

THE STATUS OF THE ROMANIAN LITERARY AVANT-GARDE AFTER 2000: FROM MARGINALIZATION TO RECOVERY

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Abstract

The present paper proposes a theoretical approach related to the critical reception of the Romanian literary avant-garde after 2000, a literary phenomenon in-between marginalization and recovery tendencies. Starting from interwar critical studies from Romania (E. Lovinescu, G. Călinescu, etc.), with predominantly negative perspectives regarding the critical reception of the avant-garde, we will observe how certain clichés of the reception of the phenomenon, seen as “extremist”, as marginal, were perpetuated, with the “barrier” of the apparently impossible literary canonization. After 2000, however, literary studies discuss the historicization of the avant-garde phenomenon, which therefore became canonical in Romanian literary history. However, several elements of the “niche” avant-garde remained in the subsidiary, in the “shadow”. This is what we call the marginal(ized), the secondary avant-garde, which includes a series of less known and researched avant-garde writers, but who contributed to the complex shaping of the avant-garde imaginary.

We will analyse several types of works published after 2000, in order to highlight the complexity of the avant-garde, under constant recovery: literary anthologies (Ion Pop, Nicolae Bârna), avant-garde dictionaries (Lucian Pricop, Dan Grigorescu), several critical studies after 2000 (Ion Bogdan Lefter, Ovidiu Morar, Emilia Drogoreanu, Paul Cernat, Dan Gulea, Emanuel Modoc, Delia Ungureanu, Daniel Clinci, Petre Răileanu, Gabriela Glăvan, Ion Pop, etc.). Many of them focus on the recovery trends of some forgotten writers, with the possibility of their inclusion in the central, canonical avant-garde, while other studies pursue new research methodologies, such as the avant-garde seen in a transnational context, in world literature context, etc.

An issue that we develop in the context of this extended future research, which is also highlighted upon in the present work, is that of post-Urmuz epigonism within Romanian literary avant-garde, a fact that explains the placement of many writers in the sphere of critical marginalization. Thus, many texts by less researched writers are forgotten, being always associated with the central avant-garde models, especially Urmuz, but also Tristan Tzara or other influential writers within the central avant-garde groups. It is precisely this problem that made us analyse the way in which the writers who are part of the marginal dimension of the avant-garde are recovered through contemporary literary studies from Romania.

Keywords: Romanian avant-garde literature; marginal(ized) avant-garde; literary studies; literary canon; literary influences.

1. Introduction and research context. The critical reception of Romanian avant-garde literature before 2000s

The presence of Romanian literary studies dedicated to central avant-garde writers, up to 2000, makes us wonder if the avant-garde phenomenon from Romania also consists of other writers who are less or not even valued at all. One may question if marginal(ized) writers contributed as well to the nuance of the avant-garde imaginary, by “promoting” the phenomenon’s ideals and, moreover, a modern vision. The complexity of Romanian avant-garde literature in a European context resides in the generous critical reception it had after the

2000s, which may be analysed from different perspectives: either from the perspective of the legitimacy of Romanian avant-garde in the context of the interwar period or observed through the prism of new methodologies such as *world literature*. What interests us is the pursuit of Romanian literary studies that attempt to recover some lesser-known Romanian avant-garde writers, because of the major influences that certain “central” representatives, influential members of the European avant-garde, had on the marginal(ized) writers.

This paper aims to trace the way in which the Romanian literary avant-garde, especially the “marginal”, the “secondary” one, was received after the 2000s, through the appearance of important studies in this regard. However, although it is not the subject of our paper, we cannot help but refer to the situation before the 2000s, with the appearance, since the 1960s of important studies dedicated to the Romanian avant-garde. We can mention some important studies from the second part of the 20th century related to Romanian avant-garde literature, including studies such as Ion Pop (1969), Matei Călinescu (1970, 1972/2002/2017, 1996/2005), Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu (1972), Adrian Marino (1973), Marin Mincu (1983/1999/2006), Eugen Simion (1984), Mircea Scarlat (1986). Before these relevant studies, several articles discussed about European and Romanian avant-garde starting with Mihail Drăgănescu (1909), Cezar Petrescu (1925), Mihail Sebastian (1927), Mihail Dragomirescu (1931). During the 1930s, the years in which the Romanian literary avant-garde took shape, hostile critical receptions of the avant-garde prevailed through works of E. Lovinescu (1926-1929), Vladimir Streinu (1927, 1940, 1977), Pompiliu Constantinescu (1931, 1971, 1972), Constantin I. Emilian (through the first doctoral thesis about the anarchism of avant-garde writers, *Anarhismul poetic*, 1932), Șerban Cioculescu (1934, 1942, 1972), Radu Gyr (1937), G. Călinescu (1939, 1941, 1968, 1974, 1979, 1982, 1998, 2003), etc.

2. Methods, corpus, concepts

The problem identified in these first studies is closely related to the issue of the central literary canon, so that the avant-garde, itself a marginal(ized) phenomenon in the interwar period, presents its own canon within its own system, in which we distinguish a *central avant-garde*, the writers with a strong sphere of influence, especially within the avant-garde groups, respectively a *secondary avant-garde*, marginalized within its own system, formed of the lesser-known writers. The studies before 2000s preponderantly focused on the main, central writers of the avant-garde, drawing attention to discussions related to identity, to the marginalization of writers from anti-Semitic stakes, which is why Jewish avant-garde writers were often not discussed or not included in avant-garde anthologies and the central literary histories of Romanian literature. More information regarding identity and ideological influences of Jewish writers has been gathered by Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, in *Evreii în Mișcarea de Avangardă Românească* [Jews in the Romanian Avant-Garde Movement], 2001 and Ovidiu Morar, in *Scritori Evrei din România* [Jewish Writers from Romania], 2014, extremely relevant studies for researchers preoccupied by the main causes for which Romanian avant-garde has been perceived as a marginalized phenomenon.

Consequently, the evolution of Romanian avant-garde literature was mostly influenced by the ideological context, from marginalization in the interwar period to acceptance and revalidation starting with the communist period, ending up to canonization after 1990. We aim to highlight the critical reception of avant-garde literature in Romanian literary studies after 2000, reception which encapsulates the importance of lesser-known avant-garde writers. Through this systematic analysis and theoretical overview, we will be focusing on some relevant studies after 2000, about Romanian literary avant-garde, in order to draw attention upon new perspectives on avant-garde.

After the 1990s, respectively 2000s, literary studies focus on those writers that remained marginal(ized) in the literary studies of the 1960s, influenced by an ideological context, but also about the reception of the avant-garde itself as a phenomenon. The need to recover the avant-garde literary phenomenon from Romania was realized by the appearance of different types of works. New avant-garde anthologies appear, continuing the efforts of Sașa Pană (1969): Marin Mincu (1983, 1999, 2006), Gabriela Duda (1997), Ion Pop (2016), Nicolae Bârna (2017). Moreover, lexicographic works that primarily focus on the avant-garde phenomenon, after 2000, such as the avant-garde dictionaries compiled by Lucian Pricop (2003), respectively Dan Grigorescu (2003, 2005). Above all, we also mention recent studies, after 2000, that address the complexity of the avant-garde phenomenon from Romania, such as those of Ion Bogdan Lefter, Ovidiu Morar, Emilia Drogoreanu, Paul Cernat, Dan Gulea, Andrei Terian, Emanuel Modoc, Delia Ungureanu, Daniel Clinci, Petre Răileanu, Gabriela Glăvan, the journal *Caietele Avangardei* [The Notebooks of the Avant-Garde] (under the coordination of Ion Pop), all these highlighting the complexity of the approaches regarding the avant-garde phenomenon, but also its topicality, which can still be explored in the contemporary period.

In this paper, we will consider carrying out a *literature review* on the studies dedicated to the Romanian literary avant-garde, studies which appeared after 2000, noting how they propose new ways of approaching this phenomenon. Through this, we aim to outline an overview on the recent and contemporary critical reception of Romanian avant-garde literature. Thus, Ion Bogdan Lefter (2000) analyses (retrospectively) the possibility of having a central, “major” avant-garde, like the one West European one, if the interwar critical reception had not anchored the Romanian avant-garde in marginality (through critical discourses of E. Lovinescu or G. Călinescu), thus setting up a ‘(missed) chance to have had an avant-garde’ (Lefter, 2000, p. 82, our translation)¹.

3. Romanian avant-garde literature in dictionaries

Lexicographical works after the 2000s aim to define and characterize this literary phenomenon in its complexity, recording a rich representation of avant-garde artists, magazines, movements, etc. On one hand, the general definition of the term *avant-garde* in Lucian Pricop’s dictionary (2003) relies on the idea of rejecting the traditional canon and the academic art. The succinct definition offered by Lucian Pricop is reinforced, however, by other lexicographical references belonging to Irina Petraș (1992), Elena Zaharia-Filipaș (also a dictionary article from *Dicționar de Literatură Română* [Dictionary of Romanian Literature], coordinated by Dim. Păcuraru, 1979), respectively Ion Hangiu (1996), thus shaping a broad picture of Romanian avant-garde, based on ideas such as: the spirit of the frond, the denial of established art, the new art, etc. (Pricop, 2003, p. 17). On the other hand, Dan Grigorescu’s dictionary (2003, 2005) turns out to be of greater complexity, the included articles highlighting the syncretic manifestation of the avant-garde at the international level, but also presenting elements “in the vicinity” of the avant-garde, located either in the period preceding the outbreak of the international avant-gardes, or in their extension. Dan Grigorescu’s approach will also trace the history of the term *avant-garde*, a term with a military meaning: ‘shock troop, combativeness, attack launched before the rest of the army starts the fight’ (Grigorescu, 2005, p. V, our translation)², as also highlighted in Richard Kostelanetz’s *A Dictionary of the Avant-Gardes* (2nd ed., 2000).

¹ Original text: “Șansă (ratată) de a avea o avangardă”.

² Original text: “Trupă de șoc, combativitate, atac declanșat înainte ca restul oștirii să înceapă lupta”.

4. Reception of Romanian avant-garde in literary studies after 2000

Regarding the literary studies of Ovidiu Morar (2003, 2005, 2014, 2015), the exegete relies on the analysis of the reduced critical reception of Romanian avant-garde, based on different causes that are not only aesthetic in the first half of the 20th century, but also on the contemporary tendencies to approach the (syncretic) avant-garde under new research methodologies, focusing also on the texts of certain “forgotten” writers (Morar, 2005, pp. 23-24), promoting scientific events about literary avant-garde, the activity of the Romanian and European Avant-Garde Research Institute, etc. Ovidiu Morar’s observations regarding avant-garde literature, contextually related to the period in which it appeared in Romania, highlight the social marginalization of this phenomenon:

The explanations for the appearance of autochthonous avant-garde must first be sought not in a break of the nature of the one invoked by Mario De Micheli, but in a state of exasperation caused by marginalization, even social ostracism, combined with cloistering in a traditionalist, exclusivist environment, with very severe norms and taboos (Morar, 2005, p. 39, our translation)³.

In *Avatarurile Suprarealismului Românesc* [The Avatars of Romanian Surrealism], 2003, Ovidiu Morar focuses on the surrealist movement within the avant-garde, distinguishing several stages in evolution (Morar, 2003, p. 10): from an early phase of avant-garde and surrealism after the First World War and at the time of the appearance of the first avant-garde magazines Romania, to a phase of surrealism around the Second World War, respectively a post-war phase, the activity of the Romanian Surrealist Group. Based on Morar’s study, it is worth noting the attention paid to certain “marginal”, “epigonic” names of Romanian avant-garde literature, including Moldov, Aurel Zaremba, Raul Iulian, Felix Brunea-Fox, Grigore Cugler, Tașcu Gheorghiu, Virgil Gheorghiu, etc., but also the attention directed to less known avant-garde magazines, evoked in recent literary studies that focus on Romanian avant-garde. Thus, Ovidiu Morar explains how certain writers are perceived as being under the influence of certain “central” models that provided writing “formulas” (Morar, 2003, p. 136), including those of Tristan Tzara or Urmuz. Thus, one of the merits of Morar’s study is the analysis of elements and patterns that are similar to Urmuz’s literary discourse, identified in other writers’ texts (both “marginal” or epigonic writers and “central” ones such as Geo Bogza). Ovidiu Morar’s study is fundamental for theorizing the existence of “central” models, “hyper canonized” figures of Romanian avant-garde, mythicized figures, or, as the exegete calls them, ‘sacrosanct, quasi-mythical models’ (Morar, 2003, p. 334, our translation)⁴, in relation to which certain connections, textual similarities and continuities of vision will be established. All these tendencies to assimilate central models may represent the necessity to overcome a complex of marginalization, a desire for legitimacy and external recognition.

A critical positioning in relation to the interwar reception of the avant-garde is found in Emilia Drogoreanu’s study (2004). The exegete analyses the avant-garde from the perspective of influences, taking, as a representative case, the Romanian avant-garde and the influences of Italian futurism, more precisely the way in which ideas of futurism, at the level of the European context, are propagated as echoes within the autochthonous avant-garde. In

³ Original text: “Explicațiile apariției avangardismului autohton trebuie căutate mai întâi nu într-o ruptură de natura celei invocate de Mario De Micheli, ci într-o stare de exasperare cauzată de marginalizarea, chiar ostracizarea în plan social, coroborată cu claustrarea într-un mediu tradiționalist, exclusivist, cu norme și tabuuri foarte severe”.

⁴ Original text: “Modele sacrosancte, quasi-mitice”.

relation to the analysis of the interwar reception, Emilia Drogoreanu notes several reasons why the avant-garde was poorly received by the conventional literary critics from Romania:

The error of historical-literary consideration of modernism [...] that of placing the avant-garde in a marginal position in the field of literature of the moment, far from the center which was considered to be the modernism. Everything that was not part of the central zone, in this case, the productions of what was later called moderate modernism, was rejected by critics from the literary canon of the era, under the accusation of extremism (the case of avant-garde) (Drogoreanu, 2004, p. 22, our translation)⁵.

Because of the existence of a traditional interwar literary canon, avant-garde literature could not receive much attention; in relation to the center of interwar literature, the avant-garde, with its writers, was marginalized:

In interwar Romanian literature, the literary criticism of the time established a literary canon, within which the avant-garde was effectively marginalized, compared to other trends, and in the history of literature, passed to the chapter *Curente extremiste*, to quote a symptomatic case, one of the most illustrative (Drogoreanu, 2004, p. 75, our translation)⁶,

that of E. Lovinescu, one of the Romanian literary critics with “authority”.

The literary studies of Dan Gulea (2007, 2016) and Paul Cernat (2007, 2018) are also representative for the “niche” topic of marginal(ized) avant-garde. Dan Gulea’s (quasi)exhaustive and well-synthesized study from 2007, *Domni, Tovarăși, Camarazi: O Evoluție a Avangardei Române* [Gentlemen, Partners, and Comrades: An Evolution of the Romanian Avant-Garde], deals with the evolution of critical reception of the Romanian avant-garde literature, balancing the first hostile critical perspectives with the positive approaches that value the phenomenon. The exegete analyses several critical proletarian discourses dedicated to the avant-garde, but also highlights the steps of its historicization, following the appearance of the first critical aesthetic studies in the context of ideological liberalization, in the 60s. The thorough analysis of the evolution of reception also includes a focus on less researched writers, such as Victor Valeriu Martinescu, Jacques G. Costin, Felix Brunea-Fox, Grigore Cugler, Ionathan X. Uranus, and others. From Dan Gulea’s perspective on the reception of the avant-garde, the “historical” avant-garde does not tend to “destroy”, as conservative critics and representatives of traditionalist groups pointed out, but rather to “build”, as the phenomenon contributed to the nuance of modern Romanian literature (Gulea, 2007, p. 436). Unlike the 2007 study, in *Marginaliile Avangardelor* [The Avant-Gardes Marginalia] (2016), Gulea relies precisely on the research of those innovative aspects of the avant-gardes (such as, for example, Jules Perahim’s book illustration), which were not so known to readers and critics. In Gulea’s conception (2016), the avant-garde is not strictly limited to the year 1947, taken as a landmark for the delimitation of the historicized avant-garde, but presents reverberations even after this year, since the avant-garde can constantly (re)define itself, by opposing a dominant cultural and literary field.

⁵ Original text: “Eroarea de încadrare istorico-literară a modernismului [...] aceea de a plasa avangarda într-o poziție marginală în câmpul literaturii momentului, departe de centrul acestuia, care a fost identificat cu modernismul. Tot ceea ce nu făcea parte din zona centrală, în speță, din producțiile a ceea ce s-a numit mai târziu modernism moderat, a fost respins de critică din canonul literar al epocii, sub acuzația de extremism (cazul avangardei)”.

⁶ Original text: “În literatura română interbelică, critica literară a vremii a stabilit un canon literar, în interiorul căruia avangarda a fost efectiv marginalizată, în comparație cu alte tendințe, iar în istoria literaturii, trecută la capitolul *Curente extremiste*, ca să cităm un caz simptomatic, unul dintre cele mai ilustrative”.

One of the most complex studies that substantiates our approach belongs to Paul Cernat (2007), who aims to recover the insufficiently discussed avant-garde writers and their texts, by analysing the *periphery complex* of the first avant-garde wave (1908-1930), and the need for internal and external legitimation of the phenomenon. What interests us is the theoretical aspect related to the legitimacy of the avant-garde (which hides certain identity stakes), in order to understand whether the fixation of Urmuz as a central model and of the writers “in the shadow” of the model is valid, or we are talking about false epigonism in the case of the marginal(ized) writers. Cernat’s approach also aims to recover some unjustly ignored personalities, anchored in the marginal dimension of the avant-garde phenomenon, such as Alexandru Bogdan-Pitești or the writer Jacques G. Costin. The literary critic also configures an ample dossier of reception of Urmuz from the period 1923-1989, important in order to understand the way in which Urmuz is still discussed in contemporaneity, through the label of the “hyper canonized” figure. The *periphery complex* highlights the

pure models from the Center (symbolism, decadentism, avant-garde, surrealism) which are assimilated to the Periphery in ‘weak’, diluted, hybrid, eclectic forms. The isolated cases of perfect synchronization (Brâncuși, Tzara, later Eugène Ionesco, Isidore Isou) are explained by the fact that their innovative action manifested itself at the ‘Center’ (in Paris or elsewhere), not in the Romanian ‘province’ (Cernat, 2007, p. 10, our translation)⁷.

An aspect of the avant-garde that often remains anchored in marginalization or even total ignorance is represented by the feminine affirmation in the context of the dominantly masculinized world of the avant-garde (through, for example, Milița Pătrașcu, Tana Qvil, Dida Solomon Callimachi, Filip Corsa, Merica Râmnicănu, Madda Holda, etc.). Cernat (2007, 2018) makes certain observations in relation to this side of the avant-garde, specifying that research directed at the feminine affirmations in the avant-garde movements is absent in the field of Romanian literary studies. Moreover, Cernat records several less unknown writers, considered “minor” avant-garde writers, such as Romulus Dianu, Sergiu Dan, Filip Corsa, Al. Tudor-Miu, and focuses on Ionathan X. Uranus, Grigore Cugler, Victor Valeriu Martinescu, etc. It is precisely through these approaches of Paul Cernat that we notice the idea of the marginalized avant-garde, which feels an acute peripheral complex (Cernat, 2007, p. 142), for which it is necessary to recover avant-garde precursors, those who become models and who directly or indirectly influence other avant-garde writers.

The 1930s represented the time when Romanian avant-garde tried to assert itself in Europe through various events: the invitation of certain representatives of the European avant-garde to Romania, the publication of many of their texts in Romanian magazines, the organization of international exhibitions, the publication of “Contimporanul” report in no. 100 from 1931, in which the entire activity of the last decade was summarized, the exposition of some programmatic texts through which the forerunners of the avant-garde were claimed, such as Urmuz. It is, thus, about the desire to affirm the identity and culture of the Romanian periphery in a European context, ‘the edges of peripheral frustrations’ (Cernat, 2007, p. 205, our translation)⁸.

Following the reception of avant-garde over time, starting from the interwar period towards the ideological recoveries under the totalitarian regime, until the moment when it

⁷ Original text: “Modelele ‘pure’ de la Centru (simbolism, decadentism, avangarde, suprarealism) care sunt asimilate la Periferie în forme ‘slabe’, diluate, hibride, eclecticice. Cazurile izolate de sincronizare perfectă (Brâncuși, Tzara, mai târziu Eugène Ionesco, Isidore Isou) se explică prin faptul că acțiunea lor novatoare s-a manifestat chiar la ‘Centru’ (la Paris sau aiurea), nu în ‘provincia’ românească”.

⁸ Original text: “Marginile frustrărilor periferice”.

evolves towards “formula”, towards “classicization”, “historicization”, the canonization of avant-garde is possible, through its post-war recovery:

The recovery of the historical avant-garde in the critical canon in post-war Romania was in fact due to the "taming" of its denying, contesting, subversive potential, under the pressure of external approval: 1) through the historicization offered by temporal distance and the creative assimilation of the model within the new aesthetic movements; 2) by emphasizing the aesthetic, integrative, moderate character in relation to the iconoclastic radicalism of similar movements in Europe; 3) by speculating on the anti-bourgeois, Marxist, progressive character of its militants; 4) by claiming the international and absolute precursor role of artists of Romanian origin (Urmuz – considered an anticipator of surrealism, Dadaism and the absurdist literature, Brâncuși – founder of abstract art, Tzara – pioneer of Dadaism, alongside Hugo Ball, Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck and Marcel Iancu, M.H. Maxy – initiator, in 1924, of plastic spectralism, E. Ionesco – creator, together with Samuel Beckett, of the theatre of ridicule and the absurd, Isidore Isou – inventor of lettrism), part of the autochthonous cultural heritage. Minimized, ignored or rejected at the beginning, often perceived as lacking “roots”, and hostile to local tradition, forced – by the desire for international recognition or for reasons of political or, as the case may be, ethnic persecution – to expatriate, some of them became, in retrospect, reasons for national pride thanks to external success (Cernat, 2007, p. 395, our translation)⁹.

Such an observation is related to the fact that there are influential, central writers of the avant garde that could have an impact on the subsequent evolution of the phenomenon. Thus, through a case like Urmuz, many writers have remained in oblivion through the constant critical reception achieved in relation to the “model” of influence. Paul Cernat’s perspective highlights the fact that the claim of Urmuz as a precursor can represent an approach of identity “exacerbation”, of ‘identity representation’ (Cernat, 2007, p. 399, our translation)¹⁰, motivated by the complex of the periphery and the need for (inter)national recognition. Thus, one may question whether we are discussing about the phenomenon of false epigonism regarding writers such as Grigore Cugler, Ionathan X. Uranus, Madda Holda. Moreover, the Romanian avant-garde, which suffers from a “Romanian complex of belatedness and cultural marginality” (Spiridon, Gutthy & Jerzak, 2006, p. 430), tends to become, in turn, a model for European centrality, especially through the achievements of a writer (and a cultural animator) like Tristan Tzara. In this sense, we deduce that literary critics were influenced by the central models of the avant-garde when analysing the literary works of some writers from the 1930s.

5. The popularization of Romanian avant-garde literature after 2010s. Monographies, anthologies, and new approaches in literary studies

⁹ Original text: “Recuperarea avangardei istorice în canonul critic din România postbelică s-a datorat în fapt ‘domesticirii’ potențialului ei negator, contestatar, subversiv, sub presiunea omologării externe: 1) prin istoricizarea oferită de distanța temporală și de asimilarea creatoare a modelului în cadrul noilor curente estetice; 2) prin sublinierea caracterului estetic, integrator, moderat în raport cu radicalismul iconoclast al mișcărilor similare din Europa; 3) prin specularea caracterului antiburghez, marxist, progresist al militanților acesteia; 4) prin revendicarea caracterului de precursori internaționali și absoluți ai unor artiști de origine română (Urmuz – considerat anticipator al suprarealismului, al dadaismului și al literaturii absurduului, Brâncuși – întemeietor al artei abstracte, Tzara – pionier al Dadaismului, alături de Hugo Ball, Hans Arp, Richard Huelsenbeck și Marcel Iancu, M.H. Maxy – inițiator, în 1924, al spectralismului plastic, E. Ionesco – creator, alături de Samuel Beckett, al teatrului deriziunii și al absurduului, Isidore Isou – inventator al lettrismului) anexați patrimoniului cultural autohton. Minimalizați, ignorați sau respinși la început, percepuți adeseori drept lipsiți de ‘rădăcini’ și ostili tradiției locale, nevoiți – din dorință de recunoaștere internațională ori din motive de persecuție politică sau, după caz, etnică – să se expatrieze, unii dintre ei au devenit, retrospectiv, motive de orgoliu național grație succesului extern”.

¹⁰ Own translation from Romanian: “Reprezentare ‘identitară’”.

In 2000s, but mostly after 2010, several studies and monographies focusing on the marginal aspect of the avant-garde appear, but also studies who put the avant-garde in relation to other cultural and literar phenomena. We mention studies such as Marian Victor Buciu's *Avangarda și Neoavangarda în Literatura Română* [Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde in Romanian Literature] (2006) or Cristian-Robert Velescu's *Victor Brauner d'après Duchamp, sau, Drumul Pictorului către un Suprarealism "Bine Temperat"* [Victor Brauner After Duchamp, or, The Painter's Path Towards A "Well-Tempered" Surrealism], 2007. Even more recently, the importance of several studies highlights the international visibility of the phenomenon, as avant-garde is indeed an international movement, here mentioning, for instance, Alexandra Chiriac's *Performing Modernism: A Jewish Avant-Garde in Bucharest* (2022) or, at an international level, Monique Yaari's «*Infra-Noir*», *un et Multiple: Un Groupe Surréaliste Entre Bucarest et Paris, 1945-1947* ["Infra-Noir", One and Multiple: A Surrealist Group Between Bucharest and Paris, 1945-1947], 2014, etc.

After 2010, avant-garde is reconsidered in literary studies from the perspective that identifies it as the "core" of postmodernity, as in the case of Daniel Clinci's study (2014), in which the avant-garde represents a bridge between modernity and postmodernity. The exegete refers to the fundamental theoretical studies in the field in order to (re)define avant-garde, namely Renato Poggioli (1968) and Peter Bürger (1974), establishing that the avant-garde suffered a failure through the process of "museification" (Bürger, 2010, p. 701). Clinci adds that the success of the avant-garde was represented by its possibility to evolve to postmodernism. Moreover, the exegete notes and analyses the existence of *a crisis of the legitimacy of the avant-garde*, as we could also observe in the case of Paul Cernat's study (2007): the avant-garde movements appear in a

modern culture of crisis. What is specific to this crisis is the fact that we are discussing about a crisis of legitimacy, which the avant-garde did not begin to solve, but to amplify, being engaged in the effort against the autonomy of the literary field (Clinci, 2014, p. 175, our translation)¹¹.

The fact that there are avant-garde anthologies even after 2010 suggests the complexity of the phenomenon, which can hardly be contained by a limited corpus of texts, especially after the 40s, when the influences of the avant-garde were stronger, identified up to postmodernity. However, most of the marginal avant-garde writers are not identified in these anthologies, the selection criteria of the texts being diverse: from "relevance" to the attempt to record all avant-garde writers, as in the case of Sașa Pană's anthology (1969). We also note the presence of a high interest in the creation of corpora containing avant-garde texts and the compilation of avant-garde anthologies: Ion Pop (2016), Nicolae Bârna (2017). Ion Pop (2016) records in his anthology the presence of several critical studies that appeared after 2000, specifically dedicated to less researched parts of the avant-garde movements, among which we specify: Simona Popescu's doctoral study (2000) on Gellu Naum, published in 2015 as *Autorul, un Personaj* [The Author, a Character], the Urmuz monographic work by Adrian Lăcătuș (2002), Radu I. Petrescu's study on B. Fundoianu's works *Privirea Medusei: Poezia lui B. Fundoianu/Benjamin Fondane* [The Gaze of Medusa: The Poetry of B. Fundoianu/Benjamin Fondane], 2003, Balázs Imre József with *Avangarda în Literatura Maghiară din România* [Avant-Garde in Hungarian Literature from Romania], 2009, Tom Sandqvist's study (2006, 2010) on Dadaism, a study dedicated to the surrealist writer D.

¹¹ Original text: "Cultură modernă a crizei. Ceea ce îi este specific acestei crize este faptul că discutăm despre o criză a legitimității, pe care avangardele nu au început să o rezolve, ci să o amplifice, angajate în efortul împotriva autonomiei câmpului literar".

Trost, by Michael Finkenthal (2013), the forewords written by Paul Cernat (2010) and Vasile Spiridon (2011) for the volumes that contain Geo Bogza's and Gellu Naum's texts. Worthy of mention, in addition to these contributions also targeted by Ion Pop, there are several studies directed at Dadaism and, implicitly, at Tristan Tzara: Andrei Codrescu, *The Posthuman Dada Guide* (2009), Marius Hentea, *TaTa DADA: The Real Life and Celestial Adventures of Tristan Tzara* (2014), Cristian-Robert Velescu, *Avant-Gardes et Modernités: Brâncuși, Duchamp, Brauner, Voronca, Tzara & comp.* (2013), Petre Răileanu, *DADA în Direct, Rrmat de Tristan Tzara, Schiță de Portret* [DADA Live, Followed by Tristan Tzara, Portrait Sketch], 2016, etc.

Regarding Bârna's anthology (2017), in the introductory part, several concepts specific to the avant-garde are theorized, thus configuring a broad picture of avant-garde features, among which we mention: the radical character, the innovative character, the preference for surprise, for the show, the performance, violence, revolution, rejection of the canon (traditional, academic), demolition, denial, contestation, insurgency, freedom, anti-classical character, anti-traditional, anti-academic, anti-bourgeois, anti-philistine, anti-official, anti-authoritarian, militancy, language deconstruction, the shock, spontaneity, authenticity, manifesto, syncretism, internationalism, absurdity, interinfluences, etc. (Bârna, 2017, pp. 11-14). The discussion about the avant-garde that does not rely on the establishment of a canon and the imposition of a "formula" also occurs in Bârna's observations. Thus, the existence of "literary recipes" represents the fixation of some noticeable avant-garde "models" within each Romanian avant-garde group, represented by talented and original writers, who (in)directly influence those more or less related to those avant-garde groups. The question is how we distinguish the writers influenced within the avant-garde groups from those who did not join any group, those writers who wrote individually, more or less isolated from avant-garde groups, such as Grigore Cugler, Jonathan X. Uranus or Madda Holda. In this sense, Bârna mentions:

There were great artists and writers who, without having explicitly joined the avant-garde – and without being considered, by literary history, as proper representatives of it –, radically renewed the field they were part of, and they did it (sometimes) in the way that the *militant* avant-garde predicted (Bârna, 2017, p. 12, our translation)¹².

We also identify the emphasis on *singular* modern and avant-garde writers in Gabriela Glăvan's study (2014), focused on Urmuz's "singularity" status (Glăvan, 2014, p. 66) within the modern literary canon, and on the identification of "particular modernities" in the texts of some writers such as Grigore Cugler or Horia Bonciu.

Finally, Nicolae Bârna (2017) detects the reception poles of the autochthonous avant-garde: if it is, indeed, marginal, or marginalised, negligible, taken into consideration only by a few avant-garde representatives, or is it, indeed, an important and complex phenomenon. This discussion highlighted by Bârna refers to a series of studies that I mentioned, so that either the avant-garde is seen as an "exaggeratedly" important phenomenon, with the aim of asserting autochthonism at the same level as the West European "world" (suggestion of "protochronist" impulses, as Bârna also specifies), or the literary avant-garde from Romania, historicized phenomenon, is still

¹² Original text: "Au existat mari artiști și scriitori care, fără să se fi raliat explicit avangardei – și fără ca să fie considerați, de istoria literară, ca reprezentanți propriu-ziși ai acesteia –, au înnoit radical domeniul în care s-au manifestat, și au făcut-o (uneori) în felul pe care îl preconiza avangarda *militantă*".

minimized, being evoked and researched only out of polite obligation, but basically considered more marginal and more ‘enclaved’ than it was, and that precisely from the desire to avoid the accusation of national cultural narcissism, of ‘protochronism’, or from who knows what negative idiosyncrasies, etc. (Bârna, 2017, p. 23, our translation)¹³.

Ion Pop’s monographic study (1990, 2007, 2017), *Avangarda în Literatura Română* [Avant-garde in Romanian Literature], offers a detailed approach on the Romanian avant-garde waves, groups, and the movements contained within them (including the representative writers, along with those in the vicinity of the avant-garde). In his opinion, the avant-garde presents as fundamental features the rupture, the negation, the renewal of language, the revolt, the refusal of convention, the cultivation of marginality, the focus on novelty, spontaneity, the absolute freedom, etc. (Pop, 2017, pp. 5-8), all these traits shading the avant-garde “mood” that the writers particularly assimilate.

After analysing the critical reception of the avant-garde in the interwar period, Ion Pop considers that the pressure of the official literary canon determined the marginalization of “deviant phenomena”, this meaning that the avant-garde, in order to be (re)considered and to be restored from marginalization, it had to undergo an evolution towards a “formula” (Pop 2017: 477), a “classicization” through which the avant-garde discourse becomes convention. Before entering the official “canon”, the exegete specifies that ‘for most critics, the small avant-garde groups [...] were no more than marginal realities in this space, expressing transient states of crisis’ (Pop, 2017, p. 485, our translation)¹⁴.

Nicolae Manolescu, Petre Răileanu, Mircea Martin, Mihai Zamfir, Eugen Simion represent other important names that focused on the avant-garde movements from Romania, relevant literary studies shaping an evolution of the reception of the avant-garde as a phenomenon between marginalization and recovery. In this context, these literary critics also highlight various prejudicial labels that have been attributed to the avant-garde, placing it in a secondary dimension, marginalized in relation to the central, canonical groups. More recent studies will focus on the recovery side and prepare the ground for new approaches in the direction of dismantling prejudices and myths about the avant-garde.

As for other recent studies, belonging to Delia Ungureanu (2017) or Emanuel Modoc (2020), the avant-garde is traced in the transnational dimension, through approaches in the context of *world literature*, highlighting the interinfluences, or, in Modoc’s terms, the transactions which the various European avant-garde movements had between them, especially in the context of Central and Eastern Europe. Delia Ungureanu also observes the existence of surrealist ideas propagated in a transnational context. These theoretical studies can form the basis of the discussion about the influences of the center on the peripheries and how the periphery, in turn, becomes the center. In the case of Modoc’s study, we encounter a use of the term *margin* associated with the avant-garde, seen rather as *the margin of the margin* (Cornis-Pope 1996: 53), based on observations related to the marginal position of the avant-garde within Romanian literature, doubled by a peripheral position of Romania in Europe. For our analysis, we will be interested in this concept of *double peripheral condition*, of *the margin of the margin*, the avant-garde being ‘marginal both in the national literary system and in the system of the European avant-garde’ (Modoc, 2020, p. 48, our translation)¹⁵. However, Emanuel Modoc identifies several clichés related to how the avant-

¹³ Original text: “Minimalizată, fiind evocată și cercetată doar din obligație politicoasă, dar în fond considerată mai marginală și mai ‘enclavizată’ decât a fost, și asta tocmai din dorința de a evita acuzația de narcisism cultural național, de ‘protochronism’, ori din cine știe ce idiosincrasii negative etc.”

¹⁴ Original text: “Pentru majoritatea criticilor, micile grupări de avangardă [...] nu erau mai mult decât realități marginale în acest spațiu, exprimând stări de criză trecătoare”.

¹⁵ Original text: “Marginală atât în sistemul literar național, cât și într-un sistem al avangardei europene”.

garde has been perceived as “marginal” in some critical studies (Modoc, 2020, p. 145). Romanian avant-garde was undoubtedly related to the European one, as the exegete observes the multitude of echoes, influences and relations with the various modernist movements in West Europe.

Modoc also argues in the concluding chapter of his study that two “clichés” of the Romanian avant-garde, from several critical discourses, persist in contemporaneity: ‘the perfect synchronization with the movements from the West’, and ‘the marginality of the avant-garde phenomenon in the interwar period’ (Modoc, 2020, pp. 218-219, our translation)¹⁶. Regarding this last “cliché”, the exegete refers to the studies of Paul Cernat (2007) and Alex Goldiș (2011), concluding that

if the multiple ‘faces’ of the Romanian avant-garde fluctuate according to the contexts, mutations and evolutions of literary studies specific to each period in which it was re-actualized, this phenomenon happens because the exegetical discourse is unable to relate strictly to the phenomenon, requiring reference to a super-ordinating paradigm (in this case, modernism) [...] The critical discourse recasts the image of the avant-garde according to a dominant paradigm, to place it either in the subsidiary or to use it only by the power of example (Modoc, 2020, p. 220, our translation)¹⁷.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, from the critical reception of the avant-garde, which began in approximately 1909 and with new approaches after 2000, we notice the outline of three stages of reception of the avant-garde: 1. of hostile receptions, in which certain “prejudices” take shape; 2. a transitional stage in which the avant-garde begins to be recovered and more seriously observed; 3. a final stage of recovery and highlighting some dimensions, contexts, marginal areas of the avant-garde, respectively retrospective analysis and critical reporting on previous literary studies that focused on avant-garde literature. The aspect that concerns us goes beyond the fixation of the avant-garde itself as a marginal(ized) phenomenon, in relation to the two canonical literary movements from Romania, modernism and traditionalism. We are interested in the configuration of the marginal dimension of the avant-garde, in relation to the central avant-garde, represented by the “historicized” phenomenon.

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¹⁶ Original text: “Sincronizarea perfectă cu mișcările din Occident”, “Marginalitatea fenomenului avangardist în perioada interbelică”.

¹⁷ Original text: “Dacă ‘fețele’ avangardei românești fluctuează în funcție de contextele, mutațiile și evoluțiile studiilor literare specifice fiecărei perioade în care aceasta a fost reactualizată, acest fenomen se întâmplă pentru că discursul exegetic e incapabil să se raporteze *strict* la fenomen, necesitând raportarea la o paradigmă supra-ordonatoare (în speță, modernismul) [...] Discursul critic reșapează imaginea avangardei în funcție de o paradigmă dominantă, care să o plaseze fie în subsidiar, fie să o folosească doar prin puterea exemplului”.

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