

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN IN WAR AND IN THE ARTS

International Conference
19 October 2018
Iași, Romania



Complexul Muzeal Național „Moldova” Iași
Primăria Municipiului Iași
Universitatea Națională de Arte „George Enescu” Iași
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Coord.:
Coralia Alexandra Costăș

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FOREWORD

Defined by Eric Hobsbawm as the "short century" of history, the twentieth century began in 1914 under the unfortunate auspices of the "suspension" of the humanistic axiological projections that European culture had launched in the *Aufklärung* era and maintained them until the Belle Époque. The "imagined communities" theorized much later by Benedict Anderson, but especially functional at the level of European elites already since the end of the eighteenth century have undoubtedly contributed to eroding the project of "eternal peace" that Kantian idealism understood in the sense of a shared value. The nation-State projects that emerged since 1780 and developed particularly during the nineteenth century acquired much more significance as soon as the heterogeneity of the international arena raised the stakes of power and access to resources respectively. In the wake of the empires with colonial vocation, the small and newly emerging nations as well as those lacking a formal existence or those being *in statu nascendi* got aligned, in turns, giving rise to a complex system of alliances that already prefigured the vision of the conflict. It broke out in 1914 and turned into a world-wide conflagration that involved often against their will both those who were prepared for the war and those for whom the conflict seemed to be a distant reality or one that could not attain them. Sooner or later, each involved nation, either in its own right or on behalf of an empire, would contribute to the industrial gear of death as manifested throughout the Great War. In few words, of course, what we refer to as "grand history" retains this metastasis transformation of evil up to the stage of a conflict that cut off millions of human lives, where technology was used by men against men, where armies could not anymore make any difference between soldiers and civilians, and during which mankind experienced indeed what had not been seen before. If the nation-State projects belonged to the political, intellectual and military elites, the latter are also those which are primarily responsible for the conflict that broke out in 1914 and ended in 1918, with different outcomes for all involved. In the name of the "imagined community", the elites involved the "organic communities" of the participating nations into a conflicting project led to the extremes, where barbarism replaced humanism, and in which "grand history" swallowed, for a while even afterwards, the "small history". As a result, upon the 100th anniversary since the end of the Great War, a necessary memory recovery exercise also involves a relation to the way in which this conflict affected not only the direct participants but also those who had to adapt the needs of everyday life according to the state of exception that would mark

their destiny. Approaching war at the level of the *Alltagsgeschichte* also implies understanding how, without having direct access to the decisions of the elites but being directly affected by them, people come to a state where they shift from the mere consciousness of factual existence to the consciousness of death – more precisely to the consciousness of a death that can occur immediately. This state is identified by the German philosopher Karl Jaspers in the posterity of the Great War, as a "limit situation" (*Grenzsituation*). The war necessarily implies such a situation, and the intersection from which the "short 20th century" starts is the one between a modernity prepared to derail and the annihilation of humanism, replaced by barbarism. Historical time is demonized, the essence of humanity being anathematized.

Not by accident, but precisely because it requires an "education of sight," art accurately captures the devil's entry into history, even when artists understand war as a possible purification, as it was the case in some of the avant-garde artists of the beginning of the last century. Even when their expectations were, from this perspective, truly deceived, the works remained testimony to the disintegration of the human during wartime. Such testimonies are analyzed in the volume *The Disintegration of the Human in War and in the Arts*, which brings together the texts of the speeches given by specialists in art and philosophy participating in the International Conference held on October 9, 2018 in the Palace of Culture in Iași, within the Centenary Program of the Iași Municipality for the period 2017-2020. The articulation of history based on Carl Schmidt's friend/enemy dichotomy removes the values of humanism, puts technological progress at the service of death, and places people in those "dark times" of which will speak, somewhat later and having the experience of the second world conflagration (direct consequence of first), Hannah Arendt. During or immediately in the posterity of the Great War, artists rendered in their works the catastrophe of the disintegration of a world from which the human, humanism and humanity disappear, leaving room for barbarism. And perhaps therefore the cultural imagery of the demonic century, that ended with the 1989 anti-totalitarian revolutions, was marked already in 1920, by Paul Klee's monoprint of *Angelus Novus*, which Walter Benjamin considered to be "the angel history".

100 years after the end of the catastrophe that disintegrated the human being, that was represented as such also in the arts, it is important to take our time to understand that although it is impossible to restore what was destroyed forever, it is imperative not to forget. This is one of the essential lessons that this volume brings to the reader.

Prof. Daniel Șandru

Coordinator of the Centenary Program of the Municipality of Iași

NATIONALISM AND THE AVANT-GARDE: THE CASE OF ENGLISH VORTICISM

Thomas Hunkeler
University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Abstract

At the beginning of the 20th century, different avant-garde movements seem to embody, all over Europe, a new cosmopolitan reality. The Romanian sculptor Brancusi brings this tendency to a well known formula: “In art, there are no foreigners.” But this idealist view tends to obliterate the fact that many modernists do in fact defend a very nationalist perspective when it comes to their rivalry with other movements. In my talk based on my recent book *Paris et le nationalisme des avant-gardes 1909-1924* (Paris, 2018), I would like to have a closer look at the case of the English vorticist movement and their journal *Blast*, which addresses the question of human disintegration very directly. While the first issue boosting with English nationalism is published only a few weeks before the beginning of the war, the second and last issue published in the summer of 1915, also known as the “War Issue”, interestingly takes a more distant stance towards nationalism. The example of Vorticism thus allows to shed light on the more general ambivalence of most of the European avant-garde movements towards issues of nationalism and internationalism.

1. NATIONALIST RIVALRIES IN TIMES OF WAR

Innocent readers might well be surprised by the title given to this contribution: “Nationalism and the avant-garde”, when they would probably rather expect a title such as “The avant-garde *against* nationalism” or “*Internationalism* and the avant-garde”. There is indeed a long tradition of thinking of the avant-garde movements around the first World War as opponents not only to the war, but to an imperialist and nationalist way of thinking which takes hold of Europe at that time. We are all familiar with the idea

that, to put it in the words attributed to the famous Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi, “in art, there are no foreigners”.¹ But this idea which we all cherish, is it true?

The case I would like to have a closer look at here, that of English Vorticism, which is a lesser known movement of the European avant-garde, shows that even these movements, while keenly aware of the international evolution of contemporary art, also had a national agenda and, I would argue, a nationalist stance which is typical of many avant-garde groups. That is at least what I have been trying to show in a recently published book-length study, in which I put this nationalist tendency into perspective in several European avant-garde movements.²

Let us start here with some more general remarks. History both of art and of literature depicts the European avant-gardes mostly as being opposed to any form of nationalism and imperialism, while insisting at the same time on the fact that these avant-garde movements are born precisely at a moment when both nationalism and imperialism are at their peak: in the years around the first World War, roughly between 1909, the year Marinetti launches Italian futurism in the Parisian newspaper *Le Figaro*, and 1924, the year of the official birth of surrealism or at least of its first manifesto. These years are a period in which we observe two tendencies which are both parallel and opposed: on the one hand, we see an internationalization of intellectual life, which goes together with a hitherto unknown acceleration and multiplication of the means of communication and circulation both of men and of ideas; on the other hand, we observe a fierce competition between nation-states, in which both culture and science are the instruments of rivalry and of the desire for hegemony.³ This situation should encourage us to think of nationalism and internationalism not as of two opposing tendencies, but as two sides of the very same coin: it is because there is an international context, because we know what other nations are doing, that national rivalries are being reinforced.

A second essential point in this context of rivalry is the uneven distribution of cultural capital, to use the terms of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Paris is undoubtedly, in these years, the intellectual and artistic capital of Europe. Pascale Casanova spoke of Paris as the World Republic of Letters;⁴ I would like to emphasize here that Paris is, at least during the period in which we are interested in here, at the very heart of both the international art market and of a network of cultural, intellectual and literary relations. Of course there are other centers, such as Berlin, Munich, Vienna,

¹ Brancusi in 1922, quoted in <http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/education/ressources/ENS-brancusi/ENS-brancusi.htm> (page last accessed December 4th, 2018).

² Hunkeler, Thomas: *Paris et le nationalisme des avant-gardes (1909-1925)*, Editions Hermann, Paris, 2018.

³ See Sapiro, Gisèle (ed.): *L'espace intellectuel en Europe. De la formation des États-nations à la mondialisation, XIX^e – XXI^e siècle*, Éditions La Découverte, Paris, 2009.

⁴ Casanova, Pascale: *La République mondiale des lettres*, Seuil, Paris, 1999.

Brussels or New York; but they all look towards Paris for what concerns the validation of their strategies of consecration.⁵

We know of course that the war brings many of these exchanges to a brutal stop, first of all between enemies. In that context, hitherto neglected smaller neutral nations, such as Switzerland or the Netherlands, become more important as new places where exchange can still take place, but also as what Geert Buelens has termed discursive battlefields,⁶ where the fight for the public opinion is being fought by propaganda, but also through what I would call “cultural politics”, which in a sense is probably just another name for more intelligent and less direct propaganda.

The explanation most often used to explain the nationalist tendencies not only of conservative artists, but of the avant-garde as well is of course the war itself.⁷ It is true that certain artists like Apollinaire in France or Franz Marc or even Hugo Ball in Germany seem to change their internationalist stance of the years before the war into a distinctly nationalist position as soon as the war breaks out. But even if we take into consideration the fact that the war and the immense wave of propaganda which sweeps through Europe had an undeniable impact on the opinion of many artists, it is also true that their nationalism was usually already present well before the war, which made it more radical but did not bring it into being. There are, as a matter of fact, many avant-garde artists and writers who did take openly nationalist positions well before the war, such as Marinetti, the founder of Italian futurism, but also artists such as Albert Gleize, one of the main figures of French salon cubism; Apollinaire and André Salmon, who defended Parisian art; Ricciotto Canudo, the Italian born founder of the journal *Montjoie*; or the Russian futurists such as Larionov, Gontcharova, Livchits and Khlebnikov.

2. VORTICISM, AN OFFSPRING OF ITALIAN FUTURISM?

In this paper, I would like to focus on a lesser known movement, the English vorticist group, which was founded shortly before the war in a very nationalist perspective and which during the first years of the war turned, in a very paradoxical way, into a less nationalist movement before disappearing itself in the bomb shell craters of the war.⁸ It is important to notice that the genesis of British vorticism is inseparable of

⁵ Charle, Christophe: *Paris fin de siècle. Culture et politique*, Seuil, Paris, 1998.

⁶ <https://www.nwo.nl/onderzoek-en-resultaten/onderzoeksprojecten/i/26/5426.html> (page last accessed December 4th, 2018).

⁷ See Silver, Kenneth E.: *Vers le retour à l'ordre. L'avant-garde et la première guerre mondiale*, Flammarion, Paris, 1991 (1989).

⁸ For recent research on vorticism, see Peppis, Paul: *Literature, Politics, and the English Avant-Garde. Nation and Empire, 1901-1918*, Cambridge University Press, 2000; *Blasting the Future! Vorticism in Britain 1910-1920*, Philip Wilson Publishers, London, 2004; Antliff, Mark et Klein, Scott W. (eds.): *Vorticism. New Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

the success of Italian futurism in the aftermath of the famous exhibition of futurist painters which toured Western Europe in 1912. After the first exhibition in Paris in February 1912, the collection of paintings then moved on to London, Berlin and Brussels before touring through minor towns in Germany thanks to Herwarth Walden, the director of the Journal *Der Sturm* and of its art gallery. In Great Britain, futurism as a movement and Marinetti as its main promoter had a huge success in the Spring of 1912. Already two years before, Marinetti had come to London to praise British patriotism in his so-called “Futurist speech to the English” while criticizing English art, which was in his mind oriented towards the past and to what he called “Medieval traditionalism” – probably an allusion to the British Pre-Raphaelites around Dante Gabriel Rossetti.⁹ In 1912, Marinetti first joined forces with a group of post-impressionist artists around Roger Fry and his *Omega Workshop*, and in 1913, upon his next venue to London, with the group of the *Rebel Arts Center* which had formed itself around Percy Wyndham Lewis, who was to become the leader of Vorticism in 1914.

In the beginning, Marinetti is seen by Lewis as a revolutionary figure capable of bringing a distinctly modern energy to English art. In a newspaper article, Lewis goes so far as to call Marinetti “the intellectual Cromwell”¹⁰ of his time: that is, both a liberator and a dictator. For the English, Marinetti will indeed play both roles: that of a liberator who has to be followed until the early Summer of 1914; that of a dictator who has to be fought from that moment on.

What is it that appeals to Wyndham Lewis in futurism? Several aspects should be mentioned. First, the importance of both the present and the future as opposed to a culture of tradition. Second, its vitalism, which quite often takes the form of machismo, of speed, of machinery (let us recall here that Britain is at that time the most industrialized country in the world). And third, on a political level, its imperialism and its culture of violence and of war. In Wyndham Lewis’ mind, Marinetti was clearly of figure of inspiration who was supposed to help the British find their own way into radical modernism.

“Futurism’ is largely Anglo-Saxon civilisation. It should not rest with others to be the Artists of this revolution and new possibilities in life. As modern life is the invention of the English, they should have something profounder to say on it than anybody else.”¹¹

The problem for the English was that in Marinetti’s mind, his presence in London was actually determined by his desire to first and foremost promote Italian futurism, that is to say: his own movement. Sooner or later, this discrepancy between the goals of the two men had to transform itself into an open conflict. Marinetti had

⁹ Quoted in Lista, Giovanni: *Le Futurisme. Textes et manifestes 1909-1944*, Champ Vallon, Paris, 2015, p. 271-281.

¹⁰ “A Man of the Week : Marinetti”, in Lewis, Wyndham: *Creatures of Habit, Creatures of Change : Essays on Art, Literature and Society 1914-1956*, ed. by Edwards, P., Black Sparrow Press, Santa Rosa, 1989, p. 30.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

presented himself from the start as a liberator; but the moment came, in the early Summer of 1914, when Wyndham Lewis and his friends felt that the British now needed to be liberated of their liberator, who had become, at least in their mind, a dictator.

It is interesting to see that the same kind of situation had in fact occurred only a few months earlier, in Russia, where Marinetti had also been invited to give some talks in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg in January 1914. Just like the British Rebel art artists around Wyndham Lewis, the Russian futurists did not appreciate what they felt was like a visit of a CEO to one of his foreign branches. This is also why almost all of the Russian futurists had preferred not to meet Marinetti in person, leaving him in the somehow ridiculous position of what they called “a general without an army”.¹²

But let us come back to the situation in London, some four months later. On the 7th of June 1914, several British newspapers published a futurist manifesto signed by Marinetti and his British follower Christopher Nevinson. Its title was “Vital English Art. Futurist manifesto”, a title which, most interestingly, was different in French, where its wording was “Contre l’art anglais”, that is: “Against English Art”.¹³ The manifesto itself contains the usual formulas of futurism: the idea that art needs to be masculine, powerful and anti-sentimental; the call for optimism and sport (this last point seems to be a concession to the British situation); the idea to create what they call “a powerful advance guard”.

What upsets the artists around Wyndham Lewis and his Rebel Art Centre about this manifesto, however, is the fact that they have been integrated into it without having been asked, since their names figure in the last paragraph of the original manifesto. They react by publishing the following note of protest in the journal *The Observer*:

“There are certain artists in England who do not belong to the Royal Academy nor to any of the passéist groups, and who do not on that account agree with the futurism of Sig. Marinetti. An assumption of such agreement either by Sig. Marinetti or by his followers is an impertinence.”¹⁴

It is against this kind of imperialist behavior of Italian futurism that Wyndham Lewis and his fellow artists, among which the American writer Ezra Pound and the French Sculptor Gaudier-Brzeska, proceed to found the movement of British vorticism and its journal, called *Blast*.

¹² Livchits, Bénédict: *L’archer à un œil et demi*, L’Âge d’Homme, Lausanne, 1971, p. 207. On Marinetti’s visit in Russia, see Andréoli de Villers, Jean-Pierre: “Marinetti et les futuristes russes lors de son voyage à Moscou en 1914”, in *Ligeia* 69-72 (July-December 2006), p. 129-146.

¹³ See Pillai, Johann et Onar, Anber: “Tracing the Performative : Marinetti, Nevinson, and the English Futurist Manifesto”, in Walsh, Michael J. K. (ed.): *A Dilemma of English Modernism. Visual and Verbal Politics in the Life and Work of C. R. W. Nevinson (1889-1946)*, University of Delaware Press, Newark, 2007, p. 59-62.

¹⁴ Letter to the editor of the *Observer* dated June 14th, 1914, in *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, ed. by Rose, W. K., Methuen, London, 1963, p. 62-63.

3. "OH BLAST FRANCE!"

Vorticism, which might simply be seen as the British version of futurism, is in fact a movement which uses futurist rhetoric and futurist aesthetics against more than one enemy: against Italian futurism and some British futurists, who accept to be just a mere branch of futurism; against British traditionalism; against British post-impressionism as heralded by Roger Fry, who was an advocate of recent French painting; and of course, last but not least, against France, which seems to embody modern art. Let us keep in mind these different frontlines when it comes to analyzing the first of the two issues of *Blast*, the "review of the Great English Vortex" as it calls itself.

In the opening pages of the first issue of *Blast* dated June 1914 (but published only in mid-July), Lewis polemically associates the futurists with the impressionists, thereby denying any significant difference to the Italian movement: "The futurist is a sensational and sentimental mixture of the aesthete of 1890 and the realist of 1870."¹⁵ He then goes on to claim the notion of revolution for the English as opposed to the French: "It may be said that great artists in England are always revolutionary, just as in France any really fine artist had a strong traditional vein."¹⁶ The long manifesto which follows works much in the same way, even if its typographical presentation is now clearly marked by the futurist aesthetics it pretends to reject.

Under the two headings of "Blast" and "Bless", Lewis tries to define, not without humour, the position of the vorticists. What is significant in these pages is that England is systematically compared and opposed, not to Italy, but to France. After having condemned all that devirilizes and weakens its inhabitants – its climate, the mild Gulf stream, the mountains keeping back the drastic winds –, Lewis goes on to what really interests him: "Oh Blast France". What he claims to hate most – judging by the size of the font – is its "sentimental gallic gush", its "sensationalism" and "fussiness", but also the "Parisian parochialism" and the fact that Paris is "the Mecca of the American".¹⁷

A little further on in the manifesto, Lewis' grievances are explicitly stated. Three points are crucial to his position: "[T]here is violent boredom with that feeble Europeanism, abasement of the miserable 'intellectual' before anything coming from Paris, Cosmopolitan sentimentality, which prevails in so many quarters." "In dress, manners, mechanical inventions, LIFE, that is, ENGLAND, has influenced Europe in the same way that France has in Art." And finally: "The nearest thing in England to a great traditional French artist, is a great revolutionary English one."¹⁸

¹⁵ Anon. [Wyndham Lewis]: "Long Live the Vortex!", in *Blast* 1, p. 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Anon. [Wyndham Lewis]: "Manifesto", in *Blast* 1, p. 13-14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 34, 39 and 42.

Since it is almost impossible to deny France's artistic hegemony in Europe in the years preceding World War I, Lewis chooses, like Marinetti before him, to identify France with tradition and his own country with modernism. His idea of the Vortex as the point of concentration of all the energy can thus be understood as an attempt to avoid the futurist cult of speed while at the same time appropriating its energy. Significantly, it also mirrors England's insularity while trying to reinterpret its marginal situation with respect to Europe as a central position, the eye of the storm as it were.

4. VORTICISM AGAINST OFFICIAL GERMANY

Lewis' attitude towards France was of course highly ambivalent, as shown again in a 1961 painting by William Roberts, one of the founding members of the Vorticist group.¹⁹ The painting depicts a reunion of the group in 1915, with the first issue of *Blast* at its center. It seems rather ironic that the meeting took place at the "Restaurant de la Tour Eiffel", as a reproduction of the tower in the background clearly demonstrates. The Eiffel Tower, one of the icons of modernism in Delaunay's paintings and in Apollinaire's famous poem "Zone", of course strongly contradicts Lewis' attempt to identify France with tradition.

The true reason of the surprising proximity between British vorticism and French modernism in this painting might well be the period depicted: Spring 1915. War rages in Europe; a war in which France and England fight side by side against a common enemy. The old antagonism is forgotten (and will only reappear at the end of the war); Germany has become one of the targets of the Vorticists. In the second and last issue of *Blast* dated July 1915, it is not France but Germany which is now identified with traditionalism. Indeed, the editorial by Lewis boldly states that "Germany has stood for the old Poetry, for Romance, more steadfastly [sic] and profoundly than any other people in Europe."²⁰ For Lewis, the war was in fact cultural: its hidden source was the unreciprocated love the Germans had for the French and, above all, for Paris:

"The German's love for the French is notoriously 'un amour malheureux', as it is by no means reciprocated. And the present war may be regarded in that sense as a strange wooing. The Essential German will get to Paris, to the Café de la Paix, at all costs; if he has to go there at the head of an army and destroy a million beings in the adventure."²¹

This being said, the position of Vorticism towards Germany and German art is in fact much more ambivalent than these lines tend to suggest. For Wyndham Lewis, unofficial Germany is indeed a major source of inspiration:

¹⁹ See <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/roberts-the-vorticists-at-the-restaurant-de-la-tour-eiffel-spring-1915-t00528> (page last accessed December 4th, 2018).

²⁰ Lewis, Wyndham: "Editorial", in *Blast* 2, p. 5.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

“When we say that Germany stands for Romance, this must be qualified strongly in one way. Official Germany stands for something intellectual, and that is Traditional Poetry and the Romantic Spirit. But unofficial Germany has done more for the movement that this paper was founded to propagate, and for all branches of contemporary activity in Science and Art, than any other country. It would be the absurdist ingratitude on the part of artists to forget this.”²²

Indeed, two Germans at least are most important for Vorticism: the German art historian Wilhelm Worringer, author of the most influential *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (Abstraction and Empathy), who inspired the English philosopher Thomas Ernest Hulme (the main theorist for Vorticism) in his distinction between abstract and vital art; and the Russian born Kandinsky, who has lived for years in Germany and whose abstract art is an important model for Vorticism.

For the British press, which has never been particularly tender, the abstract art advocated by Vorticism is identified, as soon as the war begins, as being influenced by Germany, the country of “Kubism” written with a German K. On the occasion of a Vorticist exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in London in March 1915, the newspaper *The Times* accuses the vorticists of practicing what the journalist calls “Junkerism in Art”, a heavy reproach at that time. The anonymous reviewer indeed accuses the paintings of the Vorticists of being “Prussian in spirit”, and he adds: “If the Junkers could be induced to take to art, instead of disturbing the peace of Europe, they would paint so and enjoy it.”²³ Lewis’ answer to this attack is surprisingly mild and sober:

“Many people tell me that to call you a ‘Prussian’ at the present juncture is done with intent to harm, to cast a cloud over the movement, if possible, and moreover that it is actionable. But I do not mind being called a Prussian in the least. I am glad I am not one, however, and it may be worth while to show how, aesthetically, I am not one either. [...] The junker, obviously, if he painted, would do florid and disreputable canvasses of nymphs and dryads, or very sentimental ‘portraits of the Junker’s mother.’”²⁴

In a more general way, one has to notice that the style used in the second issue of *Blast* is less conflictual than in the first issue which was published just before the war. Art historians have been quick to point out that the second issue of *Blast* was in fact a failure, because it was a lot less innovative in artistic terms and also less provocative in its style. I do not share this appreciation. As a matter of fact, *Blast 2* all of a sudden takes a surprisingly critical stance towards nationalism. Of course, there are pages marked by patriotism, that is, by the love for one’s homeland; but the nationalist overtones which were so predominant in *Blast 1* have almost disappeared. It would be wrong though to interpret this change of mind as a move towards pacifism. Several vorticist were fighting

²² Ibid., p. 5.

²³ Anon. [Arthur Clutton-Brock]: “Junkerism in Art: The London Group at the Goupil Gallery”, in *The Times*, 10 mars 1915, p. 8.

²⁴ Lewis, Wyndham: “The London Group. 1915 (March)”, in *Blast 2*, p. 78.

in World War I: the French born sculptor Henri Gaudier Brzeska was killed in June 1915 in Northern France; Wyndham Lewis became an artillery officer and war artist in 1916; the philosopher T. E. Hulme was killed in Flanders in 1917 after three years of service.

The change of mind of the Vorticists comes in fact from a different kind of awareness, since they realize, as soon as the war breaks out, that their form of artistic engagement is not appreciated in their own country. As in other countries such as France, Germany or Italy, modernists and avant-garde artists have to understand that their efforts to defend their own nation aesthetically are systematically being ridiculed and, even worse, judged as foreign. The junkerism affair of 1915 has made Wyndham Lewis aware of the fact that in aesthetic terms, the real enemy of vorticism is not futurism, cubism or expressionism, but the traditionalist conception of art which prevails in all European countries as soon as the war breaks out. As a British patriot, Wyndham Lewis agrees to fight the German enemy; but as a British artist, he knows that he has much more in common with Franz Marc, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti or Albert Gleizes than with the painters belonging to the Royal Academy with its tradition of Victorian art which still prevailed in England until the beginning of the 1930s.

Vorticism as an artistic movement did not survive the war, nor did its journal *Blast*. The artists formerly associated with vorticism had to find a way to defend their strife towards abstract art against the demands of a market which was looking at that time for more traditional paintings. Just like in other countries, the war confronted modernism and the avant-garde with what has been called a return to order. Other movements, which were yet to come, like Dada, were to take up the fight again later on. But that is a different story.

TZARA'S WARS

Marius Hentea
University of Gothenburg, Sweden

Abstract

This essay looks at how Tristan Tzara not only reacted to World War I through his Dada texts but was a wartime editor and poet before his arrival in Zurich in 1915. The essay examines how the experience of editing *Simbolul* during the Balkan Wars prefigured Tzara's editorial activities with *Dada*. Tzara was one of the first Dadaists who had to consider the relationship between artist and society during wartime.

Perhaps the most widely repeated historical claim about Dada is that the First World War was the critical impetus for bringing the movement into being. Without WWI, no Dada: that could very well be the overriding position of countless historical surveys of Dada. While in no way seeking to minimise the importance of the war as a basic spur to Dada activity, the sheer reductionism of the relationship between the First World War and Dada is problematic. The war was certainly a major structural cause to the eventual creation of Dada, but the causal link here is one of necessary but not sufficient: necessary because without the war, the individuals who eventually formed the nucleus of Zurich Dada would never have all found themselves exiled in Switzerland, but hardly *sufficient*, as the war was not the only philosophical or historiographic foil Dada railed against—to say nothing of the contradictory attitudes of certain Dada members towards the war (Ball trying enlist in the German army multiple times and in an early rush of war enthusiasm wrote to his sister that '[w]ar is the only thing that excites me', the noncoincidental staging of the First Dada Soirée on Bastille Day in 1916 with Tzara yelling out 'Vive la France').¹ Turning the 'Great War' into a

¹ Hugo Ball to Marie Hildebrand, 7 August 1914, in *Briefe 1904-1927*, ed. Gerhard Schaub and Ernst Teubner (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2003), 62 (translation mine). The ease with which these attitudes have been effaced is partly due to the strident denunciations of the Dadaists afterwards (especially something like Ball's 'Totentanz') but also an intellectual slippage which equates Swiss neutrality as a kind of anti-war pacifism, a historically empty stance which fails to take into account the internal divisions in Switzerland

metonym for all war as it concerns Dada also makes it easy to overlook the catastrophic human cost of the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) which immediately preceded it and which heavily impacted Tristan Tzara. In his native Romania in 1912, Tzara experienced war as a civilian bystander, and he not only wrote war poetry based on the Balkan Wars but also experienced what it meant to edit a 'little review' while a country was at war. In short, Tzara had already dealt with the issue of the status of the artist and art in wartime before the first guns of August 1914 were fired or the Cabaret Voltaire opened its doors in February 1916. This paper seeks to look not only at Tzara's war poetry based on the Balkan Wars and his first reactions to the war while still in Romania but also his experience editing *Simbolul*, which came out just as the guns of war were sounding in the Balkans.

In 1912, when Tzara was still a high school student named Samuel Rosenstock, he and a group of friends started up *Simbolul*, a literary journal with pronounced modernist tendencies. *Simbolul* ran for four issues, from 25 October 1912 to 25 December 1912, and, although run by teenagers, it elicited reviews in the most prominent literary journals of the day.² While the third issue stated that 'the entirety' of the editorial work was done by 'S. Samyro', Tzara's pen name at the time, he worked closely with Ion Vinea and future Dada collaborator Marcel Iancu on it.³ The editors sought out and published contributions from 'almost all of the representatives of the "new poetry" at the time.'⁴ The magazine featured, alongside poetry by Tzara and Vinea, work by Emil Isac, Adrian Maniu, Claudia Millian, Nicolae Davidescu, Ion Minulescu, and Alexandru Macedonski. These contributors were well-known champions of a modernist aesthetic. Among the younger collaborators, Isac famously called for 'not just birds, but also airplanes' as poets undertook a 'modernism along all lines' -- a modernism that would necessarily involve 'the elimination of nationalism'.⁵ Maniu declared himself irremediably 'bored' by 'the stupidity of so-called poetic material' that 'no longer had any value or sense'.⁶ One

during the First World War when it came to neutrality. On this latter point, see Maurice Henry, *Les causes de la neutralité de la Suisse et son attitude pendant la guerre de 1914-1918* (Geneva: A. Jullien, 1934).

² It was reviewed in *Noua Revistă Română* (4 November 1912, 2 December 1912, 6 January 1913), *Viitorul* (18 November 1912), *Dimineața* (19 November 1912), and *Rampa* (23 November 1912, 29 December 1912).

³ *Simbolul*, no. 3 (1 December 1912): 48 (emphasis original). Iovanache first signed himself as 'Ion Vinea' in March 1914; see Gh. Sprinterou, 'Contribuții la cunoașterea vieții și activității lui Ion Vinea', *Revista de istorie și teorie literară* 20, no. 4 (1971): 623-30.

⁴ Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale*, 2 vols. (Bucharest: Editura Minerva, 1974), 2:366.

⁵ Emil Isac, 'Modernismul pe toate liniile', *Vieța nouă* 13, no. 20 (1913): 301-2.

⁶ Quoted in Ion Pop, 'Dada en Roumanie: Échos et Prémisses', in *Dada Circuit Total*, ed. Henri Béhar and Catherine Dufour (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme, 2005), 82-89, at 83.

teenage collaborator, Charles Poldy, declared himself a Futurist.⁷ *Simbolul*'s outlook was resolutely international: the first issue had a poem by Vinea inspired by Albert Samain, an obscure French symbolist (whom Tzara also appreciated, with 'Cirque' in the 1923 collection *De nos oiseaux* alluding to Samain). The third issue announced the release of *Du 'Cubisme'* by Metzinger and Gleizes, 'two of the most proper representatives of the new movement.'⁸

Positioning itself as an internationalist, modernist journal was a conscious taking of sides in the antagonist cultural debate in Romania between cultural conservatives who championed 'native form' versus cultural modernizers who believed that Romanian culture needed to synchronize with wider European currents. While this was already a polemical positioning within the cultural field, the appearance of *Simbolul* as the country was entering into war footing upped the stakes of the cultural battle considerably. A week before the first issue of *Simbolul* appeared, Montenegro, and then its Balkan League allies Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria, declared war on the Ottoman Empire. From the autumn of 1912 until the conclusion of the Second Balkan War in summer 1913, Romania was in limbo, as an article in the leading cultural review of the time, *Noua Revistă Română*, put it: 'One thing is absolutely certain: from last autumn, when the Balkan War broke out, and until the day the Romanian army was mobilized, the entire Romanian population, in the cities and in the countryside, lived in a state of perpetual anxiety.'⁹ These were months of nervous waiting for the neutral state, with war expected to be declared any minute. After the Romanian army was eventually mobilized in the Second Balkan War, over 300,000 soldiers crossed the Danube into Bulgaria and concluded the war within twelve days without a single combat casualty (although 6,000 soldiers died of a cholera epidemic).¹⁰ As a first on European soil, enemy aircraft targeted civilians – although the Romanian planes over Sofia dropped leaflets rather than bombs.

If the Balkan Wars are relatively forgotten today, the scale of devastation was enormous: 32,000 combat casualties for the Bulgarian army, 36,500 for Serbia, and nearly 8,000 for Greece, while the Ottoman Empire lost around 100,000 soldiers.¹¹ The cost extended beyond the battlefield as epidemics killed indiscriminately and civilians became 'targets of war': 'Deliberate terror created by arson, looting, murder, and rape

⁷ Poldy declared his adherence to Futurist principles in an article in *Rampa*, 8 November 1912.

⁸ *Simbolul*, no. 3 (1 December 1912), 48.

⁹ I. Nisipeanu, 'Intensitatea vieții sociale, în timpul mobilizării', *Noua Revistă Română*, 1 September 1913, 167.

¹⁰ Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000), 118. See also Barbara Jelavich, 'Romania in the First World War: The Pre-War Crisis, 1912-1914', *International History Review* 14, no. 3 (August 1992): 441-51.

¹¹ Hall, *The Balkan Wars*, 135-6.

was intended as a spur to move populations out of a particular piece of territory.¹² Serving as a kind of precedent for the carnage to come, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded its contemporaneous report on the Balkan Wars by noting that 'the war suspended the restraints of civil life ... and set in its place the will to injure.'¹³

Although Tzara and his fellow editors of *Simbolul* were bystanders to the conflict taking place beyond Romania's borders, the war climate was palpably felt in Bucharest. For cultural commentators at the time, the appearance of *Simbolul* provoked fury because it seemed to willfully flout nationalist convictions and to undermine national culture at a time when Romanian national unity was itself under threat, not only from the specter of war but also international condemnation of Romania's treatment of its Jewish population.¹⁴ The largely nationalistic *Viața românească* opined that the 'decadent' writers in *Simbolul* produced pseudo-poetry, and with Romania on war footing the magazine was 'ridiculous', even 'quite truly odious': 'It is a lack of human solidarity, a guilty alienation [*instrăinare*] ... a kind of moral abandonment which, to us in this country, we cannot believe can have as an excuse originality'.¹⁵ Not for the last time was Tzara accused of being a foreigner out to destroy a national culture: the term *instrăinare*, which comes from the root *străin* (foreign), means becoming foreign – a jibe at the marginality of the journal's leading editors (Tzara and Iancu as Jews, Vinea with his Greek mother). The rather prevalent anti-Semitism of Romanian society at the time – Jews were denied citizenship and suffered under a host of discriminatory measures blocking access to public services or the purchase of land in the countryside – was even fiercer in the cultural sphere. 'High culture' reviews and forms emanated from urban centres, which had a heavy concentration of Jewish residents because of laws barring Jews from settling in the countryside, and as a consequence many cultural reviews and forms were seen to be in the control of Jewish hands. The legal obstacles to Jewish assimilation (no citizenship for native-born Jews) made cultural assimilation suspect in the eyes of native Romanians. These factors could not be entirely discounted by Tzara, even if his family was non-observant and spoke Romanian in the home. For their part, the editors of *Simbolul* seemed to court political controversy when the first number published an article by Emil Isac (whose literary debut was in a Hungarian magazine) that proudly announced his own decadence and violently attacked the period's leading

¹² Ibid., 136-7.

¹³ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment, 1914), 108.

¹⁴ In June 1913, Georges Clemenceau called Romania's Jews 'the last serfs still existing in Europe' (*New York Times*, 22 June 1913).

¹⁵ Quoted in Constantin Ciopraga, *Literatura română între 1900 și 1918* (Bucharest: Editura Junimea, 1970), 122-3.

public intellectual and nationalist patron saint, Nicolae Iorga.¹⁶ Already Tzara was showing himself ready to stir up polemics in the name of art -- an art that was, moreover, from the start politicized, immersed in fiercely contested cultural debates.

The Second Balkan War was a truly national event, creating 'intense *social convergence*' as 'a single goal tyrannically lorded over every person'.¹⁷ Nationalist agitation -- the conquest of Bulgarian territory was seen as the first step to 'liberating' Romanians in Transylvania, the national dream of the young country -- created a kind of mass hysteria, with the army's triumph representing the possibility of social renewal after the disastrous peasant revolt of 1907 which resulted in major loss of life and seemed to put a halt to the country's liberal, modernizing aspirations. Some sensitive observers were less triumphant, concluding that the Balkan Wars laid bare claims of progress and international harmony: '[t]reaties were drawn to be promptly torn up'.¹⁸ The poet Tudor Arghezi remarked that war imparted one horrible lesson: a culture that had been 'patiently built' over 'hundreds of years' was powerless against 'ten cannons assembled in several hours'.¹⁹ Both the 1907 peasant revolt and the Balkan Wars revealed the inherent frailty of civilizational progress and Western culture, lessons that the young Tzara took with him to Zurich and which the mass carnage of the First World War confirmed.

If '[t]he rumbling sounds of arms seems to have intimidated the delicate muses', the appearance of *Simbolul* during the First Balkan War bucked this trend.²⁰ Yet the journal's silence towards the war question led to harsh criticism in the press, which considered aesthetic fancies gratuitous during a national crisis. Tzara did not want to turn *Simbolul* into a trumpet for nationalist propaganda, but he was not entirely immune to the gravity of the military situation. One of his most accomplished Romanian-language poems, 'Furtuna și Cântecul Dezertorului' [The Storm and the Deserter's Song], was inspired by the Balkan Wars. Although published in the second number of *Chemarea*, and thus appearing after the outbreak of the First World War, the poem nonetheless harkens back to Romania's experience during the Balkan Wars. As its title indicates, the horrors of war are refracted through a deserter. Crucially, the deserter does not come from the losing side; he has not fled his regiment out of cowardice. By looking at the human cost of victory, Tzara moves beyond the classical poetry inspired

¹⁶ Emil Isac, 'Protopoii familiei mele', *Simbolul*, no. 1 (25 October 1912), 2-4.

¹⁷ Nisipeanu, 'Intensitatea vieții sociale, în timpul mobilizării', 168 (emphasis original).

¹⁸ Alfred L.P. Dennis, 'Diplomatic Affairs and International Law, 1913', *American Political Science Review* 8, no. 1 (February 1914): 25-49, at 25.

¹⁹ Tudor Arghezi, 'Cântecul Europei' (1912), in *Opere*, vol. 3, ed. Mitzura Arghezi and Traian Radu, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2003), 593.

²⁰ *Noua Revistă Română*, 4 November 1912, 1.

by the unsheathed sword and the victorious arms of heroic soldiers. The first stanza details a military advance:

*We come up on the troops from behind and cut them down
We trample corpses left in the snow
We open a window to the drowned darkness
Through valleys that sucked the enemy dry.²¹*

The lines have an intense sonority and a marked internal rhythm. In the original, one of the lines is 'Stîlcim stîrvurile lepădate în zapadă' [We trample corpses left in the snow]: the 'stî' of the first two words gathers speed, especially since the phrase starts with a rapid-fire verb and object combination, while the rest of the sentence comes together in the internal rhyme of 'lepădate' [fallen] and 'zapadă' [snow]. The basic stressed-unstressed accent of the line gives a ceaseless beat to the strophe: this is the music of war pushing the soldiers forward, linked together in rapacious cruelty as they survey the enemy's losses. The unspecified 'we' advancing in this wasteland soon falls victim to an inhospitable nature:

*The frost: bones shiver, flesh gets eaten
We let the heart cry.
Why are we sliding along the ripped mountain?²²*

As night falls, 'It is so dark that only words are light' -- but the words of the isolated deserter are collected in the second part of the poem as testimony to the futility and brutality of war:

*If nations continue to war
Why does the moon still hang so red
A godly seal of the book of peace?
Grenades break off aubergine chunks of sky.²³*

The song of the poem's title is not much of a song, as the deserter is isolated from his regiment and tries to understand how war has destroyed him: 'Look here: my body in dust and soul is coming apart.'²⁴ The loneliness of the deserter is almost existential by the poem's end, as he implores his heart to weep but doesn't know if those emotions are still accessible, so heavily has war paralyzed him. It is a remarkably astute poem, foregoing sentimentality and concentrating on the physical and psychic breakdown of the deserter who becomes heroic by merely surviving and bearing

²¹ Tristan Tzara, 'The Storm and the Deserter's Song', in *Primele Poeme/First Poems*, trans. Michael Impey and Brian Swann (Berkeley: New Rivers Press, 1976), 23.

²² Tristan Tzara, 'Furtuna și cântecul dezertorului', in *Primele poeme ale lui Tristan Tzara*, ed. Saşa Pană (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 1971), 10.

²³ *Ibid.*, 12.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

witness. The rhythms of war are metonymically brought out in the poem, but otherwise the formal innovations are limited so as to bring out the full force of the major theme, a sure sign of Tzara's growing poetic maturity.

Tzara's experiences of the Balkan Wars were those of a civilian bystander; he was too young to serve and by the time Romania abandoned its policy of neutrality during World War I, Tzara was already in Switzerland. But war's impacts extended beyond the soldiers on the front; the Balkan Wars were a moment of cultural reckoning in Romania, and they sharply affected the country's cultural politics. Tzara would have seen the nationalist turn in the popular and high-brow press and felt these pressures on his own cultural projects. The scale of devastation and the loosening of military restraints during the Balkan Wars revealed even more strongly how frail the hold of civilization was – bourgeois decorum, religious munificence, and untrammelled progress were all shown to be false. Dada's critique of the war was thus a continuation of his prior experiences, although on a much larger stage.

TONITZA'S WAR: MILITANT GRAPHIC ART IN ROMANIAN LEFT-WING REVIEWS (1918-1924)

Adela Beiu-Papanastasiou
University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

Abstract

One of Romania's most important modernist artists, Nicolae Tonitza is famous for his candid portraits of children. Yet, before being canonized as the painter of "luxuriously coloured sadness" [tristețelor luxuriant colorate], Tonitza had a rather eclectic and convoluted artistic journey which came through the First World War and a politically-committed avant-garde phase which has not been given due attention. His first-hand war experience as a soldier and war prisoner impacted his work in several ways. Apart from producing book illustrations and paintings which document the war and its protracted consequences, between 1918 and 1924 Tonitza also contributed drawings and caricatures to Romanian left-wing and avant-garde journals. His politically-committed graphic works continued to dwell on references to the war to denounce the political establishment and advocate political change. In this paper, I will examine Tonitza's contributions to Romanian leftist and avant-garde reviews after the First World War in order to understand how the war experience inflected his political views and how this reinforced political stance impacted his artistic work. I will also assess Tonitza's role within the Romanian avant-garde, alongside other reputable caricaturists like Iosef Iser and Marcel Iancu, and their reception of German expressionism as a tool of left-wing political activism.

After study stays in Munich and Paris, and travelling around Italy, Tonitza returned to Romania to a rather stark reality and art scene. He had troubles earning a living from art and was disillusioned with the staid Romanian art scene. He painted churches along with some of his fellows-artists, taught drawing and took an editorial job at *Iașul*, a conservative paper. He contributed to *Iașul* not only drawings and caricatures,

but also articles on various topics. To explain Tonitza's incongruent collaboration with a conservative paper, Petru Comarnescu contends that it was only after the Great War that Tonitza clarified his left-wing political stance. It is however difficult to gauge whether he actually sympathized with the conservative position he was supporting at Iașul, or whether it was simply one of the many compromises he made in order to make ends meet. His works – *Sena la Courbevoie* [The Seine at Courbevoie] and *Pe platou* [On the Plateau] – were shown in 1911 at the “Tinerimea Artistică” [Artistic Youth] exhibition alongside Iosif Iser's and Francisc Șirato's, and in February 1916, alongside his friend Ștefan Dimitrescu's.

Tonitza was drafted in August 1916, right after Romania entered the war on the side of the Allied Powers, and took part in the Turtucaia battle where the 85th Infantry Regiment “Prahova” of the Romanian army was defeated by the Bulgarian-German alliance and he ended up a prisoner at the Kirdjali prisoner-of-war camp, in Bulgaria. As a prisoner, he continued drawing either with improvised tools and materials or with ink, paint and paper a sympathetic Bulgarian commander provided. Together with fellow-painter and prisoner C. Vlădescu, Tonitza was even able to produce a hand-made single-copy humoristic camp magazine complete with news, advertisements and illustrations. His war experience was recorded in fourteen fragments published by Iașul during summer 1916 as “Însemnările unui luptător” [A Fighter's Notes] and in illustrations he made for G. Millian-Maximin's memoir *În mâinile dușmanului. Însemnările unui prizonier* [In the hands of the enemy. A Prisoner's Notes] (1920). Referring to war paintings exhibited in Bucharest in 1921, Erwin Kessler argues that Tonitza's wartime experiences also shaped his painting production after the war.

Around the same time, he also started a long-term collaboration with the Romanian left-wing publications. Between 1918 and 1924 he contributed drawings, caricatures and articles to such militant leftist and avant-garde journals as *Facla* [The Beacon], *Chemarea* [The Calling], *Cuvântul Liber* [The Free Word], *Socialismul* [Socialism], *Avântul* [The Impetus], *Tineretul Socialist* [the Socialist Youth], *Proletarul* [The Proletarian] and *Hiena* [The Hyena]. At this point his graphic works crossed paths with Romanian avant-garde artists like Iosif Iser and Marcel Iancu. Because they later developed completely different artistic careers, however, this aspect of Tonitza's oeuvre has been seldom considered in the context Romanian avant-garde.

Tonitza's left-wing leanings, I need to say from the beginning, are a thorny issue. It is difficult to tell how much he heeded editors' directions and how much creative freedom he had regarding drawings and caricatures commissioned by these left-wing reviews. On the one hand, pre-1989 sources documenting this aspect of his work tend to exaggerate, if not outright fabricate his support of the Romanian Socialist Party and belief in its cause. More recent criticism is reluctant, on the other hand, to associate Tonitza's name with the Socialist Party and its ideology, understandably abiding by the stigma surrounding the pre-history of the Romanian communist dictatorship. That

being said, even recent criticism is unanimous about the left-wing sympathies, if not always programmatic or party-oriented, of an important number of Romanian modernist and avant-garde artists, among which Tonitza as well.

There are several reasons for this rapprochement between innovative art and progressive politics which was occurring more widely within the European avant-garde. First, the extraordinary development of newspaper graphics was an important incentive for young artists to contribute. Second, expressionism was responsible for the revival and flourishing of printmaking, an artistic practice neglected since the Middle Ages. This encouraged intensive exchanges between art and the press, and therefore artistic democratization. The powerful print culture of the satirical journals in Paris and Munich which shaped artists from East-Central Europe, like Tonitza and Iser, was also very much ideologically-inflected

Inspired perhaps by the budding politicization of German expressionism, the Romanian socialist circles (among whom artists like Iosif Iser, Camil Ressu, Ștefan Popescu, Marcel Iancu) and publications contributed significantly to its reception and dissemination. In fact, the first Romanian article referring to expressionist concepts and terminology authored by Theodor Cornel appeared in the left-wing review *Viața Socială* [Social Life] in 1910. Furthermore, Iosif Iser, one of Romania's most important expressionist graphic artists published his first caricature in the left-wing Romanian journal *Adevărul* in 1905, before moving on to more famous venues like *Simplicissimus*, *Le Rire* [Laughter] and *Le Témoin* [The Witness].

Apart from the keen reception of Western European modernity, Romanian art was also shaped by local social and political upheavals which were difficult to overlook. The brutally suppressed 1907 peasant uprising, Erwin Kessler argues, "affected the entire local artistic mindset, and [it] thoroughly modified the representation of the peasant and the village world in Romania until long after the First World War." As a result, artistic conscience was radicalized and caricature which previously focused on social manners, was channeled towards social-political issues in the works of Iosif Iser, Nicolae Mantu, Arny Murnu, Francisc Șirato, Ion Teodorescu-Sion. As Mariana Vida shows, Iser reinvented caricature by abandoning the old style with supersized heads set on tiny bodies established by Honoré Daumier and André Gill in France and still used by artists like Aurel Jiquid and Nicolae Petrescu-Căină, for more concise, jerkier avant-garde drawings. This is the artistic stage which both Nicolae Tonitza and Marcel Iancu joined after their respective returns from Paris and Zurich.

For the Romanian left-wing press, the recruitment of modernist art helped their mission either by more effective dissemination of ideology or by biting critique which could not have been more poignant than in the raw expressionist caricatures of Iser, Tonitza or Marcel Iancu. Socialists and modernist artists also happened to be on the same side against the conservative milieu which resisted both artistic innovation and progressive politics. One important example is the never-ending feud between

Constantin Milea's and N.D. Cocea's *Adevărul* [The Truth] and *Facla* [The Beacon], and Nicolae Iorga's *Neamul Românesc* [The Romanian Kin] which spilled into the pages of Tristan Tzara's pre-avant-garde reviews *Simbolul* [The Symbol] (1912) and *Chemarea* [The Calling] (1915). Kessler, argues, like I do in my analysis of the radicalization of Romanian Symbolism in Tzara's pre-avant-garde reviews, that it was rather the reception of expressionism and left-wing political activism that galvanized artistic innovation than Marinetti's 1909 Futurist Manifesto.

Kessler attributes Tonitza's left-wing drawings to the influence of the "kitschy social criticism" in Théophile Steinlen's and Francisque Poulbot's graphics. But his stay in Munich where expressionism was already fomenting artistic and political revolution and the Romanian tradition of left-wing caricature must have had an equally important sway. While in Munich, he befriended the original artist Lascar Vorel whose caricatures were published by the famous expressionist magazine *Der Komet*. Vorel also exhibited his works – which Mariana Vida likens to Georg Grosz's and Otto Dix's – at the Goltz Gallery alongside Erich Heckel's. The friendship between Vorel and Tonitza is believed to have impacted greatly the latter's work and political views.

Tonitza's concern for social issues and his left-wing views predate his collaboration with *Socialismul* [Socialism] – the organ of the Romanian Socialist Party – as is evident in the 1916 series of drawings *Din lumea celor umili* [From the world of the humble] and the war paintings exhibited in Bucharest in 1921. For these latter, among which *Convoi de prizonieri* [Convoy of Prisoners, 1919], *Coada la pâine* [Queuing for Bread, 1920], *Femei la cimitir* [Women at the Cemetery, 1920] and *La Azil* [In the Madhouse, 1921], Tonitza used a motto from Henri Barbusse's 1919 socialist novel *Clarté*: "*Celui qui veut creuser jusqu'à la vérité doit simplifier*" [He who would dig down the truth must simplify; figure 1 and 2]. Apart from indicating the painter's political views, the motto is also suggestive of the concentration and simplification of narrative and shape occurring in these paintings. They depict destitute figures of orphans, widows, maimed people and other victims of the war by way of exaggerated, synthetic forms and cruel, stark colours. One of Tonitza's 1919 drawings for *Socialismul* [Socialism], *Spre votul universal* [On the Way to Universal Suffrage; figure 3] is stylistically continuous with the war paintings, using the same heavy, foregrounded, angular silhouettes. A commentary on the impending elections, the drawing's stylistic reference to the war paintings transfers the negative content to denounce the censorship and military control of what was supposed to be the exercise of freedom.

"Celui qui veut creuser jusqu'à la vérité doit simplifier" (He who would dig down the truth must simplify), Henri Barbusse, Clarté, 1919.

Tonitza's view of the absurdity and cruelty of the war – a staple of expressionist sensibility – was in tune with the anti-war stance of most left-wing publications. *Furtuna* [The Storm], a 1919 drawing published in *Cuvântul Liber*, announces an impending war as a direct consequence of Europe's aggressive politics (figure 4). The storm conjures the

shape of a skull in the background, while the foreground presents the vulnerable figure of a woman shielding a baby in her arms. A handy elaboration on the same topic comes from a sketch depicting a corpulent couple – the physical attributes alluding to their wealth – discussing the potential economic and social benefits of another war. It would presumably ease congestion (figure 5).

Another drawing published in *Cuvântul Liber* shows a war orphan being brutally chastised for begging, rather than being helped out and provided for by the community (figure 6). While the distorted, oversized shape of a maimed war veteran is presented as a sole figure of a presumed celebration of the heroes (figure 7). The brutal quelling of the Bucharest typesetters' strike on 13 Decembre 1918 during which the army opened fire on the crowd – an emblematic moment in the communist historiography – also figures heavily in Tonitza's graphics. Three of his drawings were published in *Socialismul* [Socialism] to commemorate one year from the bloody event (figure 8). A diptych presents belligerent scenes bound to evoke the First World War in the readers' imagination. They also suggest a perpetual war between classes, as the socialist ideology would have it. The third one imagines a dialogue between the dead (figure 9). Reversing the viewer's/reader's expectation that they were victims of the war, the dead turn out to be fatalities of the 1907 peasant revolution and the 1918 typesetters' strike, brothers in arms across the decades.

The war is a recurrent theme in Tonitza's militant graphic art of this period. In tune with leftist militant strategies, the artist uses the echoes of the war and their sway on the collective psyche to criticize the status quo, social inequality more poignant due to post-war shortages, capitalist militarism and the violent quelling of workers' strikes. Whereas the official discourse differentiated rigorously between inimical violence during the war and the lawful aggression against civil unrest, Tonitza's drawings, much like most left-wing criticism, conflates the two as a twofold crime against the lower-classes, workers and peasants alike. Not only were most of the soldiers and victims from among the poor, but their survivors also suffered the post-war shortages and were violently crushed when showing discontent. Stylistically, Tonitza's graphics of this period, although eclectic, differ from the mellower previous contours inspired by Steinlen and Poulbot, and take bolder, more concise shapes closer to the expressionist repertoire and experimenting with genre, perspective and effect. As with an important part of Romanian modernist art, Tonitza's political commitment coincided with a radicalization of his art. Conversely, once his progressive ideals cooled down, Tonitza transitioned to the more marketable aestheticized forms which established him as one of Romania's most important modernist artists.



Figure 1: N.N. Tonitza, *Queuing for Bread* (1919) and *Women at the Cemetery* (1920), oil on canvas, the National Museum of Art, Bucharest in Comarnescu, *op. cit.*, p. 325.



Figure 2: *Convoy of Prisoners*, drawing, 1919, The National Museum of Art, Bucharest, in Comarnescu, *op. cit.*, p. 337.



Figure 3: *On the way to universal suffrage*, “The elections were set for October. Censorship and siege are ongoing”, *Socialismul*, 1919, in *Grafică militantă românească* [Romanian Militant Graphic Art], Perahim, Jules, (ed.), Editura Meridiane, Bucharest, 1963.



Figure 4: *The Storm*. "Europe feverishly resumed getting armed" Cuvântul Liber, 1919, in Comarnescu, *op. cit.*, p. 308.



Figure 5: “We need another war to prevent overpopulation”, *Cuvântul Liber*, 1919, in Comarnescu, *op. cit.*, p. 309.



Figure 6: "A war orphan and begging? You have no pride you blockhead",
Cuvântul Liber no. 25, 15 Feb.1920, in Șorban, Raul: Nicolae N. Tonitza,
Editura Meridiane, Bucharest, 1964, p. 22.



Figure 7: *The Feast of the Heroes*, drawing, 1919-1924, in Comarnescu, *op. cit.*, p. 302.



Figure 8: Diptych 13 December 1918, part I, “3.30 pm...the fight” and “7.30 pm...All is quiet in the country”, *Socialismul*, 13 Dec. 1919, in Perahim, *op. cit.*



Figure 9: "-What conscription are you, comrade?"/"-1907! What about you?"/"-13 December 1918", *Socialismul*, 13 Dec. 1919, in Comarnescu, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

REPRESENTATION OF DEATH IN ROMANIAN PAINTING AROUND WORLD WAR I

Oana Maria Nicuță
"George Enescu" National University of Arts, Iasi, Romania

Abstract

The representation of death on the battlefield is a major topic in the genre of historical painting. Nicolae Grigorescu is one of the first to have introduced a realist depiction of dead soldiers in his paintings representing the 1877 War for Independence. The war photographers of the time also started to represent death around the years of World War I. One might conclude that the expressionist tendencies in Romanian painting around World War I and especially in between the two World Wars did not closely follow the example of German expressionism, but rather incorporated the lessons of historical painting and war photography in portraying death.

The violent death that prevailed throughout Europe during the First World War became soon a theme that touched the sensibility of the artists of the time. This universal theme became more potent and relevant for Expressionist artists in an age marked by war and social upheaval. In particular, Expressionists refigured the medieval motif of the Dance of Death, using it to allude to the cataclysmic destruction of World War I and its aftermath. Artists' images of both the battlefield and the "murderous deeds" (*Moritäten*) committed on the home front captured the feelings of violence and unpredictability that characterized the era.¹

By the time he commenced his graphic series *The War* in 1923, Otto Dix's attitude seems to have changed: a searing indictment of the effects of combat is blatantly apparent in the etchings. There is nothing heroic about the soldiers charging into battle: indeed, they are hardly human, their heads being obliterated by gas masks. When we do see faces, they are anguished, terrified or horribly disfigured, mentions Peter Jelavich

¹ https://www.moma.org/s/ge/curated_ge/themes/death.html.

in his study *Dance of Life, Dance of Death*.² “And then there are the corpses, ranging from recently dead to advanced stages of decay. But amid all of these accusatory images, there are still elements of Nietzschean vitalism: the worms that cover the bodies of dead evoke the never-ending cycle of life and death and new life.”³

According to Jelavich, death also sculpted grim parodies of life: whereas the prewar artists indulged and celebrated the exuberant acrobatic displays of variety shows to prefigure the cries of life, Dix saw a Dance of Death in the splayed legs and contorted arms of soldiers caught in barbed wire. Not surprisingly, the great War saw a resurgence of the Dance of Death motif, which had been prominent among Central European artists dating back to the middle ages. There Death was “a great equalizer, who spares neither peasant nor pope, neither beggar nor king. While the medieval images were weighted with theological meaning — they served as a memento mori, calling on all humans, regardless of rank, to reflect on their mortality — the Expressionists’ death-dances lack such cautionary and ultimately redemptive transcendence”⁴.

By 1916 Ernst Barlach, who had welcomed the war at its outbreak and served in the infantry, regarded it as senseless slaughter. In his painting *From a Modern Dance of Death* (fig. 6), the central figure smashes bones in blind fury. In 1918 Nolde too adopted an allegorical approach, as the exotic dancers of his prewar oeuvre, gesticulating in wild abandonment, mutated into the grimacing *Death as a Dancer*. That same year, Kirchner took over the motif and added a very personal note to it. After having spent three years in mental institutions, he carved a woodcut titled *Self-Portrait with Dancing Death*. In that image, a dancing skeleton, which seems to combine with Kirchner’s head, tries to pull his chin to the right, but the artist stares resolutely in the opposite direction, as if he struggles to overcome the call of death. According to Jelavich, this image prefigures his eventual suicide twenty years after the completion of the painting.

The Dance of Death motif became even more prevalent after the conclusion of the war, as Germany and Austria suffered blockades, high unemployment, mounting inflation, and political radicalization. In 1919, Berlin was festooned with a poster depicting a skeleton dancing with the allegorical Berolina and proclaiming: “Berlin, stop! Think it over. Your dance partner is Death”⁵.

That warning was echoed in a number of Expressionist posters, though their messages were often as opaque and confusing as the political situation itself. The year 1917 saw the formation of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), which

² Peter Jelavich, *Dance of Life, Dance of Death*, in *German Expressionism, The Graphic Impulse*, ed. Starr Figura, Museum of Modern Art Press, NY, 2011, pp.43-44.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

demanded immediate cessation of hostilities. That same year Russia provided an even more radical model, as Czar Nicolas II abdicated in March and eventually, in November, Lenin and his Communists seized power.⁶ The second generation suffered from war-induced disillusionment and were dissatisfied with postwar German society; they joined in with the cry for a new, classless society. They saw the war as a liberating force that had purged the old era and set the stage for a new one in which artists would be prophets. Writer Friedrich Burschell remembered that in 1919 "for . . . friends and myself and for millions of front-line soldiers the abdication of the German royal family and of the existing power structure meant not only the end of the senseless, murderous war, not merely salvation and liberation, but far, far more. It meant new hope, the assurance even that out of the chaos a new and better world would arise."⁷

In 1919 Behne insisted in an important essay on the revolutionary nature of Expressionism, notwithstanding that it was being increasingly accepted by the bourgeoisie. While the art of the Secession members covered the spectrum from Expressionist through Futurist to Dada, the underlying element was the struggle for an art that would contain within it the power of the newly awakened postwar spirit. Yet, unlike the two groups in Berlin, the Secession was not as precisely defined in its aim or as programmatic in its activities. The radical periodical *Mensche*, published by Heinar Schilling and Felix Stiemer, featured prints and poems by members; it also contained some important writings by leaders of the group, including the article by Behne. Certainly the best-known member of the Dresden Secession Gruppe 1919 was Otto Dix. Known today primarily for his *Neue Sachlichkeit* work from the years after 1925, Dix created a significant group of paintings, drawings, and prints during the years 1915-25. These early years were of extreme importance in his coming to terms with his traumatic wartime experiences. Like many other German artists, Dix had at first had a positive approach to the war, believing that the upheaval would sweep away the old order and usher in a new age. Like Beckmann and Grosz he voluntarily enlisted in 1914, subsequently serving at the front in Russia and France. "These experiences are the basis for several hundred drawings he executed on the battlefields and for much of his work in the subsequent decades. On his return from the front, he began to depict his experiences in a new style, a fusion of Futurism and Expressionism, deploying powerful colors with bold strokes. But it was not until 1924 that he created his antiwar epic *Der Krieg* (War), a portfolio of fifty unforgettable etchings and aquatints. With needle and acid he literally corroded the surface of the plate and conveyed both the physical and the moral destruction that he had witnessed. *Der Krieg* stands today as one of the monuments to the horrors of modern war".⁸

⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 43-44.

⁷ Stephanie Barron, *German Expressionism, 1920-1925, The Second Generation*, Prestel Publications, Los Angeles, 1988, pp. 18-20.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

The horror of the bitter fighting, political murder and torture in post-war Germany is both context and subject of the most sophisticated and original work on this theme to emerge from the period. Max Beckmann's *Die Nacht (The Night)* opens a window onto a domestic interior that has become a cold and deadly torture chamber⁹. It is a bleak view of humanity. It is also historically specific – the painting is inscribed with the dates August 1918 – March 1919. Its iconography has its origins in Beckmann's drawings made in wartime operating theatres. Rejecting Expressionist fervour and bravura, Beckmann painted the scene in leaden, sickly, colours with surgical precision. In the year he began work on it, Beckmann wrote: "So the war draws to its sorry end. It hasn't changed anything of my idea of life, it only confirmed it". A man is strangled and hung by the neck. His palms and charred foot soles are turned outwards, as in depictions of Christ, displaying their stigmata.

A woman with a bodice ripped and legs splayed collapses to the floor. One of the Weimar Republic's most trenchant analysts, Siegfried Kracauer wrote an article on Beckmann in 1921 in which he described the hellish effects of *Die Nacht*:

"Truly, the horsemen of the apocalypse are riding and mowing down the human race. Bloodlust creeps through the nights and instigates pogroms, in which men and women are slowly tortured to death with diabolical powers of inventiveness. The victims' whimpers of pain are drowned out by the hellish cacophony that is expelled from the blood-red gramophone trumpet ... the whole order of things is inverted ... But in the midst of the noise the executioners' apprentices busy themselves with complete quiet and impassivity. Little pipe in mouth, they strangle necks and dislocate limbs, as if these were perfectly normal tasks about which nothing further need be said".¹⁰

Expressionism's exploration of society through the depiction of disintegration, despair, fear or physical violence provoked at the same time the feelings of the viewer.

FUTURISM AND THE DEATH DRIVE

Another avantgarde artistic movement that depicted problems of the imminent War was the Futurism. One of the first and fundamental fundamentals of the early European avant-garde of the 20th century is futurism, whose name had been circulated just before the launch of a consonant manifesto with that name. According to Werner Hofmann, futurism was preceded by William Hogarth, with his *Tabarini Ball Hieroglyphs*, and William Turner, with *Great Western Railway* in 1844, but also with Italian divisionism.¹¹ These were the contacts that Italian painters had with the Parisian scene, and especially with the cubist artists and their geometrical collages. Futurismo had become in 1908 a kind of slogan that the Italian poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

¹⁰ Bassie, Ashlee, *Expresionism*, Parksteel International, 2008, pp. 118.

¹¹ Hofmann, Werner, *Fundamentele artei moderne*. vol. II, Meridiane Press, Bucharest, pp. 64-65.

had launched alongside concepts such as dynamism or electricism.¹² The official manifesto was to appear only on 20 February 1909 in the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. Its importance, as well as any manifestation of avant-garde, polemical and enthusiastic trends, was to establish clear ideas about a new conception of art, creative process, and artwork.

The flow of physical movement, the preoccupation for industrial transformations of the urban or suburban environment for machinery, speed and even light, in its scientific form, are the major concerns of a group of Italian artists from the first decade of the twentieth century.¹³

"We will sing from the vibrant fervent nocturnal fervor of the arsenals and the shipyards shining in violent electric months, (...) factories clinging to the crooked clouds produced by their smoke; bridges that cut rivers like giant gymnasts, shining in the sun like the blade of the knife (...)":¹⁴ these are some of Marinetti's intentions to approach the artistic field.

Originating from the radical wing of French symbolism, Marinetti believes that art and life are part of the same ensemble, and the separation of the two would be unnatural. Museums, symbols of attachment to the outdated past, had to be replaced by the dynamics of life itself. Anarchist spirit, he glorified the war and the violent aspects of life. He did not see in the massive industrialization or at the dizzying speed any danger to human existence, but on the contrary a source of the creative impulse. The car, as a symbol of the technical world, was perceived as having much higher aesthetic values than ancient sculpture. We can also say that Marinetti proposes and sustains a speed aesthetics, in which beauty is associated with the present dynamic. The birth of such aesthetics is explained, according to Werner Hofmann, by the lack of a modern tradition in Italian art. The cultural and conceptual anarchism that Marinetti proposes was the natural answer to the political, social and cultural sterility accumulated in Italy at the beginning of the 20th century.¹⁵

Future painters, including Giacomo Balla, Carlo Carra, Umberto Boccioni, Gino Severini and Luigi Russolo, were trying to embody ordinary people, and more than ever they wanted to create art for the masses.¹⁶ They argued that the viewer must be at the center of the image and provide an active response to the artist's challenges. The artists associated with this trend considered that the equalization of art and life, which will continue some years later in another form within Dadaism, is necessary and must be

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 61.

¹³ Brettell, Richard R., *Modern Art 1851-1929*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 36.

¹⁴ Marinetti, F. T., "Futurist Manifesto", 20 February 1909, *Le Figaro*, *apud*. C. Tisdall, A. Bozzolla, *Futurism*, Thames & Hudson, 2003, p. 7.

¹⁵ Hofmann, Werner, p.62.

¹⁶ Tisdall, Caroline, Bozzola, Angelo, *Futurism*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2003.

made possible by any means, but perhaps the most important of all was for them movement. Universal principle of life, dynamics could not be isolated in a static image, and: "the gesture we reproduce on the cloth no longer has to set a moment of universal dynamism. It must be the dynamic feeling itself (made eternal)."

The fascination of speed included both organic and mechanical aspects, from train speed to human body movements. The multitude of masses, agglomeration, city streets, or building shows were perceived in their space-time chaining, leading to defragmentation of visible forms.

"We have to express the invisible, which moves beyond the quiet object that we have on the right or left or the back, and not this small square of life, which is artificially fenced off the stage of a theater (...) O the composition needs a special rhythmic movement to help or contrast with the static rhythm of the sculptural entity".

REPRESENTATIONS OF DEATH IN ROMANIAN PAINTING AROUND WORLD WAR I

In the space of the native culture, the first modern representations of the war in Romanian art are related to the time of 1877 - the War of Independence. The peculiarity of such depictions lies in their documentary attitude. Nicolae Grigorescu, himself an active participant in the Romanian military campaigns, will evoke with much authenticity the atmosphere on the front. The artist will focus either on a lyrical representation that characterizes it either by deliberate realism. As an example, we can evoke *Dorobant*, *Roșiorul*, *Gornistul*, *Alarm* or *Santinela*, works in which the artist evokes the heroism of the Romanian soldiers. Silhouettes are most often captured in imposing, sometimes overly suggested by the painter, in order to make them strong demonstrations of the soldiers' captivity of deep feelings of energy and patriotism. These paintings assume the role of awareness of the importance represented by the characters represented, but also of exacerbating the patriotic feelings that accompanied the people. The opposite is the *Turkish Prisoners* or the *Prisoners' Convoy*, the shocking image of the war. The late 70's of the 19th century will find him in the country where he will return for total and active involvement in the War of Independence. He will leave with the soldiers on the Bulgarian front and will execute quickly but also with precision a lot of sketches through which he is surprised by the fighting of the fighting, the front reporter. The *Smartan attack* may be one of the best known works of this period, a work that, through the well-calculated compositional structure, succeeds in impressing the viewer with the whole energy and patriotism of the Romanian soldiers.

Located in the possession of the National History Museum of Romania, the most famous version of Nicolae Grigorescu's painting "The Smardan Attack" is one of the masterpieces of modern Romanian art. The "Smardan Attack" painting has three versions in oil (of which the only very large size is the Museum of History) and several pencils in the National Art Museum and private collections.

The most important version of the "Attack ..." is, according to the CIMEC database, owned by the National History Museum of Romania and is classified in the National Heritage section, Thesaurus. The Opera (photo above) has an area of over 10 sqm. It is in custody of the Bucharest History Museum. A very large study of the painting is located at the National Art Museum, in the National Gallery, and other known versions are in Craiova (in the Jean Mihail Art Museum - photo below) and one in a private collection in Ploiesti.

The painting "The Smardan Attack", the classified version, was commissioned by Nicolae Grigorescu by the Bucharest City Hall. In making the painting, Grigorescu used sketches made during the Independence War, when he was attached to the Romanian campaign in Bulgaria as an official painter.

The artistic value of the painting lies in the complexity and dynamism of the composition and the dramatic effect of color use, with a large dominance of grays and desaturate tones, used to convey the feeling of cold and anxiety caused by fights. Grigorescu's accents of color for details increase drama and outline the human dimension of the characters, as well as the heroism they prove.¹⁷ By its size, the Smârdan Attack is unique in Romanian art, rising to the level of reputation the painter had in Romania. No one before him, not even Theodor Aman, tried to make a work of such importance. The painting is impressive by the sensation of movement it makes in relation to its monumentality and its dimensions. The image depicted is of a strong drama, having in the first plan two natural-sized lakes: a Turk lying on the back in the snow with his hands outstretched, symbolizing giving up, and to his right a Romanian fallen with his hands clenched on the rifle. Besides these, the Romanian infantry fleeing with the bayonet to the gun, in a leaped attack position. The attitude of the soldier in the foreground is resumed to every Romanian soldier, which amplifies the original reason as in a symphony, thus enhancing the overall heroic effect. The fallen capes, the flame of the explosions, the gray mantle, the gloomy hibernate, and the red of the beans, complete the harsh and plumage of the morning field on January 13, 1878.

During the First World War, the imagery of war is somehow disconnected from the European avant-gardes's depiction of individual traumas and casualties, by insisting rather on the social consequences of war and a heroic, monumental representation of the army. Starting with autumn 1916, Iasi will become the capital of refugees from all over Romania. Here will be the king and the parliament, the government and the main institutions of the state. Although the conditions of the war imposed inherent difficulties, during the years of the war, an intensive activity took place in all fields, including on a cultural level. During this period, the publications in the Moldovan cultural center recorded a constant cultural, scientific and artistic activity, a strong preoccupation for the preservation of the cultural heritage and the continuation of the

¹⁷ <http://graficante.ro/09/picturi-celebre-romanesti-atacul-de-la-smardan-de-nicolae-grigorescu/>.

educational process - fundamental elements for preserving the national integrity. The great historian Nicolae Iorga, the art historian I. D. Ștefănescu, the composer George Enescu, the painter Octav Băncilă and many others will contribute to this.¹⁸

In this context, Iasi will become a center where artistic life will try to continue its natural course. For example, General Radu Rosetti's initiative to set up a national museum, the constant exhibitions opening up in the city, artwork vignettes demonstrated that the presence of artists such as Nicolae Tonitza, Octav Bancila, Iosif Iser or Otto Briesse in the city was a factor stimulating both the public and the younger artists.

In the summer of 1917, however, by Order no. 9400, Romania will send artists to the front, assigning them to all areas of military operations. "The Order provided for the conditions that were made available to the plastic artists to carry out the accomplishment of this artistic mission and the purpose of the works: All the works that they will conceive and execute will entrust them with full ownership of the state, giving up any reward for their work. mentioned the names and the military degree of the artists grouped by MCG with the mission of war correspondents. Thus, it can be seen that 35 artists, 25 painters and 10 sculptors were summoned to the noble mission entrusted to them."¹⁹

Besides the undeniable artistic value of these images, the artists responded to the need to create an official memoir, meant to evoke the glorious events of the past, but on the other hand the desire to set up a national mythology in which the feelings of devotion, sacrifice, bravery are in the foreground.²⁰ The presence of the artist in the middle of the battlefield, as it did in Germany, because only from there he managed to capture the dramatic truth of the war.

The artistic and plastic manifestation generated by this unique initiative was the Painting and Sculpture Exhibition of the artists mobilized by M.C.G. from January 1918. Originally scheduled for Christmas, it was varnished on January 24, 1918, at the site of the Fine Arts School in Iasi, the former Mihailean Academy, and the local press announced that starting January 26 was opened to the public.²¹ The exhibition catalog presents 32 exhibitors (20 painters and 12 sculptors) and exhibited works: 38 paintings and drawings, and the sculpture was present with 23 works in bronze and wood. Some of these valuable creations were preserved in the collection of the National Military

¹⁸ Hașegan, Theodor, *Centenar, Salon de artă vizuală dedicat expoziției de pictură și sculptură a artiștilor mobilizași M.C.G. Iași, ianuarie 1918*, Contact International, Iași, 2018, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Idem*.

²⁰ Bejan, Petru, *Razboiul ...sevaletelor, Centenar, Salon de artă vizuală dedicat expoziției de pictură și sculptură a artiștilor mobilizași M.C.G. Iași, ianuarie 1918*, Contact International, Iași, 2018, p. 18.

²¹ „Opinia“, Iași, 28 January, 1918.

Museum King Ferdinand I - Bucharest, along with many other works performed by the same artists in the post-war years, under the influence of those historical moments.

An extensive article dedicated to the exhibition appeared in the "Mișcarea" daily, which reviews all of the exhibitors, and then appreciates all the artists as a whole because they have been able to fully understand the mission they have been entrusted with. They further state that they are worthy of all admiration, because they have contributed all their talent and managed to create works that will be a remarkable adornment for the military museum.²²

In his rigorous study Theodor Hasegan mention that life on the front was a resounding experience for all artists, moments lived in battles marked their vibrant artistic sensibility. Drawings that were made on site were the documentary material for large oil compositions, monumental sculptures and low-reliefs. Also, small sculpture, watercolor, and graphic works were very expressive to the images inspired during the war. Visual compositions captured the strenuous atmosphere of the front, the disastrous consequences of the bombings, the heavy losses, the sufferings and the shortcomings. Similarly, the theme of the portrait gives us the image of the Romanian soldier, the man of the country, the widow, the sad child . Working with much expressiveness and naturalness in compositions, crocs, sketches or drawings, portraits and compositional actions are rendered without pathos, with rhetorical accents.

The works are defined by a realistic style. They capture the dramatic situations and the inner state of the represented characters. In support of the idea of liberty and high social and national ideals, the Romanian visual artists of that time have written an important chapter in the history of Romanian art. Responding to major imperatives, serving national ideals through their artistic vocation to individual experience, mobilized artists have proven the use of artistic formulas and modern visions. Their works demonstrate a novelty in the history of Romanian art from the beginning of the century: the experience of an artistic group that is in the line of valuable local traditions, established by a valuable national school, and a distinct integration in the European cultural space.²³

Among the interesting works that can be mentioned in this context we can list *The Railway Stations* of Doru Ionescu. Whether it is the Tecuci or Ocna train stations, the artist manages through the landscape to build an atmosphere in which the drama of war transpires through absence. We do not have soldiers or battlefields with him, but the metaphor of disintegration or death is present by the depiction of nature in ruin. The natural elements are combined here with the demolished architectural ones. The colors used also strengthen the message of these paintings. Another work, which is part of a long line of lectures dedicated to this theme - the front scenes, is that of Ion Stoica

²² See "Mișcarea", *Expozițiunea artiștilor mobilizați*, 31 January 1918.

²³ Hasegan Th, idem, p. 7-8.

Dumitrescu - The Battle of Mărășești. In this works, the dynamism of the battle is overwhelmed by a lot of attention, and the dynamic composition emphasizes the tense atmosphere on the battlefield. The artist, though not in the sphere of expressionism, succeeds with the help of contrasts and composite characters among planks and bayonets to impress the scene with a special drama.

Dimitrie Hârlescu is perhaps closest to expressionism by evoking, with the help of the three characters in the Prisoner's work, the psyche of the people involved in the battle drama. The positions of the three characters together with spontaneously sketched faces bring to the fore the state of exhaustion and desolation that enveloped those men once strong. Large brushstrokes make their faces emblematic expressions for the entire period. Cornel Medrea evokes himself at the level of small statues of character and features filled with emotion and vitality. Death is not obvious, as in the works of German expressionism, but only evoked. It is peculiar to Romanian art that death is always in the shadows and lurks through the desolate faces.

Propaganda made through works of art, graphics, painting, or sculpture, could reduce art to a merely contextual importance. Certainly there have also been works of occasional interest. But much of them suppresses human drama, anguish, moments of disenchantment, solidarity and manage to convey over the ages the emotion of an important historical moment.²⁴ Although in a technique often closer to realism, these artworks evoke careful and conscious drama. Death is represented by the above-mentioned artists in all scenes, from the play to the battlefield, but most of the time remains hidden, present but not presented, suggested but not exposed.

²⁴ Iftimi, Sorin, "Marele razboi" in *artele plastice, Centenar, Salon de artă vizuală dedicat expoziției de pictură și sculptură a artiștilor mobilizași M.C.G. Iași, ianuarie 1918*, Contact International, Iași, 2018, p. 12.

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- Fig. 1. https://www.moma.org/s/ge/collection_ge/object/object_objid-63261.html.
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Fig. 1. Otto Dix, *Dance of Death*, 1917



Fig. 2. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self Portrait as a Soldier*, 1918



Fig. 3. Max Beckmann, *The Night*, 1918-1919



Fig. 4. Nicolae Grigorescu, *Atacul de la Smardan*, 1877



Fig. 5. Ion Stoica – Dumitrescu, *Lupta de la Mărășești*



Fig. 6. Dimitrie Hârlescu, *Prizonieri*



FIG. 7. Cornel Medrea, *Prizonieri germani*

“LA GUERRA SOLA IGIENE DEL MONDO”!?

La grande illusione: Ingenuità ed esuberanza degli artisti che sognarono un'Europa rigenerata dalla guerra e che assistettero alla fine degli ideali sotterrati dalla morte e dal dolore nelle trincee

*Lea Contestabile
Academy of Fine Arts of Aquila, Italy*

*“Ritti sulla cima del mondo,
noi scagliamo, una volta ancora,
la nostra sfida alle stele”
manifesto futurista 1909*

Abstract

Italy has had only one great avant-garde: the Futurism. A brilliant and innovative artistic group, Futurism exalted movement, dynamism, but also violence, energy, virility, patriotism and the contempt of danger. On February 20, 1909 Filippo Tomaso Marinetti in the first manifesto wrote: "We want to glorify the war - the world's only hygiene - militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of libertarians, the beautiful ideas for which one dies and the contempt of women." Today it may seem incredible that at the beginning of the twentieth century, this position was widely supported by the cultural and intellectual elite of the whole Europe, except for the later change of opinion by those who physically took part in the war (an example for all. Otto Dix). The avant-gardes shared the anxiety of renewal and the great dream of regeneration and rebirth of corrupt and decadent society; they wanted to fight against materialism and the bourgeoisie and for this, war appeared to them as an instrument of spiritual rebirth necessary for purification.

L'Italia ha avuto una sola grande avanguardia: il Futurismo. Gruppo artistico geniale e innovativo, il Futurismo esaltava il movimento, il dinamismo, ma anche la violenza, l'energia, la virilità, il patriottismo, lo sprezzo del pericolo.

Il 20 febbraio 1909 Filippo Tomaso Marinetti nel primo manifesto futurista apparso sul Figaro scrive:

1. "Noi vogliamo cantare l'amor del pericolo, l'abitudine all'energia e alla temerità.
2. Il coraggio, l'audacia, la ribellione, saranno elementi essenziali della nostra poesia.
3. La letteratura esaltò fino ad oggi l'immobilità pensosa, l'estasi ed il sonno. Noi vogliamo esaltare il movimento aggressivo, l'insonnia febbrile, il passo di corsa, il salto mortale, lo schiaffo ed il pugno.
4. Non v'è più bellezza se non nella lotta. Nessuna opera che non abbia un carattere aggressivo può essere un capolavoro. La poesia deve essere concepita come un violento assalto contro le forze ignote, per ridurle a prostrarsi davanti all'uomo.
5. **Noi vogliamo glorificare la guerra - sola igiene del mondo - il militarismo, il patriottismo, il gesto distruttore dei libertari, le belle idee per cui si muore e il disprezzo della donna.**

È dall'Italia che noi lanciamo per il mondo questo nostro manifesto di violenza travolgente e incendiaria col quale fondiamo oggi il FUTURISMO perché vogliamo liberare questo paese dalla sua fetida cancrena di professori, d'archeologi, di ciceroni e d'antiquari. Già per troppo tempo l'Italia è stata un mercato di rigattieri. Noi vogliamo liberarla dagli innumerevoli musei che la coprono tutta di cimiteri.»¹

Per quanto oggi possa apparire incredibile, all'inizio del 900, questa posizione fu ampiamente sostenuta dall'élite culturale e intellettuale di tutta Europa, salvo cambiare opinione successivamente all'esperienza diretta della guerra (un esempio per tutti Otto Dix). Le avanguardie condividevano l'ansia di rinnovamento ed il grande sogno di rigenerazione e rinascita della società corrotta e decadente; desideravano combattere il materialismo e la borghesia e per questo la guerra appariva loro come necessario strumento di rinascita spirituale e di purificazione:

*"Come avrebbe potuto l'artista, il soldato nell'artista, non lodare Dio per la caduta di un mondo di pace di cui era così sazio, così nauseato! Guerra! Quale senso di purificazione, di liberazione, d'immane speranza ci pervase allora!" così si esprimeva Thomas Mann agli albori della Prima Guerra Mondiale.*²

All'inizio del xx secolo l'Europa è al massimo della sua potenza, la scienza e la tecnologia indicano per tutta l'umanità un radioso futuro basato sul progresso.

L'ultimo frammento del 1900, si apriva il 14 Aprile con **L'Esposizione Universale** dedicata al progresso e alle nuove tecnologie. Parigi si autoproclamava capitale della modernità e della tecnologia e l'Europa guardava al futuro con ottimismo.

L'Esposizione Universale si proponeva come laboratorio di modernità fondato sul progresso tecnico e sulla scienza e le potenze europee mettevano in mostra le conquiste del presente e le promesse del futuro.

¹ "Manifesto del futurism", published in *Le Figaro* of 20 February 1909.

² Richard Herzinger, *Die Große Reinigung oder Weltkrieg für die neue Menschheit*, in „So ist der Mensch“ – 80 Jahre Erster Weltkrieg, Eigenverlag der Stadt Wien, p. 199 Cfr.

Il discorso di inaugurazione del Ministro del Commercio francese proclamava come unica speranza di un mondo nuovo la religione del progresso. Tutto era destinato a cambiare grazie alle nuove macchine alle nuove idee. Il futuro sembrava radioso. I sogni stavano per essere realizzati. Il progresso rappresentava il bene, il destino al quale consegnare con fiducia il mondo intero.

[...] L'incontro pacifico dei Governi del mondo non resterà sterile. Io sono convinto che, grazie all'affermazione perseverante di certi pensieri generosi di cui ha risuonato il secolo che finisce, il XX secolo vedrà rifulgere un po' più di fraternità e un po' meno di miserie di ogni ordine e che ben presto forse avremo varcato uno stadio importante nella lenta evoluzione del lavoro verso la felicità e dell'uomo verso l'umanità.” (dal discorso del Ministro del Commercio francese Alexandre Millerand)³

Eppure qualcosa serpeggia negli animi. Molti artisti sono insoddisfatti e invocano un cambiamento di rotta, una rinascita della società non basata sul profitto e sull'accumulo di denaro.

Nel 1908 la città di Messina viene distrutta da un terribile terremoto e nel 1912 nelle gelide acque del Nord Atlantico affonda il più grande transatlantico del mondo, il Titanic, simbolo della tecnologia più avanzata e vanto dell'industria moderna.

Molti intellettuali europei leggono in questi eventi un presagio di morte e di distruzione causati dalla tecnica e dalla rincorsa al denaro e al profitto. L'unico modo di arrestare la catastrofe è una guerra che rigeneri e rivitalizzi la società e crei una nuova umanità.

La guerra appare l'unica possibile arma per creare un'energia creativa in grado di costruire un nuovo mondo senza restrizioni borghesi, convenzionali, morali.

Convinti che il conflitto armato possa cambiare tutto e risolversi in breve tempo, molti artisti, felici di poter dare un personale contributo, partono volontari, fiduciosi di vivere un'esperienza straordinaria di vita totale in contrapposizione alla banalità del quotidiano e in grado di trasformare se stessi e il mondo.

La guerra, sia in senso metaforico che in senso reale, viene vissuta come una tragedia necessaria, una energica ed esuberante scossa capace di sconvolgere il grigiore e la monotonia della vita.

Gli artisti delle avanguardie si preparano alla guerra, la invocano. Vivono il fascino della catastrofe; vogliono creare, attraverso l'arte, una nuova umanità: il superuomo.

Compositori, musicisti, scrittori, poeti, scultori, registi contribuiscono con le proprie opere ad accrescere l'entusiasmo nei confronti della guerra mobilitando le masse e giustificando moralmente il conflitto⁴.

³ <http://ilmegliodiinternet.it/mary-poppins-spiega-la-fine-imprevedibile-della-globalizzazione/>.

⁴. Cfr. www.raistoria.rai.it, *I pittori della grande Guerra*, Rai 3-Cultura.

Gli espressionisti tedeschi, influenzati dal pensiero nichilista di Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche che vede nella guerra la sola possibilità di salvezza per la civiltà europea abbracciano l'idea che solo la distruzione possa scatenare quell'energia vitale capace di creare il superuomo. Sulla rivista espressionista berlinese Die Aktion del 1912 si legge *“una poesia deve partecipare alla politica, creare la volontà di catastrofe, scuotere cioè le istituzioni tradizionali, demolire illusioni, creare immagini capaci di sprigionare nuove energie spirituali dalla vita quotidiana.”*⁵

L'ITALIA ENTRA IN GUERRA IL 24 MAGGIO 2015.

Il 9 agosto 1918 il poeta Gabriele D'Annunzio sorvola i cieli di Vienna e lancia 300.000 volantini, di cui 50.000 scritti di suo pugno in cui sostiene il movimento interventista per incitare l'Italia alla Prima Guerra Mondiale.

La propaganda per rafforzare l'euforia bellica utilizza ogni forma di strumento pubblicitario volantini, cartoline, libri, articoli, manifesti, arte...

Giovanni Papini, fondatore della rivista Acerba, in un suo articolo *“Amiamo la guerra!”* descrive il conflitto come un male necessario per la crescita morale di un popolo.

I sostenitori più convinti e attivisti sono i futuristi, Boccioni, Carrà, Balla, Sironi, Russolo, Sant'Elia capeggiati dallo scrittore e poeta Filippo Tomaso Marinetti convinto sostenitore di una poesia al servizio della guerra e di un'arte/conflitto.

I PROTAGONISTI

Marinetti, per il quale la guerra rappresenta un costante centro di interesse umano e letterario e gli artisti futuristi, attraverso l'uso dei manifesti, già dal 1909 si schierano a favore del conflitto armato.

Nel 1915 il futurismo pubblica il Manifesto dal titolo *“PER LA GUERRA SOLA IGIENE DEL MONDO”* in cui esorta a prendere le armi e a inveire contro i nemici del rinnovamento. La guerra viene presentata come il terreno più adatto in cui far nascere un uomo nuovo capace di trasgredire ogni convenzione e vivere gagliardamente con la lotta e l'azione il mondo nuovo della velocità e della tecnica.

“Noi Futuristi, che da più di due anni glorifichiamo, tra i fischi dei Podagrosi e dei Paralitici, l'amore del pericolo e della violenza, il patriottismo e la guerra, sola igiene del mondo, siamo felici di vivere finalmente questa grande ora futurista d'Italia, mentre agonizza l'immonda genia dei pacifisti, rintanati ormai nelle profonde cantine del loro risibile palazzo dell'Aja. Abbiamo recentemente cazzottato con piacere, nelle vie e nelle piazze, i più febricitanti avversari della guerra, gridando loro in faccia questi nostri saldi principii:

⁵ *Pensieri di Guerra, Thomas Mann e la mobilitazione intellettuale*, Elena Alessiato- Convegno internazionale, Roma 2014.

1. Siano concesse all'individuo e al popolo tutte le libertà, tranne quella di essere vigliacco.
2. Sia proclamato che la parola Italia deve dominare sulla parola Libertà.
3. Sia cancellato il fastidioso ricordo della grandezza romana, con una grandezza italiana cento volte maggiore.

Poeti, pittori, scultori e musicisti futuristi d'Italia! Finché duri la guerra, lasciamo da parte i versi, i pennelli, gli scalpelli e le orchestre! Son cominciate le rosse vacanze del genio! Nulla possiamo ammirare, oggi, se non le formidabili sinfonie degli shrapnels e le folli sculture che la nostra ispirata artiglieria foggia nelle masse nemiche.⁶



La rivoluzione è totale e va realizzata in ogni forma artistica; letteratura, teatro, pittura, scultura, musica...Occorre disintegrare ogni linguaggio tradizionale, ogni separazione tra prosa e poesia, distruggere ogni forma cristallizzata di sintassi, ricercare un'immaginazione senza fili che attraverso l'analogia, le parole in libertà e la simultaneità incorpori anche nella letteratura il rumore, l'onomatopea, l'odore, il brutto, l'oscuro. Nell'arte figurativa i pittori e gli scultori ottengono risultati imprevedibili, voltano le spalle al passato e alla tradizione, esaltano ogni forma di originalità, anche se temeraria, anche se violentissima e vitalizzano le loro opere con dinamismo, linee-forza, simultaneità, velocità.

Gli artisti italiani si schierano a favore dell'intervento dell'Italia contro l'Austria. **Marinetti, Boccioni, Carrà, il giovanissimo Sant'Elia** si arruolano volontari, **seguiti da Mario Sironi, Achille Funi, Carlo Erba, Ugo Piatti e Luigi Russolo.**

La guerra però cambia la vita a molti di loro, alcuni dei quali muoiono al fronte o a causa delle malattie diffuse durante quegli anni; altri tornano gravemente feriti o colpiti da esaurimenti nervosi, provati dalla drammatica e negativa esperienza. La loro

⁶ "Guerra solo igiene del mondo", manifesto futurista 1915.

tragica scomparsa segna una enorme perdita per la storia dell'arte privata di chissà quante e quali straordinarie opere mai realizzate.

Umberto Boccioni (1882-1916), lo scultore più importante del futurismo, muore in battaglia per una tragica caduta da cavallo all'età di trentaquattro anni e **Sant'Elia**, architetto futurista muore nel 1916 durante un'azione d'assalto, colpito in fronte da una pallottola di mitragliatrice. Molti suoi progetti restano irrealizzati. **Carlo Carrà** al ritorno, per le sue precarie condizioni di salute, viene ricoverato in un nevrocomio a Ferrara e qui, dopo aver conosciuto De Chirico, rinnega completamente le idee futuriste.

In tutto, il plotone dei futuristi lascia sul terreno 12 morti e 41 feriti

“La guerra, grande igienizzatrice sociale, riduce drasticamente così il movimento futurista, vulcanica e vitale avanguardia che aveva dato all'arte europea una scossa la cui vibrazione risuonò per decenni.”

L'11 novembre 1918 la guerra finisce. Quattro imperi sono crollati ma per molti artisti a crollare è il senso della storia e la fiducia nel futuro.

Gli artisti fanno i conti con la esperienza vissuta e riflettono sul loro iniziale ottimismo e fiducia nel conflitto armato. È il caso di **Otto Dix**, che si arruolò come volontario incentrando i suoi quadri sui temi della guerra e, in particolare, sulla “bella morte”. Al ritorno, invece, realizzerà tele che testimoniano l'orrore della guerra attraverso la deformità dei volti e dei corpi. Anche le tele di **George Grosz** raccontano, attraverso la deformazione e la caricatura, l'orrore della vita al fronte che l'artista provò in prima persona.

Dopo la grande avventura in Italia, come in tutta Europa, gli artisti tornano ad un'ispirazione tradizionale, riproponendo la storia e la rappresentazione figurativa dalle forme classiciste e auliche. **Il ritorno all'ordine**, come reazione alla guerra porterà gli artisti a contrapporre alla poetica del rumore un'arte del silenzio, della sospensione e dell'attesa. Centrale nella produzione degli artisti italiani diventa il recupero delle forme rinascimentali e classiche. Ferrara diventa capitale della Metafisica con **De Chirico**, **Alberto Savinio**, **Filippo de Pisis e Carrà** e, in maniera diversa, con **Mario Sironi e Achille Funi**. Altri pittori come **Casorati, Soffici, Sironi, Rosai, Severini** si impegnano nel recupero della classicità in ottica moderna, aggiornando i linguaggi pittorici per cercare principi di sintesi, costruzione e plasticità, incamminati con differenti declinazioni verso la successiva temperie del Novecento Italiano degli anni venti.

Ingenuità, esuberanza giovanile, bisogno di identificare i valori estetici e le metafore dell'arte nella vita vissuta? Come spiegare un'adesione così totale alla distruzione e all'assurdità della violenza di un conflitto bellico?

Cosa può aver spinto gli artisti ad aderire così fiduciosi e convinti alla guerra?

⁷ Website *La Calabria e la Grande Guerra: 1914-1918*.

Tutte le forme d'arte prendono forza dal dolore, dal conflitto, dalla lotta interiore, dalla rabbia. E' raro che la creatività si alimenti di pace e serenità. Si può comprendere pertanto la posizione degli intellettuali che credono nella **guerra come motore dell'arte** e dell'**atto creativo**. Altra cosa è la realtà: l'orrore del conflitto armato risulta spaventoso e terribile, genera morte e distruzione e le ferite e le cicatrici non solo fisiche restano scavate nel profondo.

In gioventù i linguaggi artistici si nutrono di ribellione, di rivolta, di ardore, di voglia di distruzione di ogni status quo. Le rivoluzioni nascono da menti giovani e movimenti originali. L'esuberanza giovanile porta a sognare nuovi mondi, a desiderare azioni straordinarie ed eccezionali. In maturità le tensioni si placano e si cerca la calma e il **“ritorno all'ordine”**. È questa anche la parabola dell'arte europea e italiana subito dopo la tragedia della Prima Guerra Mondiale che aveva lasciato sul campo migliaia di morti.

Pur avendo vinto la guerra, l'Italia vive una crisi profonda sia economica che politica, con una disoccupazione in aumento e, come sempre, sono i ceti sociali più poveri a pagarne le conseguenze.

Vorrei chiudere questo mio intervento con delle poesie di **Giuseppe Ungaretti**, uno dei massimi poeti italiani, che affermò di essere diventato poeta a contatto del dolore e della morte vissuti in trincea e compose con le sue prime due raccolte di liriche **“Il porto sepolto”** e **“Allegria di naufragi”** veri e propri diari di guerra poetici.

SOLDATI

Si sta come
d'autunno
sugli alberi
le foglie

FRATELLI

Di che reggimento siete
fratelli?
Parola tremante
nella notte.
Foglia appena nata.
Nell'aria spasimante
involontaria rivolta
dell'uomo presente alla sua
fragilità.
Fratelli.

VEGLIA

Un'intera nottata
buttato vicino
a un compagno
massacrato
con la sua bocca
digrignata
volta al plenilunio,
con la congestione
delle sue mani
penetrata
nel mio silenzio
ho scritto
lettere piene d'amore.
Non sono mai stato
tanto
attaccato alla vita.

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THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE EUROPEAN ARTISTIC SPIRIT IN WORLD WAR I

Cristian Ungureanu

"George Enescu" National Fine Arts University of Iași, Romania

Abstract

Artists, idealistic people by nature, are those who express and share the specific information of the period they belong to. The beginning of the twentieth century, already marked by an incredible leap of scientific knowledge and by the development of industrial technologies, also meant the outburst of amazing creative resources. The most important art groups of the historical avant-garde, which were very different as for the conceptual platforms and artistic practices, appeared in all the major cultural European centers. They had in common a total freedom of ideological expression and artists grouped themselves only according to their cultural and spiritual affinities, beyond any racial, religious or chauvinistic discrimination. With the outbreak of World War I, the situation has changed radically: many great artists - admirers and lifetime friends - became enemies, some of them considered the war as a necessary, savior and purifier process, others hoped that this way the social injustices will disappear. Most of the great European artists blamed and refused the war by emigrating to neutral countries, but many of them, who were under the influence of their own motivations or influenced by

The beginning of the twentieth century brought a spectacular increase in scientific knowledge as well as unpredictable technological applications that would allow the emergence of many new industrial fields at odds of impressive productivity for those times. These phenomena have been reflected in all other areas of human knowledge and activity. In physics and mathematics appear the first great theories and postulates that highlight the existence of the level of reality of the quantic world. In medicine, there is also spectacular progress. Naturally and spontaneously, philosophical and political thinking is channeled towards revolutionary concepts, and

the theological and metaphysical projection of the world, already heavily secularized from the occurrence of European humanism and the new paradigms of transcendent reporting, has paradoxical revitalization due to the encounter and hybridization of the old traditional doctrines, of the middle and remote Orient. Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, along with esoteric practices imported from the ancient cultures of pre-Early Europe or other continents, are reactivated in phenomena such as Theosophy and Anthroposophy, which would germinate the whole spectrum of the New Age phenomenon later on. To these powerful spiritual ares, as well as to all other aspects of European and Western social and cultural life in general, all the great European artists participated, amazed and enthusiastic about this great intellectual and spiritual flourishing.

As the artists capture and translate the data of the spirit of any cultural age, most intensely, the art of the beginning of the twentieth century has seen so many, simultaneous and diversified appearances and transformations, as no other artistic age has ever produced. Gathered generically under the phrase "Historical Avant-garde," this avalanche of creativity would encompass all major European urban centers, from London and Madrid to Moscow, and the artists enlisted, fraternized, admired each other and influenced themselves, displaying no restraints or discrimination, even if belonging to different national cultures. Strongly marked, however, by ideological fingerprints and programs of the native nation to which they belonged, these artistic centers included equally valuable exponents from all over the world. Paris continued its old programs from the beginning of modernity, but was also in charge of all the other art capitals in Europe. The important names of the Parisian art corresponded and exhibited along with the representatives of the Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter groups, the Italian futurists or the English vorticists. Cubism impresses the art world and integrates itself to Kazimir Malevich and Natalia Goncharova's Russia in which the dynamic spirit of the avant-garde movements was present. Wassily Kandinsky, an official creator of pictorial abstractionism, was living in Munich and, enthusiastic, would describe the new times as beautiful and blessed, through the multitude of expressions and innovations that, in a body, created an impressive symphony. In the same year, Arnold Schonberg and Erma Bossi proposed to the world the first abstract musical compositions. Direct expression of new and complicated concepts about Reality, the movements and currents of the historical standard or of "classical modernism", as they were to be reunited and cataloged later, gave rise to astonishment, misunderstanding and indignation among the general public everywhere, but the already institutionalized apparatus of the arts world, the galleries with dealers and collectors as passionate as the artists they cultivated, set out trails of influence and value hierarchy. The Paris Independent Salon has captured international attention since its inception, alongside the equally well-known events of the German groups Brücke and Der Blaue Reiter as well as the Russians in the Jack of Diamonds collection in Moscow, gathering prominent names from all over Europe: Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, Paul Klee and Alexei von Jawlensky exhibited

with Pablo Picasso, Albert Gleizes, Fernand Léger and Henri Matisse. In this climate of perfect international friendship, the propaganda machines of the world's great economic and political powers were conducting their own work agendas.

Today, due to the changes in planetary consciousness generated by the Internet phenomenon and by everything that has triggered at the level of communication and the transfer of data and information, it is clear that war is nothing more than a mega-business of the great powers directly or indirectly involved, profits from the preparation, deployment, and ultimately from the restoration of material and moral damages, respectively from the new geopolitical configuration resulting from the conflagration. The involvement of nations in this immense undertaking, bringing about death, alienation, enormous suffering but also immense profits, is achieved through the elaborated scientific programs of the propaganda departments. In our case study, with the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914, members of the great artistic groups in the capitals of Europe, who had collaborated and admired rejoiced, immediately became enemies. They were forced to adopt an attitude in the face of the war, and even if they did not, their ethnic or national origin drastically altered their condition, depending on where they were. Franz Marc, a passionate advocate of philosophy which stipulate that war is part of the lives of nations and has invigorating effects at the level of social body, has immediately becoming the enemy of Kandinsky and Paul Klee. The Russians in Germany - Kandinsky, Marianne von Werefkin and Jawelesky were declared enemies of the people and forced to leave Germany. The activity of all artistic groups was immediately suspended. Similarly, German artists in France were forced to leave in a hurry. A great number of artists, enthusiastic about very diverse personal perspectives on the purpose and mission of wars in the lives of nations and of each individual, joined volunteers. The meeting with the reality of the modern warfare, invested with mass destruction technologies, that completely defeated the heroic dimension of the traditional war, would overcome any of their imagination and burn their natural patriotic ideals. August Macke was killed in 1914 and Franz Marc in 1916. The French Andre Derain, voluntarily enrolled, Vlaminck, Gleizes and Segonzac suffered serious injuries. De La Fresnaye became ill immediately after his volunteer enlistment and spent the war in the reserve military hospital. Much of the great European artists have refused to participate in the war, the atrocities it involved were a too high price they were not willing to pay even if they were also convinced that social order everywhere in Europe was profound unjust and should be annihilated and changed. The exaltation of the national consciousness was an important reason among artists in terms of glorifying the war. It has reached spectacular odds among nations such as Russia, Italy, Austria and Germany. Still, among artists, these were not the first-order motivations for supporting and adhering to the war, except for the Italians, who claimed an open nationalism in their own artistic manifestations. Much of the artists from everywhere have joined and even supported the cause of the war (at least in its incipient phase) because of the inability to bear the shame of not fighting with relatives and compatriots. In this logic,

their attitude is perfectly argued. Paradoxically, the position of those who refused to participate in battles - like Picasso, Matisse, Kandinsky, Paul Klee, etc. is at least as logical and well grounded. Whether for religious reasons ("Who will lift the sword, the sword will perish") or for natural humanitarian reasons (the psychological impossibility or the definite rejection of the idea of killing another human being), they would be marked they would also be marked by the devastating effects of the world's first conflagration of modernity. Equally, they did not benefit from the creative enthusiasm before the outbreak of war, from the revolutionary circuits of the great groups, from the conceptual intensity of experimental approaches. No artist pursued the aesthetic and artistic paths he had previously developed, they all felt the need, conscious or by force of events, to approach a certain austere realism that illustrated most prominently the frustrating image of the mountains of corpses, the hate and fear that overwhelms and disintegrates human beings in the vicinity of violent deaths, of the apocalyptic landscapes with rains of bullets, bombs and poisonous gases. Artists such as the German Expressionists Otto Dix and Max Beckmann joined only because they hated the bourgeois decadence and the pedagogical dangers of the educated classes in the great centers of art. They knew that in the war they would have an extreme experience, a full contact with the pure existential reality.

An exacerbated excitement, in the imminent perspective of the war was cultivated by futurists, lured by Tomaso Marinetti's views, justified in the logic of the natural idealism due to the effervescent context of the age just before the war. The explosion of industrial development enthralled the visionary Italian poet, penetrated by the prospect of inculcating a new social order that offers unlimited possibilities for development to all individuals and nations, propelled into a barrier-free growth. Obviously, this could only be achieved by purifying the old and injurious rules of living. What is relevant in the context of our research is that all of them had very intense inner conflicts. Regardless of which belligerent nations belonged, the artists had a profound admiration for the cultural and artistic values of their war enemies. Finding out the news of the deaths of many of the artist's friends whom they adored or even worshiped and who were in the opposing camp was suffering at least as much as the death of their countrymen. Thus, in the consciousness of the great artistic spirits, much faster than in others, appears the real image of the absurdity and profound lack of humanity of the war.

Radical voices began to argue, even among those who had advocated the war and volunteers joined, driven by the very diversified motives, illustrated briefly earlier. Many of those who were not killed, suffered serious injuries or suffered depressions and psychological traumas that radically changed them. The direct encounter with the horror, the cynicism and the absurdity of death brought by the great war business turned everyone into its declared enemies. Oskar Schlemmer is a true spokesman for the consciousness of all artists who have lived directly or indirectly the effects of World War I: "I'm no longer the man who volunteered in August. Not physically, and especially not the way I think." Like him, Hans Richter would say, "During the war, I was against the war."

Returning to their workshops and hiding from the cranky eyes of the censors – also present in the propaganda apparatus after the end of the war - all the artists felt the imperiously need to express their experiences loudly and transmit them to as many people as possible. One thing is certain that, beyond the direct criticism of everything the war mechanism implies, all the great artists who participated directly or indirectly in the First World War have radically changed their perception of the world and their own artistic visions. They realized that from any perspective it would look at the phenomenon of war, it only brings apparent and insignificant advantages in the order of evolution and spiritual development of human beings. Much more profitable are, in this sense, the high and permanent values of humanity, impeccably synthesized in the golden rule of Christianity " Do unto others as you would have done unto you", or apophatic "Don't do unto others what you wouldn't want done unto you".



Fig. 1. Alexej von Jawlensky: *Self-portrait*, 1905



Fig. 2. Annie Besant



Fig. 3. Albert Bloch in his studio, Munich, before WWI



Fig. 4. Albert Gleizes, *L'Homme au Balcon*, Man on a Balcony (Portrait of Dr. Théo Morinaud), 1912,

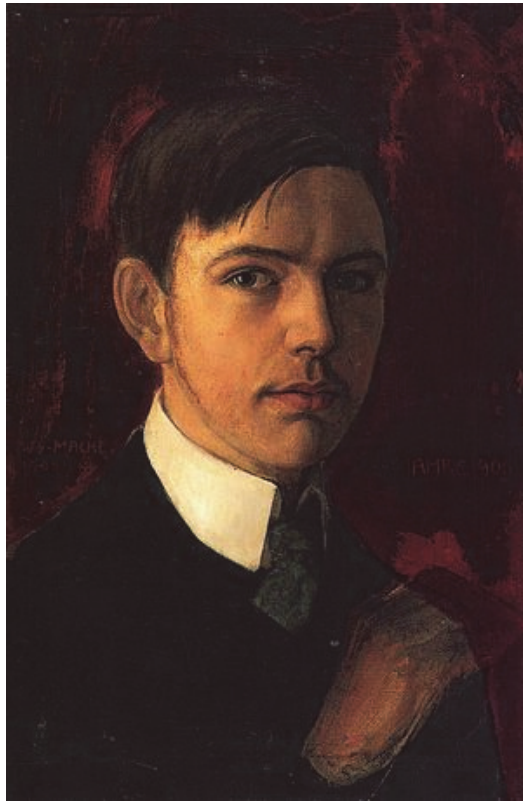


Fig. 5. August Macke, *Self-portrait*, 1906



Fig. 6. Caring for Casualties. Medical Services

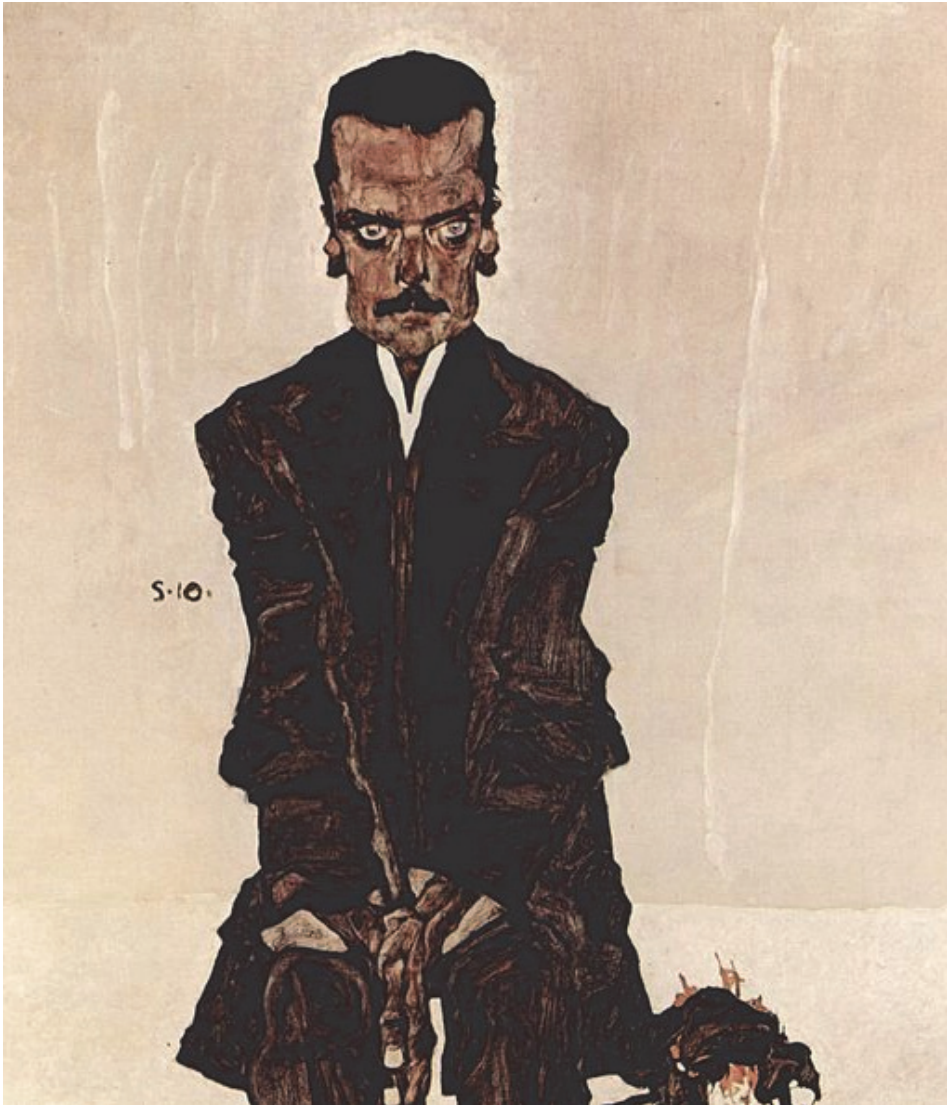


Fig.7. Egon Schiele, 1910, *Portrait of Eduard Kosmack*



Fig. 8. Arnold Schönberg in Payerbach, 1903

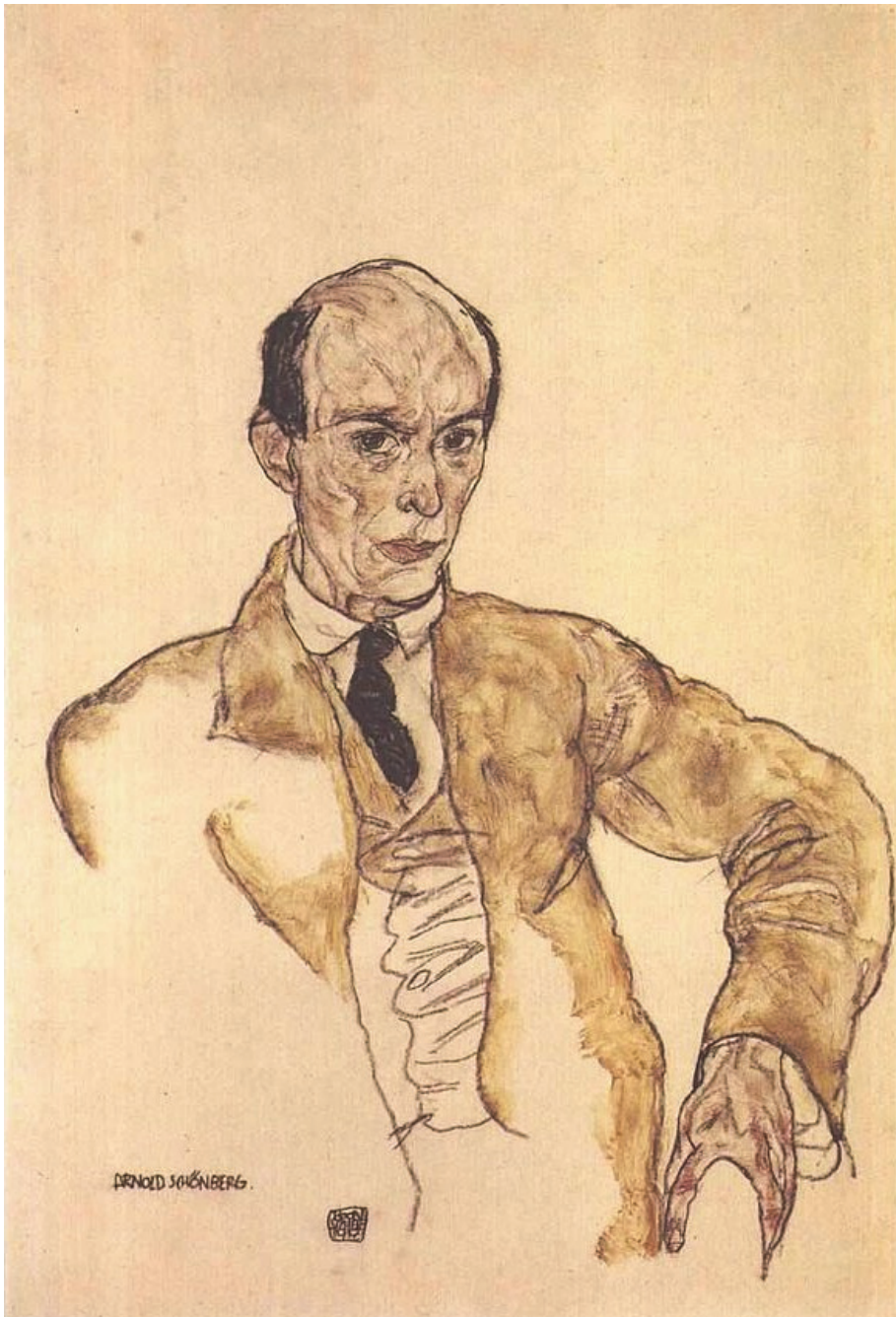


Fig. 9. Arnold Schoenberg, by Egon Schiele, 1917

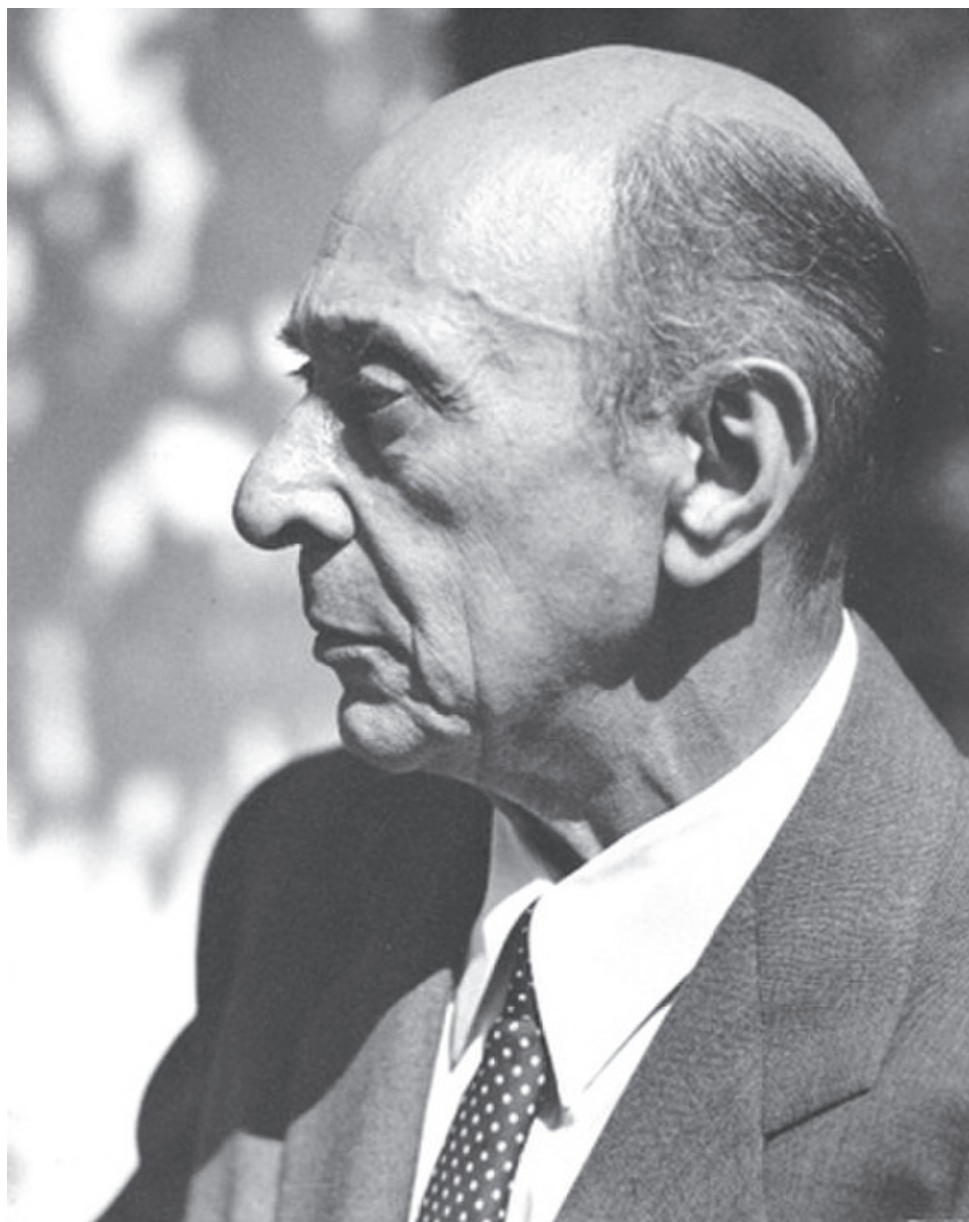


Fig. 10. Arnold Schoenberg, Los Angeles, 1948



Fig. 11. Franz Marc, *Blue Horse I*, 1911



Fig. 12. Franz Marc, *The Tiger*, 1912



Fig. 13. Otto Dix, *Dead sentry in the trenches*, 1924



Fig. 14. Otto Dix, *Skull*, 1924



Fig. 15. Paul Klee as a soldier, 1916



Fig. 16. Wassily Kandinsky, c. 1913 or earlier



Fig. 17. The Solvay Conference, probably the most intelligent picture ever taken, 1927

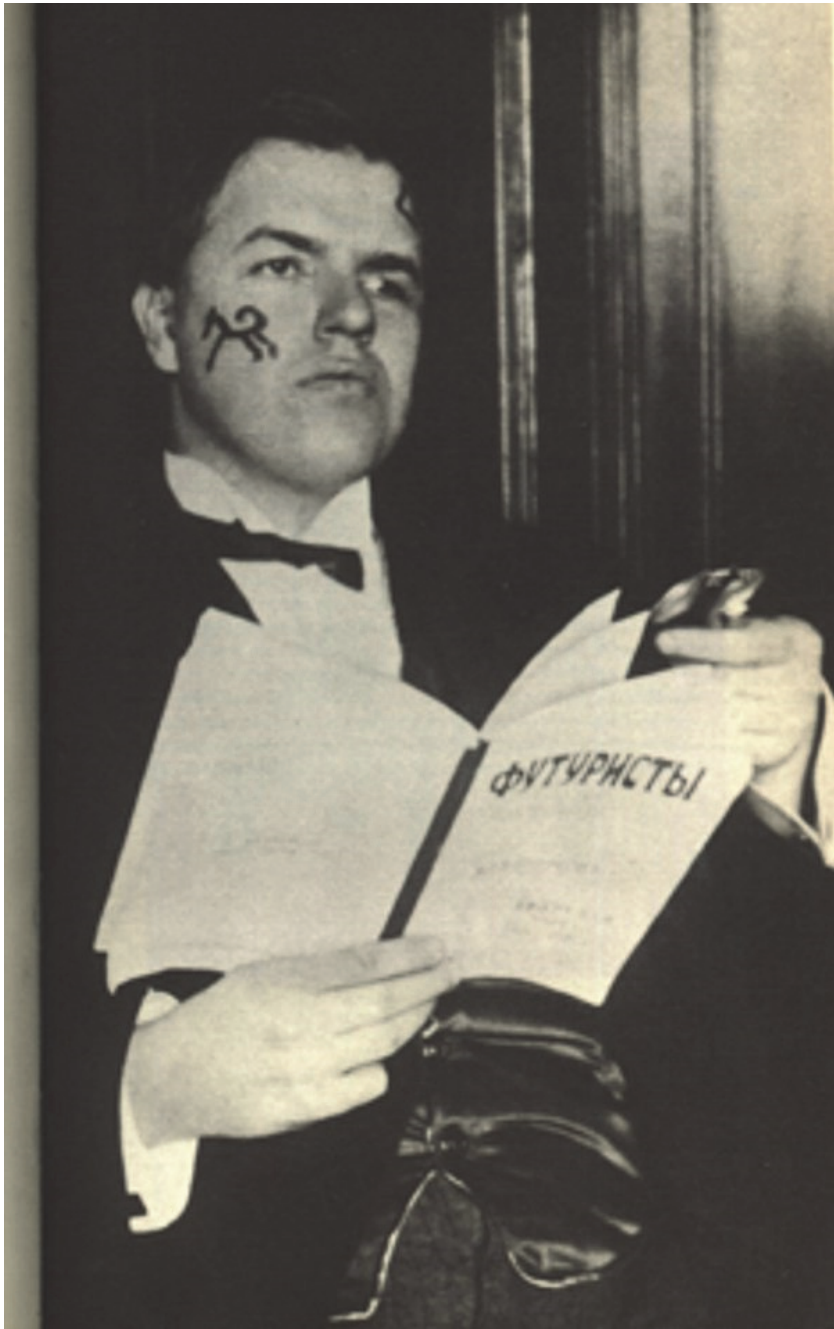


Fig. 18. Burliuk in 1914, aged 32



Fig. 19. Otto Dix on 12 April 1957

CAN WAR TRAUMAS BE REPRESENTED? ON THE EVACUATION OF THE HUMAN FIGURE IN ANSELM KIEFER'S POST-MEMORY PAINTINGS

Cristian Nae

"George Enescu" National Fine Arts University of Iași, Romania

Abstract

How can artists represent what avoids being acknowledged, remembered and represented? In reconsidering surrealism, famed American art historian Hal Foster notes that in its Bretonian version, surrealism can only be understood in relation to the Freudian uncanny, the mechanical and the traumatic. Indeed, the dismembered body is one of the major topics in Surrealist art that will haunt many other artistic representations of the artistic avant-gardes. Some of them may be inspired by the Musée de la Vale de Grace's repaired bodies of soldiers, others simply by the nightmares of war. After the second World War, such representations of the disfigured human body can be found, for instance, in Dubuffet's *l'art brut*, where, in psychoanalytical terms, the human figure bears the marks of an infantile regression. However, the main question which persists in such a psychohistorical interpretation is related to the very definition of the traumatic event as such, which, by definition, is unrepresentable. Attempting to build a different lineage than the one indicated by Foster, I claim that some of the most effective representations of traumatic memory are to be found less in surrealism and *l'art brut*, but rather in the German art coping with the traumatic memory of World War II, where the human figure is completely evacuated from the pictorial field.

ART AND THE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE

It is no news that art has long been endowed with a cathartic function. From Aristotle to Nietzsche and beyond, aesthetic theories considered art to be able to help us cope with the world, providing individual comfort, or at least social awareness. More recently, psychoanalytical theories of visual art, which transferred some of Sigmund Freud

and Lacan's ideas about the functioning of images in relation to the human psychic in the description of the creative and reception processes, and, from there, to art historical interpretations¹, have also tackled catharsis redefining its place of origin as a traumatic event the artist (or the public) is attempting to cope with². Nevertheless, the main problem facing the reparatory function of art in relation to traumatic personal or collective experiences concerns art's ability to recover the very repression which lies of the core of any trauma. In short, visual art should represent what, by definition, remains unrepresentable, concealing itself from our memory. This fundamental conundrum is only being reinforced in modern art, where painterly, graphic or sculptural images (and, after 1945, other types of images produced in a variety of new and unconventional media) are being produced not as a representation of an objectified external reality, depicted as it is, but rather as a subjective rendition of a particular experience of the world.

Although such an understanding of artistic representation as a psychic expression allows for the unconscious to materialize in the process of artistic expression, it is the very rationality of the artistic act which holds back any return of the repressed, not to mention the fact that such images would only be fragments of a traumatic experience that should be located in the past, but which the subject is unable to insert into a coherent narrative, and thus, to situate in time. According to psychotherapist Lynda Gantt, it is precisely this ability of artistic representation to offer a potential structure in which what is experienced as an eternally present, exterior and recurring menace is being pushed back, interiorized and accepted as a past experience of the subject which makes it therapeutically valuable³.

It is important, in this context, to introduce the notions of a psychic trace of an event, as well as the problem of the negation (or repression) of a memory which constitutes amnesia. Freud distinguishes between two types of traces: visual traces of the things and linguistic traces. The unconscious being regarded as both a depository of basic, albeit silent impulses, as well as a depository of memories, Freud will consider repression as an incomplete translation of an impulse in words.⁴ Although repressed, a memory, just like a desire, is never completely erased or extinguished. It runs the risk of returning in a disguised form, or to manifest itself through the obsessive repetition of certain words, phrases or gestures.

¹ For such a migration of theoretical concepts across disciplines see Bal, Mieke: *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2002.

² For the notion of coping with trauma through art in clinical therapy see Gant, Lynda, „Expressive Art Therapies”, in *Encyclopedia of Trauma. An Interdisciplinary Guide*, edited by Charles F. Figley, Sage Publications, London, 2012, pp. 245-248.

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Bowie, Malcom: *Lacan*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 1993, p. 51.

Authors such as Cathy Caruth distinguish between the traumatic event and its memory, underlying the time passed between the two as a period of "latency", essential for constituting the traumatic memory. For Caruth, it is not necessarily the event, but rather the confrontation with the event is what triggers the traumatic experience as such. Paradoxically, trauma can only be experienced through this latency and its inherent oblivion. It can never be experienced directly, but rather through its subsequent, fragmentary and, therefore, incomplete representations⁵. The subject of such an experience tends, for instance, to avoid returning to the place of the traumatic event and thus, confronting with the mnemonic traces of the event, although fragments of these experiences may return as images often associated with an indexical content which, therefore, remains difficult to decipher.⁶

The affirmation and integration of the trauma in the present experience of the subject occurs in many artworks dealing with historical testimony and collective violence. They suppose a painful process of recollection, which engages imaginative reconstructions and question the function of images as displaced symbols to reshape memories and experiences. Most often, traumatic experiences are being distortedly recounted, while, in other instances, the resulting narrative which functions as a process of recollection (and thus, acknowledgment and psychic integration) is utterly incoherent, witnessing for the fracture or even collapse of the narrator's self when language itself is being disarticulated. It can lead to significant distortions of identity, the victims being usually haunted by the past, while the perpetrators tend to repeat it compulsively, and the roles may sometimes be reversed.

The distinction between the personal and the collective levels of traumatic experience is also important when dealing with art and the representation of trauma. These levels raise the problem of the direct or indirect testimony, where the artist and the public create a situation like psychoanalytical anamnesis. If collective memory supposes a recollection of situations that already became collectively shared and publicly recognized cultural representations, supposing a certain rationalization of events, individual memory is being somatised, becoming a silent depository of sensorially induced traumatic effects.⁷ How does the latter turn into the former, as long as artistic representations, in order to be publicly recognized, should, therefore, address those who have already overcome traumatic experiences at a personal level, without, at the same time, losing their therapeutic efficacy?

⁵ Caruth, Cathy, *Trauma. Explorations in Memory*, John Hopkins University Press, 1995, pp. 7-8.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

⁷ Bennet, Jill: *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2005, pp. 5-6.

THE DISMEMBERED BODY: REPRESENTATIONS OF WAR TRAUMAS IN SURREALISM AND GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

While the answer to such theoretical conundrums is never straightforward, modern art provides attempts to respond to the „shock of the new”⁸ by depicting the alienating, disturbing and even horrific experiences of technologically advanced war. The trauma of the first WWI has only intensified the intensified aesthetic experiences provided by the plethora of stimuli encountered in the modern world, especially in the modern metropolis where such everyday life shocks numb the senses, eliciting more visceral, poignant and innovative forms of artistic communication⁹. Such a description, borrowed from Walter Benjamin’s famed account of the modern experience of shock, explains why modern art representations are so closely linked to the effects of immediate experience and engaged in the historical present. It is the loss of aura as a result of the banality of shock, which, according to Benjamin, blocks the formation of a genuine, memorable experience (*Erfahrung*) in favor of superficial sensory excitement (*Erlebnis*) that the famed philosopher decries in his famous account of the shock of the modern world as a new aesthetic category. His ideas are often remarkably close Freud’s description of traumatic experience in Benjamin’s own account of this concept. For Benjamin, experience is „whatever we cannot immediately assimilate or repulse, whatever imposes itself as if foreign substance, forcing alteration or adjustment of existing psychic and somatic mechanisms”¹⁰.

In particular, Surrealism and German Expressionism are the two modern art movements which attempted to reveal and confront the traumatic experiences of modern life, with its technological disintegration of the body, its ludicrous recomposition of social relations as reified objects and the rejection of the fascination of the war as a sublime technological object that may be encountered, for instance, in Italian Futurism.

In his essay, “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia” (1929), Benjamin considers that surrealist experience provides an example of a “profane illumination”, which in contrast to the sacred and moralistic kind found in religion was guided by a political and a “materialistic, anthropological inspiration”¹¹. He views surrealism as being closely associated to the attempt of transforming shock into a

⁸ Hughes, Robert: *The Shock of the New. Art and the Century of Change*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1991.

⁹ On the concept of shock and the modern city see Benjamin, Walter: *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings, vol. 2, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., & London, 1991–1999.

¹⁰ Shiff, Richard: “Handling Shocks: On the Representation of Experience in Walter Benjamin’s Analogies”, *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1992, p. 90.

¹¹ Benjamin, Walter: “Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia” in *Selected Writings*, ed. Howard Eiland & Michael W. Jennings, vol. 2, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA., & London, 1991–1999, p. 20.

memorable experience, something which can thus be assimilated by the viewer, despite its apparently defamiliarizing procedures.

It is a well-known fact that Surrealism appeared to be characterized by one of its most prominent figures, André Breton, as pertaining to a new type of aesthetics, where beauty ceases to be at the forefront of art if it does not account for the negative experiences of modernity, becoming „convulsive”¹². For Hal Foster, the connection between surrealism and psychoanalysis is straightforward. According to Foster, „traumatic shock, deadly desire and compulsive repetition” characterizes surrealism¹³. Foster’s account of surrealist visual language brilliantly redefines categories such as the marvellous, objective change or convulsive beauty in terms of the Freudian uncanny. He also defines their obsession for automatons as a reflection of modernist processes of technological mechanization and of commodification. However, the causal relation between the surrealist artistic procedures psychoanalytically described by Foster and the traumatic effects of the World War II was less explored. It is Amy Lyford’s seminal study that brought it into attention using a perhaps unexpected argumentation¹⁴. According to Lyford, there are several empirical, biographic arguments for retracting such a lineage, which starts with Andre Breton’s work as a student in the neuropsychiatric center of Saint Dizier, caring for the shell-shock victims that positions him as an indirect witness of the horrors of war. It is there that Breton becomes familiarized with the writings of Charcot and Freud. His biography records him being moved to La Pitie hospital in Paris in 1917, and later, between 1917 and 1918, to the Val de Grace military hospital, where he meets Louis Aragon and directly encounters the wounded of war. Val de Grace was also famous for attempting to realise facial reconstructions for the wounded, images that will haunt Breton. Lyford’s argument is now unfolding into a subtler direction. She claims that Breton might have regarded these reconstructions as attempts to erase trauma, to render it aesthetically acceptable, something that surrealist artistic procedures would not accept. According to Lyford, surrealism’s „compulsion to dismember” should rather be regarded as an attempt to embody a memory of things disappearing, being repressed by the state after the end of the war. While this reading may be debatable, in that it regards social amnesia as a well-regulated phenomenon to which surrealists were opposing by keeping the memory of the effects of the war alive, thus, overlooking its potentially spontaneous character, it has the obvious and undebatable merit of showing the relation between the surrealist technique of defamiliarization and the dismemberment of the body, approaching the human body as a site of psychic mutilation that the traumatic experience also incarnates, and as its material proof.

¹² Breton, André: *Nadja*, translated by Richard Howell, Grove Press, New York, 11th printing, 1977, p. 160.

¹³ Foster, Hal: *Compulsive Beauty*, The MIT Press, Cambridge Mass., 1995.

¹⁴ Lyford, Amy: “The Aesthetics of Dismemberment. Surrealism and the Musee de Val de Grace in 1917”, *Cultural Critique*, no. 46, 2000, pp. 45-79.

Indeed, dismemberment occurs as a recurrent technique in both surrealism and the German Expressionism, where such an imagery occurs explicitly in Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's self-portrait with an amputated arm. Although, unlike others, the artist has never served in the army, he portrays himself like a soldier back from the front, who lost his ability to paint, a suggested with is enhanced by the presence of a distressed nude woman in the background. Psychic mutilation is now physically transcribed again, while it also suggests a castrated self, an emasculated subject whose impotence may be subtly suggested by this contrast between the nude and the painter's new identity.

Death is being portrayed by painters such as Otto Dix as a familiar companion. Dix, who, unlike Breton, experienced the war directly, creates one of the most disturbing graphic reproductions of the horrors of war, where the dead are being portrayed as zombie brothers in arms, while the gas mask – a technology of death itself – becomes the modern image of the skull in gloomy portraits of such experiences on the battlefield. While being a straightforward representation of agony, it is the more terrifying how images of faceless soldiers wearing gas masks represent the technological dehumanization of killing. The mechanization of death is also present appears in Max Ernst's *The Murdering Airplane*, one of the earliest meditations on the dark side of modernism: the technology of mass murder. For Ernst, the concatenation between disembodied human hands and a machine presents the airplane as a monster reminiscent of Hieronymus Bosch's uncanny figures of animal-humans, together with a war photograph with a crippled soldier carried over by two comrades which indicates its devastating effects.

FROM THE DISFIGURED TO THE ABSENT BODY: ANSELM KIEFER'S MEMORY PAINTINGS

While the disfigured and dismembered body is one of the visual tropes that may convey the traumatic visions of the first World War, their depiction as autonomous fragments is consistent with a patient's attempt to cope with the past by providing a narrative framework in which the traumatic event may finally find its place. Nevertheless, if trauma is understood as a repressive mechanism that blocks memory, I claim that the most compelling representations of post-traumatic experiences are not those that visualise the effects of war casualties, even in their horrifying form materialized through their bodily traces, but rather those that reproduce the very process of amnesia that blocks the remembrance of the traumatic event. Such failed attempts to construct a coherent narrative, or even an articulate language, witness the disintegration of the self in its early traumatic stages.

The intensity of war traumas in the Second World War has perhaps not been equalled so far. If the First World War shocked through its capacity of mass destruction due to technological inventions such as the Zeppelin or the tank, World War II is mostly remembered for its genocide, the rationalised atrocity of the Holocaust and the

technological sublime of the atomic bomb. The scale of destruction is also hard to match: cities such as Berlin, London, Dresden, Mannheim, Coventry, Belfast, Cologne, Milan or Kassel suffered massive damages, losing important historical areas, while Hiroshima and Nagasaki were completely erased. For the Germans, the traumas of the Second World War are perhaps the most intense, being associated with the moral obligation to assume collective shame. Its wounds in the collective memory are probably still unhealed. As Marianne Hirsh has shown, the traumas of the Holocaust should not be restricted only to the direct witnesses and the survivors of the concentration camps. Photographs, objects and other material remains elicit in the representatives of the following generations similar experiences to those lived by their ancestors. Such a process of remembrance of something that was not directly lived is made possible by its integration into a narrative, a personal account of experienced history which keeps these images alive¹⁵. Such a possibility explains the formation of collective memory starting from the personal one.

One of the most persistent inquiry into such processes of collective remembrance that Marianne Hirsh has described as “post-memory” can be found in Anselm Kiefer’s paintings. As an artist of German origin born after the Holocaust, Kiefer constantly explored the collective memory of the Holocaust and the processes of shame, guilt and collective amnesia in de-nazified Germany after the Second World War. Although Kiefer is not a descendant of Jewish families, he can be associated with post-memory due to his integration of old photographs of sites and architecture from the Nazi Period in his paintings, exploring not only the trauma of the victim, but also the guilt and shame of the perpetrator which leads to a different form of amnesia. For Hirsh, the power of the photographs to create collective memory by conveying traumatic experiences inside the family makes it a central medium which mediates between the personal and the archival¹⁶. The power of the image to function as a relay is connected to what Jill Bennet has described as “affective memory”¹⁷.

Kiefer’s early involvement in uncovering and forcing the others to acknowledge their past dates to 1966 when he realised a performance captured and displayed in photographs at his first solo exhibition entitled *Besetzungen* (Occupations) at *Galerie am Kaiserplatz* in Karlsruhe. The exhibited photographs showed the then 24-year-old art student giving the Nazi salute in front of buildings located in Italy, France and Switzerland. The symbolic scale of his action forced the viewers to acknowledge the scale of destruction inflicted by the Germans in Europe due to the ideology of the Third Reich.

¹⁵ Hirsh, Marianne: *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After Holocaust*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2012.

¹⁶ Hirsh, Marianne: “The Generation of Postmemory”, *Poetics Today*, 29: 1, 2008, pp. 103-128.

¹⁷ Bennet, Jill: *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto California, 2005.

Even at that early point of his career, Kiefer was questioning the extent to which memory is being falsified both for the victims and the perpetrators who remain connected until death, as Primo Levi has already suggested. Such falsification occurs by substituting screen experiences which evacuate the memory of traumatic events for the victims, or by claiming to be powerless for the perpetrators and thus, evoking fatality to get rid of the responsibility of past actions. Kiefer's artistic incorporation and transformation of documentary photographs thus occur at the exact point when those actions could potentially lose their power through overexposure, desensitising the viewers¹⁸.

Kiefer's connection with Joseph Beuys is important not only for his leftist ideas, but also for incorporating organic materials (such as wax, straw, clay, ash and even blood) in his paintings. In the 1980s, Kiefer became associated to the New Expressionist movement, and started to explore in depth the memory of the Holocaust in the medium of painting in a moment when coming to terms with the past at a personal level has already been considered a thing of the past. Nevertheless, it was a moment when such a process of memory falsification acquired momentum, with Jürgen Habermas one of the most prominent voices who noticed that the Holocaust was being relativized in nationalist revisionist historical account, being compared with other mass-scale atrocities, justified as a reaction to Communist crimes and threats, and represented German participants as victims of the Nazi regime¹⁹.

Attempting to provoke historical reflexivity, Kiefer started to use intertextual elements by inserting references to Paul Celan's poems, especially the *Death Fugue* written in 1952. The poem narrates the experiences of a Holocaust survivor, by depicting Death as a German guardian, Margarete as an essentialized, Arian "golden haired" German woman to whom the guardian writes, and Sulamith, a Jewish woman whose graves are being dug during the poem's unfolding in a fragmented language. The pairing of two women which are never directly present in the poem suggests that the victims and the perpetrators are inevitably tied through their longing for the absent or lost ones. The poem uses powerful visual references to black milk, ash, corpses and hair, materials that will be partially suggested in Kiefer's representation entitled *Margarethe* dated 1981. In this painting, the absent women are being portrayed through the suggestion of heaps of blonde hair made up from straws, on top of which a burning light is being painted. The hair and the field of straws – a possible reference to the Nazi's obsession for homeland and mythologized earth – subtly evoke a church site where candles are being lit in the memory of the lost ones, while Shulamite's "ashes hair" is being depicted by violent, thick lines of black colour horizontally placed at the bottom

¹⁸ For a nuanced account of materiality in Anselm Kiefer and Joseph Beuys's works see Biro, Matthew: „Representation and Event: Anselm Kiefer, Joseph Beuys, and the Memory of the Holocaust”, *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, volume 16, no. 1, 2003, pp. 113-146.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 125-126.

of the painting suggesting the buried Jews that are now part of that same mythologized land.

According to Matthew Biro, „in this work, Kiefer juxtaposes gestural, linguistic, material, and mimetic elements that semantically resonate with his apparent appropriation of an abstract expressionist style (suggested by the straw and the gestural passages of painting on the canvas)”²⁰.

It is the absence of the human figure, reduced to organic material remains or even to traces of painterly matter, that retains my attention in Kiefer’s approach of post-traumatic memory. In this absence from the visual field of the human figure that remains an open potentiality, as well as a void to fill by the viewer, the repressed can return with a vengeance, as Freud underlined. Kiefer thus seems to present the unconscious traces of traumatic experiences by means of powerful symbols, evocative material remains that encapsulate or trigger photographic associations already existing or circulating in visual history such as the haunting images of piles of corpses in the Nazi concentration camps instead of re-producing them in a different medium, altering their visual appearance.

In fact, Kiefer transforms these visual documents into monuments, able to commemorate the past while evacuating their initial shock, thus performing a truly archival gesture.

It is the same strategy which characterizes his treatment of the images of entrances to the concentration camps, which were famous for portraying these entrance gates towards which railways were carrying the prisoners as a “hole”. For Kiefer, not only that the prisoners and the death trains are no longer present in the space of the picture, but continue to linger in an indefinite space which may well be associated with a memory flash which brings the past back into the present. In *Lot’s Wife*, one of his famous 1989 paintings, the memory of the camps is itself suggested by the biblical allegory of Lot’s wife who, upon leaving Sodoma, was instructed not to look back. The hole of the concentration camp is turning into a white area of painterly stains which trap the viewer’s gaze. Kiefer seems to suggest that, while looking back in the past (and confronting with trauma) may well produce a reification of the gaze, it is the same unconscious “blind spot” of our gaze which will continue to haunt our representations unless we continue to face it.

The multiplication of painterly frames, a discrete myse-en-abyme produced by Kiefer by cutting inside the space of the frame painted in an abstract expressionist, gesturely style and inserting a potentially figurative representation, is another strategic manoeuvre which alludes to the photographic memory of the concentration camps that is being reworked to preserve its affective potentialities.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 130.

Biro also noticed the ambivalence of Kiefer's point of view which allow the identification of the viewer with both the victims and the perpetrators. His other dark canvas which depicts the same motif, *Iron Path* „manages to grapple powerfully with the problems of Holocaust representation. One of the many variations during the 1980s of the field and field path imagery that Kiefer developed in the early 1970s, *Iron Path* depicts a bleak landscape upon which a pair of railroad tracks recede sharply into the distance (...) Read in the context of World War II history, *Iron Path* represents the Holocaust as an anonymous journey into death”²¹. It is the anonymity of this path which allows for the painting to drag the spectator into its space and to avoid trivializing a subject that does not belong to a historical past, but continues to resonate in the present. It is also worth noticing, together with Biro, that the technological, mechanical underpinings of the Holocaust are still present, this time, through the metaphor of the iron railway.

Last, but not least, the suggestion of an entire lost generation in one of his late, but equally powerful paintings such as *Lilith at the Red Sea* (1990), is similarly striking through its use of clothes as material remains of absent bodies.

The children night dresses which are assembled as found objects in the space of a large-scale painting evoke, at an obvious interpretive level, the myth of Adam's first wife, Lilith who, according to the myth, was turned into a demon who consequently stole children. The punishment of the woman can also be interpreted in relation to a longer history. It also evokes the phrase “long night of history” to which Nazi period may be associated as well as, possibly, other more particular historical events such as the *Kristallnacht* – the German pogrom that took place between November 9 and 13 in multiple cities, marking the beginning of the “Final Solution”.

By replacing the representation of disfigured bodies with that of absent ones, and focusing on derelict spaces which only highlight their absence, Kiefer ultimately creates a trap for the viewer's gaze that projects his own fears and personal memories in the space of the memorial thus constructed. It is also remarkable that the viewer's gaze thus seems to become the very subject of Kiefer's metaphorical, multi-layered and deeply ambivalent paintings.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

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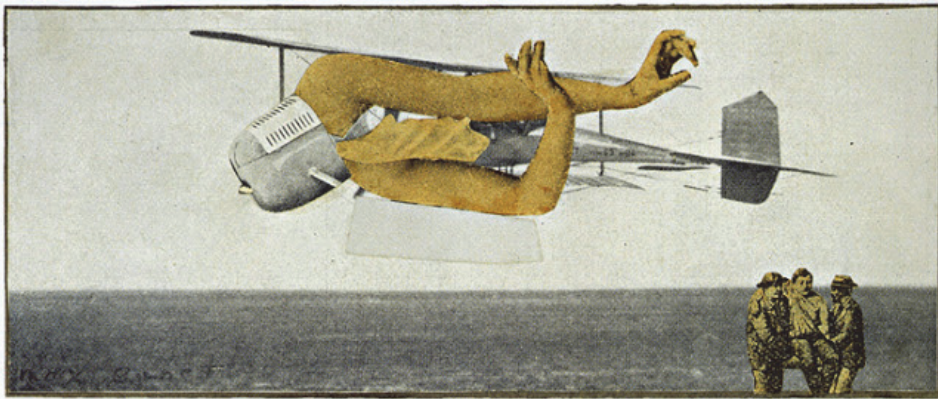
Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Self-Portrait as a Soldier*, 1915. Source: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/ernst-ludwig-kirchner/self-portrait-as-a-soldier-1915>



Otto Dix, *Wounded Soldier*, 1924. Source: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/image/otto-dix-verwundeter-wounded-soldier-1924>. Credits : bpk, Berlin / Staatliche Museen / Volker-H. Schneider / Art Resource, NY



Otto Dix, *Storm Troopers Advancing under a Gas Attack*, from the portfolio *War*, 1924
Source : <https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/resources/exhibition-kits/mad-square/world-war-i-and-revolution/>. Copyright : Otto Dix/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn



Max Ernst, *Untitled (The Murdering Airplane)*, 1920.
Source: <https://theartstack.com/artist/max-ernst/untitled-murdering-airplane>



Anselm Kiefer, *Margarethe*, 1981. The Doris and Donald Fisher Collection at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. <https://www.sfmoma.org/artwork/FC.595>



American soldiers view a pile of corpses in the newly liberated Buchenwald concentration camp in April 1945. Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_concentration_camps#/media/File: Buchenwald_Corpses_07511.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_concentration_camps#/media/File:Buchenwald_Corpses_07511.jpg)



Image of the Entrance Gate to Aushwitz II - Birkenau.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_trains#/media/File: Birkenau_gate.JPG



Anselm Kiefer, *Lot's Wife*, 1989. Source:



Anselm Kiefer, *Lilith at the Red Sea*, 1990. Source: <http://a-place-called-space.blogspot.com/2017/05/anselm-kiefer-at-museum-fur-gegenwart.html>

ROMANIAN THEATER PERFORMANCES IN BESSARABIA BEFORE AND AFTER WORLD WAR I

Daniela Hadîrcă, Larisa Noroc

*Center for Encyclopedic Studies, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
of the Republic of Moldova*

Abstract

If in the other Romanian provinces culture synchronized with European values, in occupied Bessarabia it deviated in another direction, blocking its Romanian national character and artificially infiltrating the Slavic one. Despite the fact that the River Prut became the political boundary in 1812, this does not mean the entire isolation of the Romanian spiritual space from the new province of the Russian Empire. The Romanian theater became manifest in Bessarabia as an essential element of art, which has directly influenced national spirituality. Contrary to the official tsarist policy, in Bessarabia there existed a permanent national theatrical process, characterized mainly by the numerous tours that the Romanian theater groups organized in this province at the beginning of the 20th century. The intensification of this progressive theatrical development continued thanks to the events of 1918

While the Romanian Principalities' culture synchronized with European values, in Bessarabia it changed its direction, being blocked its national Romanian character and artificially infiltrate a Slavic one. Cointerested forces purposely encouraged a policy of spiritual assimilation of the Bessarabians through the russification of the schools, the churches, the media, the administration; the colonization of the land, which dictated new development rules. The same process of denationalization and cultural alienation has also taken place in the field of art.

Bessarabian theater crossed a difficult path to creation and institutionalization, the main reason was that the Romanian territory was under foreign control.

During the Tsarist period, the national theater had a very poor activity. From the first half of the nineteenth century, no testimony has been preserved about any attempt to present any theatrical performances in Bessarabia. It is possible that such attempts have not taken place, taking into consideration that neither the Russians had the drama theater in Chisinau. However, in Bessarabia, theatrical performances were presented by foreign theater troupes, such as those from Odessa and the Kingdom of Romania. The first theatrical performance in Bessarabia was given in 1841 by a German theater troupe from Odessa led by Frisch.

Between 1812 and 1918, only the theater troupes from Iasi led by famous actors as Matei Millo, later Nechifor Luchian, the famous comic C. Bănulescu, Petre Alexăndrescu presented their performances in Bessarabia, and in the '90s, by the Bucharest actors such as Grigore Manolescu, Aristizza Romanescu.

It is remarkable that often the theater troupes hired specialists from Bessarabia, which contributed to the improvement of Bessarabian Art School. As a result, some Bessarabian actors tried to present some performances in Romanian. Stefan Ciobanu mentions the efforts of the professors V. Hartia (Bacii), V. Graur (Ialoveni) who staged some V. Alecasandri creations.

The attempts of Bessarabians to stage performances were successful in 1908, when an amateur theater troupe led by Cheorghe Madan and which were supported by Bessarabian the boyar families Dicescu, Suruceanu, Cononovici and others, presented theatre performances in Orhei (1910 – spectacle „Florin și Florica”) and Chisinau (1911 spectacle „Doi țărani și cinci cârlani”)¹. The theatre troupe also included such actors as A. Dicescu, I. Dicescu, N. Semigradov, and young actors as Popa, Razu, Suruceanu, and others. The Bessarabian mass media from the 6-8 decades has a numerous information about the amateur theatrical bands of high school students in Chisinau and the of theater amateurs troupes of Bessarabian intellectuals².

The Romanian Theater has manifested itself in Bessarabia as an essential element of art, which directly influenced the national spirituality here. Although in 1812 Prut became a political border, it didn't mean the total isolation of the new province of the Russian Empire from the Romanian spiritual space. Many documents of those times show that in Bessarabia during the Czarist occupation, in spite of official politic, there was a permanent national theatrical process characterized, first of all, by the numerous tours given by the theatrical groups over the Prut, and also by the performances staged in Romanian³.

Due to the absence of a permanent theater troupe in Chisinau, the Romanian theatric troupes had tours in Bessarabia, but they did not staged just a few

¹ Rusnac, Eugen, *Teatrul românesc în Basarabia (sec. XIX – început. sec. XX)*, Chișinău, 1996, p. 20.

² *Ibidem*.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

performances, but sometimes theatrical troupes, such as the Vladicescu brothers stayed in Bessarabia from February 1888 until May 1888⁴ and played foreign drama performances such as „Romeo and Julietta”, „Hamlet”, „King Lear”.

However, the first tour of a Romanian troupe in Bessarabia is considered to be undertaken by Matei Millo in 1850⁵. Matei Millo's tour in Bessarabia did not preserve any acts that would confirm his presence in the Besarabian space, are only testimonies of the boyars of that period⁶.

Between 1886–1904 in Bessarabia, the most frequent tours were made by Petre Alexandrescu theater troupes, that performances promoted the elements for the awakening of national consciousness, as a result they were denied entrance in Bessarabia⁷. Petre Alexăndrescu had a great success in Bessarabia and took tournaments even in Odessa.

The Romanian theaters, through their work in Bessarabia, not only maintained the national connection with the population of the Prut river, but also influenced the inspiration and training of the Bessarabian actors who played on native scenes, but also reached the big scenes in Romania, among them Gh. Păun, P. Alexăndrescu, S. Dragomir and others. Gh. Păun played in the Romanian theatre troupes from Iași, after that came back in Bessarabia and in 1860 tried to present some performances⁸. His fate is not known by historians. Between 1868–1912 Petre Alexăndrescu was also an actor at the theater from Iași and took tours in Bessarabia⁹. Another famous Basarabian actor was Gh. Madan, who played at Bucharest theatre¹⁰.

In the 80s-90s of the XIX century, Chisinau hosted the country's musical-dramatic troupes led by Bobescu, Bălănescu, Manolescu brothers. The accidental evolution of the Romanian actors, brought to live Beassarabian public and made them to believe that there are valuable masterpieces in the Romanian culture¹¹.

After the Great Union of 1918 the main goal of cultural policy in the reunited provinces as well as in Bessarabia was to educate the national conscience of the population „contaminated” by Germanization, Magyarization, Russification. The main thing was, step by step, to return the territories to the structure of the old Kingdom,

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 40-45.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*.

¹¹ Livescu, Ioan, *Teatrul în slujba poporului*. București: „Apollo”, 1937, p. 19.

taking into consideration the specificities of the regions¹². In order to achieve these goals, a conscious and planned intervention of the cultural factor was needed, which in its turn could not adequately advance to the needs and rhythms of the time and independent of the positive and indicative intervention of the political factor.

For these reasons, there has been a need to train specialists to promote culture. In the jointed provinces and especially in Bessarabia, people of different professions were sent as propagandists: teachers, doctors, priests, artists who had to work hard to revive and develop the national culture¹³.

In order to have adequate information about the state of the process, cultural inspectors were sent to Bessarabia. In their information for the Ministry of the Arts was noted some positions that had to be solved with priority:

1. Bessarabia needs a state-funded local theater.
2. The theater's repertory must contain theatrical plays of Romanian authors, as well as Russian, but translated Romanian. National minorities will also be attracted to the theater.
3. Historical performances, comedies, operetta will be successful.
4. In the cities of Bessarabia, will be allowed to activate those theatrical troupes that have a license.
5. Ticket prices for shows must be low. Students and members of cultural societies benefit from free tickets¹⁴.

Based on the information obtained, the Romanian government has adapted its cultural policy. So, a main aim of the official structures was to support financially the institutions, collectives, and artistic societies. In order to contribute to the enrichment of the Romanian cultural heritage and the unification of the artistic education in Romania, the following institutions were taken under the protection of the state: the Unirea Conservatory (1920), the Belle-Arte School (January 1, 1924), the National Theater (1923).

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND ACTIVITY OF THE NATIONAL THEATER

The First World War has weakened the artistic life of the country for a long time. Only in the big cities like Bucharest, Craiova were held theatrical performances and other cultural events¹⁵. But even in this unpopular period of the post-war years in

¹² Idem, *Politica culturală*. București, 1928, p. 6.

¹³ Arhiva Națională a României, Fond. *Ministerul Instrucțiunii Publice și a Cultelor*, inv. 532, dos. 194. p. 232, 244, 254.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Istoria teatrului în România*. București: Academia R.S.R, Institutul de istoria artei, volum III, p. 22.

different regions, a number of national theaters are inaugurated. They become, as mentioned by I. M. Sadoveanu, „cultural centers for the region that represents it”¹⁶. The magazines and newspapers of those time discussed the issue of the immediate creation of theaters, which will be places for meetings of workers' masses, aesthetic and civic education centers. A great attention was paid to the important mission of theatrical programs and also tours through the villages¹⁷.

In the early years after the Union in the region there was no professional theater, for that reason, for almost a few years here, almost, exclusively, particular ensembles, prestigious and quasi-anonymous ensembles have been manifested. The repertory presented by the theatrical troupes was composed not only of Romanian plays, but also of the international ones. The aim of these troupes was to attract audiences to the theater, to educate the national conscience, to propagate the Romanian language. Due to the lack of an audience initiated in theatrical art, especially comedies and performances with a patriotic character, which excelled in music and dance, were mounted. This also satisfied the aesthetic needs of national minorities¹⁸.

Among the prestigious Bucharest theatric troupes that played for the first time in Bessarabia, was the National Theater that presented performances on January 24th and 25th, 1918. Before, in 1920 Ionel P. Cigallia's theatrical company that presented performances included in its itinerary the cities of Chisinau, Tighina, Chernivtsi, Radauti¹⁹. In March 1921 another Bucharest Theater troupe headed by C. Demetriade presented their plays in Bessarabia²⁰.

Among the well-known theater troupes that visited Bessarabia in the years after the union, was the theater from Iasi, led by Constantin Nottara, the team headed by M. Popovici. They had performances in Chisinau, Balti, Soroca, White Fortress and Ismail²¹.

The first private theatric troupes who visited Chisinau immediately after the union, was the theater group led by M. Sorbul²². In 1920, a Cultural League theatric troupe led by Lucia Calomeri and Ion Armăsescu obtained the approval of the Ministry of Arts „to make an official theater tour” both through the towns and especially through

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Livescu, Ioan. *Teatrul în slujba poporului*. București: „Apollo”, 1937, p. 19.

¹⁸ Noroc, Larisa, *Renașterea culturii Basarabiei în contextul României întregite (1918–1940)*, Chișinău, 2006, p. 19-26, apud , Петреско. *Театр и музыка*. // *Sfatul Țării*, 1918, 23 March, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Istoria teatrului în România*, București, Volume III, p. 60.

²⁰ *În pragul anului 1923 // Școala basarabească*, 1923, nr. 1-2, p.110.

²¹ Noroc, Larisa, *Renașterea culturii Basarabiei în contextul României întregite (1918–1940)*, Chișinău, 2006, p. 19-26, apud , A.N.R. Fond Ministerul Artelor, inv. 550, dos. 532; *Naționalizarea noilor provincii*. // *Sfatul Țării*, 1920, 20 May, p. 2.

²² *Ibidem*.

the communes of Transylvania, Bukovina and the Old Kingdom²³. Between 1918 and 1923 Bessarabia was visited by the prestigious troupes led by M. Voiculescu, Manolescu. Unfortunately, the halls were not always full. This situation imposed new rules such as free entry, to encourage people to come to theatre. In order to rise the interest in national dramaturgy, works with comical subjects were made by I. L. Caragiale, V. Alecsandri, Ursachi, Burlanescu, H. Lecca, N. Gogol, Moliere, W. Shakespeare²⁴.

Simultaneously with the official and private theatrical troupes of the country, Russian, Polish, German, Italian, Jewish, and German troupes also had tournaments in Chisinau²⁵. Regretfully, some ambulatory troupes and even the Romanian teams of large theaters, unaware of the Bessarabian audience's predilections, did not choose a suitable repertoire and were performing low quality shows. As a result, some performances did not enjoy popularity and gave the Bessarabian public the impression that „the technique of the former Russian theater was far superior to the Romanian theatrical technique”²⁶. Archives documents contain information attesting to local animators' initiatives and efforts aimed at organizing stable theatrical troupes that have their headquarters in big cities²⁷.

The people who contributed to achieve this wish were the historian and politician St. Ciobanu, senators Z. Arbore, N. Alexandri, historian P. Halippa, mayor of Chisinau N. Costin, journalist and critic L. Donici-Dobronravov²⁸ and others.

The theatrical activity of the first years after the Union stimulated the appearance of the National Chisinau Theatre, which in the interwar period had several steps of development. The first season of a stable theater in Chisinau took place in October 1920, in the headquarters of Nobility Assembly²⁹. The head of the theater was Professor Dumitru Mithu³⁰. The troupe was made up of professional actors from different Romanian theaters (Bucharest, Iași), such as: C. Nottara, I. Brezeanu, V. Leonescu, M. Ciurea, V. Eftimiu, students of local Conservatories and Bessarabian intellectuals: C Calmuschi, I. Economu, I. Teodoru, M. Balaban, N. Dumitru, A. Braun, C.

²³ *Istoria teatrului în România*, București. vol. III, p. 60.

²⁴ *În pragul anului 1923. // Școala basarabeană*, 1923, nr.1-2, p. 110; *Teatrul românesc în Basarabia. // Sfatul Țării*, 1920, 25 June, p. 1.

²⁵ Rojcovscaia, Natalia, *Din trecutul teatral al Chișinăului. // Nistru*, 1977, nr. 1, p. 141.

²⁶ Noroc, Larisa, *Renașterea culturii Basarabiei în contextul României întregite (1918–1940)*, Chișinău, 2006, p. 76, apud, A.N.R. Fond Departamentul Artelor, inv. 819, dos. 45/42.

²⁷ *Teatrul Național. // Sfatul Țării*, 1919, 16 December, p.1; Ciobanu, Ștefan, *Chișinăul*. Chișinău: Muzeum, 1996, p.57; Noroc, Larisa, *Renașterea culturii Basarabiei în contextul României întregite (1918–1940)*, Chișinău, 2006, p. 19-26.

²⁸ Ciobanu, Ștefan, *Chișinău*. Chișinău: Ed. Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice, secția Basarabia, 1925, p. 57.

²⁹ Noroc, Larisa, *Renașterea culturii Basarabiei în contextul României întregite (1918–1940)*, Chișinău, 2006, p. 73-75.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

Braun, P. Prieteanu, A. Economu, M. Mori, L. Vrânceanu, M. Borgovan, N. Badescu - Riegler, C. Chirias, C. Momuleanu, D. Moruzan, N. Vasiliu, M. Pizone, M. Fotino, G. Ștefănescu, D. Muruzan, L. Calmuski, Gr. Tăutu, I. Lecca, A. Dumitrescu, P. Deculescu, M. Popovici, and others. The theatric troupe had more than 30 actors³¹. The repertoire of the theater was made up of the works of the classical and modern Romanian writers, containing original vodevils, translations from the works of famous authors such as: Alecsandri, Bădescu, Dabija, Ureche, poems by V. Leonescu, N. Bârsan, dramas by O. Goga, R. Roman, Gr. Ventura, H. Lecca, translations from the repertoire of L. Tolstoi, N. Gogol, Moliere, W. Shakespeare, operettas and vodevils by N. Alexandri, C. Porumbescu, M. Millo, Flechtemacher³² et al. According to the theater leaders, the repertoire had to be educational and sociological. The theatrical seasons were from the first of October to the first of May. September to May were reserved for rehearsals, June for holiday, and June to August were predestined for nationwide propaganda tours through Bessarabia.

During the first season, which ended on 19 May 1921, 25 plays were played at the Popular Theater, including „Avarul”, Moliere's „Forced Marriage”; „Reviewer” N. Gogol; „The Blanduzia Fountain”, „La Turnu Magurele” by V. Alecsandri; „A lost Letter”, „A stormy night”, „The Carnival” of I. L. Caragiale, as well as other Romanian and universal operas³³.

The involvement of the Romanian state in the creation and development of the theater in Bessarabia was very active in the 20's. Since 1923 the institution has been allocated annual subsidies of 2204900 lei (which varied in different periods). With the help of the National Theaters from Iasi and Bucharest and with the approval of the Romanian Writers' Society, the National Chisinau Theatre received decorations and costumes.

Once the First World War ended and The Big Union happened, the Bessarabian theatrical life became very fruitful. In the interwar years, Chisinau Theatre began to synchronize with the Romanian theater movement, due to the fact that it received the visit of notorious companies and troupes from Bucharest, Iasi, Craiova, Timisoara etc. Gradually, during the interwar period, theatrical representations in the Bessarabian space were reduced due to the lack of subsidies, but they also lost quality because the first commercial interests. The degradation of the theatrical life in Chisinau culminated in 1935 with the closure of the institution.

The theater in the Bessarabian area has seen not only the awkward institutionalization, but also the lack of well-trained actors. In spite of the difficulties,

³¹ Cemortan, Leonid, *Opt decenii de teatru național permanent în Republica Moldova. // Moldova Suverană*, 2000, 17 October, p.3; Noroc, Larisa, *Renașterea culturii Basarabiei în contextul României întregite (1918–1940)*, Chișinău, 2006, p. 80-81, apud, A.N.R. Fond. *Direcția Generală a Artelor*, inv. 652, dos. 6.

³² *Ibidem*.

³³ *Ibidem*.

many young enthusiasts have managed to get scholarships in Europe, to get acquainted with the scenic art of renowned teachers. The actors with European studies returned to the country were mentors of several generations, who in turn were initiators of innovative methods in the field of theatrical art training. So, the Romanian theater in the Bessarabian space has contributed to the development of national and international theatrical relations, to the mutual knowledge of the scenic art, to the expression of the traditional artistic vocation in a way accessible to both native artists and the public. The emergence of theaters in the new provinces was not only a form of entertainment for the population, but also a way of culturalizing and promoting the ideas of national rebirth.

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Fig. 1. Matei Millo (1814–1897). The first tour of a Romanian troupe in Bessarabia is considered to be undertaken by Matei Millo in 1850.
Source: <https://www.wdl.org/en/item/17179/view/1/1/>



Fig. 2. Aristizza Romanescu (1854–1918). Source: <https://www.ziarulmetropolis.ro/aristizza-romanescu-160-de-ani-de-la-nasterea-actritei-de-la-stralucire-la-un-sfarsit-trist/>



Fig. 3. Cheorghe Madan (1872–1944).
Source: Cemortan Leonid, *Teatrul Național din Chișinău (1920–1935)*,
Chișinău, Poligraf, 2000



Fig. 4. Nicolae Luchian (1821–1893).
Source: <http://www.ziarulevenimentul.ro/stiri/moldova/nicolae-luchian-actor--217322027.html>



Fig. 5. Constantin Nottara (1859 – 1935).

Source: <http://www.cinemarx.ro/persoane/Constantin-Nottara-846657.html>



Fig. 6. The National Theater in Chisinau. Source: Cemortan Leonid, *op.cit.*



Fig. 7. Agatha Bârsescu in "Medeea". Source: Cemortan Leonid, *op. cit.*

WAR AND ART - AT THE ENDS OF HUMAN LIVING

Bianca Boros

“George Enescu” National Fine Arts University of Iași, Romania

Abstract

The theme of war appears in art from the beginning of the written and illustrated history, contextually suited to every age. The longer we go, however, although the theme of war is still approached with genuine interest by artists, and as a propaganda tool by all the leaders of various civilizations, it becomes one of the most centered issues within human condition. It describes real and new experiences, as compared to the earlier translations of this artistic subject. This abrupt change in the consciousness of humanity has been joined by stylistic approaches, rich in meaning, amplified by the freedom of expression that was brought about by modernity. All this was possible because the art of the Great War was created on the already well-known and explored pillars of Modernism, where the artist abandons the idea of displaying the hard realities of the war only after the set of rules of academic realism, embracing instead the ludic imagination and other stylistic and technical points of view, brought by the new trends of the historical Avant-garde. To look at war and conflict, in general, in a positive key, was and still is, unfortunately, a common thing in the political speeches of the great powers. However, through art, at the extremes of human experiences, it is possible to attract attention to all aspects that define the whole phenomenon of war, such as: solidarity versus egocentrism, empathy vs. cruelty, humanism versus barbarity, etc.

On the occasion of the Centennial of the Great Union and of World War I, we remember the dead and the artists who transposed the terrifying experiences of the war, so that future generations know the historical truth about the suffering and alienation produced by the war, and also to understand the opposite of these - the hope for peace, harmony, solidarity and love.

The theme of war appears in art from the beginning of written and illustrated history, contextually suited to every age. The earliest images made by powerful civilizations like the ones of the Assyrians, Egyptians, Romans, or Greeks do not give preference to economic and cultural prosperity, but to the atrocities of war, not only unchallenged by the cultures in question, but most often sustained (morally and financially), allowed and accepted by all participating camps, and justified in the name of conquering territories or defending them.

One of the main purposes of the art of Antiquity until the modern period was the glorification of the various military leaders or heroes and their victories, but also the celebration of defeating the adverse camp, often followed by the assimilation of the culture of the defeated (an edifying example is the follow-up of the wars between the Dacians and the Romans), or even the attempt to eliminate the traces of the broken down civilization, or their rulers (ordinary deeds in Egypt, when Pharaoh deleted his predecessor from time to time). Other important issues that would have portrayed the realities of the war, such as the situation of the civilian population, the lives of soldiers outside the battles, or the social, economic, and political environment around, rarely were of much interest.

In time, however, although the theme of war is still displayed with genuine interest by artists, and as a propaganda tool by all the leaders of various civilizations and races, a more sensitive note is added to it. After the Renaissance, driven by a humanistic collective consciousness, the artists describe real experiences, although in new ways than they were portrayed in art before. Fear, pain, empathy, compassion, suffering, agony are just a few of the feelings shown in that new art. In his works, Francisco Goya puts us in front of the misfortunes caused by the Napoléon Bonaparte's army to the Spanish people, while in the opposing camp, the well-known military leader was portrayed by the painter Antoine-Jean Gros as honorable, honest and full of compassion.

The art made about and during the First World War continued to reproduce the true images of those times, but with even more courage than in past times, and through more and more innovative forms of expression than traditional ones.

This abrupt change in human consciousness has been joined by stylistic approaches rich in meaning and maximized by freedom of expression.

All this was possible due to the fact that the Art of the Great War was created on the already well-known and explored pillars of Modernism, where the artist abandons the idea of displaying reality after a set of rules, but instead embraces the ludic of the imagination and other stylistic and technical views. Before the start of World War I, abstraction in all dimensions of art began to grow. Cubism, Futurism, Dada, Fauvism, Expressionism and the Russian Avant-Garde (which was born almost two decades before the War) are among the main stylistic views that have shaped the history of art as we know it today. Ironically, a monstrous event that destroyed millions of lives had led to the creation of extraordinary, powerful and valuable art. It is important to note

how quickly the artistic currents of the beginning of the 20th century were born and consumed due to the influence of the horrors of the war on artists. For the first time in history, no emphasis is placed on the great image of the military commanders, but on the ordinary soldier, on the desolate radiography of the places devastated by the war, or on the traumas left behind. Many of the artists who have made such works have been deeply influenced by their own experience on the front.

William Orpen, English artist and soldier, made a series of apocalyptic, yet serene, bright scenes to show us that peace is possible and must be embraced. A once ruined place has chances to have a bright future. Nature does not know the definition of war. The seasons come and pass, careless of human conflicts. Referring to the landscape left desolate after the battle of Somme, William Orpen said:

The dreary dismal mud was baked white and pure - dazzling white. The sky was a pure dark blue, and the whole air. . . thick with white butterflies. It was like an enchanted land; but in place of fairies there were thousands of white crosses, marked 'Unknown British Soldier'.

French artist Henri Farré (who had lost four sons in the war) catches aerial battle in his paintings, while Paul Nash, British artist, accurately transposes us to the front lines. His landscapes have such a powerful emotional impact on the viewer, that his art has been recognized as a key element in the development of English Modernism. The sharp narrative that Paul Nash develops in the painting *We are making a new world* emerges from the title adjacent to the desolate landscape. Wyndham Lewis, in the painting *A Battery Shelled*, portrays us the front of soldiers that resemble puppets, while only officers have definitive traits.

Eric Kennington was the official front-page artist for the Great Britain in both World Wars. His realistic paintings (sometimes almost surrealist), his technique and compositions, have a contemporary touch on the subject of war.

The artists who transposed the dehumanization of war in their art, were largely German expressionists. These include Otto Dix, George Grosz, Franz Marc, Max Beckmann, and others. Later, they would appear in the 1937 *Degenerate Art* exhibition of Hitler's propaganda.

Otto Dix's war paintings are probably the most powerful and direct translations of the reality, war ever created. Cruelty is an extreme of human experiences, and Otto Dix's art, stands witness. He said: *All art is exorcism. I paint dreams and visions too; the dreams and visions of my time. Painting is the effort to produce order; order in yourself. There is much chaos in me, much chaos in our time*². In 1924, Otto Dix, together with other artists who fought in the Great War, make up a mobile exhibition called *No more war*, to show the

¹ <https://gerryco23.wordpress.com/2014/11/19/at-the-imperial-war-museum-2-the-disturbing-vision-of-william-orpen/>.

² <http://www.historyofpainters.com/dix.htm>.

public the horrors they have been through. He thought that: *People were already beginning to forget what horrible suffering the war had brought them. I did not want to cause fear and panic, but let people know how dreadful the war is and so stimulate people's powers of resistance*³.

Explicit images describing horror and death speak for themselves more intensely than a written chronicle. While serving in the First World War (in which he died), Franz Marc, referring to one of his most impressive works, *The Fate of the Animals*, wrote to his wife: *[it] is like a premonition of this war - horrible and shattering. I can hardly conceive that I painted it*⁴. Understanding the human degradation and the catastrophes caused by the war, Max Beckmann set out to objectively reflect the atrocities he had seen. He painted hospitals filled with sick and wounded soldiers, the dead, and in the unfinished work, entitled *Resurrection*, describes humanity's impossibility to return to normal after the war.

On the Romanian front, the painters, now soldiers, continued to express through their art what they felt and saw, either in the trenches, on the battlefield or after the war ended and its consequences were inevitable.

Through the painting of Camil Ressu, Ion Teodorescu-Sion, the viewer is introduced into the world of the common soldier. Ion Stoica Dumitrescu tells the story of the last attack of an injured bugler. Ștefan Dimitrescu is interested in the theme of death, and the subjects of refuge and struggle are found in the paintings of many soldier-artists who fought on the front. Referring to himself, Nicolae Tonitza called the experience of warfare a *school of resistance*.

While he lived as a war prisoner, he sketched with alternative materials, fabricated in difficult conditions. After the war he is present on the art scene with a series of works that clearly show the consequences of the terrible period.

Among the Romanian sculptors who worked on the subject of war, are Oscar Han, Dimitrie Paciurea, Cornel Medrea, Ion Jalea (who lost his hand in the fight but not the courage to create, and now we recognize him as one of the greatest Romanian sculptors), and many others.

On the occasion of the Centenary of the Great Union and the First World War, we remember the dead and the artists who transposed the terrifying experiences of the war into art, so that future generations will know the historical truth about the suffering and the alienation produced by the war, but also the acknowledgement of hope for peace, harmony, solidarity and love. Just as nature followed its course and the landscapes of the old battles are serene, so humanity recovers after the horrors of the war, leaving the

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ Fred S. Kleiner, *Gardner's Art Through the Ages: A Global History*, Vol. 2, 13th Edition, Wadsworth Publishing, 2008, pag.842.

bestiality of the conflict behind, so that the people of the future will have the chance to flourish in a healthy society and understand the truths of war through art.

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Fig.1. Assyrian war chariot, Nineveh, Iraq, (7th c. B.C.),
source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assyrian_sculpture



Fig.2. Goya - *In The Third of May 1808*, produced in 1814, source:
https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Il_3_maggio_1808?fbclid=IwAR3tTiLMpILNUMThavieORhugPhcPjAYKJ3IUSImMdH7IfkfQeW3Ugcbiao



Fig.3. William Orpen Somme - *A clear day*, 1917

source: <https://www.wikiart.org/en/william-orpen/the-somme-a-clear-day-view-from-the-british-trenches-opposite-la-boisselle-showing-the-german?fbclid=>



Fig.4. Otto Dix - *The Trench Warfare*, 1929-1832, source:

<https://o3varvara.wordpress.com/2013/10/11/otto-dix-der-krieg-the-war-1929-32/?fbclid=IwAR3mY07JsjiZLpukyew-nlrY8JhHWbHPSF2ewVbD-rlcSi9Z5M8etqtRoaU>



Fig.5. Camil Ressu – *Prisoners*, 1916, source:
<http://artainromania.ro/artisti-razboi-atelier-de-front/camil-ressuprizonieri1916/?fbclid=>



Fig.6. Dimitrie Paciurea – *God of war*,
1916, source:
<https://www.wikiart.org/en/dimitrie-paciurea/god-of-war?fbclid=>



Fig.7. Nicolae Tonitza – *Mother of a soldier*, 1919, source: <http://artainromania.ro/artisti-razboi-atelier-de-front/?fbclid=>



Fig.8. Gheorghe Ionescu – *Sin(aia)*, 1917, source: <http://artainromania.ro/artisti-razboi-atelier-de-front/gheorghe-ionescu-sinaia-din-razboi-1917-ulei-pe-carton-muzeul-national-de-arta-al-romaniei/?fbclid=>

LUCIAN BLAGA - A LUMINOUS MARK OF STRUGGLE WITH THE SELF, IN THE CREATION OF NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS, AND AGAINST THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE HUMAN IN WAR OR ART

Cosmin Pleșa

"George Enescu" National Fine Arts University of Iași, Romania

Abstract

In a very complicated geopolitical context, even in ancient times, Romanians have always continued to manifest themselves, including artistically, outside the battlefield. They could not ignore the conflagrations that, in various degrees and through different forms, have materialized even in art, as in other aspects of the society. The fact that some artists carried their own war, such as Tristan Tzara, who organized the first *DADA* show at the Cabaret *Voltaire* in Zurich on July 14, 1916, with the intention of shattering in depth the artistic practices of that time against the natural course of tense historical events, attest to this. Brâncuși, Eliade or Blaga, complete this quadrangle of our Romanian spirituality, of a *seemingly* non-Latin background, in which the collective self always brings up archetypal characters ready to reposition our minor culture from a personal eternal context into a *universal historical leap*.

Lucian Blaga's work, in its entirety, is nothing more than a personal war that the author carries with himself for the *spiritual freedom of the individual*, as creation of the Great Anonymous. Lucian Blaga places a metaphysical corollary - *an endless life* that can only be born through light and faith. It is above the physical and always mundane war. It's a wonder of the world. It's a metaphor: it's the fight with the self!

WHAT IS WAR?

The Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian Language¹ says, first of all, that this word "war" has five meanings: the first meaning is **armed conflict** (over a period of time) between two or more groups, social categories or countries, for the realization of economic and political interests, or, in addition, for the recognition of independence, integration or re-integration of a country's territories. The second meaning is that of **civil war** - armed conflict between two or more political groups of different orientations within a state in order to change public and state order or to maintain the existing one. The third meaning would be **cold war** - a state of tension in international relations caused by the hostile policy of some states towards others, which does not, however, take the form of an armed conflict. The fourth meaning is **psychological war** - state of tension, of nervous and mental harassment initiated and maintained in order to shake the morale of the adverse forces and to demoralize the population. The fifth meaning - **state of war** - comes from a figurative sense generated by quarrel, misunderstanding, ruffle, from the Slavonic 'razboj' with the meaning of killing, theft.

In Romanian, the word war also means **working tool**, a household tool that help women weave. A traditional element of authenticity and craftsmanship that has adorned in time the appearance of clothing and traditional pieces, which have become a symbol of art: the shirts of the national traditional costume famous throughout the world.

Unfortunately, it is not the meaning we will refer to in this work but to the one in the first row: war - armed conflict!

Whether we call it "war" in English, "guerre" in French, "krieg" in German, "voina" in Russian, "guerra" in Italian or "bellum" in Latin, unfortunately, we refer to everything that could have been worse and poisonous in the entire evolution of man: the wrongfulness.

Even when we talk about regaining territories or rights or freedoms, we are still referring to evil through those who have unfairly occupied them. Territories or people!

With the passage of *Time* - the master of us all - if we were to look at the evolution of human civilization, we could find its purpose in its animal instinct of possession and desire to kill from the need for survival. And things would be much simpler.

However, in the creationist context, man was created in peace and harmony by the Unique Creator and meant to master all creation, but due to its dramatic nature, Man chose - by disobedience and decay - to declare war to the Great Creator!

In this context of the armed conflict concept - which is by no means simple - the *War*, which from ancient times, perhaps even from the killing of Abel by Cain, had an incommensurable tragic and dramatic characteristic. The artists come to present it in

¹ The Explanatory Dictionary of Romanian language, *DEX*, Univers Enciclopedic P.H., Bucharest, 1998, p. 894.

parts, as each has been gifted and meant to do, taking into account only the period they lived in, whether we talk about pen, pencil, tool, scene, street or film, and more recently, as a totem of our days, even on-line, the artists - individually or collectively - always had a separate war, the war of the word and gesture, by which they severely condemned this atrocity of the human character: ***the wrongfulness of man's actions, in any form, man harming man.***

There is no easier way for a man to lose his dignity than by losing the discernment and becoming an executioner, as history has over and over demonstrated us. And by what man hides inside: Cruelty².

Above the animal instinct that kills to survive, the Cruel Man kills and terrorizes due to reasons that are above its nature.

War, unfortunately, is the best proof of human decay, dehumanization and human disintegration!

The interwar culture is under the sign of richness and diversity determined, on one hand, by the effervescence of the alignment to the European culture that began with the Symbolist movement, and on the other hand, the new unique historical context created by the Great Union of 1918, a crucial event for the becoming of the Romanians due to reaching the ideal in the historical plan, it was more than necessary to achieve a unification in a cultural plan, too, for a national specificity.

And here is where Lucian Blaga's major role applies: the Romanian artistic creation must have the same thrill, regardless of the historical province of the creator, his art bearing the seal of *the Romanian stylistic matrix* as an *a priori* gift and, extending the discussion to the European space, the philosopher and writer Lucian Blaga will contribute to the realization of the Romanian culture in its national specificity that will integrate it in the context of Europe, making it comparable to other cultures that already had an old tradition.

With the synchronization and political settlement of such a Europe and led by the desire to spiritually integrate into its unitary culture, the differentiating element will come. The main characteristic of Blaga's work is freedom of creation and the style shall be the definitive differentiating element in relation to other cultures.

This paper aims at reviewing the works of Lucian Blaga's dramaturgy as an element of an indissoluble unit, consisting in Blaga's way of thinking, a self-centered philosophy connected with the inherent conditions defining the Romanian spirit. To this adds a poetic work done under the same auspices as a practical application of the philosophical conception, an illustration of genuine, original concepts found in philosophy.

² Creation, Peter, *The Lights and Shadows of the Soul*, Humanitas P.H., Bucharest, 2015, p. 151.

The reception of Lucian Blaga's artistic work has produced enough dissensions both among the contemporaries of the writer and after his death. Nowadays, criticism fails to agree on the value of dramaturgy, which we won't be doing today either, however, we can assert that, just like a war with the Self, the work of Lucian Blaga in our directorial concept carries a fantastic ideological construction in itself, of our *becoming* in the modern concept of the term of *national identity* by redefining the *historical being*, just like a fingerprint from way back the ages, coming and passing through the present to go somewhere far, in the heights of what we now call future.

It comes from the days of Zamolxis and coagulates in the time of Anton Pann, as a living quintessence of the Romanian style, the Brâncoveanu style.

Everything that has been going on since then is nothing but what *time* will accomplish not only by will, but above all by our faith.

Beyond the ages, this style is always redefined as robust and suave at the same time, like a mystery that is not totally revealed, inviting to be felt profoundly as a national *unitary* thrill.

It is a good opportunity to be in a collective Self that seems to belong to you from *old times* and until today. It is a sacred space by excellence that gravitates around the human face. It is a tribute to the Man who once descended on this earth from the Creation and rose miraculously to the Anonymous. *It is a metaphor of Christianity*, between a god and God through Man, it is about myth and mythology, is a mystery of the unique Mioritic space. It's all about us and for us.

The Great Anonymous is the fundamental opening of our minor culture to a communion of great and ancient cultures. That's the one *axis mundi* through which the scene of Blaga's dramatic art can be placed directly in the timeless space and metaphorically ascend to the depths of our historical being.

The suggested approach wanted to place Blaga's work in the context of Romanian and European dramaturgy by establishing the main features of Blaga's drama and putting it in a personal aesthetics, as well as identifying those elements of specificity that distinguish the dramaturgy of the time.

The Romanian mythical theater is the artistic and philosophical proposal of Lucian Blaga's plays, through which the author aims to present the great themes of universal philosophy and, finally, to raise the character of minor culture to the great culture! The aim is to highlight the construction of archetypal characters or ideas, which should not be viewed as human, but as symbols/ hypostases of the Mystery, a fundamental attribute of the Great Anonymous.

1921 - **Zamolxe. Pagan Mystery**

1923 – **Troubled Waters**

1925 - **Daria**

1925 - **Ivanca / The Deed**

1925 - **Resurrection**

1927 – **Master Manole**

1930 - **Children's Crusade**

1934 - **Avram Iancu**

1944 - **Noah's Ark**

1945 - **Anton Pann**

All these titles compel, in an entirely artistic and metaphorical sense, the collective conscience to rise from the mundane invaded by the wickedness of the individual and by his cruelty, specific to the war, to a celestial plan!

Tristan Tzara organized the first *DADA* show at Cabaret *Voltaire* in Zurich on July 14, 1916.

Lucian Blaga published in 1919, in Sibiu, *The Poems of Light!*

Here is the mystery of the great spirit of Romanian authenticity, the poet, the philosopher, the playwright, the novelist, and the nationalistic man: the character Lucian Blaga: The Light!

Lucian Blaga's mystery is Light! From the Light created on the first day to the most uplifting metaphor of the uncreated light: the brilliance of a mind, which can make visible the metaphysical light of the physical darkness.

That's how Blaga understands to fight against human atrocities:

I do not crush the wonder aura of the world, nor do I kill with reason the mystery I meet on my life journey in flowers, in eyes, on lips or graves.

The light of others only strangles the spell of the unperfused abstruse in the depths of darkness, but I, I elevate with my light this world's abstruse just as the moon with her white rays does not diminish, but trembling, only increases the mystery of the night, so I elevate the gloomy horizon with wide shivers of sacred mystery and everything that is not understood is becomes even less understood before my eyes - for I love flowers and eyes and lips and graves.

This could be the formula of a *Mioritic space* which is and will remain one of Blaga's personal concepts of the highest and yet profound authenticity through which his personal *Creation* splendidly interweaved the philosophical and artistic field, creating a unique manifold manifestation: purely dramatic philosophy, philosophical art in poetry and high versatile dramaturgy. Hence, his unique and unmistakable style.

We believe that all these aspects offer a special key to the interpretation of Blaga's creation: his entire work grows around major themes such as knowledge, the relation of man with the universe, Eros, nature, death, etc. Many of his themes are organized around central revealing metaphors. However, we have established our central axis of *the directorial discourse* on four of them: **the metaphor of time, space, sound and light**, present and suggested in various ways in Blaga's drama and not only.

We only mention the latter, the metaphor of *light* that originates – in all its greatness – from the "*Light created on day one*" as an attribute of God announcing the Creation of the World and capable of deifying the being. Then the light present in the cosmic elements – the stars, the Milky Way, the moon, the sun, etc. – which induce the thirst for a lost paradise that could be associated with love anytime, as a possible materialization of Divinity and over all these divine or natural declinations of it. Perhaps it reaches the most grandiose hypostasis of light, which, in our opinion as directors, it transforms the hypostasis of the light announced in *I do not crush the wonder aura of the world*, where it is a metaphor of knowledge and up to the light coming from sacrifice, *Master Manole*, where by Manole's reply: *Up to where? Up to the Light!* it is possible to close this initially and profoundly symbolic circle of Blaga's drama, proposed by us, drama governed by these four elements: *time, space, sound and light*.

The entire work of Blaga is completely loaded with ecstatic tension in which all contrasts have been converted, just like a subtle silent cry in the mystic ecstasy of the sight of the unseen light.

We could not reach the end without recalling the reason or the metaphor of silence/the philosophical silence in response to the request of the universe: "*Human, I would tell you more / But it is in vain / And that is why the stars are shining in the sky / And tell me to shut up / And tell me to shut up*" (*The Mystery of the Initiate*). And when the existential torment that never stops demands its rights, the empire of silence is struck by a cry, like a symbol of a new search for meaning.

It is not death, it is *the great passage*. Blaga's drama comes with a timeless contrast in which *the flight above*, spiritual, cannot be conquered by nothing of the human evil, because it carries the metaphor of light!

It is something above words.

Maybe, it is just the silence that can face it.

THE GUERNICA - A PLANETARY ARTISTIC MANIFEST AGAINST THE HORRORS OF WAR

Cristian Alexii

"George Enescu" National Fine Arts University of Iași, Romania

Abstract

Picasso's *Guernica*, one of the most disturbing pictorial creations in the history of the arts reveal us, on the one hand, the power of the art impact viewed as a means of transmitting a political message, but on the other hand the real size of the atrocities which a war brings them to helpless people, civilians and animals. This enormous scenography painted by the modern master of Spanish painting, fulfils exceptional plastic qualities, even if the tones of the oil colours are limited to variations of white, black and grey. The impressive dimensions of the work allowed Picasso to plenary glorify his genius, through compositional complexity and expressive and symbolic force through which he built his characters and frames of the action of the painting. The approach proposed by me is that of updating the humanitarian and artistic importance of the masterpiece of Picasso, namely the exemplary and ever-present illustration of the atrocities and dehumanization that the war is causing.

On April 26th 1937, the town of Guernica was bombarded for about three hours by the Nazi air force of the German Legion Condor at the request of Francisco Franco's nationalist government. The masculine population of the city was about to fight for the cause of the Republicans, which means that most of the victims of the bombing were made up of women and children. These demographic aspects of the event are found in the monumental painting that Picasso will make, one of the most disturbing manifestations against the war. The work, made in oil on canvas, anchored on a huge chassis of the height of 349 centimeters and a width of 776 centimeters, was completed in June 1937. The painting overwhelmingly depicts the suffering of both humans and animals, caused by the effects of the war. Picasso built this visual chronicle using a sophisticated compositional formula and painted it in a perfectly stylistic direction,

tailored to the subject, with shades of gray, sending the viewer to the effect of photo prints. Picasso's *Guernica* has always been considered by art critics to be one of the most remarkable anti-war works in history. The work was done for the Spanish section at the *International Art and Technology Exhibition in Modern Life* in Paris in 1937, after which it continued to be exhibited in various places of the world. Since its inception, the work has been extensively publicized, being the subject of major anti-war campaigns, getting fame and funds, that have been used for refugees in the Spanish War. *Guernica* is currently a patrimony of the *Reina Sofía Museum* in Madrid.

Rudolf Arnheim, a German author, art and film theorist, and perceptual psychologist wrote in the article *Picasso's Guernica: The genesis of a painting*: "Women and children make *Guernica* the image of innocence, humanity without victimized defence. They are also often represented by Picasso as the perfection of mankind. In Picasso's opinion, an attack on women and children centers on the core or on the essence of humanity."¹ At the time of the bombing, Picasso lived in Paris, where he had settled since 1934, and at that time was appointed honorary director of the Prado Museum.

The initial drafts for the Paris exhibition project, a project that Picasso accepted as a result of the government's request for him to represent the Spanish flag, aimed to depict his studio. Immediately after the tragic event in *Guernica*, on April 26th, the poet Juan Larrea urged the artist to make war the subject of his creation. But just after reading the publications of *The Times* and *The New York Times* on April 28th, Picasso would decide and begin drafting the paper. Photographer Dora Maar had been working with Picasso since mid-1936, making various photos in his studio, and teaching him to use "cameraless photography". This technique inspired Picasso to use gray tones in the *Guernica* work, trying to mimic the psychological and symbolic effect of black and white photographs. According to Picasso's bibliographer John Richardson², he commissioned a special matte paint with a minimal gloss effect. Although he didn't accept strangers in his studio, Picasso made an exception for the American artist John Ferren, who helped him to stretch and prepare the monumental cloth. At the same time, he accepted the photographic recording during the work, as well as the presence of some visitors with political potential, in order to create a publicity that promoted the anti-fascist cause. While painting, Picasso said: "The Spanish struggle is the fight of reaction against the people, against freedom. My whole life as an artist has been nothing more than a continuous struggle against reaction and the death of art. How could anybody think for a moment that I could be in agreement with reaction and death? ... In the panel on which I am working, which I shall call *Guernica*,

¹ Rudolf Arnheim, *The Genesis of a Painting: Picasso's Guernica*, 2nd Edition, University of California Press; 2edition, 2006, pag.54.

² John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso*, Volume I: 1881-1906, Random House, 1 edition, 1991, pag.121.

and in all my recent works of art, I clearly express my abhorrence of the military caste which has sunk Spain in an ocean of pain and death."³

Considering Picasso's *Guernica* sequentially, we will notice the presence of a bull in the upper left of the work, a bull terrified by the turmoil he is witnessing, and whose mood seems to unite with the roar of the desperate woman, who holds tight her dead baby. The human-animal duality continues towards the central part of the painting, where Picasso painted a disarranged horse, which also screamed in pain, pierced by a spear.

Under the representation of the horse, as the woman under the bull's profile, we can see a dismembered soldier with a broken sword and a flower in one hand and Christ's stigma on the other, open and crisp.

One of the main centers of the composition, positioned in the upper central part of the canvas, is the peculiarly eye shaped bulb lamp, that watches over the horse's suffering, a reference to the all-seeing eye of the *Creator*, but also to the atmosphere of detention, and torture. The right part of the painting is dedicated to two other female characters who appear to be terrified of a burning building. The one above holds in her unnaturally long hand, an oil lamp, the only object he managed to take with her, in the terror of the bombing. The feminine figure from the bottom right, appears to be impeded in the desperate rush, overwhelmed with horror, but also with a suggestion of hope, toward the two light sources: the eye bulb lamp and the oil lamp. The bull's tongue, like the one of the horse or the desperate mother, is sharp as a dagger's blade, amplifying to the extreme the general feeling of the catastrophe. Picasso's painted chronicle is over. On the right, we find a character in flames, seen through the window of the burned building and whose hand reminds of the shape of an airplane. The apocalyptic scenario continues, opening up the compositional field through the multitude of doors and windows. All this tremendous tension and pain, of the human and animal bodies, is directed by Picasso through the network of lines, diagonals and divisions into thick, triangular registers, extracted from the network of lines and sections of the rectangle chosen by Picasso.

The study of geometric and symbolic analysis of Picasso's painting, carried out under the scientific coordination of University Lecturer Doctor Cristian Ungureanu, at the "George Enescu" National University of Arts in Iasi, pointed out that this rectangle, formed by two squares and a quarter, develops a very dynamic harmonic structure, the ratio of its sides being $9/4 = 2,25$. Above or in parallel with the oblique line structure that joins the corners of the canvas rectangle with the golden sections and diagonals of the squares obtained by connecting the small sides to the large sides of the rectangle, Picasso organized his compositional and symbolic war chronicle using a circular structure of four subdivisions.

³ <http://www.jamescampbelltaylor.com/guernica/>.

The key to understanding and rebuilding this circular level is precisely the eye-bulb in the form of mandorla or vesica piscis. The symbolism of the *Guernica* is very varied and unclarified with precision. For example, the bull and the horse in the work are two central elements, which are also very important and remarkable in Spanish culture, and Picasso used them with many other roles in his paintings over time. For this reason, *Guernica's* interpretation possibilities are multiple, and very difficult to clarify. Pressed by the reporters' questions, even the artist said: "...this bull is a bull and this horse is a horse... If you give a meaning to certain things in my paintings it may be very true, but is not my idea to give this meaning. What ideas and conclusions you have got I obtained too, but instinctively, unconsciously. I make the painting for the painting. I paint the objects for what they are."⁴

After the 1937 *Paris Exhibition*, *Guernica* embarked on a tour of promoting and presenting the effects of the war that the work represents. In 1939, it arrived at the Modern Art Museum in New York, where Picasso wanted the painting to be hosted and known to the whole world. Between 1939 and 1952, *Guernica* was presented in major locations across America and the West of Europe. In 1958, it was brought back to the *MoMA*, due to the degradation of the canvas caused by the transport and exhibitions it had been through over the decades, where it remained until 1981. All this time, *Guernica* has become a symbol of the catastrophes and suffering of the war, and militants for peace around the world have reproduced the work in various forms and hypostases as a planetary manifestation. At the outbreak of the Second World War, Picasso wrote a document stating that *Guernica* should not return to Spain until democracy is established. Thus, only in 1981, 6 years after the death of Franco, *Guernica* returned to Spain, and was exposed after a secure glass, until 1995. Over time, it has not lost its meaning, and in 2003 the power of this work was reconfirmed when the reproduction from the United Nations headquarters in New York was covered with a blue curtain because it was not morally compliant with the intentions of Colin Powell's speech that proposed government involvement in the American war in Iraq. Although Picasso made more paintings accompanied by strong political messages, none of them have been able to develop as much energy and interest as *Guernica*. Richard Wagner, a German composer and theatre director, said that the message sent by *Guernica* had a strong resonance across the world that did not diminish its meaning at all: "It was a tremendous circumstance for Picasso and the history of art, Republican art, protest art, and humankind."⁵

Through *Guernica*, art has once again shown the power of transmitting a message to the masses. The meaning and role of such a work can only be explained or transmitted by pursuing the ever more powerful and actual effect it has produced in planetary consciousness.

⁴ https://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/guernica/glevel_1/5_meaning.html

⁵ <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-guernica-picassos-influential-painting>.

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13. <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-guernica-picassos-influential-painting> .



Fig. 1. Guernica town in ruins, 1937,
source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Guernica

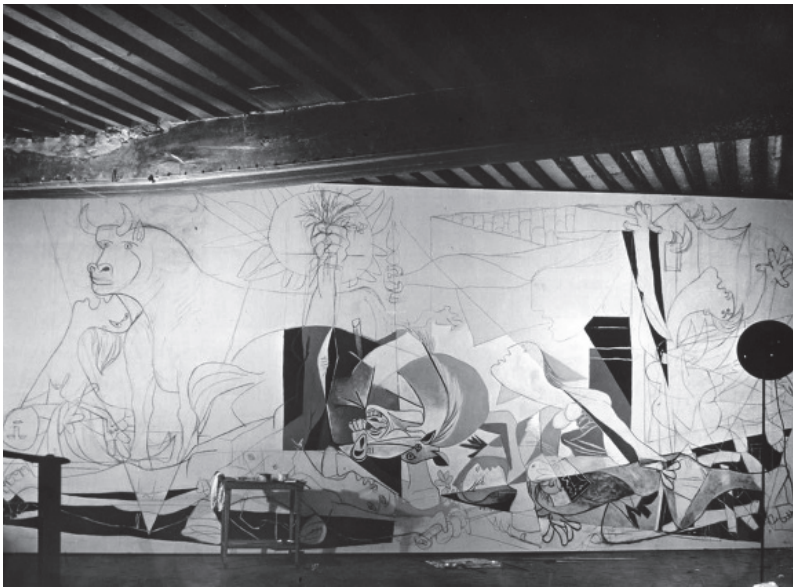


Fig.2. Guernica in working stages
source: <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/reportage-sur-levolution-guernica-photo-report-evolution-guernica-2>



Fig.3. Pablo Ruiz Picasso's Guernica
source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_\(Picasso\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_(Picasso))



Fig.4. Pablo Ruiz Picasso's Guernica, detail, source:
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_\(Picasso\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_(Picasso))

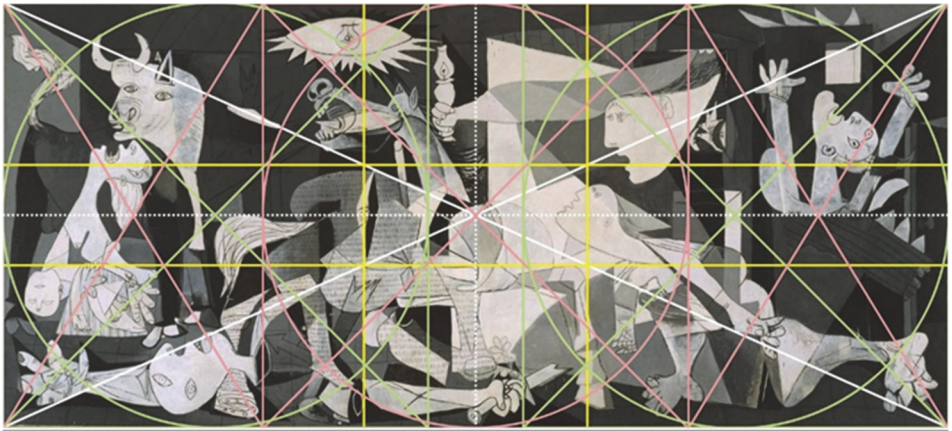


Fig.5. Geometric and symbolic analysis of Picasso's Guernica conducted by Associate Professor Cristian Ungureanu PhD, source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_\(Picasso\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_(Picasso)) and Assoc. Prof. Cristian Ungureanu's personal archive

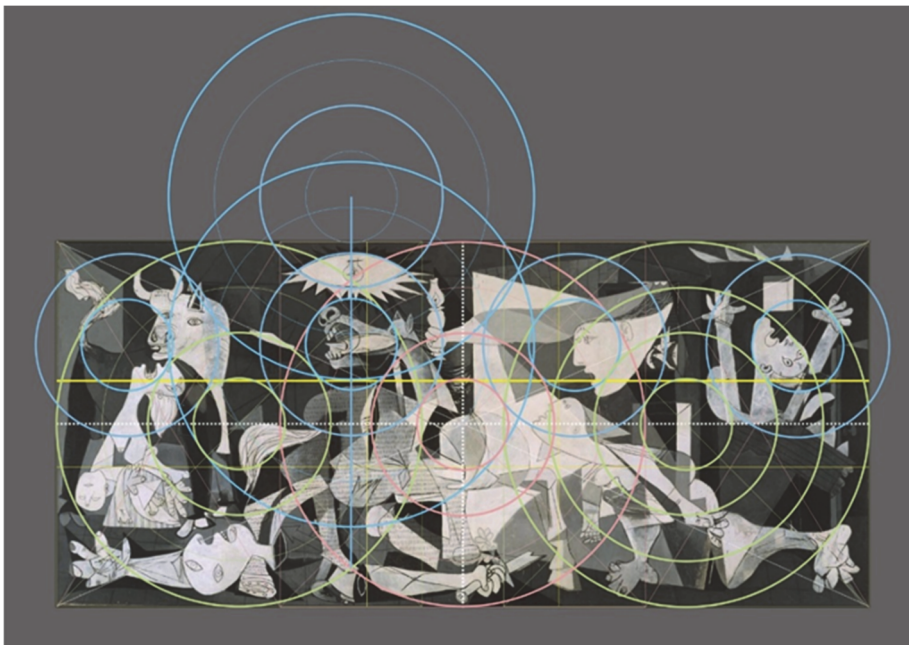


Fig.6. Geometric and symbolic analysis of Picasso's Guernica conducted by Associate Professor Cristian Ungureanu PhD, source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_\(Picasso\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guernica_(Picasso)) and Assoc. Prof. Cristian Ungureanu's personal archive



Fig.7. Workers at the Museum of Modern Art roll up *Guernica* before sending it to Spain in September 1981, source: <https://steemit.com/picasso/@agcaapo/the-horrible-inspiration-behind-one-of-picasso-s-great-works> .

DE-HUMANIZING THE ADVERSARY. THE RHETORIC OF THE JUST WAR DURING THE REFORMATION

Cătălin Hriban

Institute of Archaeology, Romanian Academy-Iași Branch

Abstract

The millenarian enthusiasm of 1419-1420 was accompanied by unprecedented fratricide violence in the Hussite Czech state. The Taborite and Orebite Radicals preachers urge, in the spirit and letter of the Old Testament, to smite the “enemies of the Lord’s Law”: „Any one of the faithful is accursed who holds his sword back from the blood of the adversaries of Christ’s Law, from personally pouring it out. Rather, each of the faithful ought to wash his hands in the blood of Christ’s enemies, because blessed are all who return vengeance to the woeful daughter, just as she has done to us”. The presentation explores the way the rhetoric of the Crusades and anti-ottoman propaganda is reused by both the Catholic and the Reformation parties during the Religion Wars of the 15th - 16th centuries.

The violent religious strife that had shaken the fundamentals of European states in the first half of 16th century takes, in its universalness, the shape of Holy Wars for each of the opposing groups involved. As such the rhetoric of the Crusade is conveniently at hand, particularly the 15th century one, a continuous evolution that started with Saracens, continued with the Cathars, the Prussians and Hussites. However, in order to capitalize such powerful ideological inheritance, the political officers of the Wars of Religion employed the image of the Turk, the enemy of the Christianity *par excellence*, to paint over the enemy, whether such enemy (the Adversary) is Catholic, Calvin, Lutheran or Anabaptist. And how one can define visually the Turk, the new Saracen, than by the weapons the enemy bears (cruel and wicked swords/sabers, i.e. abhorred by good Christian people).

"The turbulent are chafed by peace and general tranquillity and, while they attempt to destroy the pride of others, are themselves through God's just judgement very often slain by their own weapons. How blind and foolish are the men who desire war in times of peace."

Orderic Vital Historia Ecclesiastica

"In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries this [i.e. the Enemy] meant to a large degree the Turk, who became the normative foe of Christendom, the embodiment of Islam. The Turk was far from being a flat or static image of hostility. On the contrary, 'turkishness' was a multifaceted and changing identity. It was a prism, which depending on time and context reflected every aspect of Christian thinking about religious warfare."

Norman Housley, Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536

Cardinal Wolsey's justification of England's war in France in 1522, when he received news of the siege of Belgrade and was asked for English support, is so telling: "The real Turk is he with whom we are occupied, [i.e. the French] and I know no other Turk."

"That people is driven by filthy lust, suckled in wild disorder, and knows nothing of piety or the sacred. From an early age, they become accustomed not to ease beneath roofs, but to fierce combat and the snows of winter, delighting in the shedding of human blood."

Giovanni Albino De bello Hydruntino (around 1495)

The fundamental premise of this endeavor is that the sword possess an object/symbol duality, and its forceful presence in the medieval mindset oscillates constantly between daily familiarity and messianic quasi-sacredness, being for the medieval individual an entity whose value and substance can occupy any point between the familiar and sacred, in a quantum indeterminism that makes the familiar and sacred inseparable within the representation of the sword. As exaggerated as it may be¹, the context of relevance is not the one of the *sword owner* (and implicit of the warrior mystique), but the context of the *sword as a cultural object*². Paraphrasing Jean Guilaine, the sword is the most sophisticated object created by prehistoric metallurgy,

¹ Perhaps the most expressive *caveat* in this regard was issued by the very same Ewart Oakeshott, in the preamble of his popular volume *Sword in Hand*: "Unhappily, it has become fashionable, at certain times, to add to the mystique of the sword elements which were very unlikely ever to have occurred to the men to whom it was familiar and sanctified. At times scholars, as well as popular writers, have declared that a sword's outstanding appeal to its owner was other than its value as a weapon and symbol of aggressive power and of his dedication to the faith, a code, a cause, or an ideal. It is surely not incumbent upon us to accept that any pre-Freudian warrior had other ideas than these".

² The famous traveler, adventurer and translator of the *Kamasutra*, Sir Richard Burton, is the author of a book not less famous about the cultural history of the sword, *The Book of Swords*, which contains the axiom, frequently cited also: "... the history of the sword is the history mankind".

comprising, up to the end of Renaissance, the most advanced technology of the time³. The force of such object is so great that it becomes, in Catholic patrology, the message vehicle for the Lord's Peace, as a variant of the concept of *the two swords* (secular authority and spiritual authority) which at Allain de Lille (*Ad Milites*, the end of 13th century) becomes a material sword, carried by the *miles*, a sword of violence for securing secular peace, against a spiritual sword that a Christian carries with his soul, a sword of God-inspired soul peace, and which serves the knight as a righteousness standard for his actions. While the sword is an instrument of order, the opposite is not less true. The villains take possession of the sword and use it for their wicked ends, explains John of Salisbury, while Alain de Lille depicts such reversal with an emotion that verges on horror: "... they [the wicked knights] sharpen their swords in the very womb of their mother, the Church"⁴. The sword of justice can at the same time be a sword of the revolution, without being a contradiction *per se*: during the months leading to the beginning of the anti-Hussite crusades, one of the leaders of the Moderate party of the Hussites, Vaclav Koranda of Plzen, declared in September 1419: "the time of wandering with the pilgrim staff in hand has passed. Now we will have to march with sword in hand"⁵ as the non-radical Hussite rhetoric employed the metaphor of the sword exclusively in the sense of a spiritual weapon. The duality of the *material sword-spiritual sword* is consciously used as a plea against sinful bloodshed, by both the crusaders of Emperor Sigismund of Luxembourg and the Taborite radicals⁶, in the form of *arma carnalia-arma spiritualia* by Jakoubek of Střbor, the ideologist of moderate Hussitism and the main successor of Jan Hus⁷. Thus, we find that the sword as a multiple meaning cultural image is present as vividly during the Crusades as during the Pre-Reformation, both in the religious milieus and in the vernacular literate ones, in the West as well as at the periphery (geographic and theological) of Catholic Europe.

If the references of Western scholasticism may seem inadequate for assessing the cultural landscape of the Moldavian public in prince Petru Rares' time, the Scriptural text is a very suitable reference, as its message is virtually identical in the 16th century as

³ Jean Guilaine, Jean Zammit, *Le Sentier de la Guerre: Visages de la violence préhistorique*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 2001, p. 197.

⁴ Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 77.

⁵ Norman Housley, *Religious Warfare in Europe, 1400-1536*, Oxford University Press, Londra, 2002, p. 36, who quotes with gusto from Kaminsky's 1968 *History of the Hussite Revolution*, which remains the reference work on the issue of Hussitism.

⁶ The millenarian enthusiasm of 1419-1420 was accompanied by unprecedented fratricide violence in the Hussite Czech state. The Taborite and Orebite Radicals preachers urge, in the spirit and letter of the Old Testament, to smite the "enemies of the Lord's Law": „Any one of the faithful is accursed who holds his sword back from the blood of the adversaries of Christ's Law, from personally pouring it out. Rather, each of the faithful ought to wash his hands in the blood of Christ's enemies, because blessed are all who return vengeance to the woeful daughter, just as she has done to us" (Norman Housley, *op. cit.*, p. 39).

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 45-46.

is in the 21st century. As such, the image of the sword in the Old Testament⁸ is the representation of divine immanence and justice, or the divine punishment administered by men, or even directly by God (either to the Israelites or to their enemies):

- The flaming sword guarding the entrance to Paradise (*Gen. 3:24*).
- The Lord shall kill with the sword any who oppress the poor, the widows and the orphans (*Exod. 22:23-24*).
- The Angel of the Lord with a raised sword, who blocks the road in the *History of Balaam* (*Num. 22:23, 31*).
- "... And when the Lord your God delivers it [i.e. the fortress] into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword..." (*Deut. 20:13*).
- In the same book, "... The sword shall destroy outside; There shall be terror within... [for the Israelites who have forsaken the Lord]" (*Deut. 32:25*), as well as "— As I live forever, if I whet My glittering sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My enemies, and repay those who hate Me ...", *The Song of Moses* (*Deut. 32:40-41*).

There are numerous such Old Testament examples, and we select here only those that might have been more popular to a 15th - 16th century public⁹. We believe that the ultimate and fatal character of the sword is beyond disputation, as an instrument of judicial, divine and human violence, an *exemplum* of the Last Judgment. Simultaneously, the sword is the familiar war tool, which was forbidden to the Israelites under Philistine occupation (1 *Sam. 13:19*) and about which David, the still-hidden King of Israel, admonishes Goliath: "Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied'" (1 *Sam. 17:45*) and "... the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands (1 *Sam. 17:47*). The sword is also the familiar instrument that serves as an accessory to Solomonic justice, in the well-known episode of the two mothers who disputed the child (1 *Kings 3:24-27*), where, through the brutality the simple presence of the sword imparts to the scene, the shocking immanence and ultimate, irremediable character of royal justice is revealed, which is, in fact, the real intention of the wise king. Moreover, the sword also appears not only as a positive instrument for executing the divine will (the killing of Amalekite King Agag by Samuel (1 *Sam. 15:33*), but also a negative one, of the human will (the suicide of King Saul, who throws himself on his sword (1 *Sam. 31:4*), or the swords of the Ammonites, which are the instrument for the unlawful execution of Uriah, at the command of King David: "You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword;

⁸ Henceforth, all references to biblical text refer to the New King James Bible (1982), rendered in online edition, retrieved from <https://www.bible.com/bible/>.

⁹ The word *sword* appears 404 times in the Holy Scripture.

you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon" (2 *Sam.* 12:9).

In the New Testament, the sword does not lose any of its spiritual and profane roles, being equally in both its roles familiar and impressive for the medieval audience. In the form of a spiritual sword, it is an instrument of separating believers from skeptics, as final weapon with which Jesus cuts off by sword the parents from their children and the spouses from each other: "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (*Matt.* 10:34). Simultaneously, the sword is a purely material object, a weapon of attack and defense, employed by the mob who seize Jesus in the Gethsemane Garden ("Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me?" *Matt.* 26:55), and by the apprentice who takes up the sword to the Savior's defense and who is admonished by Him with: "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (*Matt.* 26:52). The material sword as an *exemplum* of executive justice is perfectly illustrated in the apostle Paul's discourse: "... Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (*Rom.* 13:4). In the evangelical discourse, the sword is the preferred metaphor for emphasizing certain extraordinary trials ("Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, 'Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed'", *Luke* 2:35; and "... he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors'", *Luke* 22:36-37). Such stylistic usage can be seamlessly joined (conceptually) with the image of the sword as an instrument of martyrdom, first in the scenes depicting the Decollation of St. John the Baptist, (although it does not appear literally in the source text, is implicitly introduced by the iconographer's vision), then in the martyrdom by the sword of the apostle James (the brother of John) by King Herod Agrippa I (*Acts* 12:2). The force of the sword as a cultural image in the New Testament reaches, however, its maximum intensity in the Apocalypse of St. John, where it designates the lethal force of the voice and the word of the Lord who pronounces sentences at the end of the world ("... out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword", *Rev.* 1:16) and its power to kill, granted to the apocalyptic riders ("Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword", *Acts* 6:4).

The sword-bearing characters from the mural paintings of Probota monastery (or Voroneț, or Arbore, or Bălinești, or Moldovița, or Moldovita and the list can continue), can be divided into four categories:

- I. Instances of divine majesty, power and immanence¹⁰: the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, in scenes of the nave and the narthex, the angel escorting the avatar of the Old Testament (the Synagogue) from the Crucifixion, or the angel severing the hands of the “spiteful” Jew in the scene of the Dormition of the Virgin;
- II. military saints, in the nave scenes: Procopius, Theodore Tiro and Theodore Stratelates, Demetrius, George, Artemius;
- III. secondary characters, actors in the Passion cycle in the nave, or background characters in depictions of the Ecumenical Councils in the narthex;
- IV. torturers and executioners in the martyrdom scenes of the Menology, in the narthex and the burial chamber.

The incidence of “civilian” sword-bearing characters is zero, as none of the male characters in the group of founders in the votive painting is wearing weapons whatsoever, and little prince John does not bear a sword in his funeral portrait on the southern wall of the burial chamber. The weapons seem to be instruments of violence exclusively reserved for characters, while the real people represented in mural painting are prevented to be tainted by such violence, whether this is judicial or not, divinely sanctioned or discretionary.

Having established that the sword is a culturally multiple-meaning, morally ambiguous and extremely powerful cultural image, we must accept a second premise, that for such an image, the speciation of its representations is not a random development, but the result of a rather semi-conscious process that selects, separates and unifies meanings, out of the contextual “cloud” that is, in fact, the cultural image accrued around the object “sword”. Actually, the process of representation “sets” materially that sword which is closest to the contemporary reality, out of the multitude of quantum possibilities that coexist within the cultural image. Specifically, the painter sets the shape of the sword within the scene he is currently painting, using both a material pattern (a real weapon, seen, understood and memorized), and a mental model, and these two models interact dynamically. The result of this constructive process is the depiction of a sword that is *appropriate, from the point of view of the individual who is painting*, to the scene, character and narrative message, as well as to the moral message the above suppose to convey. Consequently, the specific differences of

¹⁰ “[W]hen our Lord established law and order on the earth, He set them in the sword. The rule that was over the laity must come from a layman, and must be by the sword, and the sword was, at the beginning of the three orders, entrusted to knighthood to safeguard Holy Church and uphold true law and order”, as the Archbishop explains in the *History of Merlin*, such literature explaining that the Archangels and the Heavenly Hosts that defeated Lucifer’s rebellion are the highest rank of the Christian chivalry (Richard W. Kaeuper, *op. cit.*, p. 202).

representation are direct reflections of the painter's attitude towards the scene he is rendering, expressed through the cultural "furniture" convenient to him.

In general, this feedback process results in personal touches, innocent licenses that insert elephants and gorillas into the plethora of "beasts of the Earth" in the scenes of the Last Judgment, radishes on the Table of the Last Supper, or goats sheep ruminating their way through the Nativity scene. While such tiny interventions in very important areas, cycles, scenes or icons (in the altar, nave and tower, where the canon is very strict and the execution is reserved for the masters) are inconsequential from the point of view of the iconographic canon, they acquire sufficient freedom to manifest throughout scenes and areas of lesser importance, which are less noticeable and less canonically strict (in the Menology on the vault of the burial chamber, or on the walls of the narthex, which is a cycle with an iconographic program that emerged only in the middle of the fourteenth century, and was set structurally towards the end of the century, remaining though relatively fluid in shape¹¹). In such areas of relative artistic freedom, the lines are more sketched, the touches are faster, and the tones are flatter, while the representations are species and not individuals. In the Menology scenes we find those depictions of the sword that illustrate in the highest degree the attitudes and cultural "furniture" of the church painters during Petru Rareș' times.

¹¹ Suzy Dufrenne, "Problèmes iconographiques dans la peinture monumentale du début du XIV^e siècle", in *L'art byzantin au début du XIV^e siècle*, Beograd, 1978, p. 29-38.



Fig. 1. King Richard Lionheart battling Saladin (floor tiles, Chertsey, England, ca. 1250-1260, apud Nicholas Hooper, Matthew Bennet, *The Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare - The Middle Ages 768-1487*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 95)



Fig. 2. A clash between crusaders and Saracens during the second siege of Antioch (the 1st Crusade), in a 13th century copy of the *History* of William of Tyre (apud Thomas F. Madden (ed.), *Crusades, the Illustrated History*, U. Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 2004, p. 43)



Fig. 3. The crusaders of St. Louis are ambushed by Saracens during the Siege of Tunis (1270), in a manuscript of *Chroniques de Saint Denis* written in the first half of the 14th century (apud Thomas F. Madden (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 166)



Fig. 4. *The beheading of St. John the Baptist*, attributed to Amico Aspertini (1475-1552). Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (apud J. W. Goodison, *Catalogue of Paintings in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Italian School*, Cambridge University Press, 1967, p. 5)



Fig. 5. Detail from Vittorio Carpacci's *Martyrdom of St. Ursula* (1490-1495, 8th scene, *The massacre of the pilgrims*). Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, (apud Stefania Mason, (Andrew Ellis trad.), *Carpaccio: Major Pictorial Cycles*, Skira, Roma, 2000, p. 87-89)



Fig. 6. *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day*, by François Dubois (1529-1584), Musée cantonal des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne

HEROES OF OUR MEMORIES

*Sever-Petru Boțan, Elena-Cristina Boțan-Potop
Institute of Archaeology—Iași, UAPR Iași*

Abstract

The purpose of our recent exhibitions (Iași 2015 and 2017; Focșani 2017 and Venice 2016), related with the commemoration of Romania's role in the Great War, was to honor the memory of our family's war heroes. Using the bottle-cap mosaic technique Elena Boțan-Potop created a series of portraits that bring out long-lost figures and destinies, people who have made a little contribution to Romania's history in the last century. By extrapolation, their destiny is intertwined with that of the thousands and thousands of soldiers whose name is now forgotten ... they are the *heroes of our memories*.

The purpose of this brief note is to present a series of original works, both as a manner of artistic approach and as subject, realized by the artist Elena-Cristina Boțan Potop between 2014 and 2017. This project that started with the purpose of remembering and honoring the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Romanian soldiers who fought and died on the front-line during the two world wars. It is, we would say, an urge to future generations to never forget their past, their history, or those who have made it, sometimes at the expense of their life. We can notice that in the contemporary society the hero's memory becomes more diffused with the passing of time due, mainly, to the carelessness and indifference of the descendants. The very notion of "hero" is today, somehow, distorted and assimilated more to movie or comic book characters, and, from this point of view, Elena's works try to challenge the general perception.

Made of plastic bottle-caps that remind us of the assemblage technique, with a limited chromatic pattern in which predominates - yellow, red, blue and green - with *pop-art* accents – the portraits of Elena-Cristina Boțan-Potop are recomposed after pictures from the front-line or the ones preserved in the family. They appeal to the

memory of the viewers, to re-evaluate and restore the dignity of those whose actions have influenced the history of our country in the past century.¹

Thus, the works are grouped in two inter-connected exhibitions, but, at the same time, with different topics.

The first one was entitled "*The Hero of our Memories*", consisting of four portraits made in 2015, the year which marked the 70th anniversary of World War Two's ending. For this reason, the artist chose to represent three members of our family that took part in this war, together with a symbolic image of the Romanian soldier in this global conflict.

The exhibition was presented in Iasi, in 2015, both at the Cupola Art-Gallery in the Braunstein Palace and at "Mihai Ursachi" culture house. In the following year, the works were exhibited in the small gallery of the Correr-Contarini Palace in Venice, the building that houses the Romanian Cultural Institute of Venice, being highly appreciated by the public (with approximately 3000 visitors in the 10 days of the exhibition).²

The first character of the exhibition is the artist's grandfather – Sergeant Anastasiu V. Vasile – who, as an infantryman, took part in the bloody battles on the Don Bend. Taken prisoner and interned in a Soviet re-education camp, he returned to Romania in the autumn of 1944, together with the Tudor Vladimirescu Division, fighting on the western front. Presented by some as "liberators," and considered by others as "traitors," the soldiers of this division have been dispossessed, in time, by their identity and personality. The war was for Vasile Anastasiu a time of abasement, and Elena Boțan-Potop accentuates chromatically the look and posture of the character, underlining his sobriety and, at the same time, insinuating the inner conflict through the overlapping layers of green and red that adjoin around the portrait.³

The second character – Staff sergeant Vsevolod V. Botan, my grandfather - took part in the battles on the eastern front (Odessa, Caucasus and Crimea) in a light-cavalry unit – 3rd Roșiori regiment. For his heroism, gallantry and loyalty, he received numerous medals, including the Military Virtue 2nd class, which was awarded for conspicuous gallantry, above the call of duty. The photo depicts him in military uniform, with the helmet bearing the cipher of King Charles II, somewhere on the Odessa front, in 1941, when he was wounded. In the chromatic composition of the work, the artist reproduces

¹ Bilașevschi, Maria: *Eroul amintirilor*, in *Timpul*. Centenar, Iași, March 2018, No. 228, (<http://www.revistatimpul.ro/view-article/3460>) Viewed on 23 October 2018; Bilașevschi, Maria: *Eroul amintirilor*, in *IsArt*, Iași, 2016, issue II-III, p. 61.

² <https://www.icr.ro/venetia/expozitia-eroul-amintirilor-de-elena-cristina-botan-potop-in-mica-galerie-a-institutului-roman-de-cultura-si-cercetare-umanistica-de-la-venetia/it> (viewed on 23 October 2018).

³ Bilașevschi, Maria: *op. cit.*, 2016, p. 62; Bilașevschi, Maria: *op. cit.*, 2018.

both the color of the uniform (with different shades of green) and the game of shadows and lights on the figure of the soldier.

The third character – soldier Cojocaru Nicolae, the brother of the artist's grandmother—had a tragic destiny, disappearing (most likely killed) in the fierce battles around the Don Bend, at the age of 21. There have been relatively few testimonies about his early broken destiny. Among them, can be counted an army photo but also a postcard sent to the front by his father, which never arrived and was probably returned to sender.

The last of Elena Boțan-Potop's portraits resembles the photo of an anonymous soldier at Odessa and is intentionally left unfinished, suggesting the fact that hundreds of thousands of figures have remained suspended in history with their names or destinies unknown.⁴ It is an acknowledged fact that the Romanian army paid a heavy human tribute during World War II, with approximately 93,000 dead and 341,000 missing, few of whom survived the prison camps. Thus, "*The Hero of our Memories*" exhibition commemorates all those who have sacrificed their life, disappearing into the all-embracing fog of collective memory; it also raises an alarm that if history remains unknown and misunderstood, it can be repeated any time.⁵

The second exhibition, entitled "*On the front-line*", was assembled in 2017, commemorating the centennial of the heroic battles from Mărășești, Mărăști and Oituz. The theme shifts, thus, to The Great War, with a series of four portraits related to this event. The exhibition was first unveiled in August 2017 (at the exact moment of commemorating the aforementioned battles) at the Vrancea Museum in Focșani (being opened by the art critic Maria Bilașevschi) and was included among the main events in remembering the famous 1917 battles. The works were later exhibited at the Municipal Museum in Iasi and also at the Victoria Gallery of UAP Iasi. The last two exhibitions were collective, also benefiting from a series of sculpture and textile art works, related to the theme, made by young and talented local artists, such as Alexandru Burlacu, Mădălina Vieriu or Ecaterina Marghidan. In regard of the depicted characters, they are also family members or representative figures who took part in the First World War, on either sides of the barricade.

The first character is Vasile Anastasiu (the great-grandfather of the artist and father of the eponymous hero, mentioned above). He actively participated in the war, afterwards remaining in the gendarmerie forces during the inter-war period. From the family's oral memory he seems to have died sometime in the late 1940's.

The second figure is represented by the priest Petru Cuciureac from Bucovina, my great-grandfather on my mother's side, who was forcibly conscripted in the Austro-Hungarian army, in the 41st Infantry Regiment, which clustered together young men

⁴ Bilașevschi, Maria: *op. cit.*, 2016, p. 62.

⁵ Bilașevschi, Maria: *op. cit.*, 2016, p. 62.

from Bukowina, forced to fight under the banner of the dualist monarchy. Sent on the Italian front in the Alps, he was injured by a bullet in the lungs, with negative consequences to his health, ultimately causing his death in 1943 when he was only 45.

The third character is the Master sergeant Dumitru Bunea, my great-grandfather on my father's side, who took part in the battles of Mărăști and Mărășești, together with the 5th Infantry Division. As mentioned in one of his award-documents, for "*his manhood and devotion on the battlefield between July 24 and August 3*" he was decorated with the Medal for Manhood and Loyalty 3rd class as well as other commemorative medals.

The last character of Elena's exhibition is represented by the aviator Vasile Niculescu, also known as the pilot of our unification, who, on 23 November 1918 flew to the Liberty Plain at Blaj, bringing with him important documents for the great union day of all Romanians. His later destiny was a rather tragic one, dying anonymously in 1981 in Rădăuți, after being persecuted by the Communist Party.

Mixing together, as we have seen, the personal and historical aspects, the artist Elena Cristina Boțan-Potop rekindles the images from the past, bringing to life the figures of true but unsung heroes, whose memory leads from evanescent to perennial.



1a



1b



2a



2b



3

Pl. I – 1. Sergeant **Anastasiu V. Vasile** (1914-1991) – 10th Dorobanți Regiment (a – bottle cap portrait; b – picture); 2. Staff sergeant **Boțan V. Vsevolod** (1917-2003) – 3rd Roșiori Regiment (a – bottle cap portrait; b – picture); 3. Romanian medals and decorations earned by Boțan Vsevolod on the Eastern Front.



1a



1b



2a



2b



3



4

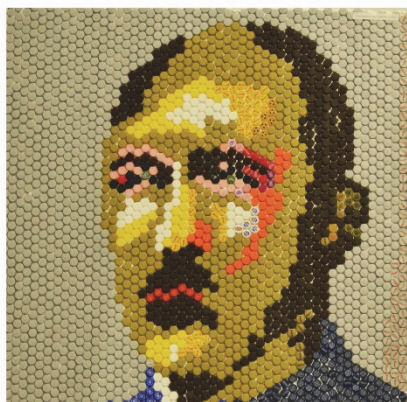
Pl. II – 1. Soldier **Cojocaru M. Nicolae** (1921-1942) – 14th Dorobanți Regiment (a – bottle cap portrait; b – picture); 2. The unknown Romanian soldier at Odessa (a – bottle cap portrait; b – picture); 3. Photo of Cojocaru Nicolae in military uniform (1942); 4. Military post-card sent by soldier Cojocaru's father, Mihai Cojocaru from Panciu.



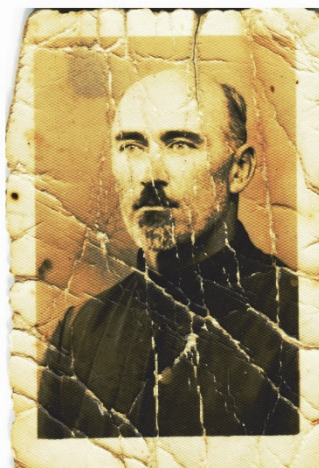
1a



1b

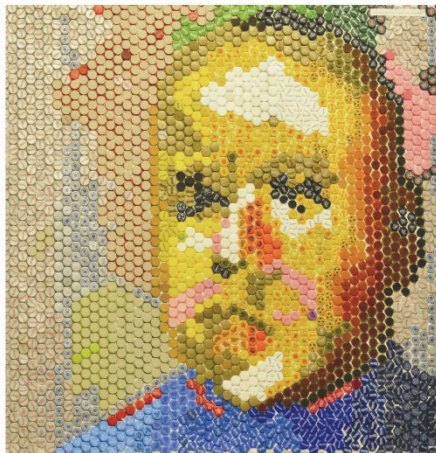


2a



2b

Pl. III—1. **Anastasiu Vasile**, NCO in the Romanian Gendarmerie (a—bottle cap portrait; b—picture); 2. Soldier (then Priest) **Cuciureac P. Petru** (1898-1943) — 41st Austro-Hungarian Infantry Regiment (a—bottle cap portrait; b—picture).



1a



1b

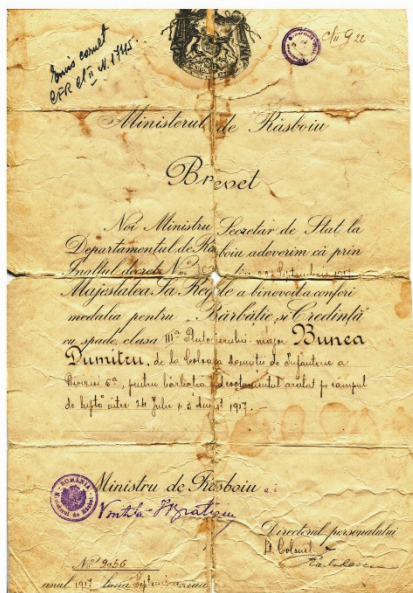


2a



2b

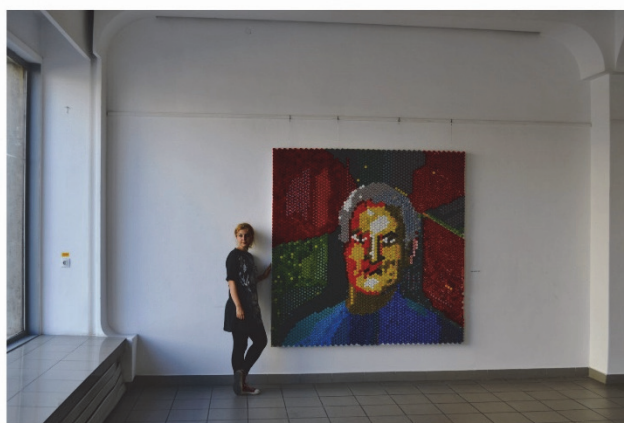
Pl. IV – 1. Master sergeant **Bunea Dumitru** (1883-1961) – 7th Artillery Regiment (a – bottle cap portrait; b – picture); 2. Lieutenant-aviator **Niculescu Vasile** (1891-1981) – Reconnaissance Squadron F4 (a – bottle cap portrait; b – picture).



1



2



3

PI. V—1. Award document from 1917 belonging to Dumitru Bunea for participating in the battles of Mărăști and Mărășești; 2. The medal for Manhood and Loyalty 3rd class belonging to Dumitru Bunea; 3. The artist Elena-Cristina Boțan-Potop with one of her portraits.

FROM SALVADORE QUASIMODO'S *I SOLDATI
PIANGONO DI NOTTE* TO THE SONG LYRICS OF
NACHTS WEINEN DIE SOLDATEN OF THE GERMAN
FOLK-METAL BAND *SALTATIO MORTIS*

Coralia Costaş

"Moldova" National Museum Complex, Iaşi, Romania

Abstract

The paper will explore the ways this sentence – Soldiers cry at night – is used in completely different temporal and spatial coordinates to describe an intangible, psychological reality : soldiers throughout the different countries participating in World War I have a double statute. They have to play the superhuman during the daytime battles, when they fight for ideals which most of the time are not theirs, personally, but at night they allow themselves to return to humanity and as such cathartically cry.

Soldiers are strong, soldiers are tough, soldiers are courageous, in numerous cases they are praised as people owe them the country's sovereignty, independence or even liberty. These are the first words that come to mind when one comes to describing them and their deeds. This hypostasis is frequently identified in numerous art works, irrespective of the precise field, or in battle reports and other historical evidence.

Apart from this generalized practice, there are cases when artists, of various temporal and spatial coordinates, focus on the opposite attitude that at least some of them undoubtedly showed, more precisely their humanness which gets manifested at times when they do not need any more to be the heroes, when they allow themselves to be themselves and to give up their superhuman statute. Such times are generically represented by the nighttime, without referring necessarily to the night hours but to those hours when the battle ceases, when they remember who they are, where they come from, who and where are the members of their families.

Such considerations are sustained by various creations, mainly textual, of which we point out two in particular. These are *I soldati piangono di notte*, by Salvatore Quasimodo, and *Nachts Weinen die Soldaten*, the title of the rock ballad of the German band Saltatio Mortis.

In the case of Salvatore Quasimodo, we should specify, in just few words, that he is considered the most prominent representative of the Italian Hermeticism, although this artistic trend mainly characterized his first artistic phase, while in the second one he becomes more interested in the human feelings, which he describes in a rather explicit manner. Quasimodo indeed created his own Hermeticism in which his former technical education (for becoming an engineer) and his studies of Latin and Greek merge only to allow his own particular expression of thought, as it was the case with the volumes *Acque e terre* (Florence, 1930), *Oboe sommerso* (Florence, 1932) and *Erato e Apollion* (Milano, 1936). His poetic creed claimed a deep spiritual liberty for men, opposing their cultural and social disintegration and presented the poet in search of a non-corrupted, pure form of creation. These qualities brought him the recognition of most important Hermetic poet, gradually differentiating him from the style of Giuseppe Ungaretti (fig. 1) – whose career as a poet started in fact in the trenches of World War I¹ – and of Eugenio Montale (fig. 2) – who volunteered to go to the front where he served as infantry officer². Quasimodo's hermetic phase was followed by a post-hermetic one, influenced by his participation into World War II, as it happened with the volume *Giorno dopo giorno* (1947). It is also to this second phase of his creation that belong the volumes *La vita non è sogno* (1949), *Il falso e vero verde* (1956), *La terra impareggiabile* (1958), where the poet shows himself more concerned with society, more pessimistic, due to man's natural propension to evil, to self-destruction.³

"I soldati piangono di notte" is part of the section "Ancora dell'inferno" of the volume *La terra impareggiabile*.⁴ The lyrics speak for themselves:

*"Né la Croce né l'infanzia bastano,
il martello del Golgota, l'angelica
memoria a schiantare la guerra.
I soldati piangono di notte
prima di morire, sono forti, cadono
ai piedi di parole imparate*

*Neither the Cross nor childhood is enough,
the hammer of Golgotha, the angelica
memory to crash the war.
Soldiers cry at night
before they die, they are strong, they fall
at the feet of words learnt*

¹ Pacella, Luigi, *Il Primo Novecento. Profilo di Letteratura italiana*, "Giuseppe Ungaretti", available online at <http://www.novecentoletterario.it/profili/profili%20di%20ungaretti.htm>.

² Galassi, Jonathan, "Reading Montale", in Eugenio Montale, *Collected Poems 1920-1954. Bilingual Edition Translated and Annotated by Jonathan Galassi*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1997, p. 431.

³ "Salvatore Quasimodo", available at <https://www.studenti.it/salvatore-quasimodo-vita-opere.html>.

⁴ Quasimodo, Salvatore, "I Soldati piangono di notte", in *Pabellón de Palabras, Revista de Poesía, Literatura y Otras Cositas*, March 2018, available online at <http://pabellondepalabras.blogspot.com/2018/03/i-soldati-piangono-di-notte.html>.

*sotto le armi della vita.
Numeri amanti, soldati,
anonimi scrosci di lacrime."*

*under the weapons of life.
Numbers lovers, soldiers,
anonymous sounds of tears.*

War is stronger than everything that is - the Cross, the childhood, the sacrifice of Jesus, the memory of angels. This enumeration seems to contain in it the entire world or at least the poet's perception of it, as war brought about a sudden disturbance of the universe order, a limitation to a unique condition of man, the one of suffering person, of sacrificial existence. The instrumental symbol of pain, the hammer, is atemporal. In this 20th century when wars were not fought any more with primitive weapons, the image that the poet uses is one that he borrows from the Bible, thus suggesting the destructive impact of war over man and his life irrespectively of time and space. Although war dehumanizes people, turning them into anonymous heroes - and this is the external, usually later, perception on their deeds – the soldiers that fight in wars preserve their human side, which they are not allowed to show otherwise than at night, when the sound of guns is muted.

A similar understanding of their struggle – both the one of the battlefield and the inner one – is found several decades later in a completely different artistic context, the one characterizing the activity of the German rock band *Saltatio Mortis* (whose name, in Latin, can be translated as the Death Dance).

Throughout their career, the band repeatedly approached the theme of war and in this context death cannot be otherwise than recurrent. This is the case of "Krieg kennt keine Sieger" (War has no Winners), a song of the 2013 album *Das Schwarze Einmaleins*, whose video clip provides the viewer with a compilation of most atrocious scenes and diabolic leaders of the 20th century wars and of the leaders hereof throughout the world. Already in this song, one can see that the focus is on the topic of what the war does to the humans, on how it affects men's living on this Earth, on how it may suddenly change destinies and undoubtedly even end it.

Looking through the comments to the videoclip posted on the YouTube Channel, one can find interesting contemporary perspectives various users have on war, on its occurrence or on the soldiers that fight it. For instance, there is somebody (Winkinger) according to whom war starts over as soon as its memories fade away, as they disappear in the greyish accumulation of continuously new information the new generations add up to the historicity of time:

Schlimm ist, dass alle 3-4 Generationen nach einem Krieg die Wahrscheinlichkeit für eben diesen stark steigt, weil die Zeitzeugen des letzten Krieges gestorben sind und sich die Menschen nicht mehr vorstellen können, wie Krieg wirklich ist.⁵

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sHF1Z4AhLI8>.

Under the same videoclip there is also another interesting comment, from somebody (JukkaETC) recalling the time spent in the army and the soldier's definition that he learnt from his commander:

Als ich in Militär war, fragte uns Kommandant: was ist Soldat für euch? Eine sagt: Soldat ist mutig! andere sagte: Soldat muss fit sein! Wider andere sagte: ein Held für Land! Kommandant schüttelt den Kopf und sagte: Soldat ist Vater, Sohn oder Onkel, vielleicht auch Schwester oder Tochter, Soldat ist Mensch⁶

The reason why such comments are quoted here is the fact that nowadays it is much easier for anyone to express his/her opinion on a struggle that affects the lives of us all, on various online platforms. The similarity in the titles and messages of poems referring to wartimes that were written at a several decades temporal distance cannot but lead to the assumption that also the perception at the level of the common people might have been similar, in spite of many other things that changed in the meantime. Technology progresses fast, it shrinks time, human feelings last long and find almost identical ways of expression, they expand time, they make it eternal.

The 2015 album of the same band, *Zirkus Zeitgeist*, focuses once again, more in-depth this time, on what war does to us, humans. Anne Catherine Swallow took an interview to the band members and in it, among other topics, war was also approached. It was Lasterbalk der Lästerliche who provided an explanation of the artists' understanding of the war impact, of how it fades away in terms of contemporary perception and therefore of the risk of thinking of war as of a mere trifle – an attitude absolutely wrong since hundreds of thousands of lives were destroyed in the World War and this is something we should not forget:

Ich denke, die aktive Erinnerung an Krieg stirbt aus. Die Letzten, die hier in Deutschland noch Krieg miterlebt haben, waren unsere Großeltern und wenn sie gehen, sterben auch die Geschichten aus, sofern sie überhaupt erzählt werden durften. (...) Wir wollten das Einzelschicksal eines Soldaten unter diesem Kreuz darstellen und zeigen, dass es dabei um einen Menschen geht, der viel zu früh und aus schrecklichen Gründen gewaltsam gestorben ist. Denn genau das bedeutet Krieg.⁷

The soldiers' humanity is clearly uttered in several songs of this band, but probably the most impressive are "Krieg kennt keine Sieger", already mentioned above, and "Nachts weinen die Soldaten", a title which is a clear example of intertextuality, a "sophisticated literary device"⁸, which creates artistic ties between authors whose works were created in completely different contexts, but whose message is, to a certain extent, identical.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ Interview available online at <https://sound-infection.de/saltatio-mortis-interview-es-ist-eine-maer-dass-ein-krieg-unvermeidbar-ist/>.

⁸ <https://literarydevices.net/intertextuality/>.

The striking simplicity of these lyrics as well as their most plausible truthfulness are symbolic and most importantly relevant for the understanding of the metaphorical human disintegration that doubled the real one, while intrinsically characterizing wartime.

It should also be pointed out that not only the title of the song but actually the entire poem gives at first the impression of non-poeticity, but paradoxically the force of this apparent everyday speech creates precisely the poetic effect, that is poeticity as Jakobson defined the concept.

*"Ein Kreuz im Schnee,
Das Grab eines Soldaten.
Ich frage mich, wer du wohl gewesen bist?
Hast du geprahlt mit deinen Heldentaten?
Warst du verliebt und wer hat dich vermisst?*

*Dein weißes Kreuz trägt nicht mal deinen Namen.
'1916' hat wer darauf gemalt.
Dir half kein Gott, Gebet und auch kein Amen.
Für fremde Rechnung hast du mit Blut bezahlt.
Warst du noch jung, womöglich selbst schon Vater?
Hast du's gewusst, dein Kind jemals geseh'n?*

*Nachts weinen die Soldaten.
Namenlose Tränen im Gesicht.
Nachts weinen die Soldaten.
Nur noch Nummern ohne ein Gewicht."⁹*

*A cross in the snow,
The grave of a soldier.
I wonder who you may have been.
Did you boast with your heroic deeds?
Were you in love and who missed you?*

*Your white cross does not even bear your name.
Someone wrote '1916' on it.
No god helped you, neither prayer nor Amen.
For a stranger's bill you paid with blood.
Were you still young, perhaps already a father?
Did you know that, have you ever seen your child?*

*At night the soldiers cry.
Nameless, with tears on their faces.
At night the soldiers cry.
Only numbers, without any weight.*

As we can see, the text implies a dialogue over time, between a living man of today and a deceased soldier of yesterday, determined by the encounter of the latter's cross by the former, who wishes the world had learnt of the mistakes of the past.

And a dialogue over time is the entire poem as it echoes Salvatore Quasimodo's creation "I Soldati piangono di notte", that belongs to the *La Terra imparreggiabile* volume, published in 1958. Quasimodo, acknowledged as hermetic poet, recipient of the Nobel prize for literature in 1959, tried to cope with the disintegration of modern culture by recreating, poetically, basic human features, recreating man through his poems, through his art. Comparing the two poems, although one rather short, the other pretty long, one on paper only, the other transmitted mainly via music, one can notice that the two texts create a bridge between them, they get personalized, they separate from their

⁹ Saltatio Mortis, "Nachts weinen die Soldaten", available online at <https://www.songtexte.com/songtext/saltatio-mortis/nachts-weinen-die-soldaten-6b7a7ada.html>.

creators and live their own lives, their destinies, communicating with each other at half a century distance.

What this music piece shows is the way a certain part of contemporary society perceives what happened back then, in World War I, in those very difficult times for the Romanian soldiers and probably for all those who had a connection of whatever kind with the conflagration.

In terms of war perception, this time by those directly involved in the battles and by those who remained home – family, friends, lovers etc., one can focus on diaries, some of which were written in verses. In the Romanian space, such cases are those kept by Ardelean Gheorghe and Paul Alexa, referred to by Livia Ardelean in her paper published in *Memoria ethnologica*, issues 52-53, July-December 2014 (year XIV). Paul Alexa, for instance was lamenting about his going to war in the following terms:

*bate-l, Doamne, cu manie,
p-âl ce-o pus pana-n hartie
și m-au scris la cătunie,
c-au scris cu cerneală neagră,
cand mi-o fost lumea mai dragă.¹⁰*

*beat him, Lord, with anger,
he who the pen on paper put
and registered me in the army,
as he wrote in black ink,
when the world was dearest to me.*

It was also Paul Alexa who remembers how fast the troops were diminished:

*din patru sute cincizeci,
n-am rămas numai trizăci,
sau trizăci am fost laolaltă,
care ne-au prins deodată.¹¹*

*Out of four hundred fifty,
Only thirty were left
Or thirty we were together
Who were suddenly caught.*

But what actually very clearly connects Paul Alexa's feelings to those referred to in the lyrics sung by the German band is the way in which he renders what he feels about Siberia, where he spent three years of his life in a war camp. In verses that are meant to cast an anathema, a bane over that land, the author admits that he cries due to the bad treatments received there:

*Arză focul și para
traiful din Siberia
focul ardă acest loc,
mult plang cu lacrimi de foc,
dacă n-am avut noroc.
ardă focu astă țară,
mult plang de pară,
dacă n-am avut tihneală.¹²*

*Fire and flame should burn down
The living in Siberia
Fire should burn down this place,
I cry a lot with tears of fire,
Since I had no luck
Flame should burn down this country,
I cry due to the flame
Since I had no rest.*

¹⁰ Paul Alexa, apud Livia Ardelean, "Viața de război. Soldați ardeleni și maramureșeni în Primul Război Mondial", in *Memoria ethnologica*, issues 52-53, July-December 2014 (year XIV), p. 150.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 153.

¹² *Ib.*, p. 154.

In his turn, Ardelean Gheorghe also wrote about the bad fate of soldiers who had to leave their homes and beloved ones and go fight in foreign lands.

*Oh, vai, de zilele mele
Cum m-o scos din țară afară.
Oh, lume, lume amară,
Iți lași clopu cel cu pană
Și tată dulce și mamă,
Iți lași frații și surori
Și te duci ca nește flori,
Meri să te topești pă lume
Să nu-ți mai știe de nume.¹³*

*Oh, my poor days,
How I was kicked out of the country.
Oh, world, bitter world
You leave your hat, the one with feather
And also your dear father and mother
You leave your brothers and your sisters
And you disappear as the flowers
You go melt out in this world
So that your name won't be known any more.*

Another interesting testimony is the one of Grigore Romalo, whose diary is the subject of a different paper, published by Ștefania Dinu. For him, his activity in the battle field together with his fellows, their efforts for defending the national interests are seen as something mechanical, as if humanity left their bodies:

Atacăm la ora 4 dimineața (...) Nu mai gândim, acționăm mecanic printr-o voință pe care am acumulat-o înainte: nimic nu mai contează, trebuie să mergem înainte orice o fi și orice ai simți¹⁴

We attack at 4 o'clock in the morning (...) We do not think anymore, we act mechanically, through a wish we accumulated in advance: nothing matters anymore, we must move forward, no matter what and irrespectively of what one might feel.

Margareta Niculescu's diary is also worth mentioning as there she noted the deeds and words of one of the wounded, Radu Mihalache, uttered in the hospital where she activated and whom she asked if he ever cried. His answer was very sincere, and rendered with simple words the emotional charge of the moment:

Dumneata ai plâns vreodată, Radule? Nu, domnișoară, n-am plâns... numai odată, când s-a sunat mobilizarea, eram acasă și toți plângeau în jurul meu; eu m-am ținut, m-am ținut, dar când am văzut pe mama că așa, se repede deodată la mine, atunci mi-au dat și mie lacrimile și n-am mai putut să-mi țin plânsul¹⁵

Have you ever cried out, Radu? No, Miss, I haven't.... only once, when people got mobilized to the army, I was at home and they all cried around me ; I tried as much as I could, but once I saw that mum all of sudden comes quickly to me, then I also started crying.

Another topic, that is tackled in the German band song, is the one of the love for the country. Where does it come from ? What motivates it ? The same questions occur in

¹³ Ardelean Gheorghe, apud Livia Ardelean, *loc. cit.*, p. 157.

¹⁴ Grigore Romalo, apud Ștefania Dinu, "Marele război – mărturii și scrisori peste timpe", in *Revista Bibliotecii Academiei Române*, year 2, issue no. 2017, p. 154.

¹⁵ Radu Mihalache, apud Ștefania Dinu, *loc. cit.*, p. 155.

a text written by poet George Topârceanu, who became a prisoner after the defeat of the Romanian Army at Turtucaia.

Dar, mă gândeam: de unde să aibă ei, în sufletul lor întunecat și amărât, lumina iubirii de țară, care singură ar mai putea da un înțeles suferințelor războiului și dezlănțui avântul? Pentru care scop, priceput și primit de ei cu dragă inimă, și de la cine ar fi putut ei să învețe uitarea de sine? Dar au încercat măcar acei cari au pus la cale acest război în incinta orașelor să se coboare până la ei, să-i lămurească și să-i întrebe?... Iar acum, întunecați și amărâți, trebuia să-și dea viața pentru scumpa lor patrie. Erau mai ales țărani de prin județele de câmp ale Munteniei – cei mai oproșiți dintre toți. Mă uitam la ei cu strângere de inimă. Nu se potriveau deloc cu imaginea „ostașului român”, de acum și de pe vremuri, așa cum mi-o zugrăvise în suflet strălucitoare defilări ale regimentelor gătite de paradă și, mai cu seamă, galeriile tragice ale istoriei noastre naționale, atât de aspră și de eroică¹⁶

And I wondered: where could they get from, in their dark poor soul, the love for the country, which is the alone one which could still give a meaning to the war suffering and unchain enthusiasm? For which purpose, received and understood by them fully heartedly and from whom could they learn forgetfulness about themselves? But have at least tried those who decided this war inside cities to go down to them, to explain to them and question them?... And now, darkened and sad, they had to give their lives for their beloved country. They were mainly peasants from the field counties of Wallachia – the poorest of them all. I was looking at them with a certain heartache. They did not fit at all the image of the "Romanian soldier", the one of now and the one of older times, as depicted to my soul by the bright parades of the regiments wearing parade clothes and especially the tragic galleries of our national history, so rough and so heroic.

Texts of this type have come to light more frequently during the last years, when testimonies of the Great War have been more and more often the subject of studies of various researchers, thus allowing us to have a glimpse of the private life of the soldiers, who were assigned the country's destinies into their hands.

Such creations, specific to the Romanian territory, confirm once more the truthfulness of the message stated by the German rock band Saltatio Mortis, and by the Italian poet Salvatore Quasimodo, that Soldiers cry at night.

¹⁶ George Topârceanu, apud Ștefania Dinu, *loc.cit.*, p. 164.



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