain higher levels of sense, we applied the methodology offered by the *theory of discursive poesis* in poetic texts, as developed by M. Borcilă, inspired by Blaga's ideas, and on the foundations of integral linguistics[18], in connection with the idea of *levels of textual coherence[19]* as certain levels of sense articulation.

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[16] Zagaevschi Cornelius 2005: 235-278.
[17]On types of texts in an integralist framework: Tămâianu 2001, also Tămâianu-Morita 2017.
[18] Borcilă 1995a.
[19] Borcilă 1987b.

3. Textual functions of metaphor

The *double semiotic relation* in text, which asserts that significations and designations in a text constitute a second-degree signifier for the specific content that is *textual sense*, allows the assumption that any element/unit of *text constitution* (as textual signifier) which contributes to textual sense construction will have a **textual function**. Textual functions will be identified by their value of textual sense, while their 'material' manifestation in the text constitution will be dependent on their function and may not have a specific expression. The same element of text constitution may have different functions in different situations, for example, different sense values of the metaphor of **the journey** in the novel (see below), while a certain value of sense may have different expressions in text, for example, *the passage of time* or, what Blaga calls in the novel "tangible time" can be expressed through a *new presence* (the giant walnut tree grown in Leonte's courtyard – element of the textual designation), *an absence* (the chestnut tree from childhood that was now missing), but also through *an expression like "cenuşa la tâmple"* [the ashes at my temples], etc. We propose that the manner in which a certain type of metaphors (the ***trans-linguistic*** metaphor) get involved in sense construction, as important textual sense 'nodes', has a major contribution to the intuitive identification of the type of the text present. This refers mostly to the metaphors detectable directly in the text constitution, and not so much to metaphor as a *textual device* that functions at a higher level of sense articulation.

From our text analysis we were able to **distinguish two types of textual functioning of metaphors**: (**A**) as *a 'metaphoric occurrence', detectable in the text constitution*, and (**B**) as ***textual device perceptible at higher levels of sense articulation***. The first type is closer to the textual functions in a narrow sense,

as defined and exemplified in the integral text linguistics[20], while the second type is consubstantial with the global-textual semantic strategies discussed by poetics and is instrumental in configuring the textual sense on a larger scale. We shall briefly present only functions of the first type here.

Metaphoric text functions of type **A** include instances of *linguistic (*or *signifying)* metaphors, similar to Blaga's 'plasticising' (depicting) metaphors, which would serve to replace the infinite string of words that would be needed to adequately describe a concrete thing through language.[21] Examples are: "«Ni se macină sufletele, zi cu zi, şi noapte cu noapte între pietrele de moară ale imperialismelor», zic, «dar încercăm să uităm»".[22] "Femeia e într-adevăr femeia amăruie, aşa cum mi se arătase în joaca târzie a după-amiezii".[23]

Also of type **A** are some instances of *trans-linguistic* (or *trans-signifying*) metaphors, which have more far-reaching effects of textual sense.[24] Often, they are symbolic-mythical metaphors which have a special significance in Blaga's work, for ex.: **the journey/road**, **the return, the smile, the song**. They way that they configure the textual sense of the segments where they appear, guiding the construction of sense and extending into other sections of text, can be followed mostly by analysing a larger segment of text and we shall not offer it here. However, we would

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[20] Coseriu 1997: 72-73.
[21] Blaga 1969b: 276.
[22] "«Our souls are being ground down, day by day, night by night, by the millstones of the imperialisms», I say, «but we try to forget»"; Blaga 1990: 41, translation mine.
[23] "The woman is indeed the bitter-sweet woman, as she has shown herself to me in the late games of the afternoon"; *ibidem*: 323-324, translation mine.
[24] In fact, in Zagaevschi Cornelius 2005, we named the former subtype **A1** and the latter subtype **A2.**

like to name some possible textual functions of these *trans-linguistic* metaphors: '***verticalization' of sense***, that is, the discovery of a symbolic dimension of a sense value attributed to a concrete thing or character of the text (like the examples for the "passage of time" above); ***symbolic description of a character*** as a metaphoric construction of characters in text (example: the character of Ana Rareş, especially in chapter XVII), and ***configuration of the sense of a segment of text*** (metaphors as 'nuclear nodes').[25]

We observe that, in principle, the ability to connect 'vertically' two or more levels of sense construction, generating a plurality of sense values, typical for metaphor, as well as the 'horizontal' connections that link its occurrences (either repeated, or functionally equivalent) in the text constitution, assign metaphor a special status among textual functions, confirming its affinity with the essentially creative nature of language activity and cultural creation in general.

4. *The Journey* and *The Return*

The novel *Charon's Boat (Luntrea lui Caron)* is a tale of **the journey – destiny,** with the variant **return-destiny retrieved**. Here, **destiny** will mean: the destiny of the nation, of a historical human being "under the times" [*sub vremi*], destiny lost, severed, removed from time and suspended "out of time" [*răstimp*]. This *motif* reappears as the reading of the novel progresses, in a more obvious or veiled form, depending on the attention of the reader to the significant elements, carriers of textual sense.

We didn't start our investigation with the intention of following the manifestations of the metaphor of **the return** in the text, but were guided to it by the abundance of clues, which

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[25] Zagaevschi Cornelius 2005: 165-176.

pointed to the importance of this metaphor in the global economy of the text. They attracted our attention during the second reading of the text, as part of the explanatory approach to follow the development of the textual sense, intuitively grasped at the first reading of the novel. During this stage we tried to identify the text units generating textual sense and their mode of functioning in the configuration of the textual sense. Among these we will briefly mention here several instances: at the beginning of the novel, the retreat from the Russian army is *seen* as a return to 'prehistory'[26], the retreat of the philosopher Leonte Pătraşcu to Câmpul Frumoasei, among his books and metaphysics, is also *seen* as a return to his personal past (the village of childhood), but also as one beyond the destiny of a single man (the destiny of a people); and finally, in the last part of the novel, the trip to Grădişte, to which Axente Creangă persuades Ana Rareş to join them, is, again, *seen as* a return, this time, to the ultimate source of the nation's spirit and of the organic-mythical creativity of the poet.

It could be argued that **destiny** is imagined metaphorically, in this novel, as a *journey*, in the (linear) dimension of its temporal actualization and in agreement with the universal (designational) metaphor *life is a journey*. However, we think that in the novel the stress falls not so much on the more general and impersonal metaphor **destiny is a journey**, but rather on the solution given by a specific human being (a poet and philosopher) confronted with the pressures of 'history'[27], a human being who tries to retrieve his destiny guided by his 'instinct' of the **return**.

To give two examples:

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[26] As understood by the character Leonte Pătraşcu in the novel, and conceptualized by Lucian Blaga in his works of philosophy: *Evoluţie şi involuţie*, in Blaga 1969a.

[27] In Blaga's sense, see above.

(1) At crucial moments of his life, Leonte has often been tempted by the *instinct of the "return". His last return* could have varied meanings. It could be *a return from history to the still living prehistory of the village*, but it could also be *a return to the nonbeing before birth*. Longing for the return can be deciphered as longing for no longer being. For a while now Leonte was subject to this *longing for a return, in which one could guess a longing to be no more.* (Blaga 1990:196)

(2) Love likes *to return to the archaic*. And we *return*. *We return to a distant past*, feeling strongly that we would gladly bear even the conditions of a freedom severed from the roots to allow the blooming of the passion unlocked in us. (Blaga 1990:105)[28]

In the first example what comes through strongly is that **the return is death** and **death is the way**, and that this is the way chosen by Leonte. It is a **symbolic** return, to the non-being before birth. In the second example also, we understand a clearly symbolic return: not a return in time, but to a certain 'world': the archaic world of the village and of sublimated passion. In both examples the background knowledge of the experiential world will be superseded in a symbolic interpretation of these metaphors which offer the reader the two ways, two solutions of **the return**.

It is to be noted that some of the metaphors of the **journey** and of the **return** in the text could be interpreted by referring them to the specific ***cultural-mythological context*** or background.[29] This context is sedimented through tradition and becomes so culturally conventionalized that although the

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[28] In both examples translation and italics mine.

[29] "In myth, legend, fairy tale, song or dream, the symbolic significance of the journey will depend on a series of factors connected to its orientation with regards to the cardinal points [North/South etc], to a certain centre, to the direction to the right or left." Evseev 1997: 127, translation mine.

metaphors contradict 'normal' sensory experience, they are still easily and non-conditionally accepted (that is, not felt as instances of *incongruence*). In some instances, the metaphors of the **journey** in the novel are indeed consolidated through a connection to the mythical (mythological) context/background. Yet there are instances when that is not sufficient.[30] If we look again at the second example from above, the metaphor of **the return**, in contrast with the mythical background (a subtype, conventionalized through tradition, of the universe of discourse of the *fantasy*[31]), suspends the meanings attributed by it and presents itself as a new and autonomous (with regards to that background) unit of sense. We should say that these values of textual sense of **the return** are supported by conceptualization in the philosophical works of the author, Lucian Blaga, and these connections are actualized as *evocative functions* during text interpretation. In this situation **the return** will no longer be considered a particular case of the metaphor of **the journey**, but becomes a metaphor specific to this text. Not all occurrences of **the journey** will be sufficiently explained by referring to the traditional mythical background. There will often remain a certain textual sense value, unique to the text, which contributes to the deep articulation of the textual sense.

5. Conclusions

In the novel we find that metaphors like **journey, way, return, crossroads, descent, exit**, support and shape the construction of

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[30] "Of great symbolic importance is the problem of the direction of movement. A journey forward has a positive meaning of evolution, affirmation and creation. A journey back is regression, surrender, failure, from where stems the belief that if you return in your journey, it will bring bad luck". *Ibidem*, translation mine.
[31] Coseriu 2002.

sense in a particular way. It is not possible for us to elaborate here, due to space restrictions, but we have shown an analysis of these instances, grouped by chapters, elsewhere.[32] What interested us and what we tried to follow was the *textual sense value* of each of these metaphoric occurrences identified in text, with their corresponding functions; therefore, the perspective is predominantly a functional one.

We were able to distinguish 3 areas or layers of 'isotopy' of metaphors of the **journey**, which were functionally distinct:

1 *The journey of life*, which accounts for the great part of occurrences, as it is a high-frequency element originating from the universal level of speech in general and participating as textual function **A** in the configuration of 'surface'-levels of sense construction;

2 *Journey – predetermined destiny* (*predestined path*) in accordance with the Romanian cultural mythological context, with few pure occurrences, but contaminating semantically more examples from the other two categories, and predominantly with a textual function **A**; this is the layer of sense values that makes use of the "mythical weight of the words", in Blaga's terms; and finally,

3 *the journey of the individual*, a domain of semantic configuration specific to this novel, with elements of a higher frequency in the last third of the text and a preferred textual functioning of type **A** (with *trans-linguistic* metaphors), with an opening towards **B**.

It is harder to outline an 'isotopy' of the sense values for **the return**, because this element has fewer occurrences than **the**

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[32] Zagaevschi Cornelius 2005: 242-271.

journey, and, with the notable exception of **the return to 'prehistory'** from the first two chapters, the other occurrences do not necessarily fit into a homogenous field of sense values. They seem to function, in principle, as solutions for **the journey of the individual**, at a similar level of textual sense construction.

With regards to its 'mechanism', although **the return** may appear, from the point of view of the *source,* to be a specific case of the metaphor of **the journey**, in fact, it shows itself as a distinct text unit, which functions in its own way. It doesn't fit completely into any of the three sense value layers/areas of **the journey** outlined above, and although it is strongly connected with them, it establishes itself into an autonomous metaphor.

From the point of view of their contribution to the in-depth configuration of the levels of textual sense, we could say that the metaphor of **the journey** presents itself in the following way:

- as a 'revived' element from the universal level of speech in general - ***journey of life*** – it manifests predominantly at a surface level of sense construction, with a purely instrumental, depicting value;
- at an intermediary level, represented by combined variants of *the journey of life* with the ***symbolic* but *conventionalized journey*** (***the predestined path***), with all its attributes from the mythological folklore context;
- at a deep level of sense articulation, *the journey* is hard to dissociate from *the return* and is presented, predominantly as a variant of ***the journey of the individual*** (***individual path***), metaphor specific to the text, sometimes connected to the traditional

predestined path, and, especially, to the different aspects of Blaga's philosophical work.[33]

The practical difficulty of dissociating between the metaphors of **the journey** and **the return** at the deepest level of sense construction is due to their complex semantic connections which we could summarize in the following way: **the return** may appear independently as a *trans-signifying metaphor*, mythic-symbolic, with its own textual sense values, but sometimes the very sense of **the journey** is a symbolic **return**. So, for example, in the last pages of the novel, we find instances of **the journey** as **exit**, **exodus** (in the form of **ascent**) into another spiritual-existential dimension of the poet, an **ascension-return to the original spiritual source of the nation and of the poet-creator**. The novel ends, fittingly, with a poem - *Grădiştea* – a suitable medium for a high concentration of symbolic metaphors, from which we will quote a relevant fragment at the end of the present analysis:

> The high ascent to the threshold of a God
> on the mountain crest, is very hard.
> Hand in hand and in step with you –
> I would never lose the way
> through hazels and bushes of blueberry.

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[33] We have on several occasions referred to Blaga's acceptation of some concepts from his essays on the philosophy of culture, in order to support and clarify the importance of certain textual sense values of metaphors discussed. This reflects one of Coseriu's **evocative functions**: "the relation with signs from other texts of the author", his Oeuvre (Coseriu 1997: 82). We consider that, in this case, these (and other) evocative relations are *secondary* for the constitution of the metaphors in the novel, because **the journey** and **the return** are not necessarily established symbols in Blaga's other works, in the same way that are, for example, *light* [lumina], *blood* [sângele], *sleep* [somnul] etc., so the former 'create sense' in the novel mainly through the novel itself and its structure.

We'd stumble from time to time, but never get lost.
On the sacred crests, in the blue, we'd be guided by
a cloud on high, below – the green moss
and the slender, tall beeches that still store
in their shape, a vivid memory
of great columns from times past. […]
Is it also given to us to reach the crest one day?

(Blaga 2001: 442-443)

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