

**THE UNIVERSE OF POETRY  
OR THE HIDDEN DIMENSION  
OF G. CĂLINESCU'S CRITICISM**

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Reading G. Călinescu's work is not always straightforward. The strong impression of accessibility created by the captivating ease of his style can in fact be deceptive. In reality, one is confronted with an unusually profound complexity of the texts, whether they are major works (such as *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* [The History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present Day]) or shorter pieces. The texts are not obscure or hermetic, yet they accumulate such a density of information that some critics keep their distance. The polymorphism of his *œuvre* is closely connected to the disconcerting complexity of the author's personality and to his vast erudition. Călinescu was a scholar, but without the rigidity generally associated with academic specialists, and he possessed an uncommon psychological makeup. Taken as a whole, he was a complete author: critic, literary historian, theorist, aesthetician, comparatist, essayist, novelist, poet, playwright, travel writer, and journalist. This polyvalence compels any reader who approaches his work from one angle or another to pay particular attention to an aspect that, as far as can be seen, has not yet been sufficiently discussed, namely the latent dimension, the hidden scope of his writing. In many instances, Călinescu says more than he appears to say at first glance.

A full initiation into every field in which Călinescu writes is perhaps not a prerequisite for commenting on his work, even though his movement across these domains is so effortless that it has sometimes been mistaken for superficiality. The author of *Principles of Aesthetics* belongs to that limited category of critics from whom one learns continuously and with whom a genuinely equal dialogue is possible only in exceptional cases. Engagement with his writings therefore presupposes both an openness to diverse areas of human knowledge and a sustained attentiveness to the often-extensive network of meanings within which his criticism operates.

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Călinescu is thoroughly and deeply prepared even in disciplines adjacent to his primary training in literature and literary criticism, and he commands a body of knowledge that reaches the level of fertile erudition, enabling unexpected, almost acrobatic associative moves. His thought is dynamic, capable of abrupt shifts in which dialectical reasoning is constantly at work; it is accompanied by a pronounced sense of paradox and by a remarkable playfulness, at times tinged with malice, which generates passages and ideas marked by exuberant or, alternatively, discreet humour. For these reasons, he is one of those authors whose classical surface form conceals a far more resistant substratum. The stylistic lightness of his prose sustains the illusion of effortless accessibility, while the true complexity of meaning remains available only to the more patient and better-informed reader.

The present topic leads me to bring into discussion at least in passing the humor of G. Călinescu, which constitutes one of the crucial hermeneutic keys to the interpretation of his work. This humorous dimension provides an effective instrument for decoding certain journalistic texts written after the establishment of the communist regime. It should be recalled that a study of high intellectual and scholarly quality devoted to this topic – regrettably still little known – was published some time ago by Valentin Ionescu, under the title *Comicul comentariului călinescian*.<sup>1</sup> A literary critic endowed with such a capacity for humor is a rare phenomenon, since humor sits uneasily with the solemn posture conventionally associated with the exercise of literary evaluation. Yet it is precisely this trait that should alert readers to the presence of subtext, for the manipulation of verbal polysemy, intentional misreadings, and ironic or satirical inflections belongs to the standard repertoire of the humorist. Not infrequently, one can observe how apparently innocuous remarks function as carefully aimed barbs, how meanings are juggled, and how a subterranean network of significations is woven into the texture of the text.

In Călinescu's case, the analysis must likewise descend to these deeper layers of the writing. If he is approached as what may be termed a 'creative critic,' the possibility arises of an assessment closer to the author's intentions and to the essence of his *oeuvre*. In this respect, Mircea Martin's remark in the landmark study *G. Călinescu și „complexele” literaturii române* [G.

<sup>1</sup> Valentin Ionescu, *Comicul comentariului călinescian* [The Comic of Călinescian's Commentary], Cartea Românească, București, 2000. Perhaps the undersigned's commentary on this, which appeared in the pages of the magazine 'Hyperion' (no. 10-11-12/2022 (342-343-344)), would also be worth reading, for the additions with the results of his own research and reflections.

Călinescu and the 'complexes' of Romanian literature] (1989) concerning an intelligence 'immersed in the suggestions of the word'<sup>2</sup> proves particularly illuminating, as it captures a fundamental trait of Călinescu's thinking and, consequently, of the great critic's writing.

G. Călinescu has, as is well known, been the object of sustained controversy. He was reproached, among other things, for pronounced subjectivity and capriciousness, for an alleged absence of method and system, for a conservative stance toward contemporary creative techniques and interpretive methods, and, above all, for his resistance – if not outright opacity – to the literary movements of the early twentieth century. Some commentators even went so far as to suggest that, as a literary historian, he had exercised his talents disproportionately on a body of writing which, because of its belated development, remained marginal when measured against the literatures of the major European nations.

I have asked elsewhere, and ask again here in response to this flawed line of reasoning: why should a literature that has produced Eminescu not merit a critic of such stature? In my view, Romanian literature, despite the premises just recalled, has become and must be regarded as a literature of genuine value. It was its great fortune to benefit—almost as compensation for its centuries-long absence from the sphere of major cultures—from a historian of Călinescu's calibre. Without his contribution, we would probably not perceive with the same clarity how compelling this literature is, notwithstanding the severity of his judgments on certain writers. Through the overall vision and architectonic system underpinning *The History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present Day*, Călinescu endowed what had long been seen as a relatively minor literature with monumental dimensions. This achievement is owed not only to the intrinsic substance of the corpus, but also to the scale and elegance of the construction that he erected at the end of a century of evolution. We must not always be wary of words: Călinescu, I would argue, wrote the history of Romanian literature as his genius dictated, rather than in obedience to pre-established patterns and, least of all, to academic convention. Călinescu's inventive power as a critic is also evident here, in the architecture of the material, in the selection and processing of information, and in the taxonomic labels that have since become canonical (for example, 'utopian messianics,' 'anti bonjurists,'

<sup>2</sup> Mircea Martin, *G. Călinescu și „complexele” literaturii române*, 2nd edition, With an Argument by the author, Afterword by Nicolae Manolescu, Paralela 45, Pitești, 2002, p. 9.

'macabre and exotic Romantics,' 'Orthodoxists,' 'tuberculous,' 'Essenists,' and others). These denominations have been adopted, both in substance and in phrasing, by later literary historians, from Eugen Simion to Marian Popa and Nicolae Manolescu. While E. Lovinescu's *History of Contemporary Romanian Literature* (1937) had already experimented with grouping writers under suggestive syntagms, such attempts remain there sporadic and marginal in the overall economy of the work. In Călinescu's case, by contrast, this procedure functions as a consistent method, whose semantic force has generated both imitation and continuity.

Not merely as an aside, it should be noted that those who claim not to discern a method in his work in fact disclose their own limitations. Călinescu's criticism is underpinned by both method and system, as was demonstrated with great rigor more than fifteen years ago by Andrei Terian in his substantial monograph *G. Călinescu. A cincea esență* [G. Călinescu. The Fifth Essence], which analyses the internal articulations of Călinescu's critical discourse down to the finest detail, situating them within the framework of a coherent and imposing architecture.

This is not the place to revisit Andrei Terian's argument in detail. It is sufficient, for the purposes of the present discussion, to note that among the major figures with whom he relates Călinescu is Erich Auerbach, while the most productive comparisons are established with the Italian critic Francesco Flora and the Polish scholar Manfred Kridl. Since the latter two authors were virtually unknown in Romania, Terian's analysis all the more forcefully underscores Călinescu's stature as a critic fully integrated into the scholarly debates of his time.<sup>3</sup> With regard to Călinescu's alleged 'resistance' to new trends, the charge is scarcely sustainable. Even today, a reader approaching his work *sine ira et studio* is struck by the acuity with which he understands - in the full Latin sense of *intellego* - psychologizing currents as well as the unexpected and often oppositional idiom of the literary avant garde. The fact that he subjects fashionable tendencies, enthusiastically endorsed by an active minority, to rigorous criticism does not imply incomprehension; on the con-

<sup>3</sup> V. Andrei Terian, *G. Călinescu. A cincea esență*, Cartea Românească, București, 2009. We may not agree with Andrei Terian's subsequent evolution, with the ideas he professes today, but this work constitutes one of the best books of criticism ever written in our culture, and regarding the study and interpretation of G. Călinescu, in the opinion of the one who writes these lines, it is the landmark without which the great critic would have been understood only fragmentarily.

trary, these pages demand particularly attentive rereading. Paradoxically, even admirers who have come close to idolizing him have not always understood him. Călinescu was, above all, a great practitioner; yet, like every great practitioner, he grounded his practice in a solid theoretical horizon – scientific, intellectual and cultural. This interdependence of practice and theory is one of the central points demonstrated in Andrei Terian's study.

Strictly speaking, Terian's demonstration was not indispensable. Numerous essays by G. Călinescu already articulate his own theoretical and methodological uncertainties and convictions. It would therefore be worthwhile to revisit these passages and reconstruct a profile of Călinescu as a thinker primarily concerned with theory. A natural point of departure is the preface to *Opera lui Mihai Eminescu* [Mihai Eminescu's Work], a text of exemplary clarity in which the critic sets out both his preoccupations in this domain and the paths by which he arrived at a series of conceptual clarifications and classificatory distinctions.

At the same time, a hidden scope can be discerned in his writing. Although he occasionally errs, exaggerates, or overinterprets, such instances neither invalidate nor significantly diminish the overall achievement of his critical oeuvre, since, despite the unmistakable marks of subjectivity, his verdicts depart from aesthetic truth only in exceptional—and, one might say, accidental—cases.

I therefore advance what could be a conclusion of the present lines; namely that G. Călinescu, in his capacity as a total author, but especially through the genius that characterized him<sup>4</sup> – a genius contested by some and others – always said more than could be understood at a first reading or, better said, at a reading that was insufficiently attentive and with gaps in information. In order to fully understand his entire critical work, one must also read the so-called minor texts, small studies, essays, articles, because they show the real dimension of the information that the critic hold. Even his main work, *The History of Romanian Literature from its Origins to the Present Day*, reveals its scope precisely through these exercises, through these second-rate works (to use the expression *cum grano salis!*)

<sup>4</sup> G. Călinescu said, in his paradoxical way, about genius: 'Genius represents an anomaly compared to the current average of humanity, in reality it is the only 'normal', suggesting the hypothesis of a norm, a canon. People should be intelligent like Plato, sensitive like Baudelaire, investigators like Newton. We represent an abnormal humanity, below the level of prototypes'. (G. Călinescu, 'Istoria literară ca știință inefabilă și sinteză epică [Literary History as an Ineffable Science and Epic Synthesis]', in *Principii de estetică* [Principles of Aesthetics], preface by Ion Pascadi, Editura pentru literatură, București, 1968, Note 1 from p. 170).

in the economy of his entire creation. Călinescu knew history very well, as well as the philosophy that preceded him. It would be worth reviewing from this perspective at least the essay 'The Technique of Criticism and Literary History', in which he quotes with great insight from Georg Simmel, W. Dilthey, Giovanni Gentile, J.G. Fichte, Abbé Batteux and where, among other things, he makes the following statement: 'Hegel is closer than any theorist of history to truth. Logic and history are correlative moments, logic is revealed in history, history without intelligibility, a collection of heterogeneous moments, is the irrational, nothingness itself. A history is not history unless it reveals a logical program. Only in the way logic is expressed lies the difference between history and the natural sciences.'<sup>5</sup>

He was also up to date – and it is difficult for his detractors to justify their failure to consider this – with the important aesthetic systems of the time (his opinions on Croce, for example, are detailed, critical and perfectly pertinent), as well as with others, less widely circulated in our country, without neglecting the oldest ones. He knew the literatures of the world, often through contact with original works, had knowledge of other arts that far exceeded the level of culture of a well-informed man, had mastered genealogies and private histories, and it is often even evident how well initiated he was in what the scholars of the '*Annales*', especially Fernand Braudel and Georges Duby, call 'the history of private life', supported – how could it be otherwise?! – also by solid geographical knowledge.

The scope that G. Călinescu's work presents would therefore be of two types: the one implied in the text's underground, which we spoke about in the first part of this discussion, and the one that must be taken into account by connecting with the texts of smaller extent in order to determine the value and depth of the main ones.<sup>6</sup> The first is unobservable to superficial reading, as I stated, and it is not about the fact that, in essence, any work needs to be deciphered, but about the attention that must be paid to the details and information contained in them, while the second is blurred by the size of the large works, requiring the research of all the texts, the establishment of the connections between them and the establishment of a value judgment that this time aims at the whole.

<sup>5</sup> G. Călinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>6</sup> It would be worth reading, for edification, at least the short essay 'Hegel the Aesthetician', included by Al. Piru in his edition of the *Principles of Aesthetics*, published by the Scrisul românesc Publishing House, Craiova, in 1974 (pp. 207-2016).

An example of a text that remained unknown, hidden in its own way for decades until it was revealed to the public and wider circles of researchers and which gives a much broader perspective than before on the scope, but also the openness that characterized the critic, on the scope of his knowledge and vision, I consider to be deeply significant in the sense of what has been stated so far.

A volume which includes two texts entitled *The Universe of Poetry* [Universul poeziei] was published in the year 2023, thanks to Ilena Mihăilă and Nicolae Mecu. Two texts because G. Călinescu only offered, during his lifetime, a synthesis of the ideas from the one that remained in manuscript and was discovered by Cornelia Ștefănescu in 1966, seeing the light of day, under the care of Ileana Mihăilă, only in 2012, in the twelfth volume of *Publicistics (Posthumous and Unpublished)*, a series coordinated by Nicolae Mecu at the National Foundation for Science and Art within the Romanian Academy.

The initiative of this publication is more than fortunate, for reasons that I do not need to detail. Let us just stick to the idea that the volumes in the *Works* series are more difficult to access, an impediment to which is added the cost of purchase, which is no longer the case with a popular edition to call popular, moreover, independent. The book is called *Universurile poeziei* [The Universes of Poetry], it was published by the Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House and is based on the conviction – which we adopt – expressed by Ileana Mihăilă in an introduction, namely that they must be taken as two completely different texts. The technical details, as well as those related to the mirror comparison, do not interest us now, especially since the first text, the one that remained in the manuscript, includes three times more material than the one known until its first edition<sup>7</sup>, due to Geo Șerban and Andrei Rusu, in 1968, in the summary of the volume *Principii de estetică* [Principles of Aesthetics].

What I would like to highlight, very briefly, is that the text until recently ‘unknown’ contains an introduction in which G. Călinescu expresses a number of reflections on the nature of poetry and the nature of its aesthetic consideration. Starting from here, he reaches the expression of some points of view that take up the problem of the relativity of appreciations regarding the value of works, an obstacle always placed – I add – in the way of those who judge art, in the sense of contesting their verdict and, in principle, of any verdict: ‘I once noticed how tedious it is to

<sup>7</sup> Printed in chapters in ‘Vreimea’, ‘Lumea’, ‘Națiunea’ and in ‘Jurnalul literar’ between 1943 and 1948.

try to define poetry and how each one formulates it through an isolated note without ever being able to determine the proximate genre and the specific difference. After all, when talking about poetry, I was generally touching on the problem of art and I was of the opinion that the claim of an aesthetic science with a determinable object and its own methods is not based on anything solid. In our country, some (M. Dragomirescu, T. Vianu) have tried to fulfill the conditions of science, starting not from the current artistic phenomenon, but from the notion of masterpiece. What that masterpiece is, no one has been able to define satisfactorily. It is true that in current speech we distinguish between honorable works and masterpieces, but it is a distinction entirely empirical, fluctuating in the same individual and difficult to verify in all.<sup>8</sup>

The solution to this impasse is to resort to historical practice, to the reality of long-term contact, from generation to generation, with works of art and of the quasi-empirical identification, beyond any measurable, quantifiable aspects, of masterpieces: 'We still maintain today, after having re-examined our former opinions, that the work of art is of eternal value, to express ourselves in absolute, postulatory terms, ignoring any historical experience, but this eternity is achieved only over generations of spirits called to have the meaning of the masterpiece. Beauty is transmitted from hand to hand like a torch through an infinite series of chosen spirits, but in a straight line. The mass is a poor conductor of beauty and no textbook in the world will convince the sports schoolboy that *Encida* deserves any esteem.'<sup>9</sup>

In the broader conception that can be discerned behind these sweeping statements, it is clear that ignoring any historical experience must lead to not taking into account what I would call the aesthetic moment, it is susceptible to many relativizations, as well as flagrant errors. It is known that, often, certain masterpieces have been overlooked, disregarded by contemporaries or by people belonging to some of the periods that followed later, entering a shadow cone or, at best, into oblivion. The mutation of aesthetic values also suffers distortions or synopes, hiatuses, it is not susceptible – at the general socio-historical level and not in the sometimes restricted circles of experts, who take over and transmit good practices almost undisturbed – to linearity

<sup>8</sup> G. Călinescu, *Universurile poeziei*, Edition by Ileana Mihăilă and Nicolae Mecu, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, Târgoviște, 2023, p. 23. It would be desirable that, in a new edition, which is fundamentally necessary, the book be provided with a name index and a thematic index.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* p. 24.

in an ideal progression towards recognition and consolidation. The statement that 'the masses are poor conductors of beauty', a ruthless, relentless verdict, is politically incorrect today (adherents of the aesthetic indistinction that has flooded artistic thought and the critical praxis of cultural studies with the installation of postmodernist culture would in no way agree with such a judgment), as it probably was in his time, but which, correctly understood, has a certain degree of accuracy and should be placed in this context.

Moreover, in this stream of ideas, the critic disputes that the so-called scientific aesthetics would have any chance. The arguments place the problem in its natural framework, rejecting the claim of some aestheticians or intellectuals without the gift of high judgments, of finding the laws of artistic composition, the infallible formula, mathematically established, for the manufacture of literary works: 'The aspiration towards a scientific aesthetics comes from the need that the individual without artistic sensitivity feels to know whether or not he is in front of a masterpiece. To know rationally. What are laws in the experimental sciences, are for us in Aesthetics the norms. For knowing how to determine the masterpiece is the same as finding its creative formula. No one can deny that aestheticians have made interesting observations about the artistic process. Likewise, it cannot be maintained that the aesthetician who speaks of norms necessarily imagines that the artist only has to follow the norms in order to obtain masterpieces.<sup>10</sup> They only maintain this: that both the artist and the critic, one to create and the other to understand, broaden their artistic consciousness by studying the structure of the masterpiece. A conviction that is not false. But the scientific presumption is wrong.'

These considerations, which obviously have more to do with the philosophy of art than with aesthetics proper (whose domain is better defined and, somehow, more limited), would deserve a little more space than the one I could have here. I cannot help but express the feeling, however, that, as they are configured as a whole (even if the author never returned to this whole thing) and formulated, the respective ideas are not so much related to the pragmatics of the discussion that follows, related to poetic objects and poetization, but also have a hidden, for the uninitiated, polemical meaning towards T. Maiorescu's considerations of poetics, with normative valences, contained in the first part of the famous 'critical research' from 1867.

<sup>10</sup> Radu Ionescu (1834-1872) had advanced such a conception, the relevance of which is beyond question, as early as the beginning of the seventh decade of the 19th century.

G. Călinescu was not an aesthete in the sense that such a scholar proposes to the world a system of his own, with all its articulations, like Im. Kant, Vischer, Hegel, Croce, Hartmann, Georg Lukács. There is no doubt, however, that he had conceived a 'working' aesthetic system, which was the basis of the vast critical and literary historical scaffolding. *The Principles of Aesthetics*, the other studies and essays (including 'Value and Aesthetic Ideal', 'Note on the So-Called Subjectivity', 'Criticism and Creation', 'Perfection in Art', 'André Gide as an Aesthete', 'Paul Claudel as an Aesthete', 'Poetics of Valéry', 'Poetics of Panait Cerna' etc.), many of the articles, *Aesthetics of the Fairy Tales* too, represent hypostases of this mental construct that feeds the internal logic of his writings. G. Călinescu's aesthetic thinking is nuanced, but also firm, not ignoring the relativities that any honest critical spirit can detect, it is dialectical, proving a profound responsibility towards the aesthetic ideal; no matter how contradictory the vision he shares, the way of expressing it, may sometimes be. So, if someone dares to dedicate an extensive, complete study to the aesthetic thought of G. Călinescu, they will have to take into account not only the explicit texts, but also the references, however brief, the allusions, the names, the phrases used in the 'great' texts, because this scope hides 'in plain sight' an overwhelming preparation, an almost unbelievable memory that has stored huge amounts of information treated without academic rigor, as if it were something self-evident.

But why is important this first version of *the Universe of Poetry*, three times larger than the known text, written in a dialogic manner and featuring examples of poems by authors from different literatures, in addition to these reflections on the aesthetics and philosophy of art?

First of all, because this universe (by 'universe' here meaning only the objects that populate it, not the relationships, fields, influences, so to speak) is much better represented than in the known text. The repertoire contains, in this older text, many more objects that fall into the realm of the poetic, often, despite appearances or customs preserved without being re-evaluated, verified, without being put in relation to reality: an object seems unpoetic and ready-made, because we do not see it as such through tradition, but a tradition of everyday life, of common use and not necessarily an artistic one, while it – for example, the bicycle – appears in numerous poems.

Then, because the examples collected from different poets belonging to Romanian, French, Belgian, Italian, German, Latin, English, American, Canadian, Russian, Spanish literatures are even more abundant than the illustrated objects, which have been a source of inspiration for several names in the

history of literature, and are no longer limited, here, to a couplet, a few lines, a stanza, at most (and that is rare), as in *The Universe of Poetry (II)* – in fact, the first in the order of publication, where the critic proceeded to a drastic essentialization of the material collected over several years, resulting in a different book than the one that would have been foreshadowed, as emerged from the study of the manuscript of the first<sup>11</sup> –, but sometimes reproduce long fragments or even entire poems. The effect – needless to say – is vast, intense, abundantly showing the scope of poetry in general, but also of the critic and the comparatist who is, here too, G. Călinescu. It becomes evident once again, consequently, in the project not entrusted to the press (as in the second study, as in *The Aesthetics of the Fairy Tales*), the critic is a meticulous, sagacious thematist, doubled by an exceptional comparatist.

Horace and Virgil are quoted – some more than once –, Proculus, André Chénier, Goethe, Heine, De Musset, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Valéry, Edmond Haraucourt, Poe, Mayakovsky, Dante, Petrarch. Passages of poetic prose from Gide and John Galsworthy appear, in addition to samples of verses by Bolintineanu, Eminescu or Goga, for example (and the list would be enormous), in addition to which verses from poets almost unknown or completely unknown to us are introduced.

It is also worth noting that, as is the case in *The Universe of Poetry (II)*, where the choice has a justification related to the need for direct contact with the original, without the mediation of an interpretation that can be 'treacherous', the poems in *The Universe of Poetry (I)* are not translated, but (with a few exceptions) appear in the original languages, here however being retained and transcribed only for the author's use.

I will dare to resort to a few examples, with the hope that this operation, fatally limited, will be able to reflect, even if only in effigy, the amazing scope that I have spoken about so far.

Here is Louis Frechette, a Canadian poet who, says Călinescu, 'sings of oaks, pines, and in all his poetry there is a boreal atmosphere that matches these trees'<sup>12</sup>:

*'Chênes au pensive front, grands pins mystérieux,  
Vieux troncs penchés au bord des torrents furieux,  
Dans votre rêverie éternelle et hautaine,  
Songez-vous quelquefois à l'époque lointaine.'*

<sup>11</sup> It is not clear what the reasons are for the critic to proceed in such a reductionist manner. We can make some hypotheses, but I think it would be a gratuitous operation.

<sup>12</sup> G. Călinescu, *The Universes of Poetry*, ed. cit., p. 125.

He is also attentive to the spirit of research and reflection on poetic objects throughout the work, citing André Chénier's quince and pomegranate:

*'Sur le coing parfumé le doux printemps colore  
Une molle toison intacte et vierge encore.  
La grenades entr'ouverte au fond de ses réseaux  
Nous laisse voir l'éclat de ses rubis nouveaux.'*

The comparatist demonstrates the breadth of his poetic readings finding that Pope, in *'The Quiet Life'*, paraphrased<sup>13</sup> Horace 'very closely':

*'Happy the man, whose wish and care  
A few paternal acres bound,  
Content to breathe his native air  
In his own ground.'*

In the following verses, discover how Lenau oscillates between the popular, almost childish register, and the serious one, an attitude dictated by the feeling experienced in the face of the rush of machinism, which characterized the era:

*'Lustig rollt der Wagen fort  
Über Stein' und Brücken;  
Stand nicht wer an seinem Schlag  
Mit verweinten Blicken?'*

The examples collected in these drafts are most often extensive, going as far as taking entire or almost entire poems, as I already said. Did he like the lyrics? Did he consider that only in this way could he truly retain the charm, style, and message of a poetic creation? Probably all of them together. As a personal confession, in the early reviews I sometimes reproduced poems in their entirety, violating the so-called rules, in order to ensure the reader a truthful image of what I was commenting on, to leave him the opportunity to form his own impression, or to support my arguments more convincingly.

Thus, a poet now forgotten, such as F[riedrich] Hebbel, is attracted, although 'somewhat trivialized',<sup>14</sup> by the image of the ocean as a substitute for

<sup>13</sup> G. Călinescu, *The Universes of Poetry*, ed. cit., p. 224.

<sup>14</sup> G. Călinescu, *Universurile poeziei*, ed. cit., p. 238.

the Universe that he uses in 'Welt und Ich' [The World and Me], retaining, because otherwise the general meaning would have been lost, the entire poem:

*'Im grossen ungeheuren Ozeane  
Willst du, der Tropfe, dich in dich verschliessen?  
So wirst du nie zur Perl' zusammen schiessen,  
Wie dich auch Fluten schütteln und Orcane!*

*Nein! öffne deine innersten Organe  
Und mische dich im Leiden und Gemessen  
Mit allen Strömen, die vorüber fliessen;  
Dann dienst du dir und dienst dem höchsten Plane.'*

From Sully Prudhomme takes on a whole sonnet, 'La Grande Ourse' [Ursa Major], which begins with 'La Grande Ourse, archipel de l'océan sans bords,/ Scintillait bien avant qu'elle fût regardée', which reminds us of Eminescu's 'La steaua', and where the indifference of the stars sings, and from Ugo Foscolo's great poem, *Dei sepolcri* [The Tombs], a copious passage, significant for the funereal, graveyard atmosphere (one of the inventoried landmarks of the poetic universe) and for the fate of forgotten poets:

*'Forse tu fra plebei tumuli guardi  
vagolando, ove dorma il sacro capo  
del tuo Parini? A lui non ombre pose  
tra le sue mura la città, lasciva  
d'virati cantori allettatrice,  
non pietra, non parola; e forse l'ossa  
col mozzo capo gl'insanguina il ladro  
che lasciò sul patibolo i delitti.  
Senti raspar fra le macerie e i bronchi  
la derelitta cagna ramingando  
su le fosse e famelica ululando;  
e uscir del teschio, ove fuggia la luna,  
l'úpupa, e svolazzar su per le croci  
sparse per la funèrea campagna  
e l'immonda accusar col luttuóso  
singulto i rai di che son pie le stelle  
alle obbliate sepolture.'*

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This working manuscript of the Universe of Poetry peremptorily highlights, despite the delay with which it reaches the public, the great scope as a writer, critic and aesthician of the author of that monument constituted by the *History of Romanian Literature from the Origins to the Present Day*, together with his entire work.

Also, alongside the thesis of these lines, one can also emphasize, with the same justification, another one, one related to a pan-poeticity which, without explicitly stating it, G. Călinescu accredits through all the abundance of examples of vocabulary considered in common thought to be too unsuitable as poetic material.

Last but not least, it offers a royal reading, a rare *plaisir du texte* immeasurably greater than the 'official' material, the one published by G. Călinescu in the 1940s, which appeared in posthumous volumes alongside *Principles of Aesthetics*, and the only one known until recently.

**ABSTRACT:** G. Călinescu's critical work is vast and offers not only opportunities to ascertain how extensive his concerns and knowledge in various fields were, but also the depth of his theoretical reflection. Unfortunately, sometimes, the apparent facility of his writing could lead to false judgments, because some of the critics failed to notice, beyond the foam of the texts, the intensity of the ideas, their topicality, the sense of accuracy combined with a rare sense of the relativity of things and opinions, the ability to handle an immense amount of information, a complex analytical spirit and a special gift for synthetic constructions.

A text preserved for many years among his manuscripts and only relatively recently made accessible to the general public, namely, the first version of *The Universe of Poetry*, shows once again a critic open to broad horizons and a creator who, without seeking to impose a system, nevertheless used his own aesthetic ideas to build an important work, of striking modernity, which shines through beyond a firm traditionalism. Examined today, this traditionalist side is nothing more than evidence of an inspired way of framing into the mainstream.

**KEYWORDS:** The universe of poetry, aesthetic systems, surface text versus deep text, the hidden scope of texts, poetic objects, pan-poeticity, comparatism.