

# ROMANIAN LITERARY SYNTHESSES OF THE INTERCULTURAL AND TRANS-IDEOLOGICAL DIALOGUE. THE AVANT-GARDE MAGAZINE *INTEGRAL*

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**Abstract:** *Through the current study we have come closer to some areas in which specific tectonics of literary movements are manifest. Found under the influence of either ideological or simply aesthetic factors, such literary boundaries give birth to new creations and result in, to a greater extent than in case of linear literature, a surpassing of the classical display, through graphemic structures, belonging to the iconic. The paper does not only answer some identity challenges with regard to the phenomenon of avant-garde: What caused the appearance of this phenomenon in Romania? When did appear for the first time, but equally, exposes the expansion possibilities, in the broad limits of the European avant-garde expression dialogue. In this respect, we analyzed the phases of the Romanian avant-garde, the temporal distance toward the center, its synthesis capacity and unique expression through the formula of the indigenous integralism that prefigured experimentalism. More precisely, by analyzing the constructivist-integralist movement belonging to the first Romanian avant-garde phase, the current paper highlights the role of the intercultural and trans-ideological dialogue between the representatives of futurism, Dadaism and especially constructivism in configuring a particular way of expression of the Romanian avant-garde, namely, the integralist manner. Integralism thus becomes a unique model within the dialogue between the center and periphery, between tradition and avant-garde, between the representatives of various cultures and between various avant-garde movements, in a synthesis that equally characterizes the Romanian avant-garde and the Romanian culture, open toward intercultural dialogue.*

**Keywords:** *avant-garde, constructivism, integralism, intercultural dialogue, trans-ideological dialogue.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION. THE PLACE OF THE ROMANIAN AVANT-GARDE WITHIN ITS CORRESPONDING EUROPEAN MOVEMENT

In order to define the place and role to the Romanian literary avant-garde in relation with the European avant-garde, there is need for both finding some pertinent relation criteria and also for identifying the extreme opinions that belong to the Romanian literary historians with regard to this rapport. It is much simpler for us to start by defining these interpretative boundaries, so as to further construct the natural relating criteria and place, in an objective manner, as much as possible, the Romanian avant-garde artistic and literary reality within the European setting. The first

worth-mentioning aspect, over which there were few, if any, contradictory interpretations, and which represents the standing point in relation with the avant-garde movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, is that of the perfect synchronicity between the Romanian avant-garde and the European avant-garde, so as it was stated by Ion Bogdan Lefter (2000). The contribution of the Romanian cultural background to the European avant-garde cannot be ignored either, some of its significant names, such as Tristan Tzara or Constantin Brâncuși, being among the firsts in literature or painting:

a (...) perfectly <synchronous> movement with the European avant-garde, in which it participated, both as a phenomenon, as part of

a continental culture whole, but also through its famed representatives, starting with Tristan Tzara, and Brâncuși, in the area of fine arts (Lefter, 2000:33)

The difference appears, and from here the problematic placement, in what concerns the real role of the Romanian avant-garde, and not of the Romanian cultural space's products, within the European avant-garde. From this perspective, we can bring about two extremes: Mincu's and Manolescu's.

Marin Mincu (2006a and, further, in his other works related to the topic) considered that the Romanian avant-garde wholly expressed itself in Europe, and even internationally. The Romanian avant-garde placed, in his viewpoint, in the foreground of the international avant-garde, in almost all art areas, through Tristan Tzara, in poetry, Eugène Ionesco, in dramaturgy, Constantin Brâncuși, in sculpturing, Victor Brauner, in painting. Nicolae Manolescu (2008) replied ironically (and with criticism) to Marin Mincu, stating that Romanian avant-gardists entered the literary history especially through what was not avant-gardism at all in their works. The avant-garde literature remained, from this perspective, in an area hidden to literary criticism. The two extreme positions presuppose not only a placement in relation with the avant-garde, interpreted from aesthetic perspective, but also in relation with an ideological dispute. With regard to Manolescu's perspective, we can mention its roots in the introductory study by Matei Călinescu to the *Anthology of the Romanian Avant-garde Literature*, by Sașa Pană, published in 1969. In this introduction, it is stated that, in cases of Ion Vinea, Ilarie Voronca or B. Fundoianu, but equally, in cases of Stephan Roll, Sașa Pană or Constantin Nisipeanu, the very literary creation takes place outside the avant-garde boundaries.

The Romanian avant-garde, in its rapports with the corresponding European movement, was subjected to criticism following the criterion center-periphery, as well. If, from the standpoint of the role played, we can identify two contrasting tendencies, manifested through Mincu and Manolescu extremes, from

the perspective of the rapport center-periphery, there is a certain imbalance, given the university professor, Paul Cernat's singular position. Paul Cernat (2007a) repositions the Romanian avant-garde rapports with the European avant-garde based on some relationships of the center-periphery type. From this perspective, Paul Cernat places the Romanian avant-garde close to the periphery, starting from the defining directions of this complex identified by Mircea Martin in a work regarding the analysis of G. Călinescu's literary criticism. These cultural complexes, identified up to the last one within the Romanian literary avant-garde, are as follows: the complex of humble origin, of peripheral existence, the complex of provincial isolation, as well as the complex toward criticism. Although the Romanian cultural space gave birth to avant-garde "genii", they manifested, according to the Romanian critic, at the "center", in Zürich, or in Paris, and not at Europe's borders<sup>1</sup>, in a space where complexes would not have allowed for manifestation in their plenitude. Paul Cernat's perspective, although the most balanced of all three, in relation with Mincu and Manolescu extremes, still needs to be regarded with certain circumspection. In his center-periphery rapports, Paul Cernat invokes the promoting channel required for the artistic creation to be valued, yet he fails to take into account the creative, full of potentiality environment in which artists developed their intellectual skills. The periphery complex highlighted through Cernat's work is the one concerning the production market and promotion instrument of the very artistic products, so long as part of those avant-garde "genii" strongly voiced their affiliation with the Romanian creative source. The most eloquent example is that of the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brâncuși, who stated, on numerous occasions, that his avangardism does not represent but a form of

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<sup>1</sup>“The isolated instances of perfect synchronicity (Brâncuși, Tzara, and later on Eugène Ionesco, Isidore Isou)”, remarks Paul cernat (2007a:10), contradicting Ion Bogdan Lefter's theory, “are explained by the fact that their innovative action took place at the very ‘Center’ (in Paris or elsewhere), and not in the Romanian ‘province’”.

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“restoration of archaic traditional art” (Munteanu, 2008:150)<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, the most adequate counter-example to contradict the critic and literary historian, Paul Cernat’s, point of view belongs, on the one side, to the university professor Ion Pop, who considers that the special openness of the Romanian literature strengthens the further expression of Tristan Tzara, an assertion that was later on looked over again and enriched by the Swedish Tom Sandqvist’s study (2010:98). Sandqvist places both the Romanian literature’s openness, at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the richness and openness conferred by the popular culture at the basis of Dada art movement. The perspective over this rapport is extremely interesting, since, from the inside, through Paul Cernat’s eyes, the Romanian avant-garde is aware of the periphery complex, whereas, foreigners’ perception (Sandqvist being just one of the many cultural personalities from abroad, who insisted on this assertion) is that the Romanian popular culture contributed fundamentally to the European avant-garde expression.

### 2. THE “INTEGRALIST” MARK

If the European avant-garde is represented by the Italian and later on, Russian futurism, Dadaism and surrealism, in Romania things are much more confuse. We can mention, in broad lines, three Romanian avant-garde phases, pretty much ambiguous when related to the values of the European avant-garde, but which give a certain particularity to the Romanian modernism, under the circumstances in which we can, as well, mention phases of the European avant-garde. Alexis Nouss distinguishes two main phases,

one initiated before the outbreak of the First World War, in which futurism, orphism, cubism, German expressionism and others manifested, and the other one, including Dadaism, surrealism, productivism, constructivism, *de stijl* movement, completed by a third phase, a weaker and less confident one:

Apart from these avant-gardes, so called historical, the recall of a third phase, starting with the year of 1950, is less confident (...); this would include, among others, abstract expressionism, pop art, the *happening*, conceptual art, the so called *arte povera*, brute art, minimalist art. (Nouss, 2000:41-42)

Between these phases, there are inactive spaces, at the level of manifestation, but still fertile from the viewpoint of future manifestations’ projection. Taken as a whole, the Romanian avant-garde may be characterized by synthesizing term, “integralism”<sup>3</sup>, an avant-garde literary movement displaying, in an assumed manner, elements pertaining to constructivism, Dadaism, futurism, even surrealism. Under the conditions of a relatively low Dadaist impact, in relation, for example, with the constructivism of *Contimporanul* magazine, respectively, under the conditions of some moderate influences of futurism, but before surrealism got to express itself wholly within the Romanian cultural space (although Breton’s first manifesto had already been published), “integralism” appeared as a synthetic form of the constructivism manifested through *Contimporanul*, *75 H.P.*, *Punct*, *Integral* magazines, of the Dadaism existing in *75 H.P.*, of the late futurism and incipient surrealism from *unu*. Integralism represents, at its core, not only a path toward the synthesis we have already mentioned, but also a path toward synchronization with the European spirit, as M.H. Maxy was about to state in his article, “Plastic Policy”, published

<sup>2</sup> Commenting on Brâncuși’s sculptural ‘avant-gardism’, Petre Comarnescu stated: “Brâncuși comes from a far-away past, inaugurating with his OLD the NEW in modern art. He comes from a cosmic vision, using a exceptionally elaborated technique, (...) in his childhood, there were still some magical practices that today have vanished; memories of his childhood will always be obsessive for the sculptor” (apud Munteanu, 2008:150).

<sup>3</sup> The literary avant-garde movement named *integralism* aims at the *synthesis-order* of the avant-garde movements, different from all historical avant-gardes, and it borrows its name from the publication *Integral*, published in Bucharest, between 1925 and 1928.

in the third issue of *Integral*. And the wish for avantgardist synchronicity is not far from Lovinescu's wish for cultural synchronicity, Ion Pop affirms, while bringing about a hot reflection topic, of the rootless Romanian avant-garde:

“Our modernism does not stand for adjusting x or y movements to our environment – wrote M.H. Maxy – but the integral manifestation of the same European spirit all over its geographical-spiritual area”. The assertion is in the spirit of Lovinescu's synchronism, the critic who also mentioned an inevitable “process of unification by leveling”, characteristic to the modern civilization. This is, in a way, an answer to numerous blames from adversaries, in relation with the fact that modern art movement from Romania would not correspond to any tradition (blames that have actually been prolonged up to our times). (Pop, 1969:28)

Probably that an understanding of Pop's assertion would not have determined the peripheral perspective on the Romanian avant-garde and it would not have corresponded, in the interpretative plan, to an intention to save it, through integration and transformation of the pseudo-avantgardist eclecticism between the years of 1912 and 1925, in a intendedly superior synthesis. This movement, integralism, atypical in Western Europe, represents, more precisely, the only avantgardist movement entirely Romanian, bearing the sign of authenticity, becoming, by extension, a sign of the whole Romanian avantgardist movement of the former half of the twentieth century:

Despite these delimitations, the Romanian literary avant-garde, so-called historical, is not a homogenous, unitary movement able to manifest itself in one single direction, or to “surf” literarily and artistically on a single wave, be it futurist, Dadaist, constructivist or surrealist, but a melting pot, a combination of movements, synthesized within the formula of “integralism”. (Cătălui, 2011:78)

The perspective of the integralist synthesis is not singular in the interpretative plan; critics and literary historians preoccupied by the

avantgardist phenomenon, such as Marin Mincu, for instance, underlined the possibility for such an interpretation. However, placing the entire Romanian avant-garde under the integralist mark stands for a simplified approach, quite a simplistic one, impossible to confer interpretative consistence to an ample phenomenon and a perfectly synchronic one with the similar movement of Western Europe. The “integralist” mark still remains defining for the Romanian avant-garde, offering, metaphorically speaking, a manner of understanding its synthesizing, constructivist particularity, different from the dominant de(con)structivism of the western movements.

### 3. INTEGRAL MAGAZINE. LANDMARKS OF INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE UNDER THE MARK OF ROMANIAN SYNTHESIS

**3.1 Integralist Doctrine.** *Integral* magazine is a satellite-magazine of *Contimporanul*, founded by M.H. Maxy, who was dissatisfied with the fusion of the mother-magazine and *Punct* magazine, and which included in its editorial board and among its collaborators famed names, such as: Tristan Tzara, Ilarie Voronca, Ion Călugăru, F. Brunea, Benjamin Fondane, Stephan Roll, Constantin Brâncuși, Victor Brauner, Mattis Teutsch, Corneliu Michăilescu. The magazine is self-proclaimed “a magazine of modern synthesis, organ of the modern movement from our country and abroad”, the only magazine that incurs its direct connection, through its subtitle, with an assumed modernity. The publication appeared on March, 1, 1925, with an editorial board in Bucharest, led by M.H. Maxy, in collaboration with F. Brunea, Ion Călugăru and Ilarie Voronca, and another one in Paris, coordinated by B. Fondane and Mattis Teusch. Among the publication's collaborators, we can remind other writers, avantgardist or traditionalist (sign for an avant-garde-founded synthesis, as an attempt to surpass, to pass by), such as: : J.M. Daniel, Ion Minulescu, Barbu Florian, Alexis Nour, Tudor Arghezi, Al. Philippide or Ernst Cosma.

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*Integral* is placed on syntheist positions in rapport with the precedent avantgardist reality, but on a hostile position, in relation with the French surrealism. Despite the openness toward the announced avantgardist synthesis, the magazine meets, next to *75 H.P.*, the most powerful experimental note, as Drogoreanu (2004:172)<sup>4</sup> also affirms, preceding, from this viewpoint, the new avant-gardes or the theoretical idea of avant-garde turned toward tradition. Later on, *Contimporanul* will also express itself from similar positions, both toward the late French surrealism and toward the Romanian incipient one, from *unu* or from the satellite-like proximity of this magazine. Starting from these opposing positions in rapport with Breton's movement, the major article that defines the magazine's orientation belongs to the same restless Ilarie Voronca and has the title *Surrealism and integralism* (Voronca, 1925/1968:420-422). Condemning the "proverbial abundance of *isms*" of the end of the twentieth century, Voronca, finds that the explanation for this abundance of movements lies in the social, political and especially, cultural structure of Europe at that time. The beginning of the twentieth century is even heavier in *isms*, and surrealism is only the last one, at that particular time, chronologically speaking, among the attempts to identify some spiritual India, yet, the endeavors of this movement do not imply its "own contribution":

Instituting hashish and dream as its art principles, excessive disaggregation had belonged to expressionism long ago, this one, in its turn, being a re-editor of nasalized romantic laments. The supportive plea for surrealism becomes its very act of accusation. (Voronca, 1925/1968:421)

In its doctrine, surrealism presented a well known principle, remarks Voronca, whereas in its dynamics it is inferior to Dadaism. It wears

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<sup>4</sup> "We noticed, nevertheless, that compared to *Contimporanul*, at *Integral*, the experimentalism benefited from a plus in its ascendance, based on its more radical criticism and more significant amount of received works of "futurist origin" (Drogoreanu, 2004:172).

the clothes of a feminine expressionism and is late in its displaying *isms*, after expressionism, futurism and cubism. "SURREALISM DOES NOT MEET THE RHYTHM OF OUR TIME", underlines Voronca, whereas, in agreement with the times, the Romanian synthesis proposes another *ism*, an authentic, masculine one, without reediting aesthetic principles that had already been expressed: *integralism*. This movement, only late described in Italy, especially due to Emilia Drogoreanu's works (ex. 2005:153-159), was to anticipate the well-known works of Umberto Eco, prose writer and referential literary semiotician of the late twentieth century, who stated, in 1962, at the time of his *Open Work's* appearance, that the current culture is one of the avant-gardes, and that the only way to return to tradition is to produce avant-garde (Eco, 1962/2002:225). Voronca's extraordinary capacity of anticipating the current dialectics of the avant-garde, of the new avant-garde or of what experimentalism meant within the Italian literary history, through a movement whose name was to be later on taken by a fascist Brazilian movement, makes us underline the imposing force of a path bearing authenticity, on the one side, opening an avantgardist expression, on the other side:

In its contemporary artistic aspect, integralism will voice its creed. Its gesture, of course, is not singular. But in front of the surrealist farewell show, one thing will be cried out loudly: *Integralism is in the rhythm of the epoch; integralism starts the style of the twentieth century.* (Voronca, 1925/1968:422)

*Integral* magazine thus contributes to a strange closeness (at the beginning of the twentieth century) between avant-garde and tradition, opposing an expression of full manifestation of the Romanian language, in Ilarie Voronca, to a radical, ill-fated vision in rapport with the country's potentialities, art, culture, in Calimachi:

Born from an extraordinary intersection, the clarity and roundness of the Latin word, next to the shadow and angular, rocky pond of the

Slavic word. A multiple resonance. An image like a gland in perpetual secretion. A sensual construction of the predicate, the noun preserving the softness of a Sunday dance, the verb strongly biting, like a sycamore tree in the wind, the adjective whistling awoken under the stabbing of a shovel [...] Which nerd declared that literature and the Romanian language should not yet be included within contemporary art. How comes that you do not understand, the new art comprises the entire force surprise right wrestle of this language (...) Not the modernism of those gathering around the feast offered by *Integral* is not what some impotent university professors, of servile borrowing may think. It is spontaneous enthusiasm, holding profoundly Romanian characters, despite all its apparent supernationalization. (Ilarie Voronca, „Pe marginea unui festin”, *Integral*, year III, nr.10/January 1927, p.3, *apud* Caruțiu, 2007:32)

This is the expression of maximum closeness of the avant-garde art to a tradition with an amazing potentiality of manifestation, reintering, cyclically, a form of anticipation. Moreover, *Integral* becomes a form meant to value the aesthetically non-indoctrinated culture, manifestation in its pure form, consonant with the form of art practiced by Brâncuși, opposing degenerative borrowings, respectively, a tradition of the cultivated creation sliding in imitation and mannerism. Through this positioning, integralism places itself in opposition with Dadaism, a movement that starts by demolishing the profound strata of culture.

**3.2 Constructivist foundations. Futurist and Dadaist echoes within the integralist melting pot.** Before debating on the constructivist-integralist peculiarities of the first phase of the Romanian avant-garde, we should notice the manner in which echoes of the main European avant-garde movements are reflected over the similar Romanian movement. Although we cannot speak about a Romanian futurism, influences of this movement, of Italian origins, were present, at a certain distance in time, in the Romanian literary avant-garde, contributing to the syncretic image of the Romanian avant-garde

(Drogoreanu, 2004). Futurist echoes are found in all Romanian avantgardist publications from the period of time of the first phase. They regard, largely, the telegraphic style, the alert rhythm, the abundance of neologisms (especially from the technical area) which were to characterize part of the works belonging to the first phase:

The poetry of futurist inspiration published by Ilarie Voronca, Stephan(e) Roll, Mihail Cosma and, sporadically, by Ion Vinea in the magazines “75 H.P.”, “Punct” and “Integral” is characterized by the telegraphic style (usually, punctuation marks, connectors and even predicates are missing), notations juxtaposed in an alert rhythm, unusual, ludic-ironical associations, defiantly neologicistic lexicon, and the abolition of the lyrical ego (the Dadaist poet is distant, cold, refusing sweet and obsolete sentimentalism and taking comfort only in registering external impressions with a reporter’s eyes) (Morar, 2005:129).

For example, in *Contimporanul*, the most important of these magazines, futurism is given ample space, in three consecutive issues, 96, 97 and 90, in which main futurist texts are presented. Among them, we can also identify the manifesto *Futurist Sensitivity*, an interview with Antonio Giulio Bragaglia, and a reportage belonging to Marinetti, as a result of his visit to Romania, *Fire at a Oil Well in Moreni*, in which the father of the futurist movement appreciates Petrașcu, Codreanu, Iancu, Maxy, Minulescu Vinea and Marcu. Let us note that the birth certificate of the Romanian avant-garde, in Paul Cernat’s view, *Activist Manifesto for the Youth*, was written by Vinea based on a rhetorical structure built on a futurist matrix, more precisely, a Marinettian one. The other magazines of the first phase also display important futurist echoes. In *75 H.P.*, *Punct* and *Integral* there are numerous pages dedicated to this movement. Issue no 27 of *Integral*, for example, contains texts by Marinetti, and other Italian futurists: F. Casavola, Farfa, P. Buzzi, but also futurist text written by the Romanians Mihail Cosma, Stephan Roll, Ernest Cosma etc. The futurist spirit is still present in many other works by Voronca, Roll, Cosma or

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Vinea. In this respect, we can remind of Voronca's program-article *Aviogram. Instead of manifesto*, the text *Accidents* of Mihail Cosma's or the manifesto *Metaloid* by Stephan Roll. As a consequence of these connections cultivated next to the Italian futurists, the Romanian avant-garde magazines of the first phase, but especially *Integral*, appeal to their artistic toolset, to the futurist discourse and technical means of the page layout.

Likewise, we can identify a consistent penetration of futurist influences within the entire structure of the magazine, but most of all, in its ideational fund and writing style in case of theoretical articles, poetry or in theater and film theory, and finally, in prose,

affirms Drogoreanu (2004:166) in *Influences of the Italian Futurism on the Romanian Avant-garde*.

As far as Dadaism is concerned, although this movement of nihilist nature was brought to stage, among others, by important Romanian avant-gardists: Tristan Tzara, Marcel Iancu or Arthur Segal, it did not meet important echoes in Romania. Without an aesthetic program (Tzara would laugh at the possibility of projecting any aesthetics; he proposed a "recipe" for making a Dadaist poem), appeared only out of the desire to free art from dogmas, Dadaism was not resonant with the Romanian cultural space. Even though a few of the Dada literature features are found in the magazines of the first avantgardist phase, such as: a deconstructivist approach, ludic spirit, preponderance of phonetic occurrence in discursive engagements, syntax abolition, and removal of punctuation marks (features that are strange from futurism, as well) its very echoes are sporadic and we can even meet opposing positionings.

There are other premises that could have led to a more important Dadaist influence on the Romanian avant-garde. Even the appearance of the magazine *Contimporanul* (and, later on, of the other satellite-magazines) owes, to a great extent, to Marcel Iancu, newly returned from Switzerland, but who had given up his Dadaist inclinations. Important Dada

writers, such as Hans Arp, Kurt Schwitters, Philippe Soupault etc. sign some of the artistic creations or program-articles within the pages of Romanian avant-garde publications of the first phase. But equally, futurist publications also include Dadaist creations. Some critics, (Morar, 2005:141, for example), considers that *Pictopetry* published in *75 H.P.* to be the result of a indigenous application of the Dadaist collage. Others, (Drogoreanu, 2004:204, for example), highlights the influence of synthesis from the Italian futurist verbal-ionic structures named *tavole parolibere*. It is worth mentioning that, despite its permanent dialogue with Dada movement, despite the proven Romanian paternity of the avant-garde literature from Cabaret Voltaire, in spite of the publication of some texts belonging to famed Dadaists, the Romanian avant-garde, open to synthesis and not to a violent and total negation, did not allow for the germination of similar ideas within the Romanian cultural space. Apart for the ludic spirit, probably of Dadaist origin, which is found in the Romanian avant-garde toolset, the other Dadaist influences are but minor, mere nuances. It is also worth mentioning that, different from the violent reaction of the Romanian first phase of the avant-garde, in relation with surrealism, Dadaism is not rejected. It simply does not succeed, despite its numerous attempts, in getting roots within a soil that could not provide the necessary nutrients for it to develop.

Constructivism, a not very important avant-garde movement in the landscape of the beginning of twentieth century in Europe, left behind the most prominent influence on the first Romanian avantgardist phase. Founded in Russia (its paternity is held by the painter Vladimir Tatlin), under the influence of futurism and cubism (some Romanian critics and literary historians even associates it with the "literary cubism"), constructivism becomes an international avant-garde movement, very active in the Western Europe, mostly in Germany and Holland. For example the followers of *De Stijl* movement place themselves under the constructivist umbrella and launch their famous manifestos, in which

the principles of new art organization are made clear based on anti-mimetism and non-figurativism, destroying and abandoning even the metaphysical to the detriment of a new construct. In this construct, in agreement with the second manifesto of *De Stijl*, signed by Theo Van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian and Antony Kok, the word does not benefit from the subjective illusion, but only from the objective reality of syntax, prosody, elements pertaining to typography, orthography, respectively, from the arithmetic structures in order to be expressed wholly<sup>5</sup>. Commenting on this manifesto, Adrian Lesenciuc, the author of the single study in Romania, dedicated exclusively to visual poetry, identified the role of the Dutch constructivists from *De Stijl*, both with regard to the movement's influence on the Romanian avant-garde and on the verbal-icon reform:

It is not the duality form/content that constitutes the constructivist unity between form and content. More explicitly, only put together can the readable and the visible restore the coverage area through speech, can they restore the relationship between language and speech resuscitate the "meaning" of words or cover words with the unspeakable. (Lesenciuc, 2006:55)

Constructivism, through its multiple forms of manifestation, starting from Mondrian's neo-plasticism, aims at promoting total art, able to comprise life and not to negate it or to copy it. Thus, art becomes an integrating unit of real and abstract, of verbal and iconic. The effects of constructivism in the literary avant-garde, in general, and in visual poetry, in particular, lead to the creation of an

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<sup>5</sup> The second manifesto of the group De Stijl sends explicitly to the impotence of word and poetry and engages forms of resuscitation: "In order to literarily build the multitude of events occurring next to us or within us, it is necessary for the word to be reconstructed, either by following the sound or the idea. Should the word's intrinsic meaning of old poetry be destroyed by the dominance of relative and subjective feelings, we wish to give word a new perception and new power of expression, using all means at our disposal: syntax, prosody, typography, arithmetic, orthography" (Van Doesburg, Mondrian & Kok, 1921, apud de Micheli, 1968), in Ilie Constantin's translation.

inseparable connection between the aesthetic theory promoted by the member of *De Stijl* and the verbal-iconic expression found within the avant-garde magazines' pages (including the Romanian publications of the first phase, directly influenced by constructivism).

The constructivist movement appears in Romania as a consequence of the influence exerted by Marcel Iancu, a converted constructivist, attendant to the first international congress of the avant-garde movement that took place in Düsseldorf, in 1922. All Romanian avant-garde publications of the first phase express, either directly or indirectly, their affiliation to the movement, but generally, these publications are characterized by a visual skeleton of this type and they include works by painters who are keen on of constructivist principles, such as Marcel Iancu, Milița Petrașcu, Victor Brauner, Mattis Teutsch, M.H. Maxy, Corneliu Michăilescu etc., completed by literary productions and program-articles under the influence of the Italian futurism, mainly. The two movements are, in fact, consonant and permissive with each other, as long as futurism held an important authority over constructivism. The reform of the word, as it is shown from the projection of *De Stijl*, led to a certain *geometrization of text, prefiguring, in a way, according to* Morar (2005:153), Isidore Isou's lettrism.

Summarizing the external influences on the Romanian avant-gardism, we can easily observe that, given the constructivist predominance, the dissonant expression of surrealism was vehemently rejected by some of the satellite- publications, such as *Integral*, the Dadaist expression was not visible, whereas the futurist one was more strongly perceived. Commenting on this general framework of manifestations, Drogoreanu asserted that the fundamental percentage of the avant-garde movements manifested during the first phase was held by constructivism; nevertheless, the Romanian avant-garde is characterized by integralism:

At the same time, of a decisive importance was the will for creative synthesis promoted by all Romanian avant-garde groups, which explains



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other influences, as well, but which was motivated, on the other side, by the tardy reception of avant-gardes in Romania. From this very reason, we consider that futurist influences got closer to constructivism rather than expressionism. (Drogoreanu, 2004:120).

On this background of *mélange*, Western avant-garde movements, occurring at a certain temporal distance from the Center, find in the Romanian cultural space a setting for their possible convergence, thus synthesis is produced, as well as a setting for discovery of the old, under the influence of the new, and in the light of innovation. Drogoreanu (2004:120) underlines:

Extremism in the first avant-garde's program successfully accompanied the stage of the discovering the innovative and iconoclast cultural spirit in the Romanian literature at the beginning of the century.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

So as it was previously shown, the entire Romanian literary avant-garde may be interpreted in relation with the constructivist-integralist synthesis. This summary of the Romanian avant-garde's orientation brings in the foreground aspects leading to the understanding of some critics' perception, critics who, maybe unfairly, considered the Romanian avant-garde either minor, in rapport with the European avant-garde, or marginal in its position toward the Center. Yet, more than this, the summary offers clues related to the manner in which the Romanian avant-garde manifested on our national territory, without implying an exclusively destructive, demolishing, nihilist action, and equally, without ignoring the extremely complex toolset of Western avant-gardes. Consequently, rather than placing the Romanian historical avant-garde in the proximity of minor or marginal, we had better settle it in the vicinity of the post-avant-garde, through its expression modalities. From this viewpoint, we can affirm that the Romanian avant-garde rather precedes the European avant-garde than aligns with it. On the other

side, not even in this instance can we be very strict, since the last surrealist phase gives evidence of aligning tendencies, whereas, in case of the constructivist-integralist phase we come across tendencies of alignment to futurism, Dadaism and, especially, constructivism. The integralist synthesis, naturally insinuated, is the one to confer value to the Romanian historical avant-garde, making it particular and producing, through it, a relocation of efforts of terminological inclusion of the European avant-garde within new conceptual frameworks. It is exactly what was about to be done by Umberto Eco, trained within the Italian cultural space, who proposes the terminological distinction between avant-garde and experimentalism, but who also, understanding the hidden mechanisms of a natural cyclicity, deconstruction-reconstruction, will put forward a rebalancing of the avant-garde's rapports with tradition. Regarded in the light of these terms, the Romanian historical avant-garde is, to a certain extent, the precursor of a phenomenon that fell under the theoreticians' analysis, yet, which could not meet its accomplishment elsewhere but within the Romanian cultural space. Each of the Western avant-gardes ended within the boundaries of their impositions, whereas the Romanian avant-garde ended, by imitation, within its own ascendance. The manifest dialectic materialism led to, on the one side, a recognition of tradition – and this an abdication form, according to Ion Pop<sup>6</sup> -, on

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<sup>6</sup> Ion Pop noted, as far as 1969, with regard to rapports between tradition and avant-garde (mainly the historical one), underlying the abdication as a sense of the avant-garde's recognition of tradition: "Tempted, thus, more to catch spiritual movement than to apply it within a literary expression, the avant-garde is anti-traditional to the extent to which it questions the very reason of literature. Should there exist any avant-garde tradition, recognized as such by the representatives of the movement, then it is composed of those spirits that tried, one way or another, to surpass literature, in search for something "different". Recognition of any traditions, by the avant-garde, is nothing but abdication, of course an inevitable but forced one, because its ideal was to live within a second, fearing eternity. Yet, since poets had to take comfort in writing literature, while still preserving the awareness of its earthly perfection, similarly, the avant-garde poets accepted a direction of

the other side, a transformation from the awareness of the present into the nostalgia of the present. Therefore, we are placed, somehow, outside modernity, and, to strengthen this, Nouss brings about a solid argument:

Let us remind, finally, that the avant-garde is placed, by definition, forward and in advance, that it precedes, announces – which presupposes trust in the value of future, that it is illuminated by an “obscure [and] perfidious lamp”, so as Baudelaire defined the eighteenth century’s ideology of progress. However, so as O. Paz stated, because the human conscience lost ground in front of the twentieth century’s apocalypses, the trust in progress, in the current (political and cultural) history, “future is no longer the depository of perfection, but of horror” (1976, p.192)<sup>7</sup>. And if the aesthetic replaces the political, future will be neither pleasant, nor credible. In a sense, this delegitimization of the avant-garde shows that it cannot be identified with modernity and probes, despite some existent retrograde and conservatory temptations, its validity regarding the awareness of the present (Nouss, 2000:44).

The avant-gardes appeared and probably will appear from an obsession for the new, out of a need of surpassing, even through a form of applied “infantile malady”, expressed as such, in a literary climate, characterized by generationist linearity. In this climate, let us perceive the need for the new, not in relation with modernity’s instruments and the need of progress, but in rapport with the need of surpassing, through innovation’s tools or even the tools of tradition. The Romanian literary avant-garde understood this aspect and gave way to a remarkable evolution. Whether or not it was hazard or the indigenous cultural background led to such a happening, it will be the literary history to establish this, in time. It is certain, though, that the Romanian literary avant-garde proposes the new as its openness,

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the literary past, while preserving the nostalgia for a perpetual present” (Pop, 1969:27-28).

<sup>7</sup> The quote is in reference to Octavio Paz’s work (1976). *Point de convergence. Du romantisme à l’avant-garde*. Paris: Gallimard.

in a unique model and in a synthesis that is worth greater attention.

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