ION BARBU
1895-1961

BIOGRAPHY

Ion BARBU, Dan Barbilian by his real name, born on 19 March 1895, in Cîmpulung Muscel, was the son of a magistrate. He attended primary school in Cîmpulung Muscel, Damieneşti (Roman) and Stîlpeni (Roman) and the first years of high school in Piteşti and then back in Cîmpulung Muscel. These frequent changes of place were the result of his father's transfers. The latter was eventually appointed president of the law court in Giurgiu and Ion Barbu attends the final years at Gh. Lazăr High School (one of his classmates is Al. Rosetti) and M. Viteazul in Bucharest. ● In 1912, he wins a contest of the *Gazeta matematică/Mathematical Gazette* and attracts the attention of the geometrician Gh. Ţiţeica. In parallel, when only 17, he familiarizes himself with poetry (Eminescu, Poe, Baudelaire, Rimbaud), due to his friendship with Simion Bayer and T. Vianu. In 1914, he takes his baccalaureate and signs up for the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Bucharest, where he attends the lectures of professors Gh. Ţiţeica, D. Pompei and Tr. Lalescu. In 1916, he interrupts his studies and takes refuge in Moldavia during the war (however, he is not sent to the front). ● Thanks to T. Vianu, the literary magazine *Literatorul/The Literary Man*, headed by Al. Macedonski, publishes his first poems in September 1918. In 1919, he publishes for the first time a group of poems under the pen name of Ion Barbu, in E. Lovinescu's *Zburătorul/The Sprite*. In 1921, his poem *Snail Catching* appears in book form, he takes his degree in mathematics and, at the recommendation of Gh. Ţiţeica, is sent on a scholarship to the University of Göttingen to study towards a Ph.D. There, he attends D. Hilbert's lectures (together with Gabriel Sudan who will take his Ph.D. with the great mathematician), then goes to Tübingen (where T. Vianu is), and then to Berlin (where the poets Al. Philippide and L. Blaga are pursuing their studies). He leads a Bohemian life, with drugs and countless love affairs, that ends in a quick and passionate love for Gerda Harsenfelder, the daughter of a well-known German doctor. ● In 1924, he returns to Romania (like Eminescu, without his Ph.D.) and undergoes a disintoxication cure under Gerda's close supervision. In 1925, he marries her and starts working as a substitute teacher first in Giurgiu, then

in Bucharest, at S. Haret and D. Cantemir high schools. An original teacher who would sometimes read poetry during the maths class. Between 1924-1926, he publishes his Balkan cycle of poems (inspired by the atmosphere of Giurgiu) [2]. ● In 1926, he becomes a lecturer in Gh. Țițeica's Department of Analytic Geometry, and in 1929 he defends his Ph.D. thesis entitled *The Canonical Representation of the Addition of Hyperelliptic Functions*. In 1926 and 1927, he publishes his hermetic cycle of poems [2]. After that, he only writes circumstantial poems, which reveal a skilful and picturesque versifier [33]. All these years, he engages in polemics with T. Arghezi and E. Lovinescu on the poetics of the former's *Right Words* and, respectively, the latter's outlook on the evolution of lyrical poetry as depicted in *The History of the Contemporary Romanian Literature*. ● In 1932, he is appointed associate professor in the Department of Elementary Mathematics and Descriptive Geometry, which arouses his interest in the axiomatic approach to mathematics. He starts publishing a series of 18 courses (almost one every year) accompanied by annexes [3-22], carefully written in terms of phrasing and including many original results. However, some of them were lost, while others were only partly preserved. ● Between 1934-1938, he has numerous contacts with the German mathematicians (resuming the contacts made during his student years and making new ones). He lectures on mathematical subjects abroad and participates in the mathematical congresses in Czechoslovakia (Prague), Germany (Baden-Baden), Austria, The Netherlands and Norway (Oslo). During the legionary regime, he openly manifests his sympathy with them (despite his numerous Jewish friends). ● In 1941, he is appointed professor in the Department of Algebra and, until his death, he focuses almost exclusively on abstract algebra. After the war, he enters a cone of shadow for political and ideological reasons, and goes through a few years of financial difficulties. But he has a comeback, first as a mathematician, when the Romanian Academy Publishing House publishes one of his books in 1956, then as a man of letters, by collaborating in the translation of Shakespeare's complete works and by writing a few circumstantial poems. At this point his literary gift is mainly expressed in prose, in several private conferences in French on Rimbaud and Moreas, and, beginning with 1947, especially in the brilliant evocations of great mathematicians [31]. He dies in Bucharest on 11 August 1961. In 1991, he is elected member of the Romanian Academy post-mortem. ● By 1954, he had published 80 scientific works (his lectures included) and many more were still unpublished. They were collected in three volumes [29], his courses were included in 6 massive volumes [30, 36, 37] beginning with 1967, and many of his average level unpublished mathematical pieces can be found in [35]. His wife's memoirs and his published correspondence [34] shed light on his personality. His poetic work is recovered, beginning with 1964, thanks to Al. Rosetti. M. Coloșenco embarked upon editing a critical edition in 1997, endeavour preceded by the publication of a biography of his youth years.

(L. B.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] *După melci/Snail Catching*, Ed. Luceafărul, București, 1921

[2] *Joc Secund/Secondary Game*, Ed. Cultura Națională, București, 1930

[3] *Curs de matematici elementare și geometrie descriptivă/A Course in Elementary Mathematics and Descriptive Geometry*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1934

[4] *Curs de algebră și trigonometrie/A Course in Algebra and Trigonometry*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1935

[5] *Curs de geometrie proiectivă/A Course in Projective Geometry*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1936

[6] *Curs de geometrie lobacevskyană/A Course in Lobachevskian Geometry*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1937

[7] *Curs de introducere la geometriile neeuclidiene/An Introductory Course in Non-Euclidean Geometries*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1938

[8] *Curs de geometrie descriptivă în formulare invariant-teoretică/A Course in Descriptive Geometry in Invariant-Theoretical Form*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1938

[9] *Curs de geometrie și teoria funcțiilor/A Course in Geometry and the Theory of Functions*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1940

[10] *Curs de matematici generale/A Course in General Mathematics*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1940

[11] *Curs de situarea axiomaticei/A Course of Axiomaties Placement*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1942

[12] *Curs de algebră axiomatică (teoria grupurilor)/A Course in Axiomatic Algebra (the Theory of Groups)*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1945

[13] *Curs de algebră axiomatică (teoria inelelor)/A Course in Axiomatic Algebra (the Theory of Rings)*, Ed. Facultății de Științe, București, 1945

[14] *Curs de teoria lui Galois a ecuațiilor/A Course in Galois' Theory of Equations*, Ed. Facultății de Știine, București, 1946

[15] *Curs de algebră axiomatică/A Course in Axiomatic Algebra*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1949

[16] *Curs de teoria lui Galois a ecuațiilor algebrice (în axiomatizarea lui Steinitz)/A Course in Galois' Theory of Algebraic Equations (in Steinitz's Axiomatic Approach)*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1950

[17] *Curs de axiomatica geometriei/A Course in Geometrical Axioms*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1950

[18] *Curs de teoria numerelor (Teoria multiplicativă a ide-alelor)/A Course in the Theory of Numbers (The Multiplicative Theory of Ideals)*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1950

[19] *Curs de teoria grupurilor și structurilor/A Course in the Theory of Groups and Structures*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1951

[20] *Teoreme de descompunere transfinite în structuri/ Theorems of Transfinite Decomposition in Structures*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1951

[21] *Curs de teoria numerelor în sisteme ipercomplexe/A Course in the Theory of Numbers in Hyper-complex Systems*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1954

[22] *Îndrumar metodic al cursului de geometrie/ Methodological Guide to the Geometry Course*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1954

[23] *Curs de teoria numerelor (Aritmetica în corpurile de numere algebrice)/A Course in the Theory of Numbers (Arithmetics in Algebraic Number Bodiess)*, Ed. Facultății de Matematică și Fizică, București, 1955

[24] *Teoria aritmetică a idealelor (în inele necomunicative)/ The Arithmetic Theory of Ideals (in Non-communicative Rings)*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1956

[25] *Grupuri de operatori (Teoremele de descompunere ale algebrei)/Operator Groups (The Decomposition Theorems of Algebra)*, Ed. Academiei, București, 1960

[26] *Ochean/Spy Glass* (edited by Al. Rosetti and L. Călin), Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1964

[27] *Joc secund/Secondary Game* (edited by Al. Rosetti and L. Călin), Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1966

[28] *După melci/Snail Catching* (edited by C. Baltazar), Ed. Tineretului, București, 1967

[29] *Opera matematică/Mathematical Works* (Edited by G. Vrânceanu, P. Mocanu), Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, București, vol. 1: *Geometrie/Geometry*, 1967; vol. 2: *Algebră/Algebra*, 1967; vol. 3: *Geometrie. Lucrări cu caracter elementar publicate ca note în diverse reviste/Geometry. Elementary articles published as notes in various reviews*, 1970

[30] *Opera didactică/Didactic Works* (edited by N.N. Mihaileanu), Ed. Tehnică, București, vol. 1: *Geometrie elementară/Elementary Geometry* ([3]), 1967; vol. 2: *Algebră elementară/Elementary Algebra* ([4], [7], [10]), 1971; vol. 3: *Cursuri speciale de geometrie/Special Courses in Geometry* ([9], [17], [11], [8]), 1974

[31] *Pagini de proză/Prose Pages* (edited by D. Pillat), Editura pentru Literatură, București, 1968

[32] *Versuri și proză/Poetry and Prose* (edited by D. Pillat), Ed. Minerva, the "Biblioteca pentru Toți" collection, București, 1970

[33] *Poezii/Poems* [Poems from periodicals, Circumstantial poems, Snail Catching, Secondary Game, Translations, Various texts in prose], (edited by R. Vulpescu), Ed. Albatros, 1970

[34] *Ion Barbu în corespondență/Ion Barbu in Correspondence* (edited by G. Barbilian, N. Scurtu), Ed. Minerva, București, 1982

[35] *Pagini inedite/Unpublished pages*, Ed. Albatros, București, vol. 1 (edited by G. Barbilian, V. Protopopescu, V.-Gh. Vodă), 1984; vol. 2 (edited by G. Barbilian, V.-Gh. Vodă), 1986

[36] *Algebră/Algebra* ([16], [22], [19], [21]) (edited by H. Pop), Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1985

[37] *Algebră axiomatică* (edited by H. Pop), vol. 1 ([12], [13]), vol. 2 ([14]), Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1988

[38] *Opere/Writings* (edited by M. Coloşenco), Ed. Echinox, Cluj-Napoca, vol. 1: *După melci, Joc secund/Snail Catching, Secondary Game*, 1997; vol. 2: *Versuri parnasiene și de circumstanță, laude și satire amicale/ Parnassian and Circumstantial Poems*, Eulogies and Friendly Satires, 1999

(L. B.)