GEO BOGZA. RHETORIC OF THE LYRICAL IMAGERY[1]

Abstract: *The poetic universe of Geo Bogza meets the imagery concept which catches the relationship between the poet itself and the word.The poet using a few symbols like the ship,the sea, the stars,the virgin,the oil world,the earth,the love,the street,the town relates to himself and to the world around.He reconstructs the world in his own style by producing fantastic,biblical and morbid effects.Bogza's imagery ensures a perfect correlation between allegory and hostile destiny,between world,spirit and symbolic connotations.*

Key words: *Geo Bogza, effects, imagery concept*

Geo Bogza's poetic universe hosts the concept of imagery that captures the relationship between the poet and the word. The poet, by means of a few symbols such as "the ship", "the sea", "the stars", "the sky", "the maiden", "the oil world", "the earth ", "the love", "the street", "the city", lyrically relates both to himself and the world around.

Bogza reconstructs this world in his own style by producing phantasmagoric, biblical and iconoclastic effects. Geo Bogza's imagery ensures deep correlation between giant and small, between allegory and hostile destiny, between world and spirit and their complementary valences.

Young Bogza's poetry distinguishes three levels of honesty: violent honesty present in *Poemul Invectivă (Offensive Poem)*, *Poem Petrolifer (Oil Poem)* and in *Cântec de revoltă, de dragoste şi de moarte (Song of Revolt, Love and Death),* melancholic sincerity in *Ioana Maria*, and meditative candour in poems of the third stage. Before it had any poetic value, the poet's revolt is a manifesto defying the expression of social and aesthetic controversy. Nicolae Steinhardt sees Geo Bogza as a "poet of the effects of elation, grandiose, solemnity, exuberance and pathos" and he identifies two phases in his lyrical creation: one of *solemn rebellion* and another which he called it *the albatross phase*, corresponding to the period in which blatant rebellion was replaced by moral elements in parabolic or allegorical texts.

We cannot say exactly where one stage ends because many constituents of a stage are found in the other. The lyrics overlap some elements leading to the formation of surreal and expressionist effects, or related to scandalous imagery as well as effects of aesthetic and social revolt.

Strong surreal effects are present in *Song of Revolt, Love and Death* where the pale maiden is compared to "a flower of vitriol of neurasthenia".

"Pale maiden with your smile as an autopsy / like a flower of vitriol of neurasthenia / pale maiden kin to autopsies and flowers" (*Song of Revolt, Love and Death*).

His entire work is interspersed with elements generating effects of apocalypse, of antithesis between ordinary and solemn, between serious and petty. The poems in *Sex Diary* suggest a violent grotesque vision in a dominated society: "I found thick mud everywhere / even in pious monasteries decayed / where icons smelled rancid". (*Downhill*)

The carnal infernal depicted in *Offensive Poem* is completed by the terrestrial infernal in *Oil Poem.* His lyrical creations in the volume *Offensive Poem* show degrading and humiliating aspects: incest, terrible love, wild instincts. The poem is a manifesto of great metaliterary value.

[1] Micu Năstase Aurelia Mihaela, University of Piteşti, nastaseaura@yahoo.com

BDD-A6118 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:51:09 UTC)

The poet expressed "existential" dismay in a comprehensive picture of the cosmos with his greatness and disaster. When he was an adolescent he was struggling with the laws of the universe. Exasperation expressed by the poet was a general dismay of the whole generation dominated by anxiety, anguish, despair and constant alert. The "biological destiny" of the universe tormented the poet because the splendors of the world no longer obeyed the internal laws, but were subject to cosmic forces directed by man. Privileges of the new society were: death, madness, suicide, neurasthenia and insomnia. The whole poem is considered a picture of the universe, drawing around key ideas, which bind and complete themselves.

The main character is the “pale maiden”, symbol of the privileges which oppose the common condition in the universe. The young maiden appears in three phases. The first aspect is the beautiful young woman who impresses with tenderness and virginity: "Pale maiden with nostalgic legs, / with legs like a dazzling fireworks game" (*Song of Revolt, Love and Death - III*).

The second aspect is the autumn equinox, a time when the dry land of summer sun is waiting for ripe grains of wheat and when the "vegetable cycle ends on a new virgin land, bestowed to receive the seed"(Chevalier,J;Gherbrant,A.1994,34-38):

"And the elegiac triangle of cranes, the unique moment / of autumn equinox" (*Song of Revolt, Love and Death - VII*).

The third aspect is when the maiden reveals other than bodily virginity, a virginity unknown that brings the end of the world:

"Pale maiden kin to the great disasters / of love / I sing your frown virginity as an unknown star / like a comet that brings the end of the world”.

The maiden is the most encountered being in the poems. It appears both in terrestrial microcosm with her nostalgic legs and teenage love, but also in the universal macrocosm as an unknown star, as a comet that brings the end of the world. *Song of Revolt, Love and Death* is established as a kind of ode organized around the pale maiden. The cosmic core is womb, ocean, nebulous and even a red bloody star that can adhere to a future generation every night. Space is populated as in visions of expressionist nightmares, of images of apocalypse, where signs of the end appear. Plants are distilling the poison of the earth, the trees are coffins. The new vision is applied to the erotic feeling that reaches extreme meanings:

"I seek your breasts that hurt me in my dream till suicide / knees like a legendary country, a country in flames." (*Song of Revolt, Love and Death - IX*).

The ostentatious authenticity is associated with items that will acquire a maximum solemnity in the next step in which serious meditation, and rhetorically solemn statement and sensitivity to the sublime will be enhanced. Written in a new style, the poems in the volume *Ioana Maria* are full of exasperating beauty and calm, illustrating "the same inner struggle and the same endless despair of Geo Bogza." (Blecher, M, 1971:280-284).The poet was able to express his inner turmoil and sadness in a warm tone embodied in quiet verse.

Ioana Maria is a poem of youth, a poem of longing, of love, and of unfulfillment of destiny. The poem is built around the symbolic ship. It is an ode, an hymn of superlative enthusiasm. By means of the calendar reportage, the poet makes a brief description, from the wet evening in February, when the romance begins, until late bitter and sad autumn.

Ioana Maria is a poem of remembrance, of reliving, of absence and separation, of longing and of unfulfilled love:

BDD-A6118 © 2012 Universitatea din Pitești
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:51:09 UTC)

"Ioana Maria I was only two ships / that meet in the morning / and on the waves that last a moment / they see and greet each other" (*Ioana Maria - XVII*). By means of techniques specific to reportage, the poet describes the landscape where the lovers consume their moments of tenderness: (the city in the dark, large quiet streets with statues, forests on the outskirts, the banks of the lake) and also the place where the poet recalls wistfully some fragments of erotic experience (the seas full of ship masts). Antithetical to serene and quiet love is that bleak and wet setting, with large boulevards:

"The city that night was full of darkness" (*Ioana Maria - II*).

The innocent love story between two young people takes a magnificent solemn dimension. From a sincere seventeen–year-old lover, Ioana Maria turns into a high star: "I, the only one in the world, / know what your star is" (*Ioana Maria - X*).

The romance between the two becomes reason to contemplate the unfulfilled love. The beloved one, metaphorically speaking, became a superior star and a ship that crossed the seas, moving away forever: "You were beautiful Ioana Maria / and I was looking at you / and I was stunned at you / like a boat / that takes you on seas / swinging you / sailing / from wave to wave / to the end of the world "(*Ioana Maria - XII*).

Sadness and melancholy suggested by the silent continuous rain predicted separation for a long time. The impossible love was announced by the ship heading to the unknown. Bogza used the "ship" as a symbol, illustrating the dominant reason for the trip. In mythology the ship evokes "the idea of security during a difficult crossing."(Chevalier, J;Gherbramt, A:1994:364). As a picture of life, the ship had to set its direction. Bogza's direction in terms of love is unrealizable and platonic. The ship mainly symbolizes "the quest for eternal faith in love, but also the shipwreck of this ideal"(ibidem). Hoping to find the faithful and loving wife, the poet knew the exaltation and got taken by the same ideal that, unfortunately, could never be achieved: "There shall never be again / that spring night / when we were together again." (*Ioana Maria, XVI*).

The name of the beloved one disappeared like the ship masts get lost in the night, and the flame of love ceased to flicker such as the lights that were turned off and on like the stars. Through the ship masts the dreams took shape, became noble, yet impractical, being linked to an impossible ideal. The fleeting happiness was illustrated by the two ships that met only for a moment to see and great each other. The destiny of the young couple was floating with the waves. The turbulent love story was similar to the waves that revealed "the unstable and passive feminine principle, the constant torment of live and soul."(Evseev,I, 1994: 204). Stirred up by an inner storm, the powerful waves destroyed pure love, becoming aggressive and uncontrollable forces.

The poet loved the seas and the remote areas where he heard every song of the earth, the journeys and the stellar distances where "people dream, live and die away." (*Ioana Maria I)*.

Changing the theme registry, Geo Bogza discovered the destroying fire that was hiding within his soul and in the oil tanks, in the tanks of crude oil. This raises the poet's interest for the world of oilmen. There is a complementarity between people and oil, defined by the unifying fire. The land of Buştenari with people, with wells, with oil, was exploited lyrically in modern language and realist spirit. *Oil Poem* is a glorification of the violence and ugliness of this land. The world of oil is especially highlighted by the events in the poems: *The mysterious murder from Buştenari, Sick oil landscape,* and in the volume *Nicolae Ilie (Epitaph, The Mistresses, Terror).*

BDD-A6118 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:51:09 UTC)

Oil Poem depicts the environment full of well lights and the reality of explosions that burst in the wells from Buştenari. In this vast poem dedicated to oil, the poet moves from exasperation to praise, from revolt to adoration.

A particularly fertile aspect is the psychological configuration of the poet that highlights, on the one hand the parallelism between man and landscape, and on the other the parallelism between landscape and man.

In all the poems dedicated to oil everything is hot: hills, wells, and people. The earth “gasps”, "flicks", "sweats", "tosses", "moans" and sheds its black suppuration. "Oil such as the stone, fire, earth or water, is one of the primary substances that exalts the writer’s fantasy "(Balotă, N, 112). The poet makes a brief testimony about Bustenari village, which at first was "a village of thieves, a nest of robbers", about "the world and other people, their sufferings and ideals", about his crimes, about the drillers burned in flames, but also about oil, a seething dirty mass." The whole poem is a poetic confession of the self. The poetic self is strengthened by the use of the first person personal pronoun "I":

"I, this one, shall speak to you about oil and his crimes / I, who is sordid and violent "(*Oil Poem*).

Drills are like lovers who drill out the bowels of the earth: "Drills, my girlfriends so hungry / they pierce the heart of the earth and suck his entrails ruthlessly."(*Oil Poem*)

The poet’s soul, black and full of indignation, is likened to a hole from where black and flammable oil springs up. The poetic ideas emerge from the self. The subjective side of the soul, inseparable from the self, is the feeling, which is a generator of poetry. There are identified “intense emotional states”. “The self is tormented by a creative conflict which ends depending on the relation between the self and the world.”(Rusu, L.: 1969:89).

The oil landscape is in a permanent tumult both at the surface of the earth and in its core where everything “groans, rattles and roars”. Both the black oil that gushes out of it as festering from a wound and “loud hysterical laughter, with satanic gurgle” produce a continuous general frenzy. In contrast with this euphoric state there is the infernal world caused by the evil and wicked oil that once it bursts from the core of the earth “unleashes its crimes, abomination and wickedness.” The hills blackened by oil produced strong madness defined as “an indistinct mixture of panic and ecstasy” (Pelin, M., 1970). The poet illustrates a desolating landscape in his poems, with dirty people, with crimes, with thousand of widows, with thousand of infamies, “with drillers burnt alive, with murderers, with brothers in infamy”. The spirit of oil life is hidden “in oil tanks, in the dark soul of all those people, a spirit that sometimes flares up at a glance, in a fire. There seems to be an identical destiny between people and drills. Sometimes they burn together and then the oil life is something epic.” (Vitner, I., 1953:26).

“The external fire, an infernal fire, corresponds to the ardent inner fire, a fire like a sacrifice, which means complete knowledge, illumination.”(Chevalier, J., Gherbrant, A.,:1994:65) Meanwhile, the fire is exploited in its negative aspects: “it darkens and chokes because of its smoke, it burns, consumes, destroys […] the fire that smolders and burns everything is opposed to the bright flames and symbolizes the subconsciousness, the chaos, the fire in hell, briefly all forms of psychological regression.” (ibidem)

Dark views arise from the four poems dedicated to the driller Nicolae Ilie. The macabre spectacle takes place around the fire causing burns. The punitive fire, as if from hell, brought tragedy, disfigured the drillers. Life takes the form of an apocalypse.

BDD-A6118 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:51:09 UTC)

Metaphorically speaking, the fire generates purifying sufferings. Through these sacrifices, the earth full of evil is purified. People are "tested" in order to reach salvation. The boy killed by "a flame of fire" has "black hands like burning coal" and eyes without eyelids. The poet uses the phrase "flame of fire", which in biblical apocalypse means "sons of God".

The earth inferno is an extension of the underworld, an inferno painted in gruesome sequences, "justified by the faith in atonement of sins in anguish that causes horror."(Bârsilă, M:2006:63) The earth boils on two levels: one of the oil that gushes out and the other of the prostitutes. "The devil of oil plunders people and nature equally". (Regman, C.,: 1966:212)

Bogza blends his life experience with meditations on life and rebellion, concerning himself exclusively with reality, veracity. He aims at presenting some aspects of human life, mostly humble, "in a language lacking in the commonly admitted elements of poetry." (ibidem).

References

Balotă, N., *Universul prozei*, Univers, Bucureşti,
Bârsilă, M, *Vârsta de fier în viziunea lirică a lui Al .Philippide*, Paralela 45, Piteşti, 005
Blecher,M., *Vizuina luminată*, Editura Cartea românească, Bucureşti, 1971,
Chevalier,J; Gherbrant,A., *Dicţionar de simboluri*, Artemis, Bucureşti, 1994
Evseev, I., *Dicţionar de simboluri*,Timişoara, 2008
Regman, C, *Confluenţe literare*, Editura pentru literatură, Bucureşti, 1966
Rusu,L., *Estetica poeziei lirice*, Editura pentru literatură, Bucureşti, 1969
România literară, nr. 4/1970

This work was partially supported by the strategic grant POSDRU/88/1.5/S/52826, Project ID52826 (2009), co-financed by the European Social Fund – Investing in People, within the Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013.

BDD-A6118 © 2012 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:51:09 UTC)