

POEMS WITH FREE VERSE IN VERSIFICATION OF LUCIAN BLAGA AND THE THEORETICAL MODEL OF GERMAN FREE VERSE

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Abstract: *In dem Artikel werden die theoretischen Merkmale des deutschen unkonventionellen Verses untersucht und sein Einfluss auf die Dichtungstechnik des rumänischen expressionistischen Dichters Lucian Blaga. Es wird gezeigt, dass L. Blaga alle Arten des deutschen freien Verses gemäß der Klassifikation von Ch. Wagenknecht verwendet hat: "freie Verse", "unregelmäßige Rhythmen", "freie Rhythmen", "prosaische Lyrik". Ähnlich wie "freie Verse" und "unregelmäßige Rhythmen" sind die silbotonischen, unregelmäßigen, verschiedenfüßigen und verschiedenmetrischen Konstruktionen, in denen der Autor nicht nur die Monotonie der klassischen Dichtung, sondern auch das grundlegende Prinzip der Homomorphie zu durchbrechen versucht. Analog zu dem Vers libre stehen Gedichte, die nach dem Prinzip der "freien Rhythmen" und der "prosaischen Lyrik" aufgebaut sind. In solchen Strukturen ist die metrische Betonung kaum spürbar, und die Tonalität entspricht der unmittelbaren, spontanen Rede. Im freien Vers verwendet der Dichter aktiv besondere syntaktische Konstruktionen, Wiederholungen bestimmter rhythmischer Gruppen und die freie Satzstruktur, die ein bedeutendes Ausdrucksmittel des Vers libre darstellen.*

Keywords: *freie Verse, unregelmäßige Rhythmen, freie Rhythmen, prosaische Lyrik, vers libre.*

An ambition for renewal, experimentation, and rejection of the established classical norms of poetry characterizes early twentieth-century poetry. Traditional poetic forms, although in various variations, are perceived as having exhausted their possibilities, that is the reason why poets start looking for new types ways of versification outside the canons. Thus, free verse, also called vers libre, is one of the latest forms of poetic expression.

Vers libre is a way of organising poetic thought that is characterised by the division into verse lines by the intonation and syntax principle and the rejection of the metrical structure, rhyme and traditional stanza. The internal organisation of the poem, which creates an internal poetic rhythm, is intrinsic to vers libre.

The first appearance of vers libre is detected in German poetry of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These are the poems with "freie Rhithmen" of

F. Klopstock, which are based on the imitation of the ancient rhythms, in particular hexameter, elegiac distich, alcaic and sapphic stanzas. These poems have not only different numbers of metrical feet in the rhythmic line but also a different number of syllables per foot (Arndt, 1968: 183).

In English literature, the first attempts at using free verse are associated with the works of W. Whitman, who created free forms based on biblical poetry with its syntactic homogeneity and each period's completeness. That is a rhythmic poem derived from the repetition of sounds, words, phrases and sentences; it is built by changing speech units (Kirby-Smith, 1996: 10).

The modern and widely recognised *vers libre* was composed by French poets, representatives of the symbolism movement, by the end of the nineteenth century. The term “*vers libre*”, which refers to a verse free from the strict rules of traditional versification, made its first appearance in the foreword to the collection *Premiers poems* (1897, “First Poems”) and was mentioned by a French art critic and symbolist Gustave Kahn (Paladian, 221: 6).

The initiator of free verse in Romanian literature is considered to be the symbolist poet A. Macedonski, who promoted in his scientific works the renewal of poetry and the liberation of verse from classical norms. In contrast to his theoretical considerations, Macedonski utilised traditional verse with numerous metrical variations and non-classical modulations. The ambition for new forms and experimentation could be tracked in the early lyrics of the poet when the poetry of that period is characterised by sharpness, shock, destruction and rejection of canons. In 1879 the young Macedonski attempts in the field of *vers libre* (the poem “*Hinov*”), that, according to L. Galdi, should be examined alongside similar attempts by V. Hugo and A. Rimbaud (Galdi, 1971: 259).

Only at the beginning of the twentieth century did Romanian literature start to produce works in *vers libre*, and these are the poems of Tudor Arghezi, George Bacovia, Adrian Maniu, Lucian Blaga, and Ion Barbu. Yet, in the case that the majority of the poets were experimenting with the French model of *vers libre*, L. Blaga proposed a new prosodic structure that corresponded neither to the traditional patterns nor to the variants of *vers libre* widely accepted in the modernist “new poetry”. The young Blaga cultivated free verse following the German model.

There are two concepts of free verse in German versification: “*freie Verse*” and “*freie Rhythmen*” that differ because of their unique distinctive features. German scholars, such as E. Arndt, W. Kayser, D. Frey, Ch. Wagenknecht, and Ch. Hönig separate these concepts in their works, as they have different origins.

In German linguists' works, most attention is paid to verses with free rhythms - “*freie Rhythmen*”. According to E. Arndt, free rhythms originate from strict verse forms, such as the ode, hexameter, and even *knittelvers*. Many versifiers share the same thought as Arndt, they maintain that only the metric basis was integral for creating such poems. Arndt states that poems with free rhythms do not require compliance with metrical laws, they are free from rhyme and stanza. Concurrently, modern “*freie Rhythmen*” are approaching prose more closely. They are constructed not so rhythmically, and their lines are not so strictly connected: they lack metre and stanza, and there is no consecutive change of accents (Arndt, 1968: 183-185). Thus, as stated by D. Frey, “*freie Rhythmen*” are poems that rely more on rhythmic accents in words rather than on metrics (Frey, 1996: 92). W. Kayser claims that “*freie Rhythmen*” have a strictly ordered size, which is due to their

historical origin from strict verse forms. However, there is no rhyme detected in them, and the poem's lines could be of different lengths. According to Kaiser, the main feature of this type of verse is rhythmic emphasis (Kayser, 1991: 44-54).

The definition of "freie Verse" and "freie Rhythmen" was studied in detail by Ch. Wagenknech. The scholar believes that "freie Rhythmen" is a separate type of verse that appeared after the period of classical odes, which lose the feature of ancient poetry only in the nineteenth century, and in the twentieth century the mentioned features disappear completely. According to the scientist, free rhythms are further developed in R.M. Rilke's "Duino Elegies", in the works of B. Brecht lately and in the poetry of expressionists (Wagenknech, 1999: 92-97).

Thus, "freie Rhythmen" are poetic works, a distinctive feature of which is rhythmic stress, they have neither metre, nor rhyme or stanza, and the lines in these poems could be of any length. As stated by Ch. Hönig, the most significant formal feature of such poems is the splitting of the text into lines – "Zeilenbrechung" (Hönig, 2008: 26). Therefore, free rhythms are non-rhymed poems devoid of regular isosyllabism, in which, according to the author's intention, graphically fixed segmentation of the text into verse lines could be detected.

Although the majority of the German researchers' works are devoted to "freie Rhythmen", the most used type of free verse is the actual "freie Verse". According to E. Arndt, this type of poem has a free rhythmic pattern. However, in this type of versification there is a clear beat division: these are verses with a constant change of stressed and unstressed syllables (Arndt, 1968: 181). D. Frey refers to "freie Verse" poems with unusual rhythm, irregular stanzas and rhyme, in which coincide only stressed vowel sounds that could be subjected to metrical analysis (Frey, 1996 : 92).

A more extensive characterisation of "freie Verse" is given by Ch. Wagenknech, who defines three types of poems with untraditional structure: "freie Verse", "unregelmäßige Rhythmen" and "prosaische Lyrik". The first type, "freie Verse", is the poetry of traditional verse with a non-traditional structure. In other words, these are the poems free from isometric lineation, in which metre (iamb, trochee etc.) is present, but rhyme and strict strophic division is absent. These forms first appeared in German versification due to the publication of the opera "Daphne" by Martin Opitz in 1627. In the recitatives for this musical work, the author used the so-called "Madrigalverse" that had previously been performed only in the Gregorian chant. These are poems in which the length of the verse line is not limited or predetermined by metrical limits but has a strict division into stops.

According to Ch. Wagenknech, "unregelmäßige Rhythmen" are untraditional poems with "half-free and half-strict rhythm", which the researcher calls, following Brecht, "unrhymed verses with irregular rhythm" (Brecht, 1980: 206-211). Such poems include different metric structures, in which there is a disordered alternation of differently-shaped feet and metric lines. "Freie Verse" differs from "unregelmäßige Rhythmen" in the way that the former is not based on a single metre, whereas the verses with different metrical patterns in the structure of the latter are detected.

Ch. Wagenknech states that "prosaische Lyrik" is a prose work that is written in the shape of a poem, but by no means is a poem in prose (Wagenknech, 1999: 101-102).

According to German scholars, the term "freie Verse" is a broader concept, it is a free verse with unregulated stanza and rhyme, in which certain metrical patterns could be detected. Traditionally, these forms are unrhymed, which is typical for blank verse as well.

Therefore, the term “freie Verse” denotes free verse in German versification, i.e. unregulated blank verse, in which stanzas use lines of different lengths; and the concept “freie Rhythmen” is a free poem without metre, which is, in most situations, unrhymed. Similar to the French term “vers libre” is “freie Rhythmen”.

In our research on Lucian Blaga’s verses with the non-traditional structure, we will consider the classification created by Ch. Wagehnech.

The first category of verses – “freie Verse” – corresponds to heterometrical structures constructed based on a metre. It is the most widely used model in which we follow the successive combination of verses with a different number of metres in the verse, in which the rhythm is identified. These structures are characterized as the combination of unequally sized verses, in which there is a symmetrical alternation between stressed and unstressed syllables.

The mentioned pattern is identified by Vladimir Streinul who claims that such poems represent “traditional versification disguised typographically” (Streinul, 1966: 244). In such structures, by separating the poetic phrase and passing it into the next line with the help of enjambement, the poet visually creates a free form of the structure while preserving the rhythmic cadence of the verse. The technique of these poems requires a particular compliance metric, such constructions are built around a basic metre, usually the pentameter or the iambic hexameter, whose presence is visible in the text. Such forms are called heteromeric constructions which are composed based on one metre.

We will illustrate with the poem “Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii” (1919) [“I do not crush the crown of this world’s wonders”]:

“Eu nu strivesc corola de minuni a lumii (I6)
și nuucid (I2)
cu mintea tainele, ce le-ntâlnesc (I5)
în calea mea (I2)
în flori, în ochi, pe buze ori morminte. (I5)
Lumina altora (I2)
sugrumă vraja nepătrunsului ascuns (I6)
în adâncimi de întuneric, (I4)
dar eu, (I1)
eu cu lumina mea sporesc a lumii taină – (I6)
și-ntocmai cum cu razele ei albe luna (I6)
nu micșorează, ci tremurătoare (I5)
mărește și mai tare taina nopții, (I5)
așa îmbogățesc și eu întunecata zare (I7)
cu largi flori de sfânt mister (I4)
și tot ce-i neînțeleș (I3)
se schimbă-n neînțeleșuri și mai mari (I5)
sub ochii mei- (I2)
căci eu iubesc (I2)
și flori și ochi și buze și morminte. (I5)”

The rhythmic diagnosis of the poem highlights the binary rhythm of the iambic meter, even verses conforming to the pattern of the theoretical rhythm are in the minority. According to G. Tohăneanu, the binary meter sequences in their actual structure admit optional placements of some unstressed syllables in the “stressed” positions of the

rhythmic matrix (Tohăneanu, 1976: 225), since the rhythm “does not rely on a fixed distribution of stressed syllables, but on the invariant of the rhythmic module”(Dinu, 2004: 130). Thus, on the horizontal line, we distinguish the correct iambic meters that form the iambic rhythm of the whole poem. Following the scheme of the poem vertically, we visualise an amorphous construction, the obtained rhythmic structures are organised chaotically, outside any technique, and the variety of metres oscillates between one and seven feet in the verse, which gives novelty to the poetic formula. Therefore, Blaga’s verses are not “an interrupted prose”, but they form a poem with a non-classic syllabo-tonic structure, that is based on iambic heterometry in which the accuracy of the inner structures of the rhythms crystallises.

Poems in the category “freie Verse” are characterised by a free alternation of verses in which the author avoids enjambement, creating verses of different lengths, syntactically and lexically autonomous. Such poems simultaneously possess elements of both strict versification (in metre and rhythm) and free versification (verse length, astrophic structure, avoidance of rhyme) – the actual distinction between iambic forms, trochaic forms and amphibrach is tracked through these structures. Thus, these constructions could be characterised by the notions of free iamb, free trochee and free amphibrach. The most active poet cultivated free alternation of iambic lines of different lengths. As an example, we will illustrate this poem “Izvorul nopții” (1919) [“The Spring of Night”]:

“Frumoaso,
ți-s ochii-așa de negri încât seara
când stau culcat cu capu-n poala ta
îmi pare
că ochii tăi, adâncii, sunt izvorul
din care tainic curge noaptea peste văi
și peste munți și peste seșuri,
acoperind pământul
c-o mare de-ntuneric.
Așa-s de negri ochii tăi,
lumina mea.”

At first glance, it may seem that the given example is free verse, as this is what the graphic form of the poem demonstrates: the chaotic presence of long and short lines, the refusal to write the beginning of the line in capital, which brings it closer to free verse, the prose intonation, specific to everyday conversation. The cadence of the verse is, however, much more regular, since there are fewer situations, in which the marked position of the metrical pattern is occupied by the unstressed syllables. The share of the accents reveals the great mobility of the iambic rhythms that alternate disorderly in the text. The verses are indisputably composed from iambic meter, we do not notice any deviation from the rhythmic scheme. The novelty of the form lies in the poet’s use of the typographic isolation of each verse, which could not be transcribed isometrically and are not the classical rhythms decomposed typographically, but are free iambic forms obtained as a result of a chaotic organisation, beyond any technique; the variety of metres ranging from one to seven feet in verse. The innovation of such structures lies in the “play” of the verse sequences; the poet, in order to avoid rhythmic monotony, seeks to differentiate one line from another in such a way that, when a shorter line is encountered, a sense of freedom of form is created.

The category “unregelmäßige Rhythmen” includes structures in which syllabj-tonic verses with a different metrical pattern alternate in a deformed and irregular manner, in which both binary and ternary rhythms are combined. Structures with combined rhythms differ from the polyrhythm of classical versification by the fact that in classical versification the rhythm changes from one larger fragment to another or from one stanza structure to another, and the change of metre is motivated by the content of the work. In heterometric constructions, the alternation of verses occurs in each or almost every line, and it is spontaneous, irregular and unmotivated. As an example, we will illustrate the poem “Glas în paradis” (1944) [“The Voice in Paradise”]:

“Vino să şedem subt pom. (D3)
Deasupra-i încă veac ceresc. (I4)
În vântul adevărului, (I3)
în marea umbr-a mărului, (I3)
vreau părul să ți-l despletesc (I4)
să fluture ca-n vis (I3)
cătore hotarul pământesc. (I4)

Ce grai în sânge am închis? (I4)
Vino să şedem subt pom, (D3)
unde ceasul fără vină (I4)
cu şarpele se joacă-n doi. (I4)
Tu ești om, eu sunt om. (An2)
Ce grea e pentru noi (I3)
osânda de a sta-n lumină! (I4)”

The verses of such a structure are striking for their variety of metrical patterns. The fragment is composed of different syllabo-tonic verses. The experiment lies in the diversity of forms, which is also the basis criterion in the composition of such a structure. Since in structures with combined rhythms, the metrical patterns change from one verse to another, they could form the rhythmic cadence neither based on metre nor rhythm. Concurrently, the interior rhythmic cadence, the technique that differentiates such structures of *vers libre*, is distinguished in every verse.

This category also includes forms with binary or ternary rhythmic cadence, which are characterised by the unsystematic existence of anacrusis at the beginning of the verse. In syllabo-tonic versification, we distinguish binary and ternary rhythms that are differentiated by their inner structures: one stressed syllable and one unstressed alternate in binary rhythms, and in ternary rhythms, two unstressed and a stressed syllable alternate. Everything is different in the inner structure of each type of rhythm. The binary, trochaic and iambic rhythms in the segment of the positions between the stresses are co-equivalent with an unstressed syllable. In turn, ternary rhythms, dactylic, amphibrachic and anapestic ones are equal in the rank of unstressed syllables in the position between stressed syllables. What differentiates them is the anacrusis (weak unstressed syllables preceding the first metrical stress), which appears at the beginning of the verse. Traditional versification is characterised by accuracy and regularity: if the first verse of the poem is a trochee, then all verses will be trochaic; if the first verse is iambic, dactylic or amphibrachic, then the following verses will have the same metrical pattern.

Lucian Blaga makes an attempt to change the monotony of the rhythms by “playing” in an irregular manner with unstressed syllables at the beginning of the verses. This modality expands the poet’s possibilities, allowing him to build structures with combined rhythms by using the free and unsystematic variations of anacrusis. In the category of binary anacruised rhythms fall poetic works whose rhythmic pattern emphasises the unsystematic alternation of trochaic and iambic verses of different lengths. The elements that characterise them are the unsystematic anacrusis, i.e. the existence or absence of an unstressed syllable at the beginning of the verse, and the irregular clausula (masculine, feminine, dactylic). To be candid, in some cases, we identify the poet’s attempt to even out the rhythmic pattern by using a masculine clausula at the end of the trochaic verse to create a visual pattern of the iambic verse and conversely, using the feminine clausula at the end of the iambic line to move to the trochaic pattern of the next line. However, this technique is more of an experiment and does not become a rule for the creation of anacruised forms. As an example, we will provide the poem “Martie” (1919), [“March”]:

“Din caier încâlcit de nouri (I4)
Toarce vântul (I2)
fire lungi de ploaie. (I3)
Flușturatici fulgi de nea (I4)
s-ar așeza-n noroi, (I3)
dar cum li-e silă – (I2)
se ridică iar (I3)
și zboară să-și găsească (I3)
cuib de ramuri. (I2)
Vânt și-i frig – (I2)
iar mugurii (I1)
prea lacomi de lumină (I3)
își zgulesc acum (I3)
urechile în guler. (I3)”

In the poem above we distinguish graphically 14 lines with a different rhythmic pattern in a disorderly graphic organisation. Typically L. Blaga’s verses are characterized by syntactic autonomy, but in some situations, the poet resorts to the method of enjambment by breaking the syntactic form of the verse in order to create novelty. The alternation of the rhythms in the text certifies the oscillation of the iambic (50%) and trochaic verses (50%). At the end of the trochaic verses (4, 7, 10, 13) the metres are syncopated, which means that in the rhythmic pattern of the trochee, the unstressed syllable at the end is empty, but lines 1, 6, and 8, 11, 12, 14 with iambic rhythm have anacrusis at the end which does not form a metrical unit, since in the realisation of the metre we take into account the stressed syllable. Thus, arises the question of in what rhythm these verses are written. The experiment with the unsystematic anacrusis leads to the creation of new poems in which the verses with different rhythms alternate. The binary rhythmic identity of these verses results in the compatibility of those rhythms, as the transitions from one to another might be unnoticeable to an inexperienced reader. The novelty of the structure lies in the alternation of monosyllabic anacrusis and clausula in an irregular section.

According to the classification of Ch. Wagenknecht, the category “prosaische Lyrik” includes the actual vers libre. Such structures are characterised by a fundamental rejection of all secondary verse-forming principles (metre, isosyllabism, rhyme and regular

stanza), and they rely on the primary feature of the verse speech, which is the author's division of the flow of speech into verses (lines) that may or may not coincide with syntagms or sentences. In L. Blaga's poetry, only seven poems belong to that example. A model example is the poem "Am înțeles păcatul ce apasă peste casa mea" (1924) ["The sin that burdens my house"]:

“Am înțeles păcatul ce apasă peste casa mea
ca un mușchi strămoșesc.
O, de ce am tâlmăcit vremea și zodiile
altfel decât baba ce-și topește cânepa în baltă?
De ce am dorit alt zâmbet decât al pietrarului
ce scapără scânteii în margine de drum?
De ce am râvnit altă menire
în lumea celor șapte zile
decât clopotarul ce petrece morții la cer?
Dă-mi mâna ta, trecătorule, și tu care mergi,
și tu care vii.
Toate turmele pământului au aureole sfinte
peste capetele lor.
Astfel mă iubesc de-acum:
unul între mulți,
și mă scutur de mine însumi
ca un câne ce-a ieșit dintr-un râu blestemat.
Sângele meu vreau să curgă pe scocurile lumii
să-nvârtă roțile
în mori cerești.

Sunt tremur de fericire
ziua întreagă deasupra mea
puterile păsărești au arătat în triumphiuri
spre ținte luminoase.”

In this poem, the lines are of different lengths, there is no rhythm, size, rhyme, or alternation of masculine and feminine endings. The particular originality of the poem lies in the complex syntax and a special type of melody, or rather the ambition for the complete absence of such. This way Blaga brings his work to full prosaization. However, freedom from size and rhyme does not mean the rejection of poetics since it is defined in a rigid organisation within the poem itself and is purely individual.

Lucian Blaga's inventiveness in the segment of irregular verse culminates in the composition of amorphous structures, in which the poet combines verses with a different prosodic pattern. Such structures are composed according to the German model of free verse – “freie Rhythmen”.

These are the forms with a loose rhythm, in which different stanzas in lines are haphazardly combined with an extended amplitude of the intervals between stresses, with a variable anacrusis and a variable clausula. This is predominantly blank (unrhymed) and astrophic verse. Such construction is recorded in seventeen poems by Lucian Blaga, five of which are written in the free dolnik style, and twelve poems have the structure of a blank taktovik with different stanzas in lines. Syntactically these structures resemble vers libre. Although they possess rather a radical shape, filled with stressed verses with zero or four-

and five-syllable intervals, in the vast majority of lines the intervals between the lines vary from one to two syllables, indicating the internal organisation of the poem based on stress. In such structures, the internal rhythm of the lines changes with the transition to each new line, most of which have a non-classical structure. The free verse form of the poem could be indicated by the sharp contrast in the length of the lines and the colloquial, prosaic intonation that is typical to everyday, confidential and intimate conversations. An example we will provide from the poem “Pe ape” (1924) [“On the Water”]:

“Porumbii mi i-am slobozit (I)
să-ncerce pajiştea cerului, (Dk)
dar sfâşiaşi de vânturi (I)
se-ntorc înapoi. Pe vatra corăbiei (Dk)
inima mi-o-ngrop subt spuză (Tk)
să-şi ţină jăratecul. Pasarea focului (Amf)
nu-mi mai fâlfăie peste pereţi. (Dk)”

Firstly, to determine which system of versification the works belong to, we consider the identity of the rhyme orders with syllabo-tonic rhythms. We record iambic, amphibrachic, dolnik and taktovik lines in the given fragment. In the poem, we observe a haphazard mix of rhythms, but the dominance of tonic forms and colloquial intonation eliminates the metricity of the syllabo-tonic verses. The poet’s mastery is seen specifically in the development of new configurations of all the metres of tonic verse. That is the Romanian analogue of the contemporary German “freie Rhythmen”.

Lucian Blaga skillfully possesses the ability to use all types of German free verse. The poet debuts with unregulated blank verse in which we record classical stanzas – “freie Verse” and “unregelmäßige Rhythmen” – constructions in which the author tries to break not only the monotony of classical versification but also the fundamental principle of homomorphism. L. Blaga’s free verse is based on the German “freie Rhythmen” principle of the early twentieth century and “prosaische Lyrik”. In structures similar to the “freie Rhythmen”, the rhythmic pattern shows a tonal disordered beat, in which metrical stress is barely felt, and the tonality corresponds to immediate, momentary speech. Such structures differ from “prosaische Lyrik” only by the fact that they contain metrical lines. In free verses, the poet actively makes use of special syntactic constructions, repetitions of certain rhythmic groups, and free construction of sentences, which are significant expressive means of *vers libre*.

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