

**THE ROMANIAN POST-AVANT-GARDES.
BETWEEN INFLUENCE AND EQUIVALENCE**

Abstract: For the better part of the last three decades, Romanian poetry has undergone a series of mutations that led to the recovery of the interwar avant-garde, both in terms of poetic discursive strategies and in the militant rhetoric of its manifestoes. Although the first avant-garde influences date back to the 60ies, with a major iteration in the 70ies and the 80ies, because of the socio-cultural context of these periods we can only speak of a formal influence of the avant-garde. This paper intends to analyse how the Romanian poetry of the 2000s is the first true iteration of the inter-war avant-garde that accomplished a stylistic, thematic, and ideological literary recovery, in a way that could not have been possible in communist-era Romania. For this, the study will assess the socio-cultural context of Romanian post-communist transition and its influence on the contemporary literary structures and institutions, while also drawing parallels between the avant-garde and the contemporary programmatic literary discourses.

Key-words: historical avant-garde, manifestoes, Generation 2000, fracturism, identity, poetics

The starting point of the present study is the idea that, knowing the main directions, the literary programmes, and the manifestoes of the so-called Generation 2000, it can be stated that there is a clear literary iteration of the historical avant-garde in the Romanian literature of the 2000s. A first observation in this respect is that, for the first time in two decades after the 1989 Revolution, Romanian literature has managed to recover both the avant-garde poetry as well as the main rhetoric and literary formulas that composed the poetics of literary manifestoes and incorporate them into their own poetics. Even though the beginnings of avant-garde influence on Romanian poetry can be traced back to the 70ies and 80ies (with a first *post-avant-gardiste* iteration through the poetry of the “War Generation”),

the socio-cultural context of these historical periods has hindered the complete recovery of this controversial literature from ever being achieved. While post-revolutionary poetry has its own role in this process of recovery, the first transitional phase of post-communist Romania has caused a sort of literary meltdown in the cultural field.

To be more precise, a rather paradoxical phenomenon occurred: while the fall of communism meant a total liberalisation of all aspects of life (cultural or otherwise), writers that achieved a canonical position within the literary field in the 80ies (when generational affinities were much more important in the evolution of literary forms) have started to disengage from such gregarious forms of literary cohabitation and proceeded to create literature individually, through personal projects of maturity. Starting with the year 2000, young writers that made their debuts at the beginning of the new millennium have found solace in reintegrating themselves into generational literary groups, not unlike the historical avant-garde groups.

More so, it would seem that Generation 2000 shares a common destiny with the Romanian literary avant-garde, stylistically and thematically, but also because of their marginal position in the literary canon. Literary critics such as Paul Cernat have analysed the Romanian avant-garde from this exact perspective in his work *The Romanian Avant-garde and the Periphery Complex (Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei)*. Rebelliousness, viscosity, de-poetisation and de-tabooisation of lyrical conventions (Pop 44), shouldering a peripheral position in the grand context of Romanian literature are but a few of the meeting points of these literary phenomena. Extra-literary aspects, such as precarious editorial conditions, lack of visibility on the market, and negative critical reception from canonical literary criticism, are also common conditions of the two literary groups. However, before discussing the major aspects that bring Generation 2000 and the historical avant-garde closer together, a short excursus must be made detailing the few (but highly evident) influences that avant-garde poetry had on previous literary movements that preceded Generation 2000. We shall call these occurrences *neo-avant-garde breaches*, as they typically stand out in the context of the literary forms of their time.

One such case is the post-war “War Generation” (a term utilised for the group of writers that was especially active immediately following the Second World War). A rather

atypical case in the history of Romanian literature, the War Generation (Dimitrie Stelaru, Constant Tonegaru, Virgil Teodorescu, Mihail Crama, Ion Caraion, Geo Dumitrescu, Mircea Popovici, Ștefan Popescu, and others) had a complicated evolution. Born in the interwar period and with a literary youth at the crossroads of two dictatorships, the authors of this generation saw in their avant-garde precursors veritable trail blazers of militant poetry. This particular line of poetry had succumbed to a rather grotesque result after the communist regime was established. For the War Generation, avant-garde poetry

had a more judiciary influence than literary. The nonconformity of the avant-garde was more artistic. It is only starting with Stelaru, Tonegaru and Geo Dumitrescu (...) that poetry increases its dose of liberty and ethical disobedience. General histrionism is a main characteristic of this new avant-garde generation that will end up being devoured, later, by social realism¹. (Manolescu 938)

With regards to this generation, poetic engagement has everything to do with the writers' own relationship with the realities of the Second World War. The militant poetic act *against* the war does not end with the establishment of "socialist peace", although it will however be substituted with ironic anti-communist attacks in the 70ies. For example, Geo Dumitrescu's poetry will follow a rather interesting evolution: ironic engagement through irony against the traumas of war, then a militant turn in favour of communism only to turn against the new establishment employing irony a second time (Croitoru 87). Having been tardily re-engaged through poetry, authors of the War Generation become themselves the representatives of a tragic irony. Disillusioned by the failure of the socialist utopia, they begin to re-engage poetically by being disloyal to the socialist cause, but faithful to reality. Having a rather curious critical reception, seen either as a sort of annex-poetry of the interwar avant-garde through which social realism is anticipated (such is the case with Emil Manu) or as a major turning point in the evolution of Romanian poetry (as Liviu Petrescu asserts in his book

¹ "avusese ecou mai mult judiciar decât literar. Inconformismul avangardei era mai mult artistic. Abia cu Stelaru, Tonegaru și Geo Dumitrescu (...) poezia își crește doza de libertate și nonconformism etc. Cabotinismul și histrionismul sunt o caracteristică a acestei noi generații avangardiste, pe care realismul socialist o va devora aproape în întregime". My translation.

on the poetics of postmodernism), the War Generation is nevertheless a highly particular case in discussing avant-garde literary reiterations.

But perhaps the most productive neo-avant-garde literary current is the literary generation of the 80s. This group presents a very interesting case, not only in the context of our discussion, but also in the grand picture of post-war Romanian literature. It is most thought-provoking to see how the writers of this generation are the most promising only when taken as a whole group. The legitimising anthology of this group, *Competiția continuă* (*The Continuous Competition*), that gathers the most important writers of the 80ies, stands as proof of how their programmatic stances only resist by generational affiliation. Furthermore, this generation is the first one to come in contact with the discussions on postmodernism. This is why the most relevant aspect of their theoretical texts is that affiliating with the postmodernist thought meant the first synchronising of Romanian literature to Western cultural values after the end of the Second World War. Thus, the general effervescence of these writers is quite understandable. However, amidst this highly active literary scene, tensions have arisen, and with it, the sense that literature of the 80ies was, paradoxically, lacking. Gheorghe Crăciun, one of the most important literary figures of this period, talked about his generation in terms of failure, inconsolableness and disappointment. In an interview given to the *Observer cultural* (*Cultural Observer*) magazine in 2004, he bewails not the literature of his generation, but the lack of collective vision that could transform their literary project into something of an as great a symbolic value as the generation that preceded it:

I am not disappointed in the literature of my colleagues and my friends, a literature that is, without a doubt, one of the most vivid manifestation of creative spirit in our entire post-war culture, but in the fact that we were never able (...) to fully understand – as true Europeans – what we want from literature itself (and Romanian literature in particular) and to act accordingly². (Gheorghe Crăciun 217)

² “ (...) nu sunt dezamăgit de literatura colegilor și prietenilor mei, care reprezintă – n-am nici o îndoială – cea mai vie manifestare a spiritului creator din toată literatura noastră postbelică, ci de faptul că noi toți n-am fost în stare (...) să înțelegem mai bine – ca niște adevărați europeni – ce vrem de la literatură (și ce vrem în particular de la literatura română) și să acționăm (să scriem) în consecință”. My translation. Note that this interview was included in Gheorghe Crăciun. *Teatru de operațiuni*. Pitești: Paralela 45, 2006. I use the cited text from this source.

Having been a complicated generation, caught between self-legitimising and the anxiety of canonisation, while also recovering the historical avant-garde as explicitly as possible (especially in the dimension of literary engagement and in introducing literature in the praxis of life), literature of the 80s has not achieved generational fulfilment. After the 1989 revolution, the many intra-generational efforts to establish a canonical school of thought led to a series of multiplicities and individualities that often tried too hard to distinguish themselves from the general group. The many liberties won after the revolution did not help in this respect, leading to a generation that was theoretically prepared to establish a new literary canon to dissolve into individual projects of maturity.

Finally, “Generation 2000” has had one of the most productive discussions about a literary generation over the last three decades. While the War Generation was short-lived, and the literature of the 80s has always had a very impressive theoretical and analytical support to back their literary programmes, Generation 2000, while having its fair share of literary manifestoes, was almost immediately rejected by the canonical literary criticism and praised by the young one. What is most striking about this generation is the social context in which it is active. The most pertinent description of this generation, with regards to the relationship between literature and society is made by Grațiela Benga. Intuiting the negationist attitude of Generation 2000 as having all the signs of an immunologic response, the Romanian researcher paints, in large strokes, the profile of the society that gave birth to literature of the 2000s:

On the brink of the new millennium, Romanian society was disconcerted, disoriented, disappointed. A part of it retreated in disillusionment, another turned to the aggressive rhetoric of the extremes. Politically, approaching the new millennium brought out artifacts of old, authoritarian times. Economically and socially, the regression was undeniable, with a major impact on the standard of living. Mentally, this translated into a crisis that has already emerged from its dormant state. Literarily, this crisis imposed a change of code – one that, on one side, strived to define the generation in opposition with the textualism of the 80s and, on the other, assumed the aggressive, colloquial stance of the socio-political discourse. Their writing does not reflect the contact with a

disappointing social reality, but rather expresses itself against this reality. This attitude is similar to an organic response to a viral attack on the body ³ (Benga 17-18)

Only by reading the literature of this generation in terms of an immunologic response can we fully understand its tenets. Thus, a veritable dialectic of negativity resides in the writing of Generation 2000, one that, while it can be circumscribed to an avant-garde tradition of negation, it can also be subordinated to a larger social phenomenon. As a whole, the literary production of the 2000s can be read as a response given to a society that has extreme systemic dysfunctions, be it in the form of the acrimoniousness of fracturist poetry, the existential angst of minimalist biographism or the evasionist aesthetics of neo-expressionism. Ștefania Mincu also takes into account this aspect:

It is evident (...) that the newcomers in the 2000s distinguish themselves from the writers of the 80s and are more closely related to the writers of the 90s. Their profile is defined by the fact that they want to be (and they are) the most radical: irony, ludic, parody, textual self-referentiality no longer satisfy them. What interests them is neither the text (as an almost "transcendental" form of the literary work), nor the textualist experiment, at present considered an obsolete form of evasion and inefficient dissidence towards reality (...), but, more importantly, the social context, understood differentially, with different overtones than that what we used to call "sociality" not long ago ⁴. (Mincu 14-15)

³ "În pragul noului mileniu, societatea românească era descumpănită, dezorientată, dezamăgită. O parte a ei s-a retras în dezabuzare, o alta a virat spre retorismul agresiv al extremelor. Politic, apropierea noului mileniu scotea la suprafață artefacte din vechiul timp al autoritarismului. Economic și social, regresul era de netăgăduit, cu impact major asupra nivelului de trai. Mental, dădea proporții unei crize care depășise stadiul latenței. Literar, această criză impunea o schimbare de cod – care, pe de-o parte, voia să se definească în opoziție cu optzecismul textualist și, pe de altă parte, prelua componenta agresiv-colocvială a discursului socio-politic. Scrisul tinerilor nu reflectă contactul cu o realitate socială dezamăgitoare, ci e menit să se exprime împotriva acestei realități. E similar unui răspuns organic la un atac viral asupra trupului". My translation.

⁴"Se vede (...) că noii veniți în preajma anului 2000 se deosebesc de optzeciști și că au afinități mai mari cu nouăzeciștii. *Profilul* lor se evidențiază prin faptul că se vor a fi (și sunt) cei mai radicali: nu-i mai satisfac ironia, ludicul, parodicul, autoreferențialitatea textuală – trăsături acreditate de literatura optzecistă în special. Ceea ce îi preocupă nu este *textul* (ca normă aproape «transcendentă» a operei literare) și nici *experimentul textualist*, considerat actualmente doar o formă depășită de evaziune și de dizidență ineficientă față de real, justificabilă doar la momentul în care a apărut ei, în primul rând, *contextul social*, înțeles însă diferențiat, cu conotații inedite față de ceea ce obișnuiam noi să numim «socialitate» până nu de mult". My translation.

Another relevant characteristic that shapes the poetics of this generation is the discussion on language. The mutations of the language of poetry can be explained through both the lack of linguistic means (the insufficiency of a language that cannot loyally render the author's exasperation) and the general contamination of language with the mass-media rhetoric. This *radical language*, as Ștefania Mincu calls it, consciously opposes the status quo through excessiveness, it constantly accuses the establishment of confiscating their identity, their own reality. This is why Generation 2000 proposes a new fictional pact. Waiving any traditional fictional pacts, their writing identifies with reality in a crude manner or, on the contrary, ends up in impossible and unacceptable fictions, pathologically anomalous (Mincu 15-16). This is why Generation 2000 resorts to strategies of scandal (stylistically) and liminality (discursively). As an immunologic response, this generation's use of language is the most convenient instrument of reaction. Last of all, the negationist dimension of Generation 2000's writing must also be understood in the context of an acute need of *re-ontologizing the discourse*. Even if this perspective resembles the main aspirations of literature of the 80s (in the same way *authenticism* is taken from interwar discourse and later introduced by Mircea Nedelciu, or the transitivity of poetic language is inherited from Gheorghe Crăciun following Tudor Vianu's footsteps), this new urge of the young writers suggest an evident rupture from tradition (this was explicitly stated in the *Fracturist Manifesto* – "Manifestul fracturist" – in 1998). In the case of Generation 2000, their rebellious attitude towards the literature of the 80s came as a need of shaking the relative surfeit that the older writers were experiencing later in the 90s. The emergence of cultural plurality in the 90s already got the best of the writers of the 80s, and it is to this phenomenon that Generation 2000 has responded radically, by explicitly stating the rupture between these two literary generations. In this respect, the poetics of negation, transmitted on all levels of discourse, comes from the necessity to reinvest lyrical discourse with ontology. Moreover, essential to our understanding of this literary current in terms of rupture and discontinuity is the way it changed the background of the front line:

In the case of millennials, literature is at stake only in subsidiary. In contrast to the postmodern offensive, that tried to legitimize poetry through the utopic image of a

literary telos, of a certain “progress” in the dimension of forms (...), Generation 2000 claims existential legitimacy. In other words, before trying to define literature as a form of art, they see it as a form of living⁵. (Terian 127)

This is the general context in which the poetry of the 2000s has materialised in several literary directions. It is important to mention that, while these directions do retain their individuality, there are authors that easily glide between disjunctive tendencies without affecting their personal style. Therefore, we have *fracturism*, by far the most avant-garde movement of the 2000s, with a programmatic attitude of systemic negation, deconstructive tendencies, and the desire to inflict “a fracture in the art receiver’s routine” (Benga 26), with its most important exponents: Marius Ianuș, Dumitru Crudu, Elena Vlădăreanu, Ruxandra Novac, Ionuț Chiva and Cristian Cosma, *utilitarianism*, with the most notable members: Adrian Urmanov, Andrei Peniuc, Răzvan Țupa, for which poetry “hides a sort of totalitarian power, by which the poet imposes his own set of rules in the act of communication” (Benga 37), *biographist minimalism* (Dan Sociu, M. Duțescu, T.S. Khasis) and, lastly, *neo-expressionism* (not to be confused with the late-modernist artistic movement of the 70ies in the West): Dan Coman, Claudiu Komartin and Teodor Dună. In order to better understand the equivalence between Generation 2000 and the historical avant-garde one must take into consideration the militantist attitude of the two groups. This is why this paper further proposes an analysis of the poetics of the manifestoes that were written in the 2000s in relation to the praxis of literary engagement in the social field⁶.

The first manifesto that I propose for discussion is *The Fracturist Manifesto*, first published in 1998 under the title *Fracturism – A Manifesto* (“Fracturismul – un manifest”) and signed by Marius Ianuș and Dumitru Crudu. Highly neurotic, violent, bordering on slander, *The Fracturist Manifesto* has the attitude of guerilla warfare and the discursive technicism of military reports. Even the making-of of the manifesto is revealed authentically:

⁵ “Miza milenariștilor pare a fi doar în subsidiar literatura. Spre deosebire de ofensiva postmodernilor, care încercă să-și legitimeze poezia prin utopia unui *telos* literar, a unui «progres», în planul formelor (...), generația 2000 își revendică o *legitimare existențială*. Altfel spus, înainte de a defini literatura ca pe o formă de artă, ei o văd ca pe o *formă de trăire*”. My translation.

⁶ A similar enterprise was done with the manifestoes of the Romanian avant-garde, in a study published earlier in this journal. See Emanuel Modoc, *The Poetics of Romanian Avant-Garde Manifestoes*, in *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2015, pp. 186-200.

“Fracturism is a current we initiated – D.C. and M.I. – in the night of 10 to 11 September ’98 (when we were beaten in the streets), to finish once and for all with poetry. From that moment on, our writings were called fractures”⁷ (Ianuș, Crudu 134). Anarchy and the programmatic rejections of established conventions are the two main focal points of poetic fracturism. The principal directives of this current are authenticity, naked description of biographical details, polemic attitude towards the literary canon, towards textualism and postmodernism. Let us see how the authors of the manifesto understand the tendency to re-ontologise the discourse:

Fracturism, after it has covered the fissures of reality and existence, wants to institute an extremely tight bond, a unity between the way you live and the poetry you write. Fracturism understands that these two things cannot be segregated. You cannot, at the same time, be a university professor, a petty bourgeois careerist – or a merchant – a politician and a nonconformist poet⁸. (Ianuș, Crudu 135)

Fracturists thoroughly reject the encyclopaedism and escapism of their literary counterparts from the 80s. This could be argued as a strategic attack caused by the symbolic capital of the earlier generation, but whatever the true motive of this programmatic attack, *The Fracturist Manifesto* is, now, a literary milestone in contemporary Romanian literature. The manifesto itself has been periodically updated with several annexes, the first one being signed by Dumitru Crudu, the second one by Marius Ianuș, and with a third one, relating to fracturist prose, signed by Ionuț Chiva. These annexes are merely explanatory, they do not offer any relevant revisions, but add some interesting nuances to the original text. For example, for Dumitru Crudu, the main focus of poetry should be *subjectivization*:

Fracturism proposes a solution: transferring the attention from the object(s) to the subject.

Fracturism understood that the objects cut out from reality have to be moved in the

⁷ “E un curent pe care l-am inaugurat – D.C. și M.I. – în noaptea de 10 spre 11 septembrie ’98 (când am fost bătuți pe stradă), ca să terminăm odată cu poezia. Din acel moment scrierile noastre s-au numit fracturi”. My translation. Note that all quotes from Ianuș and Crudu are taken from Mincu, Marin (ed.). *Generația 2000*. Constanța: Pontica, 2004.

⁸ “Fracturismul, după ce a acoperit fisurile realității și existenței, vrea să instituie o legătură extrem de strânsă, o coeziune între felul cum trăiești și poezia pe care o scrii. Fracturismul a înțeles că aceste două lucruri nu pot fi despărțite. Nu poți fi, în același timp, un profesor universitar academician, un mic-burghez carierist – comerciant – politician și un poet nonconformist”. My translation.

background, and alongside this, the cinematic techniques, excessively used, must be eliminated. At the same time, fracturism relinquishes any neutral, objective and outward perspectives on reality. Fracturism claims the re-emergence of the subject of the poet in the foreground, to the detriment of the presented object, because it is only by this that the true, fragile nudity of reality can be captured⁹. (Crudu 136)

Marius Ianuș, on the other hand, uses *ingenuity* as a means to produce fracturist poetry, ingenuity seen as both spontaneity and artlessness:

The most potent effect of art is ingenuity. THE INGENUITY EFFECT. Poetry is, for us, an intervention upon reality (...). And if any artistic instrument appears on the stage, it has to have the same effect as a scalpel forgotten inside the patient. The utmost ingenuity can only be achieved by a good understanding of mental states¹⁰. (Ianuș 138)

This ingenuity, or artlessness, must be set in motion by what Ianuș called an “existential pitfall” (Ianuș 138). In this respect, the fracturist poet takes on a terrible existential pact. In a sense, this is the same avant-garde tenet of intensely *living* art through life and life through *this* art, a way of integrating art in the *praxis of life* (Bürger 23).

Another manifesto that challenges the established norms society and of canonical perceptions on literature is signed by Elena Vlădăreanu, *Take Your Bitch and Go! (Ia-ți târfa și pleacă!)*, published in the *Luceafărul* (“The Evening Star”) magazine in 2003. Following the same attitude of rejecting the poetics of the 80s, Elena Vlădăreanu praises authenticity over the commercial literature of the former generation. For the author, the novelty of Generation 2000 consists in manifesting a retractile conduct that is favorable in cultivating pronounced individualities:

⁹ “Fracturismul propune o soluție: transferul atenției dinspre obiectul/obiectele decupate asupra subiectului emițător/receptor. Fracturismul a înțeles că obiectul/obiectele decupate trebuie să treacă în plan secund, iar odată cu aceasta și tehnica aparatului de filmat, hiperutilizată. De asemenea, fracturismul renunță la a-și adjudeca niște perspective neutre, obiective și exterioare asupra realității. Fracturismul revendică reparația în prim-plan a subiectului real al poetului, în detrimentul obiectului prezentat sau a (prezentării) tehnicilor poetice, pentru că numai în acesta am mai putea surprinde nuditatea fragilă a realului”. My translation.

¹⁰ “pentru noi efectul cel mai puternic al artei este ingenuitatea. EFECTUL DE INGENUITATE. Poezia este, pentru noi, o intervenție asupra realului (...). Iar dacă apare în scenă vreun instrument, acesta este efectul unui bisturiu lăsat în pacient. Ingenuitatea maximă poate fi atinsă numai printr-o bună cunoaștere a stărilor psihice”. My translation.

Discourse in the 2000s programmatically denounces attraction towards obscenity, typical to postmodernist mentalities, trying to exorcise aggressiveness and existential violence. This is why our language is rough, obscene even to the limit of gratuitous slang. The only way to immediately obtain the authenticity of objective experience seems to be the fracture that claims a discursive syncopation of the sentence. By sickly adhering to the desecrated reality, we can explain the visceralisation of the autobiographical segment, explored to abjection, only to obtain the utmost authenticity¹¹. (Vlădăreanu 327)

Like Vlădăreanu, Ianuș and Dumitru Crudu, there were a great many writers in the first years of the 2000s that had written such virulent manifestoes. Fracturism is the literary movement that reopened the anti-establishment literary paradigm. Following in its footsteps, a series of other similar manifestoes emerged, among which *In bed with mother literature* (*În pat cu mama literatură*), signed by Bogdan-Alexandru Stănescu, stands out. Both an acute sensibility to the poetic paradigm shifts occurring in Romanian literature and a mindfulness of the sociological factors that generated the literary crisis of the 2000s can be identified in his text:

You cannot write self-referential, inkhorn poetry anymore. Not when you see a mother in a sweetshop feeding her daughter an ordinary pastry and then licking the teaspoon afterwards. To ignore the fact that we live in a miserable society, in a country worthy of the theatre of the absurd would be the greatest form of treason against the writer's condition¹². (Stănescu 337)

We have seen, thus far, how anarchist discourse or social commentary is configured within the manifestoes of Generation 2000. Another category which is exploited in the

¹¹ "Discursul douămiist denunță programatic atracția către obscenitate, tipică mentalității post-moderniste, încercând să exorcizeze, astfel, agresivitatea și violența existențială. De aceea, limbajul douămiștilor este extrem de dur, chiar obscen până la limita suportabilității argotice. Singura modalitate de a accede nemediat la autenticitatea trăirii obiective pare a fi numai operația fracturării ce-și revendică, epistemologic, sincoparea discursivă a enunțului. Plierea maladivă către realul desacralizat explică visceralizarea segmentului autobiografic, explorat până la marginile abjecției, în vederea obținerii unei maxime autenticități". My translation. Note that all quotes by Vlădăreanu are taken from Mincu, Marin (ed.). *Generația 2000*. Constanța: Pontica, 2004.

¹² "Nu poți scrie o poezie total auto-referențială, livrescă până în sângele hârtiei, când într-o cofetărie vezi o mamă care-și linge lingurița după ce a dat fetiței să mănânce dintr-o prăjitură ordinară. A ignora faptul că trăim într-o societate mizerabilă, într-o țară demnă de teatrul absurdului ar fi cea mai mare trădare față de condiția de scriitor". My translation. Text is present in Mincu, Marin (ed.). *Generația 2000*. Constanța: Pontica, 2004.

programmatic discourse of this generation refers to the discussion on language. In this sense, the movement known as *utilitarianism* (Andrei Peniuc, Adrian Urmanov, Răzvan Țupa) is relevant for this dimension, as utilitarians often see language as something that can be exploited in order to reach the audience by employing strategies of empathy and rhetoric devices that would familiarize the lecturer with the transmitter. For Adrian Urmanov, for example, the utilitarian poem is the real answer to the great challenges of literature in the 2000s. By wholly detaching from fracturism, Adrian Urmanov launches the manifesto entitled *I am the utilitarian poem (eu sunt poemul utilitar)*. Its rhetoric is similar to one that could be found in an advertisement and the utilitarianist discourse strives to revitalise the relationship between the author and the reader. Urmanov proposes an interdisciplinary method that targets advertising, marketing and psychology, alongside rhetoric:

The utilitarian poem achieves the transition from a type of aesthetic-imaginative vision to a more functional one, a vision-mechanism, with all the transformations that this re/orientation presupposes./ the utilitarian poem does not have its own technical formula./ the utilitarian poem presupposes a new way of understanding a poet's own state and a new attitude towards the poem./ the utilitarian poem no longer belongs to the poet./ the utilitarian poem belongs to the reader¹³. (Urmanov 18)

I am the utilitarian poem (“eu sunt poemul utilitar”) is, in fact, a long, narrative poem-manifesto that introduces the philosophical concept of utilitarianism in poetry. It is an interesting sample of conceptual poetry that functions on the avant-gardiste principle of integrating art in the praxis of life. The relative textual sterility of the discourse and the lack of any form of lyrical effusions indicate the ostentatious nature of this manifesto. It can be seen, from the very beginning, that the neutral tone of the manifesto mimics the persuasive mechanisms of advertising even though the text has nothing to advertise. And herein lies the true purpose of this manifesto, because not having anything to advertise means that the manifesto itself is entirely devoid of meaning. Even though the desire to transform poetry into

¹³ “poemul utilitar realizează trecerea definitivă dinspre un tip de viziune estetică-imaginativă către formula unei viziuni funcționale, viziune-mecanism, cu toate transformările pe care le presupune o astfel de re/orientare./ poemul utilitar nu are o formulă tehnică proprie./ poemul utilitar presupune din partea poetului asumarea unei noi înțelegeri a statutului propriu și a unei noi atitudini față de poem./ poemul utilitar nu mai aparține poetului./ poemul utilitar aparține receptorului”. My translation.

an ideological instrument, the very fact that this prerequisite is evident in the text transforms the manifesto into a meta-commentary on the specious mechanisms of persuasiveness used in mass-media, a kind of meta-paraenesis transmitted to an absent audience. Having remained a simple curiosity of its time, *I am the utilitarian poem* will surely be recovered in the future, especially when theoretical discussions on conceptual poetry will catch up in the Romanian literary field.

The manifestoes chosen for our discussion follow a predictable logical sequence: in discussing the poetry of the 2000s, I have chosen to delineate the relationship between it and Romanian interwar avant-garde literature, following the shared aspects of the two literary movements: reconsidering literature as an institution, the challenges of language in innovating discourse and social commentary, and the endeavor to find ways of introducing art in the praxis of life. This is why I have also chosen a manifesto that negates the institution of canonical literature (Ianuș), a manifesto that challenges the way in which we use language in literary discourse (Urmanov), and two excerpts that are representative to the relationship between the writers of the 2000s and Romanian contemporary society.

However, a more pressing matter becomes apparent. To what extent can we circumscribe a clear avant-garde tradition to Romanian contemporary poetry, knowing that the strictures of the Communist-era politics wreaked havoc on Romanian literary tradition? Did the recovery of Romanian avant-garde actually occur as a result of an unconscious tendency that emerged after the collapse of the communist regime, or was it consciously assumed? And how can we differentiate autochthonous influences from Western ones? To answer these questions, I propose the idea of *cultural ricochet* that could explain the complicated network of influences and tendencies that surround the poetry of Generation 2000. This is because when discussing a text such as *The Fracturist Manifesto*, we can clearly see that the authors deny any autochthonous tradition, instead claiming to follow in the footsteps of poets such as Ginsberg, Ashbery, Yves Martin or Kenneth Koch. However, the avant-garde influence on these authors is indisputable, and even though no explicit claim to an avant-garde tradition is made, the genealogy of influence can be identified. Another explanation is that fracturists such as Marius Ianuș or Dumitru Crudu tried to relinquish any sort of Romanian literary tradition because the main literary figures of the 80s (which were

the ones the fracturists disputed the most) did mention avant-garde authors such as Geo Bogza, Gherasim Luca, Ilarie Voronca as literary precursors. Thus, while a very intriguing paradox of influences occurs, we can clearly delineate a relationship between the historical avant-garde and Generation 2000. Moreover, we can even establish the grade of similarity between these two currents by analyzing their legitimizing texts. We can clearly see how a timid continuation of avant-garde tenets within the War Generation occurred, rapidly extinguished with the monopoly of socialist realism, followed by a strong resemblance in the literature of the 80s, when avant-garde literature was fully recovered by the authors of that time, and, finally, a *structural similarity* in the poetry of the 2000s, when literature had both the artistic means of revitalizing the important discussions on literature as an institution and the social liberties to do so. Programmatic discourse is not the only aspect that brings the two literary currents together. Generation 2000 also has literary figures that may be considered of avant-garde descent.

From the perspective of the poetic anarchism of literary avant-garde and its common grounds with the literature of the 2000s, this study tried to expand on the idea that there is a clear avant-garde lineage in the structure nature of the contemporary literary movements in Romania. Marius Ianuș is probably the most important anarchist poet in the Romanian literature at the turn of the century. Through his poetic activity from the early years of the 2000s, his radical attitude and his combative stance, Marius Ianuș is the spearhead of Generation 2000. If, with the historical avant-garde, we can witness an explosion of poetic liberty through de-poetisation and de-tabooisation of lyrical conventions, Marius Ianuș wholly continues such a tradition. As far as the poetry of Dan Sociu goes, I find his poetics to be relevant to my discussion, considering his tendency to explore biographical details with assumed sincerity, and lacking any trace of conventional lyricism. By claiming a highly individualistic lyrical instance, Dan Sociu manages to develop his poetry on the bare decorum of citadinism, hyper-trivialized autobiographism and the directness in his confession that borders on mundane obscenity. In regards to the neo-expressionists Claudiu Komartin and Dan Coman, I find that they make quite a particular case for the poetry of Generation 2000. If fracturists were anarchists by nature, having much in common with the most radical avant-garde poets (Geo Bogza, Sașa Pană, Ilarie Voronca and others), Komartin and Coman recover

a different aspect of the avant-garde: the late-surrealist poetry of the 40s (Gellu Naum, Gherasim Luca, Dolfi Trost), that are juxtaposed with expressionist imagery into quite an interesting blend of post-avant-garde poetry. Ștefan Manasia, on the other hand, is the poet that seems to incorporate both the convulsive, visionary poetry of late-surrealism and the confessional, hyper-trivialised lyric of the more visceral avant-garde poets. Through his dense, alluvial writing, at times surrealist, at times anarchist, Ștefan Manasia manages to recover and reinvent a lyrical tradition that has had limited concrete iteration throughout the history of Romanian poetry. Moreover, Ștefan Manasia is quite an interesting case for the poetry of the 2000s for his ability to glide between the different codes and literary registries of the time. Radicalism, citadinism, authenticity, autobiographism, and a sincere confessional mode are distinguishing marks of avant-garde lyrical tradition, and by following them the present study attempted to justify the possibility of continuity between the Romanian historical avant-garde and the poetry of Generation 2000.

References

- Benga, Grația. *Rețeaua. Poezia românească a anilor 2000*. Timișoara: Universității de Vest, 2016.
- Bürger, Peter. *Theory of the Avant-garde*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
- Cernat, Paul. *Avagarda românească și complexul periferiei*. București: Cartea Românească, 2007.
- Crăciun, Gheorghe. *Competiția continuă*. Pitești: Paralela 45, 1999.
- Crăciun, Gheorghe. *Teatru de operațiuni*. Pitești: Paralela 45, 2006.
- Croitoru, Corina. *Politica ironiei în poezia românească sub comunism*. Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2014.
- Esposito, Roberto. *Immunitas. The Protection and Negation of Life*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.
- Manolescu, Nicolae. *Istoria critică a literaturii române. 5 secole de literatură*. Pitești: Paralela 45, 2008.
- Manu, Emil. *Generația literară a războiului*. București: Curtea Veche, 2000.

Mincu, Marin (ed.). *Generația 2000*. Constanța: Pontica, 2004.

Mincu, Ștefania. *Douămiismul poetic românesc*. Constanța: Pontica, 2007.

Petrescu, Liviu. *Poetica postmodernismului*. Pitești: Paralela 45, 2011.

Pop, Ion. *Avangarda literară românească*. București: Minerva, 1990.

Terian, Andrei. “Esențială pentru noua generație este schimbarea frontului de luptă. Miza milenariștilor pare a fi doar în subsidiar literară”. *Caiete critice*, no. 2-3, 2005.

Urmanov, Adrian. “eu sunt poemul utilitar”. *Cuvântul*, no. 5, 2009.