

forest: the reigning right-wing politics of official Hungary, the left-liberal modernism of the periodical *Nyugat* (with which Kassák still had tense, but collegial relations), the socially critical but also nationalistic and sometimes anti-Semitic 'populist' writers, and the ideologically ossifying Hungarian Communist Party. Kassák bravely faced head-on the increasingly conservative and repressive tendencies in the Soviet Union of the 1930s and was sharply critical of writers such as Ilya Ehrenburg, Maxim Gorky, Henri Barbusse, Anna Seghers, and André Gide for their connivance with Stalinist smear-campaigns and falsifications; he openly defended pariah-figures such as Leon Trotsky and Victor Serge. One of the most dramatic instances of Kassák's unflinching political honesty appeared in the November 1936 issue, in which he delivered a blistering denunciation of the silence of the French left-wing writers upon the execution of sixteen 'old Bolsheviks' on 25 August 1936 in the course of the Moscow Show Trials.

Contrasting with this public address was the singular document of mourning and personal grief of *Munka* 63, dedicated to Kassák's wife, the performer Jolán Simon, who committed suicide on 25 September 1938. The issue contained the tributes of friends and fellow writers to Simon, including Kassák's heart-wrenchingly unadorned expression of pain 'Halk kis ballada' (Pale Little Ballad) as well as a beautiful, playful earlier verse by Attila József, who himself had committed suicide ten months before Simon:

Were there a collective craftsman's bench,
It would produce her winter shoes,
Were there a true-hearted billygoat,
It would baa out her many virtues.³⁷

³⁷ 'Ha volna kollektív iparosfa, | téli cipőjét megteremné, | ha volna igazszivű kecske, | az ő dícséretét mekegné.' Attila József, 'Simon Jolán', *Munka*, 63 (1938), 2170.

ROMANIA: 'WINDOWS TOWARD THE WEST': NEW FORMS AND THE 'POETRY OF TRUE LIFE'¹

Revista celor l'alți (1908); *Insula* (1912); *Chemarea* (1912); *Contimporanul* (1922–32); *75 HP* (1924); *Punct* (1924–5); *Integral* (1925–8); *Urmuz* (1925); and *unu* (1928–33)

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From the last decade of the nineteenth century until 1948, when the communist regime took over, the Romanian reading public had access to a lively modernist scene which produced a relatively large number of periodicals, mostly before the mid-1930s, both in the capital, Bucharest, and to a lesser, but still surprisingly large extent, in the provinces. Some of these were ephemeral, lasting no more than a single issue, others endured for years or even a decade. Some magazines were stamped graphically by iconic avant-garde features in layout, typography, drawings and illustrations, while others were more conventional.

Romanian modernism was part and parcel of the country's attempt to 'catch up' to a modernity that was perceived as Western. It played a role in the transformation of taste and in the political and cultural debates about the country's modern history and its future. Modernist literary and art periodicals doubled as venues of social and political critique, and articles on the new architecture also commented on urban squalor and were accompanied by blueprints of recently completed structures. Thus art and politics, life and literature, industry and photography, aesthetic theory and architectural practice were intertwined in the texts and visuals of the

¹ 'Ferestre spre occident' (Windows toward the West) is the title of B. Fundoianu's article in *Contimporanul*, 111 (3 June 1922), 11–12. 'Poetry of True Life' ('poezie a vieții adevărate') is a phrase from 'Poezia pe care vrem să o facem' (The Poetry That We Want to Make'), *Viața imediată* (Immediate Life), 1 (1933), in Gabriela Duda (ed.), *Literatura românească de avangardă* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997), 90. All translations, unless otherwise stated, are the author's own.

Romanian modernist press and in the minds of many European avant-gardists more generally.

When Filippo Tomasso Marinetti visited Romania in 1930, he rode in what he poetically called the 'automobile of the Romanian futurists' ('automobilul futuriștilor români'). The writers and artists of the Romanian avant-garde who hosted him took him to see the out of control fire at the oil fields in Moreni, and he followed up his visit with an essay translated into Romanian for the review *Contemporanul* as 'Incendiul sondei din Moreni' (The Moreni Oil Well Fire)—later there was a poem as well—about this site of industrial modernity. Marinetti described the well's 'spiral beauty' ('frumusețea spiralică'), akin to that of an impossibly tall ballerina dancing wildly, furiously in a 'shower of sparks' and 'girling her boiling hips' ('volutele soldurilor ei ce fierb').²

According to Steven Mansbach, morphologic similarities between Western and Eastern European modern artistic styles may be proof of important connections across the continent, but he points out that they have as often masked important dissimilarities in intention, function, references, reception, context, and meanings. Mansbach argues that 'What has long made the magnitude and merit of modern art from Eastern Europe remote is a general ignorance of the historical, political, and social conditions to which the respective modern movements were a creative response.'³

Take the publication of Marinetti's 'Futurist Manifesto' in Romania (as 'Manifestul Viitorimei') on 20 February 1909. This incendiary text was printed in Romania on the very same date on which it appeared in the Paris daily *Le Figaro*. In fact 20 February in Romania, which then observed the Junian calendar, came thirteen days later than in Paris.⁴ Thus this instance of seemingly perfect synchronization hides dissimilarities in chronology, in context and also in meaning. In Romania, the manifesto was first published in a rather staid fortnightly entitled *Democrația: Revistă politică, economică și literară* (Democracy: Political, Economic, and Literary Magazine) printed not in the capital, but in the southern city of Craiova.⁵

² F. T. Marinetti, 'Incendiul sondei din Moreni', *Contemporanul*, 10:96–8 (Jan. 1931), 2–3. Quoted from the Romanian translation signed by Alexandru Marcu published in *Contemporanul*. The editors' introduction to 'Incendiul sondei' mentions the poem 'L'incendio della sonda' that Marinetti was going to publish 'soon', 2. See also Paul Cernat, *Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei* (Bucharest: Cartea românească, 2007), 174–6.

³ Steven Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe: From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3.

⁴ Mădălina Lascu was the first to question this synchronicity. See 'Craiova, poarta de intrare a avangardei europene pe teritoriul românesc? Noi pecizări privind pătrunderea futurismului în România' (Craiova: A Possible Gateway for the European Avant-Garde in Romania? New Clarifications as to the Penetration of Futurism in Romania), paper presented at the Society for Romanian Studies conference 'Europeanization and Globalization: Romanians in Their Region and the World', Sibiu, Romania, 2–4 July, 2012.

⁵ *Democrația*, 1:19 (20 Feb. 1909), 3–6.

The Romanian version of the manifesto, with its daring, violent, high-strung language, was framed by several counter-elements that subverted its very intent and meaning. The headline in *Democrația*, 'O nouă școală literară' (A New Literary School) appeared above the group of texts, as well as in the table of contents on the review's cover, where F. T. Marinetti and M. Drăgănescu were listed as joint authors. Mihail Drăgănescu was a lawyer and the magazine's editor-in-chief.⁶ The descriptive textbook-like title did much to dampen the shock of the manifesto's imperatives. A portrait of Marinetti reproduced from *Il poeta Marinetti* stood at the top of page 3. It was followed by a brief introduction of 'Mr. F. T. Marinetti', and by a note (printed in italics to suggest written correspondence) 'signed' by Marinetti. The Italian futurist politely asked his correspondent to send him his 'opinion of and total or partial adherence' to Futurism.⁷ The text of the manifesto was thus sandwiched between this courteous front matter and Mihail Drăgănescu's symmetrically polite reply, again in the form of a collegial letter.

The correspondence between Marinetti and Drăgănescu may be understood as part of Marinetti's campaign to launch Futurism. A number of Romanian literati and periodicals subscribed to *Poesia*, the international literary review that Marinetti edited in Milan. *Poesia*, in turn, featured the translated texts of Romanian writers and poets.⁸ Marinetti had sent the Manifesto to Drăgănescu, and to other *Poesia* subscribers around the world before its publication in Paris, thus making possible the coincidence of its appearance on (almost) the same date in 1909 at the two ends of Europe. Futurism and Marinetti's manifesto were also objects of discussion in other Romanian periodicals in 1909, including the official Liberal Party newspaper *Viitorul* (The Future—yet another coincidence), where the symbolist poet Ion Minulescu (who also published a translation of the Manifesto later in 1909) was an editor.⁹

In his response to Marinetti, *Democrația's* editor took issue with several of the extravagant suggestions hurled by the manifesto. Addressing Marinetti with the cordial salutation 'Dear brother' ('scumpe confrate'), which Marinetti had also employed, Drăgănescu nevertheless questioned the 'rather curious points' of the 'inflammable manifesto', which, he said, prevented 'us from wholly agreeing'.¹⁰ He

⁶ Cernat, *Avangarda*, 86.

⁷ 'păreră D-voastră asupra Manifestului Viitorimei și adesiunea D-voastră totală sau parțială'. *Democrația*, 1:19 (20 Feb. 1909), 3. According to Lascu, this was a circular letter. See her 'Craiova, poarta de intrare', op. cit.

⁸ Emilia Drogoreanu, *Influențe ale futurismului italian asupra avangardei românești: Sincronie și specificitate* (Pitești, Bucharest: Paralela 45, 2004), 26, and Adrian Marino, 'Échos futuristes dans la littérature roumaine', in *Littérature roumaine, littératures occidentales: Rencontres* (Bucharest: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1982), 170–4.

⁹ Cernat, *Avangarda*, 86–7.

¹⁰ 'Totuși fiind puncte destul de curioase în manifestul Viitorimei pe cari poezia în general—cred—că nu le poate concepe, noi nu ne putem uni în totul cu ideile cuprinse în incendiabilul vostru manifest'. *Democrația*, 1:19 (20 Feb. 1909), 6.

addressed himself particularly to the furious verbal attack Marinetti unleashed on bourgeois cultural institutions and professionals. 'We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind', item 10 of the Manifesto read. It continued:

For too long has Italy been a dealer in secondhand clothes. We mean to free her from the numberless museums that cover her like so many graveyards.

Museums: cemeteries!... Identical, surely, in the sinister promiscuity of so many bodies unknown to one another....

So let them come the gay incendiaries with charred fingers! Here they are!... Come on! set fire to the library shelves! Turn aside the canals to flood the museums!

... Take up your pickaxes, your axes and hammers, and wreck, wreck the venerable cities, pitilessly!¹¹

Drăgănescu chided Marinetti for not appreciating the cultural riches in which Westerners revelled, and contrasted this plenty with the poverty he saw at home:

You've become bored with your many museums, libraries and antiquities, but we Romanians have almost no museum, almost no library. You have too many professors, too many archeologists, museum guides and antiquaries. We, alas, have almost none, we are a poor young country. Only yesterday rid of the Ottoman and Phanariot yoke, we are [in the process of] taking shape today and we have no art of our own momentous enough to amaze in distant Western countries. Our few brilliant great men journey to your enlightened Western countries... because here they are regarded with vulgar envy and disinterest.

We don't have museumcemeteries [*sic*] because there was nothing for us to bury.... [O]f course, underground may lie many ignored, lost, dispersed historical sources, buried in the darkness of time, which cannot be visited even once a year... so that we may get to know our ancestors and their actions in the cultural, political, and social domain, while you [Westerners] have had enough because you see them too much daily in your museums.¹²

¹¹ 'The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism', trans. by R. W. Flint and Arthur Coppotelli, in R. W. Flint (ed.), *Marinetti: Selected Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 42-3.

¹² 'Voi v' ați plictisit de mulțimea muzeelor, bibliotecilor și anticităților voastre, și noi Românii nu avem aproape nici un muzeu, aproape nici o bibliotecă. Voi aveți prea mulți profesori, prea mulți arheologi, ciceroni și anticari. Noi, vai! aproape nu avem nici unul, suntem o sărmană țară tânără. Abia ieri scăpată de sub jugul Otoman și Fanariot, ne formăm azi și încă nu avem o artă proprie care să sguide până'n departatele voastre țări occidentale. Puținele scânteie strălucitoare ale oamenilor noștri mari ce posedăm, purced prin luminatele voastre țări occidentale... de oarece la noi sunt priviți cu o vulgară invidie și desinteresare.

Noi nu avem muzeecimitire, pentru că nu am avut ce îngropa... De sigur că sub pământul nostru vor zace multe izvoare istorice, ignorate, risipite, pierdute, îngropate de negurile vremurilor îndepărtate și cari nici măcar odată pe an nu pot fi vizitate spre... a ne cunoaște bine strămoșii și acțiunea lor în domeniul cultural, politic sau social, pe când voi vă săturați că prea îi vedeți zilnic în muzeele voastre.' *Democrația*, 1:19 (20 Feb. 1909), 6.

The Futurist Manifesto's appearance in Paris and Craiova almost simultaneously in 1909 might suggest the timely flow of ideas across the East-West divide, but Drăgănescu's accompanying commentary rebuffed Marinetti's call to destruction and cultural nihilism as inappropriate for a young country that had still too little culture to afford its destruction. Even when agreeing with the Italian futurist, the Romanian editor undermined the Manifesto's flamboyance and totalizing stance. While he rejected sentimentality and joined Marinetti in praising nationalism, Drăgănescu's notion of nationalism differed radically from the Italian's: 'We don't want tears of pain, we want energy and daring... We too want action [and] movement', he writes. But he continues with an explanation that turns Marinetti's aggression into a sweet proclamation of ethnic and spiritual kinship: '... in order to follow you, since we oriental Latins are of one blood with you western Latins, our origin stems from Rome, we love our people because we love patriotism.'¹³

The Craiova *Democrația* cannot be considered a proper modernist magazine, despite being an early venue for the initial publication of Marinetti's seminal manifesto. Conversely, some Romanian self-declared modernist publications in the interwar years reserved ample space for political analysis and satirical cartoons. The most important of these was *Contimporanul*, also the longest-lived of the periodicals analysed here. Throughout Europe, politics, art, and life were intertwined from the turn of the century until the 1950s (and beyond). But in areas of the continent where modernity was perceived as the opposite pole of local backwardness, modernism became associated with a programme of actual modernization that avant-garde writers and artists favoured. The following survey of Romanian modernist and avant-garde magazines attempts to contextualize their appearance in terms of Romania's twentieth-century political and social history.

The 'Old Kingdom' becomes 'Greater Romania': islands, symbols, and a call to arms

After the Second Balkan War, in 1913, Romania gained southern Dobrudja, a sliver of land west of the Black Sea and south of the Danube settled by Turks, Tatars, Bulgarians, and Romanians, that had belonged to Bulgaria. With the outbreak of the Great War, Romanian politicians pondered the benefits of neutrality or engagement. Despite the Kingdom's Hohenzollern monarch and its traditional German alliance, in 1916 the Romanian Kingdom joined the Entente in exchange for secret

¹³ 'Nu vrem lacrimi de durere, vrem energie și îndrăzneală... vrem și noi acțiune, mișcare spre a vă urma, căci noi latinii orientali, suntem de un sânge cu voi latinii occidentali, origina noastră pornește din Roma, ne iubim neamul căci iubim patriotismul.' *Ibid.*

promises of territorial gains in adjacent parts of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy should the Allies prevail. Since they won the war, Romania obtained the promised lands of Transylvania and Bukovina; the country also benefited territorially from the Russian Revolution and the red scare that traversed Europe. In an attempt to stem the revolutionary tide, the Great Powers allowed Romania to claim the province of Bessarabia, which had been under Russian control since 1812 but had a large Romanian-speaking population. Thus between 1913 and 1918 Romania more than doubled in size and its population grew by almost as much. This territorial and demographic expansion made Romania more cosmopolitan and it stimulated economic and urban growth. The population of Bucharest in particular increased at a galloping pace from 382,000 inhabitants in 1918 to 870,000 in 1939.¹⁴

Even before the Great War, modernism was in the air, not only in discussions of Futurist ideas, but also as a Romanian version of Symbolism became the first important literary dissident movement.¹⁵ *Revista celor l'alți* (The Magazine of the Others; 1908) and *Insula* (The Island; 1912) were both edited by the Symbolist poet Ion Minulescu, who had briefly studied law in Paris in 1900 before abandoning academia for literary bohemia and journalism. In the first issue of *Revista celor l'alți* in March 1908, Minulescu signed the manifesto 'Aprindeți torțele' (Light up the Torches), which explained the magazine's title, and the literary movement he envisioned:

Light up the torches to shine light on the literary present! The literary present? ... Here it is. A few youths who speak and read Romanian just like the others, but who wish to write in a different way than the others, [and] have the courage to plant a flag in the middle of the road at high noon, and, addressing the others, to say: 'Up to this point this has been your road; from now on it is ours.'¹⁶

The article was written in a dignified, moderately militant tone. The torches, the flag, the challenge to 'other' youths, and the word 'courage' all signalled an open struggle between rival groups for official recognition. The final paragraph also alluded to a generational 'passing of torches': 'Enter the temple of literature through the main gate, not through the side doors. Prostrate yourselves before the dead near

¹⁴ See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca: Cornell Paperbacks, 2000), 8, and Keith Hitchins, *Romania 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 346.

¹⁵ Matei Călinescu, 'Avangarda literară în România', in Sașa Pană (ed.), *Antologia literaturii române de avangardă și câteva desene din epocă* (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1969), 16.

¹⁶ 'Aprindeți torțele să luminăm prezentul literar! Prezentul literar?... Iată-l. Câți-va tineri care vorbesc și citesc românește la fel cu cei l'alți, dar care voesc să scrie într'altfel de cât ei, au curajul ca ziua nămiiza mare să înfigă în mijlocul drumului un fanion și adresându-se celor l'alți să le spună:— "Până aici, este drumul vostru; de aci încolo, al nostru".' *Revista celor l'alți*, 1:1 (20 Mar. 1908), 1.

the entrance. That's all... On their graves there are candles burning... [while] you are bearing torches in your hands.'¹⁷

The 1912 weekly *Insula* similarly described the aesthetic difference between itself and 'them', between 'a strange and enigmatic island' and the 'dead ocean of advertising' surrounding it. ('*Insula* stranie și enigmatică pe oceanul mort și cotidian al reclamei?').¹⁸ A contrast was also invoked between the island and the continent of bad taste:

We are in truth the islanders disgusted by and in revolt against the dry and impertinent noise of those on the continent... An unknown island, we have appeared, scorned by any literary geography, on whose maps we don't even figure as a possibility... We're therefore not obliged to take account of any of the canons of this geography.¹⁹

Between 1908 and 1912 the tone of literary rebellion had turned haughtier and more categorical.

Romania's first avant-gardists were extremely young heirs to Symbolism. The revue *Simbolul* (The Symbol), edited by the high school students S. Samyro (that is Samuel Rosenstock, whose more enduring pen name would be Tristan Tzara) and E. Iovanaki (later known as Ion Vinea), appeared only four times in 1912. Their classmate Marcel Iancu (later known abroad as Janco) financed *Simbolul* and was responsible for layout and graphics. Yet, established, more mature symbolists like Macedonski, Maniu, and Minulescu were among its collaborators.²⁰

In 1915, Iovanaki and Rosenstock adopted their lasting pen names of Ion Vinea and Tristan Tzara, which appeared on the front cover of another short-lived review, *Chemarea* (The Call), edited by Vinea. Paul Cernat describes it as a primarily political and civic anti-war publication.²¹ Yet it was also the first periodical to bring a modernist visual style to its covers.²² The first issue featured 'L'Ondée' (The Downpour), a 1901 woodcut by the Swiss-born Félix Vallotton, which depicts a chaotic

¹⁷ 'Intrați în templul literaturii pe poarta cea mare... Prosteranați-vă în fața morților de lângă intrare. Dar atâta tot... Pe mormintele lor ard candelă... Voi purtați în mâini, torțe aprinse.' Ibid.

¹⁸ *Insula's* article-programme is reproduced in I. Hangiu, *Presa literară românească: Articole-program de ziare și reviste (1789–1948)*, vol. II: 1901–1948 (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1968), 207–9.

¹⁹ 'Sintem în adevăr insularii dezgustați și răzvrățiți de larma seacă și obraznică a celor de pe continent... Insulă necunoscută, am apărut în disprețul oricărei geografii literare, pe ale cărei hărți nu figurăm nici ca posibilitate... Nu sintem deci ținuși să luăm în seamă nici unul din canoanele acestei geografii.' Hangiu, *ibid.* Among other periodicals with similar profiles that also made brief appearances were *Fronța* (1912), *Grădina Hesperidelor* (1912), and *Orizonturi noi* (1915).

²⁰ Călinescu, 'Avangarda literară', 16–17. In 1912 Vinea and Iancu were 17 and Tzara was 16 years old.

²¹ Cernat, *Avangarda*, 97–9. *Chemarea* was also the title of several later ephemeral periodicals.

²² *Ibid.* 99–100. Cernat confuses the sequence of the two *Chemarea* issues.

urban street scene in which a bourgeois crowd stands against a gusty wind.²³ The second (and final) cover of *Chemarea* featured another Vallotton woodcut, one dating from 1893, entitled 'Les baigneuses surprises par l'orage' (Bathers Surprised by the Storm), part of the artist's 'Les petites baigneuses' (Little Bathers) series. Though very different from 'L'Ondée', since the foreground image here focuses intimately, however, on two little girls, the theme conveyed by both woodcuts chosen for these covers was that of stormy weather, alluding perhaps to the wartime turbulence, the loss of control and of tranquillity.²⁴ Both Vallotton prints made repeat appearances on *Contimporanul* covers seven years later, establishing a visual link between the 1915 *Chemarea* and its younger, but more long-lived sibling.²⁵ Vinea edited both periodicals.

The 'Avertisement' (Prologue), which inaugurated *Chemarea*, acknowledged a crowded field of reviews that Vinea compared to a noisy amusement park, in which this additional sheet could hardly be justified. He sketched a society of cheating, falsehood, danger, and repression before calling on his readers and collaborators to 'step out... with heavy armour under our vests, to exchange the maps in editorial offices for arsenals at the ready, to carry asphyxiating bombs in hand-baskets, and pencils with blades', adding, 'now... is the turn of the young, of those called up if need be to fight, to ask themselves where they'll be sent. Our magazine is a question [posed by] a group of writers, journalists and students, addressed to everyone.'²⁶

Several articles in *Chemarea* struggled with the seductions of war and nationalism. Although the review was critical of jingoism, of Romania's holding out for the best territorial offer, and of the possibility of redrawing boundaries according to the impractical principle of nationality, a 'kingdom or an imperium that would have as its frontiers the Dniester and the Tisa [rivers] and [reach] beyond Bukovina, a country [that was] in the dreams of all Romanians' was held out as an undoubtedly attractive ideal. The 'wonderful dream [about] these lands, godly in their beauty'

²³ Maxime Vallotton and Charles Goerg, *Félix Vallotton: catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre gravé et lithographié* (Geneva: Les Éditions de bonvent S.A., 1972), 225, 227. Image available at Wikimedia public domain. 'L'Ondée' was part of the artist's series on the 1900 Paris World's Fair and had been reproduced in 1901 in the Berlin review *Die Insel*. This may be where *Chemarea's* editors had found 'L'Ondée'.

²⁴ *Chemarea*, 1:1 and 1:2.

²⁵ See *Contimporanul*, 1:12 (16 Sept. 1922), and 1:13 (1 Oct. 1922).

²⁶ 'Să ieşim... cu platoşe tari sub veste. Să îndocim hărţile din redacţii cu panoplii la îndemână; să avem bombe asfixiante prin coşuri, şi creioane cu şiş... [A]cum... e rândul celor tineri şi chemaşi, la nevoie, să lupte, să se întrebe unde vor fi trimişi. Revista noastră e o întrebare, a unui grup de scriitori, ziarişti şi studenţi adresată tuturor.' *Chemarea* 1:1 (Oct. 1915), 1-2. The article is signed 'I. Vinea' on p. 3.

was unfortunately being 'dirtyed' by the political scheming employed in their acquisition, wrote Ernest Poldi.²⁷

In the second issue Vinea satirized the country's neutrality and cowardice, and the political calculations involved in choosing sides: 'And we won't go into Transylvania now... but at the end; Transylvania or Bessarabia, according to circumstance,—but only at the end' ('Şi în Ardeal nu vom intra acum..., ci la sfârşit. În Ardeal, sau în Basarabia, după împrejurări,—dar numai la urmă').²⁸ In another article Theodor Solacolu lampooned the 'auction of patriotic (?) beliefs' and 'the noise of nationalist drums and cudgels' ('licitaţia credinţelor (?) patriotice se ţine la câte o răspântie de stradă, în sgomotul tobelor şi ciomegilor naţionaliste de toate sunetele şi toate culorile').²⁹ Tristan Tzara contributed the anti-war poem, 'Furtuna şi cântecul dezertorului' (The Storm and the Song of the Deserter).³⁰ Perhaps it was the storm in this poem that the Vallotton woodcut on the cover had been chosen for.

Close to the time of this publication, in autumn 1915, Tristan Tzara left Bucharest for Zurich and met Marcel Iancu, who had gone there to study the year before.³¹ Iancu and Tzara (and Iancu's two brothers who also studied in Zurich) helped produce the Cabaret Voltaire happenings and the Dada movement (see Chapter 45). As the war wound down, the two friends—by then estranged—moved to France in late 1919 to early 1920, and Tzara settled in Paris for the rest of his life, excepting the war years when he went into hiding in the south. Iancu, however, returned to Romania in 1921 and lived in Bucharest for the next two decades; he became a prolific and successful architect, and continued as a visual artist and modernist theoretician. He also pursued a rich editorial and curatorial career editing magazines and organizing exhibits.³²

²⁷ 'Principiul naţionalităţilor': 'Cu toate astea însă, ne înfăşişăm de atâta timp un regat sau o împărăţie a României care să aibă drept fruntarii Nistrul şi Tisa şi dincolo de Bucovina, o ţară visată de toţi Români. ... Şi deodată vezi întreg visul minunat, pământurile acestea dumnezeiesc de frumoase supuse meschinului politicianism dela noi?' Ernest Poldi, *ibid.* 13. Poldi was the pen name of Leopold Chapira, a high school friend of Vinea's. See Cernat, *Avangarda*, 100.

²⁸ I. Vinea, 'Note repezi', *Chemarea*, 1:2 (1 Oct. 1915), 18.

²⁹ Theodor Solacolu, 'Impresii de iarmaroc' (Impressions from the Fair), *ibid.* 29.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 26-7.

³¹ Harry Seiwert, *Marcel Iancu: Dadaist—Zeitgenosse—wohltemperierter morgenländischer Konstrukтивist* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 50.

³² Michael Ilk, *Marcel Iancu: Das Graphische Werk Catalogue Raisonné* (Ludwigsburg, 2001), *passim*. For an overview of Iancu's many-faceted career see *Centenar Marcel Iancu 1895-1995* (Bucharest: Muzeul naţional de artă al României, 1996), the catalogue of the Iancu centennial exhibition held in Bucharest in 1995.

Contimporanul and its circle

On 3 June 1922 Iancu and his old friend Ion Vinea launched *Contimporanul: organ al constructivismului românesc* (The Contemporary: Organ of Romanian Constructivism). Iancu financed the review and was its artistic director and theoretician as well as the organizer of the group that gathered around the publication.³⁵ The more bohemian Ion Vinea served as the review's official editor. Lasting until 1932, *Contimporanul* was the longest running of Romania's interwar modernist periodicals. In all, 102 issues were published, although in fact there were fewer, since double and triple issues were frequent in the review's later years. *Contimporanul* was much more than a review, however: Iancu and his collaborators organized art exhibits and other 'syncretic' events, and a 'Contimporanul group' was a recognizable if shifting formation in Bucharest.³⁴

Paul Cernat has noted three distinct phases in the life of *Contimporanul*.³⁵ During the first which lasted until July 1923 it appeared fairly punctually once a week and was dominated by political and social concerns which were on everyone's mind after the wartime upheaval and as Romanian society embarked on the project of assimilating vast new territories and multilingual, multireligious populations.³⁶ This first period was followed by a hiatus of nine months after which *Contimporanul* re-emerged, in April 1924, as a periodical of the artistic avant-garde. It then appeared less frequently and less regularly.

In this second phase, politics gave way to predominantly aesthetic preoccupations. The review's third period was one of growing eclecticism; it began after yet another hiatus—from 1928 to 1929—and lasted until 1932. Collaborators known for contributing also to periodicals affiliated with Romania's new right were visible—if never dominant—in the pages of *Contimporanul* in this last phase. Conversely, Ion Vinea was also writing for *Cuvântul* (The Word)—an independent paper of the 'new generation' that after 1934 became a fascist mouthpiece, and he was elected MP on the National Peasant Party list.³⁷ This increased openness to diverse ideologies,

³⁵ Radu Stern, 'Boekarest' (Bucharest), in Radu Stern and Edward van Voolen (eds), *Van dada tot surrealisme: Joodse avant-garde kunstenaars uit Roemenië, 1910–1938* (From Dada to Surrealism: Jewish Avant-Garde Artists from Romania, 1910–1938 (Amsterdam: Joods Historisch Museum, 2011), 43. See also Tom Sandqvist, *Dada East: The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 345.

³⁴ Cernat, *Avangarda*, 131–2, and Paul Cernat, *Contimporanul: istoria unei reviste de avangardă* (Bucharest: Institutul Cultural Român, 2007), 19, 63, and Seiwert, *Marcel Janco: Dadaist*, 141, 175, 183.

³⁵ Cernat, *Contimporanul*, 12–13, 20–2, 28–9.

³⁶ Cernat identifies the review as a monthly in this period (ibid. 13) but *Contimporanul* appeared on a weekly basis in 1922 and 1923.

³⁷ Cernat, *Avangarda*, 169–74.

aesthetic theories, and mainstream politics laid the groundwork for a backlash from a newer and more radical avant-garde.

Contimporanul took its title from a much earlier semi-monthly periodical of the same name sponsored by the Iași Socialist Club in 1881–91.³⁸ The founders of *Contimporanul* in 1922 seem to have made this choice to suggest ideological continuity with socialism. Thus, the programmatic article printed in italics in the first issue of the 1922 magazine, entitled 'Bun sosit!' (Welcome to you!) and signed by Dr N. Lupu, an older politician with ties to the socialist movement, recalls that earlier publication:

My generation and the one before mine owe much of their spiritual culture and intellectual polish to the great socialist magazine that, thirty years ago, bore the same name.

I wish my younger compatriots and the new magazine [*Contimporanul*] the same success in civilizing the Romanian intellect and life at the beginning of this century and in this new and rare human epoch as its 'grandmother' [*Contemporanul*] had at the end of the last century.³⁹

This first issue included no illustrations, and the lettering of the title was conventional. *Contimporanul* then looked like a 'normal' wordy periodical, although it was very much left of centre. In the very next issue, however, all this changed: the title was now rendered in attractively uneven, hand-drawn all-cap letters; the initial 'C' drawn in such a way as to suggest an upside-down sickle. Soon cover pages began featuring illustrations—mostly political cartoons that accompanied sharp political editorials criticizing the National Liberal Party (NLP) then in power, the Brătianu family which dominated the party, Romania's foreign relations, the new constitution, censorship, and policies towards ethnic and religious minorities. Italian fascism, labour struggles, the Turkish–Greek conflict, the oil industry, and the Soviet famine were all grist for journalists at *Contimporanul*. Cover drawings were attributed to A. Dragoș, Brutus Hanes, Luc, and increasingly to Marcel Iancu.⁴⁰

³⁸ The earlier periodical had used the spelling 'Contemporanul'. Its subtitle was 'Scientific and Literary Review'. The editors wished to inform readers 'how science saw the world'. Hangiu, *Presă literară românească*, I: 346–7.

³⁹ 'Generația mea și cea anterioară, datoroște mult în cultura ei sufletească, în poleirea ei intelectuală, mării reviste socialiste de pe vremuri, care purta acum 30 de ani acelaș nume. Doresc tinerilor mei confrăți și noiei reviste, să aibă, în "civilizarea" intelectului și vierții românești, dela începutul acestui secol și în această nouă și rară epocă a omnirii, acelaș success ca și bunica sa la finele veacului trecut.' *Contimporanul*, 1:1 (1922), 1.

⁴⁰ Some cover drawings, like the one entitled 'Amnistia' (The Amnesty) for the 10 June issue, were unsigned; but it was very likely Dragoș's as his name appears among the contributors for that issue. See also Mariana Vida, 'Grafica lui Marcel Iancu și metamorfozele limbajului plastic de avangardă/ Marcel Janco's Graphic Art and the Metamorphoses of the Avant-Garde Language in Fine Arts', in *Centenar Marcel Iancu 1895–1995/ Marcel Iancu Centenary 1895–1995*, 174–87.



Fig. 49.1 Cover of *Contimporanul*, 1:4 (24 June 1922), designed by Marcel Iancu, caption: 'Brătienii: Succesele noastre au fost, sunt și vor fi' (The Brătianus: Successes Have Been, Are, And Will Be Ours)

The cover of the 24 June issue, for example, featured a Iancu caricature of the three Brătianu brothers (Ionel, Vintilă, and Dinu) dancing atop piles of money, banknotes coming out of their pockets, the three gesturing with raised arms and hand movements (Fig. 49.1). At the time, Ion I. C. Brătianu served as prime minister, Vintilă as Minister of Finance, and Dinu sat in parliament. They ran the NLP founded by their father. Much about the three figures in the cartoon—the expression, facial hair, the cut of the suit, their gestures—is identical. The caption reads 'Brătienii: Succesele noastre au fost, sunt și vor fi' (The Brătianus: Successes Have Been, Are, And Will Be Ours). The caricature 'prefaced' two harshly critical and ironic articles on the inside pages: 'Bâlcii de succese' (The Luna Park of Successes) and 'Domnii Brătianu: o elegie' (The Brătianu Gentlemen: An Elegy), which accused Ion and Vintilă of incompetence on several fronts.⁴¹

Other covers drawn by Iancu in 1922 such as those captioned 'Problema pâinii' (The Bread Problem), 'D. Brătianu limitează libertatea presei' (Mr. Brătianu Limits the Freedom of the Press), 'Pactul de non-agresiune' (The Non-Aggression Pact), and 'Mărul grecesc' (The Greek Apple), all tackled current domestic or international problems, in a style linked to Iancu's Dadaist days.⁴² But *Contimporanul*'s

⁴¹ *Contimporanul*, 1:4 (24 June 1922).

⁴² *Contimporanul*, 1:9 (5 Aug. 1922); 1:18 (18 Nov. 1922); 1:21 (9 Dec. 1922); and 1:22 (16 Dec. 1922).

covers also offered surprises; there were the 're-runs' of the two Vallotton woodcuts that had appeared in the 1915 *Chemarea*, as well as reproductions of works Iancu had created for posters in his Swiss days. These visual 'echoes' drew attention to the editors' former lives and to the world beyond Romania's frontiers. Iancu and Vinea may also have been playing with ideas for the future while riffing on the past.

Despite the heavily political orientation of the early *Contimporanul*, indications of broader cultural, intellectual, and aesthetic leanings abounded from the very beginning. B. Fundoianu's column 'Ferestre spre Occident' (Windows toward the West) in the first issue compared 'the old continent', i.e., post-war Europe, to a decrepit hotel whose 'doors no longer closed [properly], with all the life inside the rooms spilled as by a phonograph into the hallways' ('Bătrânul continent trăește astăzi ca un hotel cu cărămida putredă... cu uși cari nu se mai închid, cu toată viața din odăi risipită, ca într'un fonograf pe coridoare').⁴³ He applauded the new possibilities for cosmopolitan intercourse among books and ideas written and expressed in different languages, and used the occasion to point out that 'a young Romanian decadent' ('un tânăr decadent român')—an allusion to Tristan Tzara—had succeeded in 'creating for all of new Europe a strange aesthetics' ('a izburit să creeze pentru toată Europa nouă, o ciudată estetică').⁴⁴ The 24 June issue of *Contimporanul* featured the column 'Note de pictură' (Notes on Painting) probably attributable to Iancu. The author defined 'abstractionism' as 'the liberation of painting from life aspects and exterior signs'.⁴⁵ The politics of culture was also a topos in these early days of the review, as evidenced in 'Scriitorul bugetiv' (The Budgetivore Writer) about the Society of Romanian Writers' mistaken policy of seeking state subventions.⁴⁶

By the end of 1922 *Contimporanul* had taken a visual turn toward abstraction. Its covers were no longer consistently either political or cartoonish. The 4 November issue featured Iancu's 'Dansul Negrilor' (Negro Dance), a graphic composition he had drawn as a poster for the Zurich 'Chant nègre' (Negro Song) soirée on 31 March 1916; he had used it a second time as publicity for a *Der Sturm* exhibit in 1917.⁴⁷ The last issue of 1922, on 30 December, featured an engraving identified simply as 'Desen'

⁴³ *Contimporanul*, 1:1 (3 June 1922), 11–12. See also Cernat, *Contimporanul*, 123.

⁴⁴ *Contimporanul*, 1:1 (3 June 1922), 12.

⁴⁵ *Contimporanul*, 1:4 (24 June 1922), 13, trans. Magda Teodorescu, in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-gardes, 1910–1930* (Cambridge, MA/London: LACMA & MIT Press, 2002), 533.

⁴⁶ *Contimporanul*, 1:3 (17 June 1922), 12–13.

⁴⁷ *Contimporanul*, 1:16 (4 Nov. 1922). In fact the date printed on the *Contimporanul* cover was 4 Nov. 1916 [sic]. It seems more than likely that this apparent typographical error was intentional, a kind of visual joke, since the cover reproduced the poster Iancu had made in 1916. The engraving is identified as 'Invitation à une soirée Dada, 1916', in J.-M. Palmier, 'Articles redécouverts: Le mouvement Dada 2/7 Dada à Zurich naissance du mouvement'. Accessed online at <http://stabio2.unblog.fr/2010/01/23/le-mouvement-dada-2-7>. It is identified as 'Affiche pour le Chant nègre, Cabaret Voltaire, 1916, 73 × 55; Image reprise dans l'affiche de la Sturm-Ausstellung [sic], II. Serie (oeuvres de Albert

(Drawing) by Marcel Iancu while the cover of the next issue (6 January 1923) presented his Cubist self-portrait. Like the 'Negro Dance' poster, and the 'Drawing' in the 30 December 1922 issue, Iancu's self-portrait was unrelated to any specific article in the magazine. Together these covers by Iancu signalled his increasingly central role in the production of the magazine and the aesthetic turn that the editors were contemplating: art for art's sake instead of art in the service of politics.

Beginning with 13 January 1923 *Contimporanul* had a whole new look. In large format, each issue consisted of only four pages. The lettering of the title lost the uneven, artisanal quality. Thick, bold, all-cap italics—either in red or in plain black—gave the new *Contimporanul* title a determined and dynamic feel. In the new format cover illustrations amounted to a far smaller proportion of the page. Many of the pictures were identified as original woodcuts by Marcel Iancu with or without specific titles. Still, the magazine continued to carry articles about domestic and international politics, be it the new constitution, pogroms in north-eastern Romania, demonstrations by nationalist students who were demanding the introduction of *numerus clausus* in Romanian universities, the question of ethnic minorities in Greater Romania, the anniversary of Marx's death, and the situation in Soviet Russia among other topics.

Appearing again after a long absence in spring 1924, *Contimporanul* threw itself into the politics of aesthetics. 'Însemnări de artă' (Art Notes) of April 1924 began with the thesis that 'Beauty in art is a prejudice'. Iancu contested artistic conventions of virtuosity and technique, and applauded the authenticity, intensity, and expressiveness of children's art, folk art, primitive art, and the art produced by the mentally ill.⁴⁸ 'Manifestul activist către tinerime' (Activist Manifesto to the Young) written by Vinea appeared in the very next issue bearing all the rhetorical marks of high avant-gardism. Divided into three parts, the manifesto began by insulting conventional art, society, and politics. Part two declared in a single synthetic sentence what the collective 'we' 'WANT' ('VREM'), while part three starting with 'THUS' (DECI) laid out more prosaically an ambitious programme encompassing art, society, the economy, and industry. The following are excerpts from the three sections of the manifesto:

Down with Art
'cause it has prostituted itself!
Poetry is nothing but a press to wring the tear gland of girls of any age;

BLOCH, Fritz BAUMANN, Max ERNST, Lyonel FEININGER, Johannes ITTEN, KANDINSKY, Paul KLEE, Oscar KOKOSCHKA, Ottakar KUBIN, Georg MÜCHE, Maria UHDEN) à la Galerie DADA de Zurich, le 14 avril 1917'. See Documents Dada accessed at <http://dadasur.blogspot.com/2010/01/blog-post_2957.html>, and Seiwert, *Marcel Janco*, 82.

⁴⁸ 'Art Notes', *Contimporanul*, 3:44 (Apr. 1924), trans. Julian Semilian and Sandra Agalidi, in Benson and Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds*, 533–4.

Theatre—a recipe for the melancholy of salesmen of canned food;
Dramaturgy—a jar of foetuses with make-up on;
Literature—a flattened enema;
Painting—nature's diaper, spread out in procurement rooms;
Music—a means of locomotion in the sky;
Sculpture—the science of dorsal fondling;
Architecture—an enterprise of bedecked mausoleums;
Politics—the business of grave-diggers and brokers;

.....
WE WANT

the miracle of the new word in full;
the rigorous and speedy visual expression of a Morse telegraph

THUS [we want]

The death of the epic and of the psychological novel

.....
We want the theatre of pure emotion, theatre as new existence freed from the washed out clichés of bourgeois life [and] from the obsession with meaning and orientation.

We want visual arts free of sentimentalism, of literature and of anecdote; they should be the expression of pure forms and colours in relation to themselves.

.....
Romania is being built today.

In spite of the stupefied political parties, we are breaking through into the great activist industrial phase.⁴⁹

Rivals and allies of *Contimporanul*: heroic and foreign relations

The years 1924 and 1925 represent the high tide of Romania's modernist avant-garde. Both 75 *HP* and *Punct* (Point or Period) made their appearance in October 1924, the former also for the last time (Fig. 49.2). Its seemingly enigmatic title referred to the 75 Horse Power of a modern automobile engine and the editors

⁴⁹ 'Jos Arta | căci s'a prostituat! | Poezia nu e decât un reasc de stors glanda lacrimală a fetelor de orice vârstă; | Teatrul, o rețetă pentru melancolia negustorilor de conserve; | Literatura, un clisur răsufat; | Dramaturgia, un borcan de fetuși fardați; | Pictura, un scurec al naturii, întins în saloanele de plasare; | Muzica, un mijloc de locomoțiune în cer; | Sculptura, știința pipăirilor dorsale; | Arhitectura, o antrepriză de mausoleuri înzorzonate; | Politica, îndeletnicirea cioclilor și a samsarilor | VREM | minunea cuvântului nou și plin în sine; expresia plastică, strictă și rapidă a aparatelor Morse. | DECI | Moartea romanului epopee și a romanului psihologic | Vrem teatrul de pură emoțivitate, teatrul ca existență nouă, desbărată de clișeele șterse ale vieții burgheze, de obsesia înțelesurilor și a orientărilor. | Vrem artele plastice, libere de sentimentalism, de literatură și anecdotă, expresie

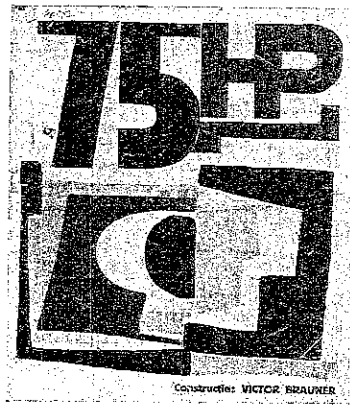


Fig. 49.2 Cover of 75 HP (Oct. 1924), designed by Victor Brauner

claimed that theirs was the work of the only avant-garde group in Romania. Echoing the spirit of Vinea's 'Activist manifesto' Mihail Cosma declared—in French—that 'Literature [was] the best toilet paper of the century'. On the side of the page of the 'Aviogram' which took the place of the *de rigueur* manifesto, the reader was urged in the vocative, 'have your brain de-loused' ('Cetitor, deparazitează-ți creierul!'). The visuals and acrobatic printing of the review as much as its content recalled the playful exuberance of Dada posters and publications. Victor Brauner's cover design inscribed the characters '75 HP' against a simple bold geometric 'construction' in primary colours. On another page a 'Pictopoezie' (Pictopoem) 'invented' by Brauner and Ilarie Voronca embodied a new art form—neither painting nor poetry but 'pictopoetry'.⁵⁰ In 'Pictopoem no. 5721' numbers and phrases were projected on a grid of geometric pastel colour shapes. The review's back page advertised—again, in French—Victor Brauner's upcoming show.⁵¹ 'Tout le monde doit aller voir l'exposition du peintre Victor

a formelor și a culorilor pure în raport cu ele înșile. |România se construiește azi. | În ciuda partidelor buimăcite pătrundem în marea fază activistă industrială. |'. *Contimporanul*, 3:46 (May 1924), 10. See also Andrei Oișteanu, 'The Romanian Avant-Garde and Visual Poetry', in *Exquisite Corpse: A Journal of Letters and Life* for an alternative translation of several lines: (<http://www.corpse.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=177>).

⁵⁰ According to Steven Mansbach, Brauner and Voronca were attempting to overcome 'the traditional *paragone* between the visual arts and poetry' and to replace it 'with a mechanistic, fully modern aesthetics'. S. A. Mansbach, 'The "Foreignness" of Classical Modern Art in Romania', *The Art Bulletin* 80:3 (Sept. 1998), 542.

⁵¹ Sașa Pană, *Născut în '02: memorii—file de jurnal—evocări* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1973), 172.

Brauner' from 26 October to 15 November. Romanian, French, and some Italian and German were used at times in the same unruly paragraphs. Domestic and foreign subscriptions were available in Romanian lei and in French francs for regular and deluxe editions.⁵²

A month after 75 HP's explosive appearance, many of the same contributors launched the monthly *Punct* subtitled *Revistă de literatură și artă constructivistă* (Review of Constructivist Literature and Art), later *Revistă de artă constructivistă internațională* (Review of International Constructivist Art) and then *Revistă de artă constructivistă* (Review of Constructivist Art). *Punct's* 'director', or editor-in-chief, was Scarlat Callimachi but Victor Brauner and then Ștefan Roll, in succession were credited as the actual editors on *Punct's* back page until the last few issues.

On the cover of *Punct's* first issue its readership was entreated to read both 75 HP and *Contimporanul*. On the continuum between modernism and avant-gardism *Punct* was closer to the latter than *Contimporanul*, even if some of *Punct's* most intransigent contributors, for example, Iancu, were closely associated with *Contimporanul*. In March 1925 *Punct* fused with *Contimporanul*. Just before this, *Contimporanul* announced (in French) that the two publications were 'the only organs of the Romanian avant-garde' ('les seuls organes de l'avantgarde roumaine'). The merger was noted in *Contimporanul* no. 55–6 as an effort to unite propaganda forces. A similar announcement (in French) appeared prominently in the last issue of *Punct* (16 March 1925). Like other interwar avant-garde magazines, *Punct* published articles and poems by local authors in foreign languages as well as the work of foreign-language authors such Philippe Soupault, Hélène Kra, Kurt Schwitters, Herwarth Walden, Theo Van Doesburg, and Pierre Bourgeois in French and German. But unlike *Contimporanul*, *Punct*, did not include reproductions of graphic work by foreign artists such as Hans Arp, L. Kassák, Braque, Picasso, or Sidney Hunt. All of this suggests a sustained effort to link with foreign colleagues and audiences, although each publication did this in its own way.⁵³

By the mid-1920s the group around *Contimporanul* was well established and it had become somewhat proprietorial about the development of the avant-garde in Romania for which it assumed full credit. A somewhat paternalistic note in the October 1924 (3:48) issue of *Contimporanul* described 75 HP's graphics as derivative

⁵² For a full discussion of 75 HP see Drogoreanu, *Influențe ale futurismului*, 185–203.

⁵³ Examples include Ion Vinea, 'Victoire en bleu', *Punct*, 2 (30 Nov. 1924), 1; Dida Solomon, 'Pensées de Noël', *Punct*, 6–7 (3 Jan. 1925), 5; and Marcel Iancu, 'T.S.F. Dialogue entre le bourgeois mort et l'apôtre de la vie nouvelle', *Punct*, 11 (31 Jan. 1925), 3. See also Drogoreanu, *Influențe*, 132–3, 144–55. *Integral* devoted a whole special issue, no. 13–14 (June–July 1927), to French poetry featuring Ribemont-Dessaignes, Max Jacob, Roger Vitrac, Izara, Céline Arnaud, Paul Dermée, Reverdy, Fondane, and Seuphor. For graphic work by Kassák, Picasso, Braque, Hunt, and Arp see *Contimporanul* 3:47 (Sept. 1924), 5:64 (Feb. 1926), 5:67 (June 1926), 5:70 (Nov. 1926), and 5:71 (Dec. 1926).

of earlier heroic Dadaist and Futurist publications and while applauding its courage, it also qualified it as juvenile.⁵⁴

The Bucharest avant-garde presence was by no means limited to its periodicals publications but these were the universal vehicle for publicizing their other events and activities, as well as many avant-garde performances and publications outside Romania. *Contimporanul* and its kindred periodicals regularly announced and reviewed the books of poetry, fiction, and essays published by the writers who contributed to these periodicals and whose volumes were most often published as imprints of these same periodicals.⁵⁵ Similarly, as indicated, Victor Brauner's first one-man show, which opened at the Fine Arts Syndicate in October 1924, was announced on the back page of *75 HP*. This event was followed in 30 November–30 December of the same year by the first international exhibition organized by *Contimporanul*. It showed works by twenty-four foreign and local artists and *Contimporanul* (3:50–1) devoted a double issue to the exhibit catalogue (Fig. 49.3). The February 1925 issue carried a long article in French 'L'Exposition internationale du "Contimporanul"' (The International Exhibition of *Contimporanul*), listing the participants by country. The lead paragraph drew attention to the importance of the show:

This is the first modern [art] exhibit in which Belgium, Germany, Sweden, Hungary, Poland, Serbia, and Romania [all] participated. It is a demonstration of the real existence of a new current which . . . traverses our epoch lending it its own style. The phenomenon manifests itself everywhere simultaneously and in all spheres of spiritual activity. . . . The new art is an abstract art that does not imitate nature except . . . [by virtue of being a] process of creation.⁵⁶

Given that the exhibition had already closed, and that the anonymous article was in French, it seems that it was written to remind avant-gardists outside Romania of the show's significance, and, since it had been organized by *Contimporanul*, the glory reflected on the review. The article identified the participants as countries—particular states were said to be represented by this or that artist—despite the fact that it stressed the universality of the modernist style.⁵⁷ Taking the national point

⁵⁴ See Cernat on *Contimporanul*'s assumed role as ultimate judge of avant-garde value: *Avangarda*, 145.

⁵⁵ Two such series were published by *Integral* and *unu*.

⁵⁶ 'C'est la première exposition moderne à la quelle participent la Belgique, l'Allemagne, La Suède, l'Hongrie, la Pologne, la Serbie et la Roumanie. C'est une démonstration sur l'existence réelle d'un nouveau courant, qui . . . traverse l'époque lui prêtant un propre style. Le phénomène [sic] se manifeste simultanément partout et dans tous les domaines de l'activité spirituelle. . . . L'art nouveau est un art abstrait qui n'imité la nature que dans le procès de création.' *Contimporanul*, 4:53–4 (Feb. 1925).

⁵⁷ See also Pană, *Născut*, 173–4. Pană tallies the foreign exhibitors as: Tereza Zarnowerowna and Mięczyński from Poland, L. Kassák from Hungary, Marc Darimont and Lempereur Haut from Belgium, Josef Peters from Flanders, Karel Teige from Czechoslovakia, Viking Eggling from Sweden, and Kurt Schwitters, Hans Arp, Paul Klee, Hans Richter, C. Buholz, E. R. Vogenauer, Arthur Segal, and Mrs A. Segal from Germany. The Romanians included Iancu, Maxy, Mattis-Teutsch, Brauner, Brâncuși, Milița Petrașcu, and Dida Solomon. Pană counts the Romanian-born Arthur Segal, who lived in Berlin at the time, as German, while including Brâncuși, who lived in Paris, with the Romanians.

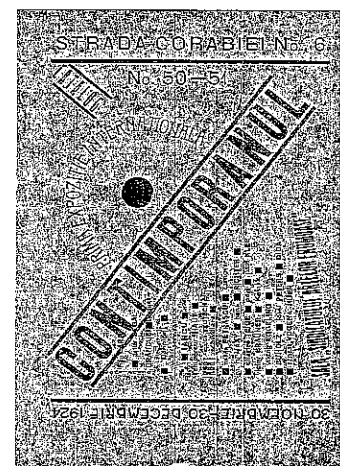


Fig. 49.3 Cover of *Contimporanul*, 50–1 (30 Nov.–30 Dec. 1924)

of view further, the article also pointed, without false modesty, that such an important international exhibition had taken place in Romania first, before anywhere else. Similar efforts in 'foreign relations' and in network building across Europe were on display when Romanian avant-garde publications referred to kindred foreign ones or to performances and art shows taking place abroad, or when they noted that a compatriot had earned a foreign distinction—for example the acquisition by a Berlin museum of a painting Arthur Segal had entered at the annual Juryfrei show in Berlin in 1924.⁵⁸ Foreign echoes of Romanian happenings were also proudly noted: thus *unu* signalled that *Paris-Soir* had publicized the exhibit of 'grupul "Arta nouă"' (the New Art group) at the Academy of Decorative Art in Bucharest, *unu* itself gave the show a detailed review in the same issue (*unu*, 2:13, May 1929).

Revolt against *Contimporanul*

In the avant-garde landscape that gradually became more complex and diverse *Contimporanul*'s voice toned down to more moderate artistic and literary decibels cultivating, Cernat suggests, a more tolerant, non-dogmatic, and ecumenical modernism.⁵⁹ Some bylines now belonged to authors who were not part of the avant-garde at all, and of these, some were associated with the spiritualist right, and were

⁵⁸ Cernat, *Avangarda*, Ch. 9 treats the relations of Romanian avant-garde reviews with others across Europe.

⁵⁹ Cernat, *Contimporanul*, 36.

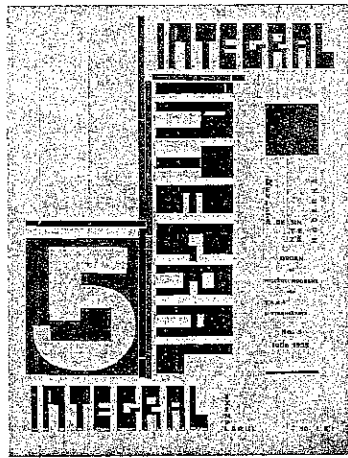


Fig. 49.4 Cover of *Integral*, 5 (July 1925)

later, in the 1930s, to slide towards that other radicalism, fascism.⁶⁰ This stylistic and ideological looseness drew mounting critiques from younger, more militant artists, and writers, and such views generated other modernist periodicals such as *Integral* (1925–8), *Urmuz* published briefly by George (Geo) Bogza in Câmpina, and *unu* published by Sașa Pană in Dorohoi and later in Bucharest.⁶¹

The monthly Constructivist magazine *Integral* (Fig. 49.4) was edited by the artist M. H. Maxy, a dissident from *Contimporanul*. *Integral* attempted to synthesize all currents of modernism, to integrate and analyse critically any and all artistic experiments. It had two different subtitles ‘Revistă de sinteză modernă’ (Review of Modern Synthesis), and ‘Organ al mișcării moderne din țară și străinătate’ (Organ of the Modern Movement at Home and Abroad); the two usually appeared together on *Integral*’s covers, which often sported Constructivist linocut compositions by Maxy.⁶² Its manifesto struck both Constructivist and Futurist notes:

We definitely live under the sign of the urban. *Filter—intelligence, surprise—lucidity. Rhythm—speed.* Simultaneous balls—atmospheres giving concerts—billions of saxophones, telegraph nerves from the equator to the poles—strikes of lightning; the planet with flags, industrial plants; a giant steamer; the dance of the machines over bitumen ovations.

⁶⁰ Cernat, *Contimporanul*, 34–7.

⁶¹ Ibid. 38; Pană, *Născut*, 224; and Ion Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română* (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1990), 105.

⁶² See Michael Ilk, *Brancusi, Tzara und die Rumänische Avantgarde* (Bochum: Museum Bochum, 1997), 54–60.

A crossroads of an era. Classes are going down, new economies are being built. The proletarians are imposing forms. New psycho-physiologies are growing.⁶³

Integral had outposts in Paris and in Italy staffed by contributors with one foot in Romania—Benjamin Fondane (Fundoianu’s French penname), Ilarie Voronca, Hans Mattis-Teutsch, and Mihail Cosma. Fondane’s articles in French dealt with international subjects like Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* playing in New York, Paris, Berlin, and Rome, or an encounter with Jean Cocteau.⁶⁴ Fondane signed ‘Fundoianu’ for pieces he wrote in Romanian.⁶⁵ Constantin Brâncuși and Tristan Tzara also contributed from Paris, writing in French.⁶⁶

Like *Contimporanul* before it, *Integral* also involved itself in ventures beyond the review. In its very first issue for instance *Integral* announced the staging of André Gide’s play ‘Saul’ with sets and costumes designed by Maxy.⁶⁷ The next issue carried a long article ‘Regia scenică—Decor—Costum’ (Staging—Sets—Costumes) written by Maxy and illustrated with his set and costume drawings for ‘Saul’. He argued that modern art was exerting a major influence on theatre and wrote mainly about stage experiments in Russia and Germany.

Also in its inaugural issue in March 1925 *Integral* advertised three forthcoming volumes illustrated by Maxy that were to come out the same month with its own publishing house. In June and July boxed advertisements again announced that the books would appear ‘soon’.⁶⁸ *Integral* carried other publicity on a dedicated ‘advertisements page’. Grocery stores here shared space with artists’ supply outlets, attorneys, and photo shops. Avant-garde reviews like *Periszkop* from the Transylvanian city of Arad also appeared here, and *Integral* publicized its own applied art workshop that designed posters, interiors, carpets, furniture, ceramics, theatre sets, and costumes, and the exhibitions and courses at the Decorative Arts Academy (Academia Artelor Decorative) founded and directed by Maxy.

The aging *Contimporanul*’s more and more evident eclecticism, the synthetic aspirations of *Integral*—that may have seemed like another face of eclecticism—as well as *Integral*’s growing irregularity,⁶⁹ made some impatient readers of avant-garde periodicals like Sașa Pană and his friends ask themselves: ‘why not bring out our own magazine? A magazine that won’t make concessions to good taste, one that will publish

⁶³ *Integral*, 1 (1 Mar. 1925), trans. Monica Voiculescu, in Benson and Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds*, 554.

⁶⁴ ‘Jean Cocteau’ *Integral*, 2 (1 Apr. 1925), 3, and ‘“Chacun sa verité” à l’Atelier’, *Integral*, 2 (1 Apr. 1925), 6.

⁶⁵ For example, ‘Provincie’, *Integral*, 3 (1 May 1925), 12.

⁶⁶ See *Integral*, 4 (1 June 1925).

⁶⁷ ‘Notițe’, *Integral*, 1 (1 Mar. 1925), 16.

⁶⁸ *Integral*, 1 (1 Mar. 1925) and 4 (1 June 1925).

⁶⁹ The eighth issue of *Integral* was dated Nov.–Dec. 1925. The next issue, no. 9, was dated Dec. 1926. See also Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română*, 163, 180.

only a few writers, namely those encountered in the pages of the avant-garde periodicals of those years whose names were Voronca, Roll, Călugăru, [and] Bogza.⁷⁰

This rhetorical question and those posing it produced the review *unu* (one). A similar impulse may have been responsible for *Urmuz*. The careers of *Urmuz* and *unu* are closely intertwined. Both began in provincial towns and both on principle refused to publish anything approaching the mainstream in art, politics, or literature. Bogza's style has been described as 'violent, strident [and] daring in content and vocabulary' ('Paginile scrise de Bogza erau... violente, stridente, îndrăznețe în conținut și în vocabular').⁷¹ A sample from the manifesto in the inaugural issue of *Urmuz* illustrates Bogza's extremism:

The soul's tussle throbbing outward, liberation and reaching toward Him moaning from the hard blow of brutality.

Working in the dark corner, while we warmed ourselves still by the light of a false sun, He opened the faucet of cold that now envelopes everyone.

The sun until today naked in all of its uselessness.

The cold grows insinuatingly reproachful of our superfluousness. Those with thick-skinned souls not noticing this event continue to worship the old orb.

But we who feel the cold penetrating us sharply; need for reaction. And then: movement, much movement. The birth of constructivism, surrealism and the other dynamic isms, necessary to our life threatened by freezing.⁷²

Bogza conceived of *Urmuz* as following in the footsteps of *75 HP*.⁷³ But the choice of 'Urmuz' for the review's title is not unimportant. Bogza was invoking *Urmuz*, the founder of Romanian absurdist literature, and a precursor of the avant-garde.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ 'Ce-ar fi să scoatem noi o revistă? O revistă care să nu facă concesii bunului gust, care să publice numai pe cițiva scriitori și anume pe cei pe care îi înțilneam în paginile revistelor de avangardă din acei ani... Voronca, Roll, Călugăru, Bogza.' Pană, *Născut*, 225.

⁷¹ Ibid. 224.

⁷² 'Sbaterea sufletului în afară, eliberarea și ajungerea până la El gearmă din lovirea dură cu brutalitatea. | ... Lucrând în colțul obscur, pe când noi ne încălzeam încă la lumina unui soare fals, El a deschis robinetele frigului care acum cuprinde pe toți. | Soarele de până azi gol în toată inutilitatea lui. | Frigul crește înșinuat mustrător superfluității noastre. Cei cu pielea sufletului groasă insesizabili acestui eveniment continuă a se închina vechiului astru. | Dar noi cari simțim frigul pătrunzându-ne ascuțit, nevoie de reacționare. Și atunci: mișcare, multă mișcare. Nașterea constructivismului, suprarrealismului și celorlalte isme dinamice, necesare vieții noastre amenințate cu înghețul.' 'Urmuz', *Urmuz: Revistă de avangardă* (Jan. 1928), 1.

⁷³ Pană, *Născut*, 246, and Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română*, 180.

⁷⁴ 'Urmuz' was the pen name of Demetru Demetrescu-Buzău, born in 1883. He was a Kafka-like literary personage who worked as a judge's assistant and wrote a few pieces published in 1923; soon after he took his own life. See introduction to *Urmuz's 'Fuchsiada'* translated by Julian Semilian and Sanda Agalidi, in *Exquisite Corpse: A Journal of Letters and Life*, cyber issue 11 (spring/summer 2002), at <www.corpse.org/archives/issue_11/poesy/urmuz.html.>.

But after just five issues, *Urmuz* folded for a combination of financial, pragmatic, and programmatic reasons, so as, according to Sașa Pană, to bring 'all modernist forces, all those who rejected compromise, into *unu's* orbit' ('Toate forțele moderniste, toți cei care resping compromisul, trebuie să se strângă în jurul lui *unu*').⁷⁵

The word 'unu' (one) appeared on the front page of the inaugural issue of this new magazine that was to have been called *Avangarda literară* (The Literary Avant-Garde). Subsequent issues were to carry the appropriate numerals 'doi' ('two'), 'trei' ('three'), etc. The editors decided, however, that it made more sense to maintain continuity, and thus kept the number *unu* as title.⁷⁶ The manifesto-poem signed by Sașa Pană began with a line first seen in *75 HP*, "reader, de-louse your brain!" ("deparazitează-ți creierul").⁷⁷ Quotation marks alerted readers to its being a citation, and one of its later lines was '76 HP'. Other references included 'avion' (airplane) and 'radio', signalling an enthusiastic alliance with the edgy technological modernity already present in *75 HP* and in other Romanian avant-garde reviews, from which *unu* drew several contributors. It thus tied itself in various ways to the emerging tradition of Romania's modernist currents and voices. The manifesto also listed some names: 'marinetti, breton, brîncuș, vinea, arghezi, ribemont-dessaigues, țzara, theo van doesburg' (all with no caps), and called for the 'burning of printed matter in libraries' ('arde maculatura bibliotecilor')⁷⁸ not unlike the furious calls launched by Marinetti back in 1909. While Arthur Segal, *Urmuz*, Marcel Iancu, M. H. Maxy, and others were left out of this initial roster, future issues dedicated articles to some of them as leaders of the local avant-garde movement. In the case of *Urmuz*, a whole issue was devoted to him.⁷⁹ *Unu* thus joined the community of Futurism, Dadaism, Constructivism, and Surrealism and gestured lovingly towards Romanian-born and foreign poets and artists from a broad spectrum of modernisms.

Unu (Fig. 49.5) had a surprisingly long career for an avant-garde review, coming out regularly the first Sunday of every month until 1933 under the editorship of the energetic young army physician Pană.⁸⁰ Born in Bucharest to Jewish parents as Alexandru Binder, the name under which he functioned in his military capacity, Pană grew up in Dorohoi. He trained in military medicine in Iași and Bucharest, graduated in 1927, and became an officer in the Romanian army. He wrote poetry and read the modernist press avidly, often while riding the train to his military

⁷⁵ Pană, *Născut*, 226–7, 230, 241.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 229.

⁷⁷ 'Manifest', *unu*, 1 (Apr. 1928). Monica Voiculescu translates this same phrase in two different ways: 'debug' and 'disinfect', in Benson and Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds*, 335 and 708.

⁷⁸ 'Manifest', ibid. The phrase 'arde maculatura bibliotecilor' is syntactically ambiguous. It could be translated as both a description—'the printed matter of libraries is burning'—and as a vocative—'burn the printed matter of libraries'.

⁷⁹ Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română*, 182, and see *unu*, 3:31 (Nov. 1930), the *Urmuz* issue.

⁸⁰ Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română*, 181.



Fig. 49.5 Cover of *unu*, 3:21 (Jan. 1930), playful superimposition of 'UNU și cu unu fac unu' (One and One Make One) on the article 'Despre miracol' (About Miracles)

assignments, although his literary activity under a pseudonym remained undetected by his employer.⁸¹

Between 1928 and 1933 *unu* published fifty issues (plus one, in 1935, a 'special conjugal edition' on the occasion of Moldov's wedding). Pană financed the review out of his officer's stipend. In February 1929, having been the butt of many jokes due to its provincial locale, the review moved its operations to Bucharest.⁸² In autumn 1930 *unu* expressed disgust with the venerable *Contimporanul's* growing gentility in a scathing article entitled 'Colivă lui Moș Vineă' (Old Man Vineă's *Colivă*), written (but not signed) by Sașa Pană.⁸³ *Colivă* is a ritual food made from ground wheat and walnuts that is eaten traditionally during Orthodox burials by everyone in a Romanian (village) community who joins in mourning; it was also a free meal for the village poor. The connotations of 'colivă'—tradition, mourning, alms—were nothing if not counter-ideals of modernist sensibility. The author described the sad spectacle of *Contimporanul* wallowing in moderation and eclecticism over the previous five years, while trying to balance its erstwhile daring, progressive stances by including non-avant-garde figures. While despising Vineă, as is clear from his title, Pană held Iancu particularly responsible for *Contimporanul's* lack of back-bone given that he was well-off and the paper's sponsor.⁸⁴ Youth and enthusiasm were held up

⁸¹ Pană, *Născut*, 227, 275, 301.

⁸² *Ibid.* 230, 233, 248; and Ilk, *Rumänische Avantgarde*, 71.

⁸³ Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română*, 184.

⁸⁴ 'Colivă lui Moș Vineă', *unu*, 29 (Sept. 1930), cited in Gabriela Duda, *Literatura*, 78. Note that Duda attributes the article to Sașa Pană, while Pop attributes it to Ilarie Voronca. Gabriela Ursachi and

against *Contimporanul's* wavering. In the conclusion Pană added that Constructivism, which *Contimporanul* had championed from its beginnings, was alien to *unu's* own evolving views.

Representing a somewhat younger generation of Romanian-born avant-gardists, *unu* was taking a turn towards Surrealism, leaving Constructivism to architects and 'claiming a stance completely torn from reality' ('își revendică o conduită cu totul ruptă de realitate'), a creativity that basked in dreams and 'semitrezie' (half-sleep).⁸⁵ Surrealism was already part of the roster of modern 'isms' available to Romanian writers and artists. *Contimporanul* had signalled its arrival, publishing some early manifestoes and other texts, and even placing Iancu's portrait of André Breton on the cover of the May 1926 issue.⁸⁶ *Integral* had acknowledged the new current but did not endorse it; Voronca wrote that Surrealism drew on Freudian theories and Dadaist experiments and it did not 'respond to the rhythm of the times'.⁸⁷ But Bogza's *Urmuz* had listed Surrealism among the 'dynamic isms' that could save the soul from freezing and *unu* was now increasingly drawn into the Surrealist orbit, acknowledging Constructivism as a stage it had left behind.

Unu also distanced itself from *Contimporanul* politically. Aware of the turmoil taking place in Surrealist circles in France, *unu's* editors considered their options. They felt that they had to be careful in order to avoid suppression, or even arrest. But increasingly their sympathies went with Breton's new review *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* (Surrealism in the Service of the Revolution, 1930–3), which had replaced *La Révolution surréaliste* (The Surrealist Revolution, 1924–9; see Chapter 10). They decided to express their political views discreetly, through illustrations and the brief notes and reviews under the rubric 'acvarium' ('aquarium') on the review's last page. Leading the leftward turn was the poet Ștefan Roll, but Pană followed.⁸⁸

In 1930 *Contimporanul* hosted the by then overtly fascist Marinetti while *unu* was contemplating aligning itself with the materialist wing of the Surrealist movement. The *unu* collaborators refused to attend receptions for Marinetti, 'Mussolini's academician' ('academicianul lui Mussolini'), while *Contimporanul* feted him and took him on excursions.⁸⁹ True, Iancu's article published in *Facla* in May 1930, 'Futurismul nostru' (Our Own Futurism) suggests his own fairly tepid

Paul Cernat support Duda. See Gabriela Ursachi, 'Literatura: Iulie', *România literară*, 28 (July 2004), <<http://www.romlit.ro/iulie3>>, and Paul Cernat, 'Futurism și interculturalitate', *Observator cultural*, 231 (July 2004) <http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Futurism-si-interculturalitate*articleID_11410-articles_details.html>.

⁸⁵ Duda, *Literatura*, 79.

⁸⁶ Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română*, 177.

⁸⁷ Ilarie Voronca, "Suprerealism și integralism", *Integral*, 1:1 (Mar. 1925), 4–5, trans. by Julian Semilian and Sanda Agalidi, in Benson and Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds*, 555–6.

⁸⁸ Pană, *Născut*, 300–5. This autobiographical account is confirmed by the secret police files on *unu*. See Stelian Tănase (ed.), *Avangarda românească în arhivele Siguranței* (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 232–44.

⁸⁹ Pană, *Născut*, 364.

acceptance of Marinetti, and an independent style of domestic Futurism that avoided politics and street riots.⁹⁰ Despite their differences, in some ways the two modernist reviews were still part of the same world. They seem even to have had some discussions about fusing with one another, and they shared a concern for how the Romanian avant-garde was received abroad. Sașa Pană records proudly in his memoirs the *Der Sturm* issue in 1930 dedicated to *unu*. *Der Sturm's* editor, Herwarth Walden, had anticipated that *unu* would reciprocate, but this never happened since *unu's* by now Surrealist-leaning editors were not interested in publishing work produced by the Expressionists and Constructivists of *Der Sturm* (see Chapter 32).⁹¹

Another monthly, *Alge: Revistă de artă modernă* (Algae: Review of Modern Art) made its appearance in September 1930 edited by Aureliu Baranga. Seven issues came out—with gaps—until July 1931. The review was printed on colour cardstock, each issue in a different colour. (A second series appeared briefly in 1933.)⁹² According to Sașa Pană, he and his colleagues at *unu* had encouraged this extremely young group of talented writers and artists, some of whom were still in high school, to launch their own irreverent Surrealist magazine rather than become an annex of *unu*.⁹³ This may also have been an effort to nurture a kindred publication just in case one or the other of them were censored or shut down in the intensely politicized atmosphere of the early 1930s. The two periodicals in fact entertained mostly warm relations: Baranga and other 'Algists'—S. Perahim, Gherasim Luca, Paul Păun—were published in *unu*, while *Alge* no. 7 appeared privately on 26 July 1931, to celebrate Sașa Pană's wedding.⁹⁴

In the hiatus between the two series of *Alge*, the Algists published two single issue reviews under other titles. The first in October 1931, entitled *Pulă: Revistă de pulă modernă: organ universal* (Cock: Review of Modern Cock: Universal Organ), came out in a print run of thirteen. The editors pushed the joke further by announcing officiously that 'thirteen cocks had been brought out' ('sau scos treisprezece pule'). In the same spirit of adolescent exuberance in February 1932 on the occasion of Perahim's first personal show, his colleagues printed a review entitled *Muci* (Spot).⁹⁵

Despite such high jinx *Alge* contributors were increasingly and very seriously attracted to communism and *unu* itself was leaning that way in its last year. Ștefan Roll, a regular contributor (and fine poet) at *unu*, also wrote polemical journalism for left-wing political publications such as *Cuvântul liber* (The Free Word) under

his real name of Gheorghe Dinu.⁹⁶ After *unu's* demise, Geo Bogza published a new review in December 1933 called *Viața imediată* (Immediate Life). Although it came out only once, both the title and its manifesto 'Poezia pe care vrem să o facem' (The Poetry That We Want to Make) marked a new direction for many of the avant-gardists. The article signed collectively by Bogza, Perahim, Luca, and Păun criticized the abstract, hermetic, intellectualized poetry written by people incapable of living close to life, 'a barren poetry, which cannot bother anyone and which passes from their hands straight into nothingness' ('o poezie stearpă, care nu poate să supere pe nimeni și trece din mâna lor de-a dreptul în gol').⁹⁷ The 'knights of modernism' ('cavalerii modernismului') were guilty in their scribbling of a kind of egoism that deserved only scorn. This was also certainly a self-criticism. The poetry these authors said they wanted to make now was 'a poetry of our time' ('o poezie a timpului nostru') accessible to the masses. In conclusion, they wrote, 'we are beginning to write a poetry of true life, a poetry that can be read by one-hundred-thousand people' ('Începem să scriem o poezie a vieții adevărate, o poezie care să poată fi citită de o sută de mii de oameni').⁹⁸

By 1933, emerging through a kaleidoscope of exuberant, impertinent, Constructivist, Surrealist, erotic, theoretical, and political reviews, Romanian modernist magazines had come full circle. After Symbolist beginnings, *Contemporanul* had started out by looking back to a militant socialist publication of the previous century bearing the same name. It was initially full of political editorials and caricatures, but it metamorphosed into an avant-garde art and literature review. Eventually it became, for some, unbearably soft and ideologically diverse, prompting younger colleagues to carry forward the torch of a more intransigent, if increasingly inaccessible style of modernism. With *unu* and *Alge*, the avant-garde embraced Surrealism and an intense interest in a world in which dreams and the unconscious were as important and real as life. For the 'unists' and 'algists' of early days, literature and art were intentionally hermetic since only elitist revolutionary techniques could access that reality. But for some writers within Surrealist circles these experiments lost their aura. Under the pressure of domestic politics and the influence of literary, artistic, and political struggles elsewhere in Europe, the dream masters became propagandists. In this turn-about, World War II and the Stalinist regime that soon followed in Romania found former avant-gardists writing literature for the masses and serving as editors of communist magazines.

⁹⁰ 'Futurismul nostru' (Our Own Futurism), *Facta*, 358 (19 May 1930), trans. by Magda Teodorescu, in Benson and Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds*, 713–14.

⁹¹ Pană, *Născut*, 289.

⁹² Ilk, *Rumänische Avantgarde*, 72–9.

⁹³ Pană, *Născut*, 289, 303.

⁹⁴ *Alge*, 7 (26 July 1931), and Ilk, *Rumänische Avantgarde*, 77.

⁹⁵ Ilk, *Rumänische Avantgarde*, 77.

⁹⁶ Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română*, 291; and Petre Răileanu, *Gherasim Luca*, traducere din limba franceza de Anișoara Biru (Iași: Junimea, 2005), 36–7.

⁹⁷ Geo Bogza, Paul Păun, Gherasim Luca, S. Perahim, 'Poezia pe care vrem să o facem', *Viața imediată*, 1 (Dec. 1933), in Duda (ed.), *Literatura*, 88.

⁹⁸ Duda, *ibid.* 89, 90.

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