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Cannibalizing the Canon: Dada Techniques in East-Central Europe aims to rewrite Dada history by focusing on issues and territories that have remained under-researched. In the reception of Dadaism, which has mainly centered on the major hubs, radicalism based on a nihilistic dimension was often emphasized—an interpretation supported even by the Dadaists themselves, who built a founding myth later included in literary histories. To overcome a series of clichés, the editors outline an approach in the introduction that relies on revealing “the underlying continuities between Dada and other artistic developments, whether local or international, prior to Dada and after it, as well as between artists’ intellectual and personal identities and the ‘peripheral’ environments from which many of them emerged” (3). The volume aligns with contributions that challenge the reductive labeling of Dadaism and allow for revision by questioning the focus on the six canonical centers, as seen in the collective volume *The Eastern Dada Orbit* (1998). Although the editors acknowledge the significant role of this earlier volume, they also emphasize the need to move beyond the East-West dichotomy still visible in previous approaches, opting instead for “supranationality,” reflecting the complex identities of the artists. Furthermore, they interpret Dadaist techniques in East-Central Europe not as imitation but as hybridity, resulting from “critical appropriation and active synthesis” (6). In addition to exploring the transfer of Dadaist strategies in East-Central Europe using relevant methodologies like the network model, *Cannibalizing the Canon* revisits issues consistently excluded from Dada histories, such as ephemeral practices.

The first section, *Topographies*, gathers contributions that focus on the emergence of Dadaism in underexplored areas, highlighting the interactions between artists that facilitated the circulation of publications. In his article, Jindřich Toman traces the import of Dadaism in Prague and investigates the mechanisms by which Prague became “an active periphery” (35). Using the network model, he highlights the importance of printed materials in establishing connections and shows, by examining the links between Melchior Vischer-Tristan Tzara and Jaromír Berák-Richard Huelsenbeck, how contacting the center could function as a strategy for obtaining visibility. Additionally, in the context of trans-ethnic interactions in Prague, these contacts opened the way for local adaptations. This is also seen in the echoes of Dada in Prague’s entertainment centers, such as the cabarets, where “modern art served as a source of entertainment” (33), leading to “dadaistic poetry.”

Emanuel Modoc explains the transmission of Dadaism in Romania by exploring the connections between local avant-gardes. Referring to four concepts—the Romanian “pictopoezia,” the Czech image-poem, the Hungarian picture-poem, and the Polish photomontage—Modoc highlights the formation of an “inter-peripheral networking” (46). He demonstrates that “at least in the case of the East-Central European avant-gardes, local interferences, interactions, and reciprocal influences determine the way in which Western European artistic movements are imported and naturalized” (47).

Przemysław Strożek's study investigates the traces of Dadaism in Poland by reconstructing a network of contacts and Dada works that appeared in translation. The author distinguishes two periods in the import of Dadaism: a “decentralized” one, characterized by the establishment of Formism/Futurism and later, Constructivism, where the assimilation of Dada occurs due to interest in its international character, and a “centralized” one, where Dadaism is received by reference to the Parisian center as “a historical trend” (73) and as a platform for Surrealism.

Jasna Jovanov reconstructs the formation of Dadaism in Yugoslavia through the activities of Dragan Aleksić, demonstrating that the practices within Yougo Dada find a specific formula in “the poetics of ‘constructive denial’” (81), promoting a “deliberate aspiration toward synaesthesia and multimedia” (86) visible in the matinées. András Kappanyos’ study, which concludes the first section of the volume, delves into the case of Hungarian Dada and proposes viewing the movement “as an attitude, rather than a

style or ideology” (105). Kappanyos challenges the interpretation of Dadaism as “an incarnation of the ancient spirit of denial” (106) and describes it instead as “a collective behavior in the vein of radical intellectual subversion” (109), a product of modern society. After analyzing the historical background, Kappanyos argues that for the Hungarian avant-garde, the activation of Dadaist features occurs involuntarily as a reaction to contextual tensions, and he demonstrates that Dada functions as an intermediate phase, a trigger for Constructivism.

Challenging the canonical construction of Dadaism is the purpose of the contributions grouped in the section *In/Exclusions*, which deal with issues and representative figures of the Dada movement that have generally been ignored or omitted from literary historiography. Iulia Dondorici investigates the case of Céline Arnauld, a Romanian-born Jewish poet, considering her interaction with avant-garde circles and the reception of her activity in avant-garde histories. In reconstructing Arnauld’s activity, Iulia Dondorici emphasizes the continuity, at an ideational level, between the pre-Dadaist stage and the interval of her adherence to Dadaism, questioning the idea of the emergence of the movement as a rupture from previous movements such as Cubism, and highlighting the interference between Dadaist aesthetics and esprit nouveau techniques. Moreover, Arnauld brings a distinct note within the Dadaist group through her predilection for inclusion instead of radicalism, an option that, from the author's perspective, is Arnauld’s response to her own marginalization within the Parisian group—a marginalization also identified in avant-garde studies due to her absence from the list of participants at Dada events. Hubert van den Berg's study also aims to reconsider the contribution of women to Dada events. Considering the Dadaists’ appetite for wordplay, the author intends to decipher some “nickname puns”: Jeanne Rigaud and Maria Cantarelli. Thus, starting from the distinct versions of the program for the second Zurich Dada soirée, Hubert van den Berg proposes, correlating information from the Dadaists’ memoirs, the hypothesis that Jeanne Rigaud and Maria Cantarelli are, in fact, Sophie Tauber and Maya Chruszcz.

Analyzing the reception of Dadaism in Hungary is the purpose of Károly Kókai's article, which emphasizes, by identifying the influences, an aspect that differentiates the Hungarian space from other canonical areas: the fact that it manifests itself in isolated works rather than in a group. The analysis of the theoretical articles on Dada signed by

Iván Hevesy, Tibor Déry, and Béla Balázs follows, as the author of the article demonstrates, the same pattern: rejection by association with chaos, followed by adhesion and integration in their work, a situation determined by the political climate and the temporal factor. Alexandra Chiriac proposes in her study a reconsideration of the avant-garde in the Romanian space from the perspective of the integration of mass culture into art forms, a strategy seen as a form of dissent in the context of Dada. The connection between Dada and consumer culture contributes to a contestation of the hierarchies between art forms, considering that the hierarchical system still proliferated in the histories of the avant-garde. Using the concept of “autopoiesis” (Erika Fischer-Lichte) to highlight the intersections between art and life, her approach is placed in the context of the reconsideration of performance, claiming that “embracing the performative and constructing it as both transgressive and liminal can help normalize marginalized forms of avant-garde artmaking” (194). From this perspective, the author analyzes the role of advertising in Romanian avant-garde periodicals and traces the process of establishing modern architecture through Marcel Iancu’s contribution, also pointing out the reforms made in interior design and the integration of urban landscape elements into performance.

The performative dimension of Dadaism has been overlooked in avant-garde histories. The contributions from *Performativities* propose an investigation of ephemeral art forms, going beyond traditional frames. Edit Tóth highlights the role of Dada techniques in the formation of modern design by analyzing the work of Marcel Breuer. She demonstrates that Breuer redefines the concept of “artist as producer” by integrating performance and media elements in the process of conceiving the object. As a reply to the mechanization of the human body captured by the Dadaists, Breuer establishes, by using elements of media photography, an interaction between the object and the consumer, aiming to develop a “constructive self-awareness” (229). Thus, “the main task of design becomes the attunement of subject and object in a mutual performance” (244). Meghan Forbes explores, based on archival sources, the under-researched career of Mira Holzbachová, a member of the Devětsil group, a group of Czech avant-garde artists, emphasizing the effects of the intersection of Constructivism with Dadaist techniques and the transition towards Surrealism. Her performances question the stereotype of the pantomime actor (“Dada Mime”) by overcoming gender

restrictions while incorporating social engagement in the spirit of left-wing politics. Thus, as the author explains, Mira's character is “a woman who levels critiques at war” (265), determining, through the involvement of the grotesque, a “slippage between laughter and tragedy” (266), also inserted into the figure of the clown/harlequin.

Michalina Kmieciak demonstrates that the traces of Dadaism are more visible in the Polish avant-garde in marginal areas or in the early period of the avant-garde characterized by the tendency to experiment with different trends. The analysis of some student groups like Symposjon or the negativists, as well as the manifestos that appeared around the so-called second generation of Futurists, illustrates the use of negation. The negative dimension functions, on the one hand, through “spoken journals” as a rejection of the written word, replaced by an endless work in progress through “collective imagination” and, on the other hand, by the involvement of parody, satire, and nonsense aimed at self-negation by mocking the principles of Futurism. At the same time, the author emphasizes the functioning of Dadaism as a trigger for the experiments of the Polish Expressionist group, through the interest in sound poetry and the return to a pre-speech that privileges the rudimental way of communication through gestures and movement. The article by Sára Bagdi and Judit Galács outlines the process of reforming the theater by integrating the rhetoric and techniques of Dadaism, alongside mass media forms, to establish a collective art form. By analyzing the theoretical contributions and artistic productions of the ephemeral Green Donkey Theater that operated in Budapest, the authors highlight a process of mediation between the art form and the public through cinematic comedy and modern dance techniques (eurythmics) that offer greater freedom to both performers and spectators. Advocating for art as a collaborative process contributes to redefining the public as an active presence against the norm that imposed the “silent voyeurism” (322), thus deconstructing the contrast between high and popular art.

The singularity of Dada became recurrent in avant-garde histories through the invocation of unquestionable radicalism. To deconstruct this myth, the contributions in the section entitled *Trans(pos)* reveal points of interference or intersections between Dadaism and previous and subsequent movements. Günter Berghaus explores the influence of Futurism on the founding of Dadaism, highlighting visible interference both in the pre-Dadaist activity of the movement's members and in the initial stage of

Cabaret Voltaire. The reference to Futurism has made it possible to nuance some features often applied to Dadaism, such as the anti-art character, which, as Berghaus demonstrates, also contains a positive dimension through the attempts to release the spectators from the patterns that shape their existence. At the same time, the exposure of the differences between the movements is highlighted by pointing out common strategies, such as simultaneism and bruitism, reinvested with a new function by the Dadaists in accordance with the “dissonant constitution of the world” (350). Éva Forgács analyzes the orientation towards Dadaism in the Hungarian Avant-Garde and Neo-Avant-Garde as a way to establish the foundations of an oppositional culture while explaining the apparent paradox between rebellion, freedom of expression, and the need for a leader figure chosen to encapsulate diverse trends in the spirit of solidarity that “would highlight shared features as a survival strategy” (368). Oliver A.I. Botar revisits a lesser-known phase of the activity of Moholy-Nagy, a representative figure of the Hungarian avant-garde. The author demonstrates that exposure to the activity of the Dadaists during his exile in Berlin determines the production of Mechano Dada works and also functions as a turning point or transition to Constructivism. At the same time, the analysis of the reception of the Dadaist phase highlights the appearance of contrary reactions and, as the author explains, the fact that Moholy-Nagy himself identifies his isolation is a sign of the appropriation of Dada techniques through an active synthesis. Imre József Balázs investigates the circulation of Dadaist techniques in Hungary through the activity of figures considered rather marginal in the historiographical discourse. The author not only refers to the texts published in the periodical IS but also recomposes the editorial activity of the founders, demonstrating a display of radicalism and a way to challenge the establishment through scientific topics and daily practices. Moreover, the author nuances the periodical’s affiliation with Dadaism, opting to place it in the list of other East-Central European publications by highlighting the synthesis of avant-garde practices. Both theoretical articles and poetic texts or experiments in cinema confirm the dualism between “abstraction” and Surrealism. Also under the sign of synthesis, more precisely of the interference between Dadaism and Constructivism adopted simultaneously, it appears, as Krisztina Zsófia Csaba explains, the avant-garde anthology *Book of New Artists*, the result of the collaboration between Lajos Kassak and Moholy-Nagy, emphasizing a “destruction-to-construction narrative” (464). Restoring

the compilation process and identifying the sources of the images used contributes to the reconstruction of the network of contacts with representatives of the avant-garde and also confirms and strengthens Kassak's position in the international context. Moreover, Kassak's orientation for an international audience is emphasized through his decision to opt for visual communication to facilitate worldwide transmission by eliminating language barriers.

The last section, *Hybridities*, is dedicated to the intersections that occur both in artistic activity, through the blend of science and art, and in the (re)construction of identity in the case of avant-garde agents with multiple identities who use language as a tool for negotiation and redefinition, taking into account the representations of the body with the inclusion of mechanical motifs. Arndt Niebisch demonstrates, through Raoul Hausmann's scientific interests, that the Dadaists refer to science in an unconventional manner as their theories are shaped by personal experience and aim for worldwide transmission. The ambition to reach a wider public explains the contestation of Einstein as a representative of the academic circles and an orientation rather towards pseudo-scientific ideas such as those of Hanns Hörbiger. Thus, as the author shows, Hausmann's interest in science involves "utilitarian goals" (503) and appears as a way to create "a cultural identity" (496). Alexandru Bar and Michael White reflect on multilingualism, a feature invoked in the historiographical discourse on Dadaism that ends up reiterating a native and non-native binary logic that creates differences between the avant-garde artists, manifested even inside the avant-garde circles. Starting from Derrida's study *Multilingualism in Modernist Fiction*, the authors approach the negotiation of identity in the cases of Tzara and Hausmann, advocating for overcoming the previously invoked binary logic. In this regard, the authors demonstrate not only that both Tzara and Hausmann sought to reinvent themselves by using French, a language with tradition, as a legitimizing strategy, but also that the predilection for sound poetry and bruitism appears "less as an escape from monolingual nationalisms than a critical route back into them" (525). Magdolna Gucsa restores, through the case of Emil Szittyá, the dynamics of the cultural scene in Zurich before and after the First World War, highlighting the intersection of Dadaism with earlier artistic practices and political ideas. To explain Szittyá's approach to Dadaism, the author considers the reconfiguration of the outsider status conferred by successive relocations and the

process of identity reformation to place himself in the context of the international avant-garde: through pseudonym, language, and the adoption of the vagabond posture which functions “not only as a lifestyle, but as an identity to embrace and as a source of art” (566). At the same time, political beliefs (left-wing ideas) facilitate the establishment of contacts with the Zurich Dadaists. Györgyi Földes’s contribution highlights, based on the identification of the figure of the dandy both in the context of decadence and in the avant-garde, a process of transgressing gender distinctions in the case of Dadaism when the dandy no longer functions only as a masculine code. Using the theoretical frames of Donna Haraway, the author captures, in the case of the avant-garde, the mechanization and the creation of hybrids by rejecting clear distinctions, inverting the male-female categories and producing cyborgs, while in the Hungarian context, a binary representation of sexes is still preserved, alongside asexual figures (robots) due to Constructivism’s influence. Finally, Merse Pál Szeredi proposes a reinterpretation of Sándor Bortnyik’s paintings, *The New Adam* and *The New Eve*. By deciphering the reference system articulated through irony and allusion, the author demonstrates that Bortnyik uses the techniques of Constructivism and Dadaism to challenge their principles, revealing not a utopian side associated with technological progress, but a critique of it, as a “symbol of humanity’s fate within a dystopic technologized future” (613).

Cannibalizing the Canon has the merit of shedding light on under-researched territories and overlooked issues in avant-garde historiography, restoring the contributions of those artists who did not figure in the canonical constructions of Dadaism and incorporating ephemeral art forms. Using new theoretical approaches and methodological frameworks, the volume challenges the singularity of Dadaism and its founding myths. The focus on the connections between local avant-gardes, employing transmedial and transnational perspectives, corrects and nuances some directions from avant-garde histories, contesting the hegemony of the West and a hierarchical system. Thus, the volume brings a significant contribution to the Dada movement and to the research of the avant-garde.