

**!K** Local Contexts | International Networks  
Avant-Garde Journals in East-Central Europe

**Local Contexts / International Networks  
Avant-Garde Journals in East-Central Europe**

**Edited by Gábor Dobó and Merse Pál Szeredi**



**Petőfi Literary Museum – Kassák Museum  
Kassák Foundation  
Budapest, 2018**

## THE AVANT-GARDE AND ITS JOURNALS 2

Proceedings of the International Conference “Local Contexts / International Networks – Avant-Garde Magazines in Central Europe (1910–1935)” held in the Kassák Museum, 17–19 September 2015

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# Contents

- 5 Gábor Dobó – Merse Pál Szeredi  
Introduction
  
- 7 Eszter Balázs  
Artist and/or Public Intellectual?  
Hungarian Avant-Garde Polemics on ‘New Art’ and the Writer’s Role  
and Responsibilities during the First World War
  
- 25 Jindřich Toman  
Permanent Synthesis: László Moholy Nagy’s Idea of a Synthetic  
Journal
- 45 Appendix. László Moholy-Nagy: Guidelines for a Synthetic Journal
  
- 50 Gábor Dobó  
The Self-Description of Lajos Kassák’s Avant-Garde Magazine  
Dokumentum (1926–1927)
  
- 62 Piotr Rypson  
Tadeusz Peiper’s Strategy for Zwrotnica
  
- 88 Michalina Kmieciak  
Zwrotnica shows the Way? Journals of the Kraków Avant-Garde  
in the 1930s
  
- 116 Przemysław Strożek  
The Chapliniade, Proletarian Art and the Dissemination of Visual  
Elements in Avant-Garde Magazines of the 1920s
  
- 134 Klára Prešnajderová  
Slovenská Grafia: The Magazine that brought New Typography  
to Slovakia
  
- 146 Sonia de Puineuf  
‘Die Syntetische Zeitschrift’ – Study Cases Nová Bratislava and  
Nový Svet

- 156 Michał Wenderski  
Between Poland and the Low Countries – Mutual Relations and Cultural Exchange between Polish, Dutch and Belgian Avant-Garde Magazines and Formations
- 178 Dušan Barok  
Body of Thought – Artists' Texts and Their Contribution to Theory
- 183 György C. Kálmán – András Kappanyos  
Avant-Garde Studies in the Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Past, Present and Future
- 188 Irina Denischenko  
Whither Comparative Avant-Garde Studies?  
Conference Roundtable and Concluding Remarks

Gábor Dobó – Merse Pál Szeredi

## Introduction

The present volume consists of papers based on the presentations held at the conference of the Kassák Museum entitled *Local Contexts / International Networks – Avant-Garde Magazines in Central-Europe (1910-1935)* in September 2015. The Kassák Museum is the only Hungarian museum devoted entirely to the avant-garde and its documents. The Museum launched a programme centred around the presentation of archives and private collections, contemporary reflections on the avant-garde, and a reconsideration of Kassák's oeuvre. The institution preserves the highly significant avant-garde archive and collection of Lajos Kassák which is the starting point for various research projects of the museum, including periodical research.

Coordinated with the avant-garde periodical research projects and the *Signal to the World – War ∩ Avant-Garde ∩ Kassák* exhibition (about Kassák's first avant-garde journal), with the support of the International Visegrad Fund and CEFRES, the Kassák Museum organized an international conference between 17 and 19 September 2015. Under the title *Local Contexts / International Networks*, the conference had as its subject the 'Central European avant-garde journal,' arguably the most important medium of communication for progressive literature and visual arts in the region during World War I and the interwar period. The conference brought together researchers of different disciplines and approaches to analyse the multifaceted nature of the avant-garde journal. It aimed to draw attention to the tensions between national/local and international/cosmopolitan and offer possible answers to the question: how did the different cultural and historical characteristics affect the local avant-gardes of Central Europe?

It emerged at the conference that recent studies of Western periodicals have useful lessons for work on the avant-garde journals of East-Central Europe. A complex approach to Slovak, Czech, Polish and Hungarian avant-garde journals has discovered what made these journals distinctive. The historical avant-garde periodicals of the 'Visegrad countries' imagined and defined themselves as parts of an international network, publishing artworks from different countries, using various languages, and employing a layout that involved a supposedly 'universal' visual code. However, as was pointed out in several conference presentations, many of these magazines went beyond their 'universal' messages and also dealt

with local problems such as the potential of town planning, nationalism (or opposition to it), folklore, and resistance to the hegemonic discourses of cultural life in the country.

The conference was based on cooperation among research institutes in all four Visegrad countries. In a break from the usual form of academic projects on this subject, typically established via national or bilateral partnerships or directly hosted by Western institutions, the *Local Contexts / International Networks* conference was aimed at promoting the participation of young researchers from the Visegrad countries, supplemented by established experts in the field. Our cooperating partners were the Charles University, the Jagiellonian University, Adam Mickiewicz University, the University of Warsaw, Masaryk University, the Institutes of Art History of the Academies of Sciences of the Czech Republic and Poland, the National Museum in Warsaw, the newly established Slovak Design Museum, Monoskop.org, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and Eötvös Loránd University.

The main outcome of the conference was a new regional discourse in avant-garde periodical research, a field that is interdisciplinary by its nature. The speakers had backgrounds in applied and theoretical literary and art historical studies, anthropology as well as intellectual history. They presented their research in English at the conference sessions and plenaries, which were all followed by extensive conversations and debates. At the roundtable discussion, representatives of all participating institutions provided each other with a broad overview of their current avant-garde projects. The conference audience included members of the Hungarian academic community, researchers from as far afield as Estonia and the United Kingdom, and university students from diverse fields of the humanities. As we originally envisaged, the conference provided an excellent starting point for regional cooperation.

Eszter Balázs | *Kodolányi János University of Applied Arts – Kassák Museum, Budapest*

## Artist and/or Public Intellectual?

# Hungarian Avant-Garde Polemics on ‘New Art’ and the Artist’s Role and Responsibilities During the First World War and the Subsequent Revolutionary Regimes (1915-1919)

Did the avant-garde artists of the early twentieth century consider themselves intellectuals? This question has emerged in debates on artistic ideas and ideologies in the avant-garde movement. After the Dreyfus Affair, writers, scientists and artists in France demanded to have their voice heard in public affairs purely on the grounds of their intellectual capacities.<sup>1</sup> This model of the modern intellectual emerged in an irregular way at points all over Europe, including the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> The French origin of the phenomenon showed up in the adoption of the word *intellectual* throughout the continent.<sup>3</sup>

## Dissidents During WWI

The early years of the First World War saw a diminution in Hungarian intellectuals’ resistance to political and economic forces. As in other European countries, Hungarian modernism became the target of a

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<sup>1</sup> The essay was prepared as part of the research project of the Petőfi Literary Museum – Kassák Museum NKFI-K 120779. See Christophe Charle, *Naissance des ‘intellectuels’, 1880-1900*, Seuil, Paris, 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Christophe Charle, *Les intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle. Essai d’histoire comparée*, Seuil, Paris, 1996.

<sup>3</sup> For the Hungarian case see: Eszter Balázs, *‘En tête des intellectuels’: Les écrivains hongrois et la question de la liberté et de l’autonomie littéraires (1908–1914)*, Thèse de doctorat, EHESS, Paris, 2008. See also as a book published in Hungarian: *‘Az intellektualitás vezérei’, Viták az irodalmi autonómiáról a Nyugatban és a Nyugatról* [At the Head of the Intellectuals. Debates on Literary Autonomy in *Nyugat*], Napvilág, Budapest, 2009.



national backlash, and intellectual and cultural life was dominated by positivism.<sup>4</sup> The Hungarian press and periodicals overtly supporting the Great War trumpeted their moral victory over the ‘intellectuals.’ In periodicals that had been defending literary autonomy and modernism, writers abstained from portraying themselves as autonomous intellectuals and, at least at the beginning of the conflict, even joined in the war effort.<sup>5</sup> These modernist journals later adopted an anti-war attitude, if somewhat feebly.

The First World War nonetheless produced a new feature in the history of intellectuals: the dissident opposing the policy of the authoritarian pro-war state.<sup>6</sup> Many avant-garde artists were among these dissidents. A number of radicalized artists, seeing the war chiefly as a conflict between the ruling classes and the masses, expressed their opposition to the war ‘through calculated provocations, such as publishing works by artists who were citizens of enemy countries.’<sup>7</sup> Franz Pfemfert, editor of *Die Aktion* [The Action], the leading Expressionist organ in Berlin, was such a figure.<sup>8</sup> *Die Aktion* combined aesthetic radicalism with political radicalism and raised Expressionism to ‘a powerful vehicle of anti-war commitment, international solidarity.’ Its editorial staff consciously advocated internationalism.<sup>9</sup> As art historian Éva Forgács says, ‘The term *avant-garde* was once again infused with its original military and political meaning.’<sup>10</sup>

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4 Eszter Balázs, ‘War Stares At Us Like an Ominous Sphynx.’ Hungarian Intellectuals, Literature and the Image of the Other (1914–1915), in Lawrence Rosenthal and Vesna Rodic (eds.), *The New Nationalism and the First World War*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2015, 97.

5 Ibid, 108-111.

6 Christophe Prochasson, Intellectuals and Writers, in John Horne (ed.), *A Companion to World War I*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, 327.

7 Éva Forgács, The Activation of the Avant-Garde, in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, Los Angeles Museum of Art and The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2002, 143.

8 Timothy O. Benson, *Die Aktion* in Berlin, in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds*, 145.

9 Éva Forgács, *The Activation of the Avant-Garde*, 143.

10 Ibid.

The emerging avant-garde movement in Hungary was also the most important platform for dissidents there, through the journals founded by the writer Lajos Kassák.<sup>11</sup> Like the German activist groups, it also adopted Expressionism as an idiom to convey revolt and despair. According to Éva Forgács, Expressionism was not seen as a mere aesthetic category in Central Europe (and neither were art works ‘purely’ Expressionist); activists had an articulate social consciousness and political goals.<sup>12</sup> They robustly rejected the war and urged a radical transformation of society. Like German expressionists and unlike Italian Futurists (who believed in violence as an ethical and regenerative force in itself and were pro-war), Kassák’s movement, through journals inspired by *Die Aktion*,<sup>13</sup> dared to adopt a vigorous anti-war stance, calling for an immediate end to hostilities. This activity led to *A Tett (The Action)* being closed down in October 1916, only a year after its launch.

### Hungarian Avant-Garde’s Self-definitions: ‘New Art’ and ‘New Artist’

My analysis will focus on definitions of ‘new art’ and ‘new artist’ in the Hungarian avant-garde – concepts that constantly evolved throughout the war. I will also show how the notion of the ‘intellectual’ once again became an accepted self-representation among certain avant-garde figures (but with new meaning) after the first years of the conflict when ‘autonomous liberal intellectual’ had become term of abuse among establishment writers.

Intensive reflections on literature and art were not confined to the avant-garde in Hungary. In the opening weeks of the war, the relationship between war and literature and between war and culture became established as burning issues in literary and intellectual periodicals and even the daily press. For many writers, artists and scholars, the Great War pro-

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<sup>11</sup> Eszter Balázs, *Avant-Garde and Antimilitarism: A Tett*, in Gábor Dobó and Merse Pál Szeredi (eds.), *Signal to the World. War ∩ Avant-Garde ∩ Kassák* (The Avant-Garde and its Magazines, 1), Kassák Museum, Budapest, 2016, 12-51.

<sup>12</sup> Éva Forgács, *The Activation of the Avant-Garde*, 143-144.

<sup>13</sup> See more about influences: Oliver Botar, Lajos Kassák, Hungarian ‘Activism,’ and Political Power, *Canadian American Slavic Studies*, 2002, no. 4, 393-394.

# MA

## IRODALMI ÉS KÉPZŐMŰVÉSZETI FOLYÓIRAT

Szerkesztőség és kiadóhivatal:  
Bpest, V. Visegrádi-u. 15.

Szerkesztik:  
KASSÁK LAJOS és UITZ BÉLA

Előfizetési ár Magyarországon:  
Egy évre 10 K, félévre 5 K.

**TARTALOM:** U. Boccioni: Szobor. / Barta Sándor: Az Univerzum dicsérete (vers.) / Székely László: Halottíratás a csapszék előtt, A hegy lábához értem, A szegénység-tudói (versek.) / Szélpál Árpád: Színház 1918 (vers.) / Kadár Erzsébet: Mi volt ez? (vers.) / August Stramm verseiből. / Kürti Pál: A javasasszony (novella.) / Tihanyi Lajos: Arcképtanulmány (olajfestmény.) / Kassák Lajos: Grimasz mindenre, Szomorúság a városban (versek.) / Mácza János: A színműről Szomoroy. / Boross F. László: Barbusse és Szomoroy háborus könyveiről.

III



U. BOCCIONI: Szobor

Ara: 1 korona.

5

Figure 1. Ma, 1918, no. 5. Front cover designed by Lajos Kassák

vided a new field of experience. Intellectual, literary and artistic activity had been imbued with *war culture* – a system of representations based on the acceptance of the war and on the hate of the enemy<sup>14</sup>.

For Hungarian avant-garde magazines, however, the principal issue of the war was not its influence on intellectual and cultural life. The chaos of the war seemed to open up the possibility of a social transformation that would transform artistic creation. The concepts ‘new art’ and ‘new artist’ were formulated in *A Tett* in opposition to traditional modernism and particularly to aestheticism. It also promoted ‘synthetic’ or ‘vitalist’ literature, which it described as the ‘newest’, to make a distinction from the ‘new literature’ advocated in the circles of literary modernism and its journal *Nyugat* [West], which had been launched in 1908.<sup>15</sup> The second avant-garde journal *Ma* (Today), launched after the ban of *A Tett* in autumn 1916, artistic innovation was also described in terms of internal polemics. I would argue that the avant-garde magazines contributed significantly to the thinking about the roles and functions of the ‘artist’ and of the ‘intellectual’ during WWI.

Let us have a closer look at Kassák’s first journal, *A Tett*. According to the writer Andor Halasi (November 1915), artists were supposed to be ‘men and children’ who pass on emotions and thoughts to people.<sup>16</sup> He also defined art as opposed to ‘impressionism’, a pre-war synonym of the aestheticist model. As a true Expressionist, he wanted to grasp ‘everything while it was in motion.’<sup>17</sup> This belief in the ‘*élan vital*’, a concept of energy, movement and intuition rooted in the anti-rationalist philosophy of Henri Bergson, must not be confused with the initial pro-war discourse that subordinated words to actions in order to support the war effort.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The expression *war culture* was defined by historians Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914–1918. Understanding the Great War*, Profile, London, 2002, 102–103.

<sup>15</sup> Lajos Kassák, Szintétikus irodalom [Synthetic Literature], *Ma*, 1, 1916, no. 2, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Andor Halasi, Új irodalmi lehetőségek [New Literary Possibilities], *A Tett*, 1, 1915, no. 2, 22.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>18</sup> In December, Kassák re-published his pre-war poem *Mesteremberek* [Craftsmen], some lines of which could be interpreted as conveying an anti-war commitment. It also expressed a vigorous rejection of the aestheticist model and urban vaudeville: ‘let’s throw out the dream decorations, the moonlight and the Orpheum!’ However, urban popular culture was later warmly welcomed in *Ma* as an inspirational source for new art. *A Tett*, 1, 1915, no. 2, 42.

Soon, many of those who wrote for *A Tett* attempted to propose techniques for creating new art in terms of search and/or research, a theoretical framework that appeared from time to time at avant-garde movements.<sup>19</sup> According to the writer Zoltán Haraszti (in December 1915), avant-garde art was a transcendental quest with neither rules nor limits, close to anarchism.<sup>20</sup> (Anarchist thought had a strong influence on Berlin intellectuals<sup>21</sup> and it can be seen, at least partly, as a German influence on Kassák's journals.) Another critics rather emphasized scientific approach of avant-garde arts: Andor Halasi, pointed out the importance of natural selection in art<sup>22</sup> and the sociologist Imre Vajda in early 1916 denied the accusations that *A Tett* was 'researching chaos' and he declared that in the spirit of positivism, the magazine's 'poets, critics and academic writers are concerned not with the unknowability and mystery of the world, but with its regularities.'<sup>23</sup> In his *Programm* of March 1916, Kassák maintained that the avant-garde was open to both spirituality and the sciences in seeking self-expression.<sup>24</sup>

In the same program, Kassák also insisted that the new literature should not 'serve ethnic or national ends' or turn inward on itself in a 'decadent' way. Rather, it must take 'the entirety of the cosmos' as its subject.<sup>25</sup> He overtly emphasized the anti-authoritarian stance of his journal by outlining the progressive role of art, in conjunction with progressive political and economic movements, which would make possible 'a leading role for the artists in the rule of the state machine.'<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Eszter Balázs, *Quest or Investigation, Quest and Investigation: Search for an Artistic Program in the Hungarian Avant-Garde Movement during WWI*, presentation at the conference of EAM entitled 'Quest and Investigation', Université Rennes 2, 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Zoltán Haraszti, *A betüktől az Istenig [From the Alphabet to God]*, *A Tett*, 1, 1915, no. 3, 39.

<sup>21</sup> Timothy O. Benson, *Die Aktion in Berlin*, 45.

<sup>22</sup> Andor Halasi, *Egyszerű szívek* by Lajos Barta [*Simple hearts* by Lajos Barta], *A Tett*, 1, 1 Dec. 1915, no. 3, 52.

<sup>23</sup> Imre Vajda, *Világnézet [Worldview]*, *A Tett*, 1, 5 Jan. 1916, no. 5, 69–70.

<sup>24</sup> Lajos Kassák, *Programm [Program]*, *A Tett*, 2, 1916, no. 10, 154. (Translated by John Bártki in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds*, 160-161).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, 153-153.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.

This tendency to politicize art was related to the tendency to aestheticize politics and was typical of the avant-garde movement in general.<sup>27</sup>

It was in the columns of *A Tett* that Kassák first dissociated the movement from Futurism, placing it alongside ‘conventionalism’ and Christianity (understood as Christianity used by politics in war).<sup>28</sup> This was a political rather than an aesthetic move, since Futurists were pro-war; *A Tett* undoubtedly shared the Futurists’ break with tradition and vision of the past.<sup>29</sup> In particular, the Hungarian avant-garde completely shunned the kind of nationalism espoused by the Futurists, leading it into a clash of values with the establishment and bourgeois art.

In the International Issue of *A Tett* in August 1916, Kassák sent ‘red greetings’ on behalf of some ‘innocent and cultured fellows from Budapest’ (the editorial staff).<sup>30</sup> First, he stated the journal’s anti-war stance by listing the figures he took as models of anti-war commitment. These were two well-known pacifist writers of Entente countries, Romain Rolland and Hall Caine, and an anti-war German politician, Karl Liebknecht. Moreover, publishing works by artists and writers of ‘enemy nations’ and of their neutral sympathizers (Russian, Serbian, Belgian, French and English) was in itself an insult to the warring state. Kassák made a plea for ‘art of absolute value’, too. The magazine’s artistic ideals did not

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<sup>27</sup> The programme of politicization of art and aestheticization of politics was born in Hungary in the years before the war. Small left-wing ‘vitalist’ journals such as *Aurora* [Dawn], *Május* [May] and *Új Magyar Szemle* [New Hungarian Review] proclaimed a ‘revolutionary’ art that was distinct from Marxist aestheticism and the art of propaganda. Art for art’s sake was another object of criticism. These small journals, however, were in many ways still tied to *Nyugat*, the great journal of Hungarian literary modernism. The programme of ‘new art’ first came into focus in the avant-garde journals *A Tett* and *Ma*.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 154.

<sup>29</sup> In challenging pre-war Hungarian literary and aesthetic modernism, Hungarian Avant-garde ‘was imbued with a variant of the Futurist insistence on an epochal break with the past’. Éva Forgács, *The Activation of the Avant-Garde*, 144. See for example: Aladár Komját, *Hungaricus: A szenvedő ember* [Hungaricus: The Suffering Man], *A Tett*, 1, 1916, no. 13, 224.

<sup>30</sup> Lajos Kassák, *Jelzés a világra* [Signal to the World], *A Tett* (International issue), 2, 1916, no. 16, 277.

# MA

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**KASSÁK LAJOS és UITZ BÉLA**

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**TARTALOM:** Bortnyik Sándor: Metszet. / Kassák Lajos: Tovább a magunk után. / Iwan Goll, Ludwig Rubiner, Karl Otten: Versek (német.) / G. W. Calcezin: A bolsevizmusról a bolsevizmusért (orosz) / Henri Martin Barzun, Theo Varlet, G. J. Jouve: Versek (francia). / Gergely Sándor: Szobor. / Uitz Béla: Galimbertiek † / G. Dénes Valéria, Galimberti Sándor: Festmények. / Horace Traubel kommunista énekeiből (amerikai). / Libero Rittomare, Palolo Buzzì: Versek (olasz). G. K. Chesterton írásaiból, (angol) / Hevesy Iván: Szabó Dezso könyve.

III



12

„Az állam a munka rabszolgaságán nyugszik.  
Ha a munka szabad lesz az állam elveszett.”

Tartalmazza a VI. kiállítás katalógusát is.

INTERNACIONÁLIS SZÁM ÁRA: 2 KORONA.

Figure 1. Ma, 1918, no. 5. Front cover designed by Lajos Kassák

seem to trouble the Hungarian authorities, but its antiwar stance and international dimension was an intolerable provocation, and led to its closure.

In his next journal *Ma* (Today), launched in November 1916, Kassák responded to the bellicose Hungarian mainstream press by turning their accusations upside down and defining the new artist as a genius and a crazy person (the antithesis of the ‘sober person’ promoted by conservative critics).<sup>31</sup> New art had to express the chaos of modernity like a good poster in the streets, using images as weapons: this is a good example of how avant-garde embraced the imagery of mass culture.<sup>32</sup> Kassák identified primitive and ‘negro’ art as precursors of this art.<sup>33</sup>

In ‘Synthetic literature’, an extended essay for the November 1916 issue, he used anti-feminist rhetoric as a way of denigrating the aestheticist model of art. ‘New art’ was a ‘joyful action’ in contrast to the ‘feminine game’ of ‘humiliation’ based on ‘nuances and points’.<sup>34</sup> Anti-feminist arguments had been widespread in the Hungarian discourse since the turn of the century, used in the rhetoric of denigration. By contrasting ‘old’ and ‘new’ arts in these terms, Kassák seemed to share the anti-feminism of the pro-war discourse, which contrasted the two fronts in these terms and glorified a militant masculinity. To Kassák’s mind, artists were virile and masculine, ‘aggressive men who arrange socially’ and were capable of shaking up the public.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, art was a provocation and an attack on conformism. Poems themselves were defined as ‘heavy, raw blocks’, ‘plastic, musical and theoretical instruments’.<sup>36</sup> Art was ‘raw material subordinated to the genius of the artist’<sup>37</sup>, but was only ‘seemingly brute’.

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<sup>31</sup> Lajos Kassák, A plakát és az új festészet [The Poster and the New Painting], *Ma*, 1, 1916, no. 1, 4. He detailed stigmatizations (namely: ‘fools’, ‘pederasts’ and ‘bastards’) in Lajos Kassák, *Szintétikus irodalom*, 19.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 3. See on this: Timothy O. Benson, Exchange and Transformation: The Internationalization of the Avant-Garde(s) in Central Europe, in Timothy O. Benson (ed.), *Central-European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910-1930*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2002, 60.

<sup>33</sup> Lajos Kassák, A plakát és az új festészet, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Lajos Kassák, *Szintétikus irodalom*, 20.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>37</sup> Lajos Kassák, A plakát és az új festészet, 2.



'In reality, art is a provocation hidden in a drilled and trimmed material.'<sup>38</sup> In masculinizing the image of the avant-garde artist and art, Kassák was taking an approach similar to that of youthful movements such as Expressionism and Futurism. These movements wanted to challenge the ruling elites in the quest for a 'new man' by offering alternatives to hegemonic masculinity. Futurists exalted a militant masculinity which glorified war<sup>39</sup>, while Kassák's anti-war masculinity was, on the contrary, undisciplined and represented the chaos of the soul and individual freedom. This was what made it – and it alone – capable of social transformation.

### Inner Polemics of the Avant-Garde About Art in 1917

In 1917, the question of artistic innovation provoked the first real internal polemic dispute in *Ma*, leading up to a schism in the editorial staff in October of the same year. First, a small group of the youngest contributors began to demand independence from Kassák's authority on the pages of the journal by claiming a politization of arts. In June 1917 – not independently from the major changes in Russian politics – the 19-year-old József Révai spoke up for the 'warrior-like, combatant, military and moreover political' writer who would be 'a serious and sober intellectual waiting for the socialization of literature.'<sup>40</sup> He used the French neologism 'intellectual', which he understood as a warrior-like figure. This may be identified as an avatar of the 'party intellectual', a type which became widespread in the post-war period.

Unlike Kassák and the majority, Révai preferred to use the term 'literature' instead of 'art', implying the greater propaganda potential of literature. Literature should be 'tendentious' and monumental, and accordingly, it should have its source in Russian and English literature (rather than French or German).<sup>41</sup> A writer also had to be an 'intellectual' (*intellektüel*), namely a person with interest in public life and politics. Révai carried on the gendered stereotypes: rather than feminine, passive and decadent, this literature should be 'great, raw, moreover dirty

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<sup>38</sup> Lajos Kassák, *Szintétikus irodalom*, 21.

<sup>39</sup> George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford, 55.

<sup>40</sup> József Révai, *Ibsen és a monumentális irodalom [Ibsen and Monumental Literature]*, *Ma*, 2, 1917, no. 6, 129.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

strength<sup>42</sup> which could affront conservatism, described as a bold, old man with moustache<sup>43</sup> – a stereotypical portrait of Hungarian virility of the nineteenth century. While sharing Kassák's anti-feminism, Révai outlined the subject of the artistic product as exclusively social, comparing it to 'mass flats with smell of cooking'.<sup>44</sup> This image was rooted in literature published by authors of proletarian origins in the Hungarian social democratic press before the war (as well as in Gorkij's novels that were widely read in Hungary) and resurfaced here as Révai's proof of artistic innovation.

A month later, in July 1917, again discussing the issue of literature, Révai developed his idea of binary oppositions: the ideal writer regards individuality as unimportant but is a 'combative critic' rather than a 'tolerant critic, a literary historian'.<sup>45</sup> Criticism should be combative (not 'objective') and the writing 'aggressive and dirty', taking a definite position.<sup>46</sup> This time, he raised the examples of Turgenieff and Verlaine to contrast Russian and French literature.<sup>47</sup> The first represented massiveness and monstrosity, seen as qualities of the 'newest' literature. In his writing for in *Ma*, he rejected the aestheticist model (which he called alternately 'Secession' and 'Impressionism'), a position similar to Kassák's, but diverged from Kassák's view in asserting the responsibilities carried by cultural creation.

In October the same year, when the Bolshevik revolution was taking place in Russia, Révai demanded that writers from Budapest should be objective and have an international outlook and proletarian origins.<sup>48</sup> This time, as well as subordinating one specific task of the writer to another ('literary historian' to 'critic'), he prescribed the kind of origins (namely humble origins) a writer should have. Révai emphasized the organic interdependence of literature and politics and how the first should be incor-

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> József Révai, *Kritika* (Schöpflin Aladár: Kritikai tanulmányok) [Critique (Aladár Schöpflin: Critical Studies)], *Ma*, 2, 1917, no. 7, 135.

<sup>44</sup> József Révai, *Ibsen és a monumentális irodalom*, 129.

<sup>45</sup> József Révai, *Kritika*, 134.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 134-135.

<sup>47</sup> József Révai, *Készülő könyv elé* [A Preface to a Forthcoming Book], *Ma*, 2, 1917, no. 9, 175.

<sup>48</sup> József Révai, *Kassák, új fajiség és objektív líra* [Kassák, New Ethnicism and Objective Poetry], *Ma*, 1917, no. 10, 192-193.

porated into the latter. Again, he took a very different line from Kassák in emphasizing the responsibility of the writer.

In November 1917, Révai rejected the concept of the ‘genius’ (poet), claiming that a writer has to give room to ‘characters’ coming from the masses.<sup>49</sup> He also urged the complete disappearance of the author, a view at odds with Kassák’s focus on the person of the artist.<sup>50</sup> Kassák had previously advocated ‘genius’ and ‘crazy persons’. Révai defined the mandatory moral character, as well as the origins, of the writer. Poetry should derive from social activity; consequently, the form is a sin against the content. This negation of the form was another element that put him in opposition to Kassák, who saw the choice of form as particularly significant and outlined the artist as ‘social man’ without any restriction.<sup>51</sup> This time, along with three fellow editors (Mátyás György, Aladár Komját and József Lengyel) Révai left Kassák’s group and planned their own journal, to be entitled *Ezerkilencszáztizenhét* [1917]. The censors did not grant Komját and his group permission to realize their plans in 1917, but a year later, they published an anthology of poetry, *1918 Szabadulás* [1918 Liberation].<sup>52</sup> Like every Secessionist, Révai took part in the instauration of Communist movement in Hungary. After months of illegal revolutionary socialist activity, Révai became a founder of the first Hungarian Communist Party in autumn 1918 and worked for its *Vörös Újság* [Red Journal]. Under the influence of the politician Béla Kun, the philosopher György Lukács and the Marxist philosopher, Ervin Szabó (who died in September 1918, before the Communists seized power), he published theoretical works on dictatorship.

Kassák’s next significant intervention in the question of art and the artist was only in August 1918, by which time Hungary’s imminent defeat in

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<sup>49</sup> József Révai, Babits Mihály: Irodalmi problémák [Mihály Babits: Literary Problems], *Ma*, 2, 1917, no. 11, 9.

<sup>50</sup> József Révai, Készülő könyv elé [Preface to a Forthcoming Book], *Ma*, 2, 1917, no. 11, 176.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* The awareness of form was specific to the arts in Central Europe. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was an expression of autonomy not otherwise granted to artists, including the avant-gardes. Form as the Agent of Social Change, in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds*, 237.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

the war was already evident.<sup>53</sup> He declared – undoubtedly against Révai – that the writer or artist should be ‘a progressive talent’ and have ‘aggressive strength.’<sup>54</sup> In November 1918, when the war had officially ended and new parties, including a Communist Party, had emerged, the writer Sándor Barta, who published more than any other except Lajos Kassák in the avant-garde journals, expressed support for Kassák and put forward a common standpoint against Révai and his associates (who had left the *Ma* circle the previous year). He claimed that the artist should not follow any party dogmas but espouse ‘social art’ and a new ‘cultural politics’ based on a new morality and new thinking.’<sup>55</sup>

## Avant-Garde and Art in Postwar Revolutionary States in Hungary

The writing in *Ma* published between the political end of the First World War up to the proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in March 1919 centered on a definition of (revolutionary) art, whether referring to it as ‘socialist’, ‘communist’ or without qualifier, that stood against ‘party-political art.’<sup>56</sup> This meant distinguishing the interaction between art and the world – as urged by the avant-garde movement – from the subordination to politics desired by the Communist Party. In December 1918, Kassák for example welcomed ‘active anti-militarists’ and ‘intellectual workers’ fighting the class struggle and rejecting aestheticism who would create a ‘communist art’, but without ‘obeying any orders from outside the art field.’<sup>57</sup> Instead of being ‘party agitators’, artists should provide workers with necessities of a higher order. What did Kassák mean by these words? First, ‘communist art’, was not an official party-based approach to art but Kassák’s individual conception. Communist ideas were still fluid at the time, not yet dominated by any organization, and many Hun-

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<sup>53</sup> Lajos Kassák, A ‘Ma’ demonstratív kiállításához [To the Demonstrative Exhibition of ‘Ma’], *Ma*, 3, 1918, no. 8-9, 90.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> Sándor Barta, 1918 Szabadulás [1918 Liberation], *Ma*, 3, 1918, no. 11, 135.; Lajos Kassák, Tovább a magunk útján [Continuing our Own Way], *Ma*, 3, 1918, no. 12, 138.

<sup>56</sup> See e.g. Lajos Kassák, Tovább a magunk útján [Continuing our Own Way], 139; Árpád Szélpál, Forradalmi művészet – vagy pártművészet [Revolutionary Art – or Party Art], *Ma*, 4, 1919, no. 1, 4; Gyula Juhász, A Ma útja és célja [The Route and Destination of *Ma*], *Ma*, 4, 1919, no. 1, 10.

<sup>57</sup> Lajos Kassák, Tovább a magunk útján [Continuing our own way], 138-139.

garian intellectuals, disappointed by the war, took a great interest in the new leftist ideas. Second, the term 'intellectual workers' was rooted in the pre-war social democratic vocabulary and became widespread throughout Europe after the war, far beyond the leftist movements. Here, it referred to a radicalized character of the artist. Kassák preferred the term 'artist' to the term 'intellectual', which he took as a concept of Enlightenment-rooted modernity and never used it during the First World War period.<sup>58</sup> Although he never made his opposition explicit, Kassák's articles conveyed a view of 'intellectual' as the antithesis of the 'artist': the former uses intellectualized conceptions; the latter intuition and creativity.<sup>59</sup> Intellectualized conceptions, and their political equivalent in the rationalist and progressive ideology of the Enlightenment (including abstract logic and abstract conception of citizenship which was supposed to suppress class identity), were probably seen by Kassák as antithetical to intuition and the avant-garde model of the expression of free will and of an intuitive sympathy with one another.<sup>60</sup> The *Die Aktion*, which was a source of inspiration for Kassák, had begun to use the word *Intellektuellen* with a bad connotation from 1918 when it became the journal of the Spartacus Association.<sup>61</sup> However, the fact that Kassák did not set these

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<sup>58</sup> The only time he used the term 'intelligencia', a term expressing a community of all sort of intellectuals, before going into exile was with a negative connotation. See Lajos Kassák, *Levél Kun Bélához a művészet nevében* [Letter to Béla Kun in the name of Art], *Ma*, 4, 1919, no. 7, 146. (Translated by John Bátki in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds*, 230-233).

<sup>59</sup> 'Since intuition was a form of empathic consciousness, a distinterred type of instinct, the social order arising from this state would be the product of a sympathetic communion of free wills, an order expressive of the consciousness of each citizen rather than one imposed mechanically from without by some external authority.' Mark Antliff, *The Jew as Anti-Artist. Georges Sorel and the Aesthetics of the Anti-Enlightenment*, in Mark Antliff, *Avant-Garde Fascism. The Mobilization of Myth, Art and Culture in France, 1909–1939*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2007, 74.

<sup>60</sup> Earlier he opposed 'liberal contemplation', a characteristic of naturalism, to the 'true artist' who is 'a subversive, revolutionary character'. Lajos Kassák, *A plakát és az új festészet*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> Biró Annamária, *Értelmiségképzetek a német és a magyar aktivizmusban* [Images of the Intellectual in the Hungarian and German Activisms] in Biró Annamária – Boka László (szerk): *Értelmiségi karriertörténetek, kapcsolathálóok, írói csoportosulások* [Intellectuals' Careers, Networks and Writers' Groups], 2, Partium Kiadó - reciti, Nagyvárad-Budapest, 2016, 213.

two concepts in explicit opposition shows that he did not totally reject the model of the liberal intellectual.<sup>62</sup> Writers who did so were associated with a great ideological shift. One was the French political theorist Georges Sorel, who drifted from anarcho-syndicalism to the anti-democratic right before the war, and elaborated ‘an aestheticized concept of revolution, premised on the agitational role of myths.’<sup>63</sup> Sorel also differed from Kassák, for whom – in line with his radical left sympathies – anti-Semitism was completely absent from his writing<sup>64</sup>, in labelling Jews as ‘the very epitome of the ‘intellectual’, the abstract, disembodied symbol of the ‘pure idea.’<sup>65</sup> By contrast, Révai, who unlike Kassák was himself of Jewish origin, made some deprecatory comments regarding Jews. Writing in *Ma* in 1917, he disparaged the artistic choices of Jews as decadent and typical of the aestheticist model.<sup>66</sup> By doing this, Révai wanted to emphasize the unworthiness of aestheticism by associating it with Jewish origins, seen by him as obsolete and that he believed he had already left behind him. He was not alone: the critique of the Jewish upper and middle classes and their representative figures by leftist intellectuals of Jewish origin was not absent in Hungary during WWI.

In the period of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (March-August 1919) when ‘the ‘outsiders’ of radical art suddenly became the ‘insiders’ of a politically progressive government,’<sup>67</sup> there were important shifts in the definitions of art and the artist. These have to be explained in the

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<sup>62</sup> Annamária Biró emphasized a slightly different conclusion by claiming that Kassák totally rejected liberal intellectuals. However, she also stressed the importance of the ‘new artist’ at Kassák by pointing out the influence of the German Kurt Hiller’s conception of the Intellectual on this. See Biró Annamária, *Értelmiségképzetek a német és a magyar aktivizmusban*, 217-218.

<sup>63</sup> Mark Antliff, *The Jew as Anti-Artist. Georges Sorel and the Aesthetics of the Anti-Enlightenment*, 74-75 (for the quotation: 63.) There is no room here to present all the discourse on the Jew as Anti-Artist which had been widespread since Wagner in many European countries.

<sup>64</sup> Eszter Balázs, *Avant-garde and antimilitarism: A Tett*, 24-25. His correspondence must be edited and studied also from that point of view.

<sup>65</sup> Mark Antliff, *The Jew as Anti-Artist*, 106.

<sup>66</sup> József Révai, *Ibsen és a monumentális irodalom [Ibsen and Monumental Literature]*, *Ma*, 2, 1917, no. 8, 129.

<sup>67</sup> Timothy O. Benson, *Exchange and Transformation: The Internationalization of the Avant-Garde(s)*, 56.

context of the political radicalization of the Hungarian avant-garde. Just before the Communist political takeover at the end of March 1919, the poet Árpád Szélpál firmly dissociated revolutionary art from party art on the grounds of artistic freedom. He put forward an individual vision of communism and revolution.<sup>68</sup> During the short-lived Communist regime, *Ma* continued to be published, and its late April issue published a speech on ‘activism’<sup>69</sup> which Kassák had delivered earlier, in February – before the communist takeover. It was an individual vision of communism, revolution and revolutionary art and ‘activism’ was defined as helping to create the free world of the ‘collective individuum’ – a term created by Kassák to designate the ‘new man’ (not only artist) building a ‘new society’.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, Kassák was charged by the Commissariat of Public Education – personally by the philosopher György Lukács who was its vice-commissary – of making decisions about posters; and which was in fact an authorization of making censorship in the domain of this new means of communication.<sup>71</sup> Kassák himself admitted in his autobiography that he became a ‘censor of poster’ and worked 16-18 hours a day until he asked for his transfer into the Theater Directorate.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, himself and his avant-garde group asked and received massively

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68 Árpád Szélpál, *Forradalmi művészet – vagy pártművészet* [Revolutionary Art or Party Art], *Ma*, 4, 1919, no.1, 4.

69 Lajos Kassák, *Aktivizmus* [Activism], *Ma*, 1919, no. 4, 46-51. (translated by John Bártki in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds*, 219-225.)

70 He also proposed a ‘revolution of the proletariat class’ and a communist regime. It should be ‘an individual revolution that erases every government and party dictatorship’, leading to the construction of a ‘socialist society’ through phases of social democracy and communism with party conflicts.

71 Letter by György Lukács to Lajos Kassák (28<sup>th</sup> March 1919). Budapest, Kassák Museum, Inv. Nr. KM-lev. 368.

72 Lajos Kassák, *Egy ember élete*, vol. II, Budapest, Magvető, 1983, 511-512, 516-517. Kassák’s role as a censor was remarked at first by Oliver Botar by analyzing Kassák’s autobiography: Oliver Botar, *Lajos Kassák, Hungarian ‘Activism,’ and Political Power*, 392. Botar notes that ‘one could understand Kassák’s desire to work in an office of poster propaganda, given his early recognition of the artistic and political possibilities of poster art, but it was not a position of a propagandist he accepted.’ (Ibid.)

financial and infrastructural help from the Communist regime during the Commune.<sup>73</sup>

Nevertheless, in his writing on art and the artist, he remained detached from the regime's official point of view. A final declaration on 'new art' was published in June in form of a letter to Béla Kun, the communist leader (an ex-prisoner of war in Russia), who had accused Kassák and his peers, similarly to some Social-democratic writers and politicians who had joined the Commune, of being incomprehensible to the proletariat.<sup>74</sup> In his response, Kassák refused to serve as the mouthpiece of the Commune and maintained that the new art was not class struggle but aimed to create the 'absolute man', devoted to revolutionary action.<sup>75</sup> At the end of his letter, he asked Kun to leave the judgment of literature to the professionals. This can be seen as an anti-authoritarian stance to safeguard the autonomy of art and artist. However, the Communist leaders were especially upset because the letter was published in reprints, too.<sup>76</sup> Symbolically, these were Kassák's final words. Next month, *Ma* was forced to cease publication on the grounds of shortage of paper (just before the regime itself collapsed and a rightist regime took power).<sup>77</sup> The declaration Kassák wrote right after the journal had been banished (and before the regime collapse) was never released – it was banned by the Commissariat of the Public Education: in this declaration he ultimately redefined the role and function of the artist during the Commune: 'It is not a person-

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<sup>73</sup> A MA művészcsoporth munkaterve [The Working Plan of the Ma Artist Group], n. d. [before 28<sup>th</sup> March 1919], Budapest, Kassák Museum, Inv. Nr. KM-an 12; Notice by the Országos Lakásbizottság [Public Flat Committee], Budapest, Kassák Museum, Inv. Nr. KM-an 11/4.

<sup>74</sup> The letter to Kun was published in *Ma* and also in reprints. (Lajos Kassák, *Levél Kun Bélához a művészet nevében* [Letter to Béla Kun in the Name of Art], 146-148.; *Ibid.*, Táltos, Budapest, 1919.)

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* See also Éva Forgács, The Hungarian Commune, in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds*, 211.

<sup>76</sup> Recommended letter by *Szellemi Termékek Országos Tanácsa* [Public Council of Intellectual Proprieties] to Lajos Kassák (1st July 1919). Budapest, Kassák Museum, Inv. Nr. KM-lev 419/4.

<sup>77</sup> Letter by Lajos Kassák to *Szellemi Termékek Országos Tanácsa* [Public Council of Intellectual Proprieties] (8th June 1919). Budapest, Kassák Museum, Inv. Nr. KM-lev. 388.



al apotheosis, neither a mass art in the interpretation of the tribunes.’<sup>78</sup> He also declared that the avant-gardists as artists ‘never used to be server to the bourgeoisie, and they don’t want to serve any other class even it is called the proletariat.’ The role of the artist, he said, is not equal to that of the ‘attorney’, ‘administrator’ and ‘speech-maker’.

This overview of the interpretations of the role and function of the avant-garde artist since the emergence of the avant-garde movement in Hungary in 1915 intended to shed light on how avant-gardists defined and interpreted art and literature and their relation to public life. While the role and the function of the artist was widely discussed, even in proper polemics, the word ‘intellectual’ or ‘intelligentsia’ were used much less often. While József Révai used it in the sense of the party intellectual, Kassák preferred to avoid it when he could. When he did use it, it had rather a negative connotation. As an émigré in Vienna, after the fall of the Commune, Kassák continued to dislike the word ‘intellectual’ and its cognates: he used the word *entellektuell* to designate writers and intellectuals during WWI ‘felling in the narcosis of nationalism’ and from whom he naturally strongly distinguish the avant-garde.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> A világ új művészeihez! [To the New Artists of the World!], n. d. [later than 9th July 1919], Budapest, Kassák Museum, Inv. Nr. KM-an 13.

<sup>79</sup> A MA folyóirat köré csoportosuló aktivisták memoranduma a MKP-hez [The Memorandum of Activists around the journal Ma to the Party of Communists of Hungary], n. d. [later than May 1920].

## Permanent Synthesis: László Moholy Nagy's Idea of a Synthetic Journal

In 1925, the Czech avant-garde magazine *Pásmo* published a programmatic article by László Moholy-Nagy entitled 'Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift' [Guidelines for a Synthetic Journal].<sup>1</sup> This text counts among the important sources that help construct a conceptual history of modern periodicals, and it also captivates as an attempt to marry the magazine idea with the idea of synthesis. Students of the interwar avant-gardes have not systematically focused on synthesis, and perhaps for a good reason: it appears to be a somewhat vague relic of the long nineteenth century rather than a product of post-World War I modernism. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the avant-gardes – and László Moholy-Nagy – negotiated synthesis repeatedly, trying to understand it in a new way. Specifically, in proposing a synthetic magazine, Moholy-Nagy followed a path that moved the synthetic perspective beyond the level of a synthesis of arts to generalize it as a model of modernist discourse. The fact that the location of this model was precisely the magazine suggests that the study of platforms dovetails with conceptual history very well.

### 1. Synthesis: An Alternative Utopia?

A brief description of Moholy-Nagy's 'Guidelines' is not complicated. The text is in German, it is about 1,000 words in length, and it is divided into five sections. The four main sections are dated 1922, and the fifth, dated 1924, amounts to a brief post-script. This structure plausibly indicates that the author did not revise his 1922 text when sending it to *Pásmo*, but merely updated it with a brief comment on the current state of affairs, effectively showing that the idea of synthesis continued to be present in his thinking. At the same time, the text echoes the wave of magazine projects so characteristic of the early

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<sup>1</sup> László Moholy-Nagy, 'Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift', *Pásmo* (Brno), 1, 1925, no. 7-8, 5. All quotations from the 'Guidelines' are taken from this source; the translations are mine. For a full translation of the 'Guidelines' see the Appendix to this essay.

twenties.<sup>2</sup> One may even wonder whether the ‘Guidelines’ did not indicate Moholy-Nagy’s desire to launch his own magazine. If so, the publications projects that evolved at the Bauhaus, which Moholy-Nagy joined in 1923, may have changed this idea.<sup>3</sup>

The opening section of Moholy-Nagy’s ‘Guidelines’ is worth quoting at length:

The content of this journal is *the new form of life that can in many ways be realized already today*. This new form of life determines a complete re-evaluation and continuation of all researches and accomplishments in all fields of human work. All available powers are to be placed into their service. There are two necessary reasons for this. First, we want to place our individually crafted will to work into the service of collectivity. Second, the nature of the present life’s tasks makes it impossible for a single person or a few individuals to master them even to one’s individual satisfaction. But our life and the lives of all can be built in a most economical, most potentiated and most constructive manner by way of a concentration of all powers. In other words, we no longer need to yield to the pressure of all possible events; we must *shape* them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For an extensive list see Beata Bocian and Paulina Kurc-Maj, Journals of the Avant-Garde in Europe: A Selection, in Paulina Kurc-Maj (ed.), *Changing the Field of View: Modern Printing and the Avant-Garde*, Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź, 2014, 159-165. Further see Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009-2013, 4 volumes, esp. the final volume dedicated to Central and Eastern Europe. For period reactions to an expanding genre of illustrated magazines see Anton Kaes et al. (eds.), *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, California University Press, Berkeley, 1994, esp. section 26 ‘Visual Culture: Illustrated Press and Photography’.

<sup>3</sup> For the functions and complexities of Bauhaus publishing projects see Patrick Rössler, *The Bauhaus and Public Relations: Communication in a Permanent State of Crisis*, Routledge, London, 2014, esp. chapter 7.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Ihr Inhalt ist *die neue in vielem schon heute realisierbare Form des Lebens*. Diese neue Form des Lebens bedingt eine vollkommene Neuwertung und Weiterführung aller Forschungen und Ergebnisse auf *allen* Arbeitsgebieten des Menschen. ▷

Scanning this truly mobilizing passage for key concepts, we find many prominent slogans of the day, like collectivism, actionism and optimization of work. A crucial concept, however, is the ‘new form of life’. It alone is sufficient for the author to buttress the call for a publishing platform that would address all current developments. Nonetheless, a reader expecting additional references to synthesis, and perhaps even its definition, may be disappointed: the term does not return in the text. We might thus leave at that, simply label Moholy-Nagy’s call as visionary and programmatic and stop searching for details. In doing so, we would imply that invoking synthesis was no more than an eye-catching cliché meant to invoke something broad and unifying.

There are indications, however, that it would be descriptively inadequate not to take the idea of synthesis seriously. Although Moholy-Nagy was clearly emphasizing the present, i.e., the changes one could see before one’s eyes, we note a sentiment in which the idea of synthesis served as a trope that marked a departure from the preceding era. For instance, reviewing the history of the Prague Linguistic Circle in the 1920s, i.e., the early stages of European structuralism, we note that members of this scholarly group repeatedly took a position on the idea – and ideal – of synthesis. Reminiscing about their teachers, linguists whose careers had formed in the late nineteenth century, the Prague linguists characterized them as fundamentally incapable of synthesis.<sup>5</sup> These nineteenth-century masters studied isolated linguistic phenom-

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▷ Alle verfügbare[n] Kräfte sind in deren Dienst zu stellen. Das muß aus doppelter Notwendigkeit entstehen; die eine ist: daß wir unseren in uns individuell aufgeklärten Arbeitswillen in den Dienst der Kollektivität des Lebens stellen wollen. Die andere: daß die heutigen Aufgaben des heutigen Lebens solcher Natur sind, daß ein Mensch oder wenige Menschen sie nicht einmal zu ihrer individuellen Befriedigung bewältigen können. Die Konzentration dieser Kräfte aber kann unser Leben und das Leben aller am ökonomischsten, am gesteigert[e]sten und am konstruktivsten aufbauen; d.h. wir brauchen nicht mehr dem Zwang aller möglichen Vorgänge zu folgen: wir müssen sie *gestalten*.’ László Moholy-Nagy, *Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift* (emphasis in the original).

<sup>5</sup> For details see Jindřich Toman, *The Magic of a Common Language: Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, Jakobson, and the Prague Linguistic School*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 1995.



Figure 1. ReD, 1927, no. 1.



Figure 2. Pásmo, 1924, no. 1.



Figure 3. L'Esprit Nouveau, 1920, no. 1.

ena, eventually producing a fragmented knowledge of language. Significantly, the rhetoric of this distancing often uses the term ‘courage.’ The old scholarship, so we hear from Prague, was characterized not only by a lack of synthetic thinking, but a lack of the courage to synthesize.

Returning to the avant-garde, the relevant statements about synthesis appeared before 1914 and their nature is instructive in reminding us about the latitude of the concept. Specifically, synthesis was among the core concepts of Italian Futurism, with theatre playing a prominent role. Futurist synthesis was neither an act of contemplation nor a cautious statement of a well-balanced menu, but a call to action. Recall that among the often reproduced examples of *parole in libertà* is a composition entitled *Sintesi futurista della guerra*, which demonstrates the Futurist idea of accomplishing synthesis through violence.<sup>6</sup>

Post-1918 developments that emphasized synthesis are clearly visible in the programme of *L'Esprit Nouveau*, a magazine started by Le Corbusier, Amedée Ozenfant and Paul Dermée in 1920. *L'Esprit Nouveau* raised synthesis to a general cultural programme, thus transcending a merely technical notion of the term.<sup>7</sup>

Another visible site of synthesis was De Stijl, as documented, for example, by Theo van Doesburg’s 1922 lecture ‘The Will to Style.’ In characterizing modern times, not just the arts, Doesburg used a list of eleven binary oppositions, all structured along the formula ‘future X instead of past Y.’ He thus speaks of ‘clarity instead of vagueness,’ ‘truth instead of beauty,’

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<sup>6</sup> This interpretation of synthesis had predictable metamorphoses, cf. Alessandro Bruschetti’s 1935 triptych entitled *Fascist Synthesis* with Mussolini multiply embedded into a complex Italian ambience including diverse war machinery; for a reproduction see Vivien Green (ed.), *Italian Futurism 1909–1944*, Guggenheim Museum Publications, New York, 2014, 282.

<sup>7</sup> In discussing synthesis, I am focusing on cases in which synthesis is explicitly understood as an encompassing cultural gesture, not a restricted technical term. The Hegelian triad is a bona fide example of the latter. Clearly, drawing sharp borders is not simple. Thus the distinction between analytic and synthetic Cubism, popular in the days of this direction, although technically sounding, reflects a figure of thought that was considered a valid pattern of reasoning across the board. Yet another usage is encountered in historiography and criticism, where researchers often offer the term synthesis *ex post facto* as part of the interpretation they are providing. I will return to this case in more detail, see section 2.2.1.

and, significantly, ‘synthesis instead of analysis.’<sup>8</sup> Doesburg used the term synthesis in his lecture once more when he embarked upon the relation of arts and technology: ‘Since the arts are moving predominantly in a constructive, architectural direction, no one should be surprised if they draw together in order to produce a solution. A solution is to be expected from a monumental synthesis.’<sup>9</sup> Just like Moholy-Nagy, van Doesburg does not attempt to provide a formal definition of synthesis, yet the results of the synthetic shift are understood to be no less than monumental.

For our purposes, it is important to note that in the years immediately after 1922, the date he apparently penned his ‘Guidelines,’ Moholy-Nagy continued to return to this concept. Specifically, there are references to synthesis in his *Malerei Fotografie Film* [Painting Photography Film], a book completed in 1924 and published in 1925, and in a few passages of his ‘Theatre, Zirkus, Variété,’ published in 1925. In *Malerei Fotografie Film* he states:

What we need is not the ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’ next to which life drifts away as a separate entity, but a self-generating synthesis of all vital moments that leads toward the all-encompassing totality [*Gesamtkwerk*] (life) that suspends all isolation [...].<sup>10</sup>

Slashing *Gesamtkunstwerk* to *Gesamtwerk* is crucial, and a step beyond the concept of synthesis that had become a cliché in the context of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*<sup>11</sup> and the turn-of-the-century synthesis of arts. Moholy-Nagy was clearly moving in the direction of unity of art and life. As regards matters of execution, the idea of a ‘self-generating synthesis’ [die sich selbst aufbauende Synthese], i.e., synthesis conceived as a dynamic process from within, echoes Goethe and German

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<sup>8</sup> Theo van Doesburg, *Der Wille zum Stil, De Stijl*, 1922, no. 2-3, in English in Joost Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg*, Studio Vista, London, 1974, 115-126, quote on 123.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Was wir brauchen ist nicht das ‘Gesamtkunstwerk,’ neben dem das Leben getrennt hinabfließt, sondern die sich selbst aufbauende Synthese aller Lebensmomente zu dem alles umfassenden Gesamtwerk (Leben), das jede Isolierung aufhebt [...]’ László Moholy-Nagy, *Malerei Fotografie Film* (Bauhausbücher, 8), A. Langen, München, 1927, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Wagner’s idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* turned into cliché despite its roots in the revolutionary days around 1848 when a synthesis of arts (poetry, music, dance) instantiated by way of opera was meant to carry a political charge and thus transcend art.

romanticism. Nothing like this is visible in the 'Guidelines,' though, and so one is justified to conclude that his understanding of synthesis was in flux between 1922 and 1924. This is plausible, since the 'Guidelines' were written before he came to the Bauhaus. The new environment, including Bauhaus thoughts on pedagogy and, significantly, Bauhaus reflections on avant-garde theatre, certainly influenced him.

Indeed, the other important piece where synthesis appears in Moholy-Nagy's texts is embedded in Bauhaus theatre projects. It is his contribution 'Theatre, Zirkus, Varieté' to the volume on theatre edited by Oskar Schlemmer,<sup>12</sup> and reflects reactions to contemporary developments in theatre, at the Bauhaus and elsewhere. Moholy-Nagy opens by saying that as a medium, theatre is distinguished 'through its specific synthesis of expressive elements,'<sup>13</sup> and a few pages down he uses the notion of a 'synthetic theatre design' [synthetische Theatregestaltung].<sup>14</sup> On the whole, his vision of the theatre of the future is projected by way of a vocabulary that rests on terms such as totality and completeness, the latter being a translation of the German *Gesamtheit*. Thus, the theatre of the future is a *Theatre der Totalität* that emphasizes a total stage action [Gesamtbühnenaktion]. In the end, a net of concepts emerges in which a variety of holistic images, often metaphoric,<sup>15</sup> compete.

Clearly, a nuanced history of avant-garde synthesis/syntheses would be a rewarding topic. With some philological patience, we might be able to find further invocations of synthesis,<sup>16</sup> with the Bauhaus providing fur-

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<sup>12</sup> László Moholy-Nagy, 'Theatre, Zirkus, Varieté,' in Oskar Schlemmer, László Moholy-Nagy and Farkas Molnár, *Die Bühne im Bauhaus* (Bauhausbücher, 4), A. Langen, München, 1925, 45-56.

<sup>13</sup> 'Durch die ihm eigene Synthese der Darstellungselemente.' Ibid, 44.

<sup>14</sup> 'So kann die WIEDERHOLUNG eines Gedankens mit denselben Worten [...] als Mittel synthetischer Theatregestaltung wirken.' Ibid, 51.

<sup>15</sup> 'Eine ZAHRADARTIG INEINADERGREIFENDE Gedankengestaltung.' Comp. Ibid, 52.

<sup>16</sup> Berlin Dadaists sought synthesis in the idea 'Der Mensch ist simultan,' cf. Raoul Hausmann's *Synthetisches Cino der Malerei*, reproduced in Timothy O. Benson, *Raoul Hausmann and Berlin Dada*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, 1987, 145; while post-1917 Russian Futurists formed an ephemeral group in 1919/20 named *Živskulparx* (Kollektiv živopisno-skul'pturno-arhitekturnogo sinteza). For a later case, see Rumanian Integralism and its periodical *Integral* edited by M. H. Maxy, Victor Brauner and Ilarie Voronca between March 1925 and April 1928, subtitled the 'magazine of modern synthesis' ['revistă de sinteză modernă'].



ther points of reference.<sup>17</sup> For our purposes, however, it seems sufficient to conclude that synthesis was a working concept in the early 1920s, but – as in Moholy-Nagy’s ‘Guidelines – was raised to a principle that defined platforms such as magazines.’

## 2. Periodicals

So far, we have reasons to conclude that Moholy-Nagy’s use of synthesis was not casual, and one of its central meanings was a step beyond the synthesis of arts towards a general vision as reflected in the step from *Gesamtkunstwerk* to *Gesamtwerk*. At the same time, however, Moholy-Nagy was not the first to propose a synthetic magazine. But before we turn to details, let us spend a few lines on a conceptual clarification.

### 2.1 A Mini Theory of Periodicals: Focus Magazines and Panorama Magazines

In discussing magazines/periodicals, we can visualize them as points along a scale. At one end are periodicals strictly tailored to specific interest groups – professional groups, gender groups, and the like. Let us call them ‘focus periodicals.’ Their profile is narrowly defined and although they may address a whole range of topics, their scope is ultimately restricted – a fashion journal may have rubrics about hats, shoes, children clothing, this and that, yet on the whole it remains a fashion journal. At the other end is a periodical that seems to be virtually about anything. A number of terms come to mind in the latter case – a *potpourri magazine*, a *variety magazine*, etc. – but at this point I will use the term ‘panorama magazine,’ drawing inspiration from the nineteenth-century German-lan-

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<sup>17</sup> Gropius and Kandinsky come to mind. Gropius’s manifesto of 1919 does not use the term *synthesis* but it implies it in almost biblical language: ‘Wollen, erdenken, erschaffen wir gemeinsam den neuen Bau der Zukunft, *der alles in einer Gestalt sein wird*: Architektur und Plastik und Malerei [...]’ [Let us jointly wish, invent and make real the new edifice of the future, *which will combine everything in a single form*: architecture and sculpture and painting [...]]; emphasis J.T., quoted from Giulio C. Argan, *Gropius und das Bauhaus*, Rowohlt, Hamburg, 1962, 128. As for Kandinsky, cf. his ‘Über die abstrakte Bühnensynthese’ [Abstract Synthesis on the Stage] (1923); in English in *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, vol. II, 1922–1943, G. K. Hall, Boston, 1982, 504ff.

guage magazine from Prague that called itself *Das Panorama des Universums*.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, one can hardly imagine a more generous definition of the scope of coverage.

While focus magazines seem to be relatively straightforward, panorama magazines are challenging. For one thing, it may not be quite obvious what interests (besides a form of amusement) they express and why their diffuse character should justify their existence and secure them any readership at all. In some instances, though, they appear in the form of what I will call ‘framed,’ or ‘amalgamated’ panoramas, where amalgamation is provided by a higher-order perspective; a panorama can be amalgamated by a number of such perspectives including religion, politics, national interests and much more. This higher-order operation eventually cancels the scale suggested above, and in the end, amalgamation turns a panorama magazine into a focus magazine. The question then arises whether this is possible because panorama magazines always invite an amalgamating gesture. If so, an avant-garde journal that displays ‘alle Forschungen und Ergebnisse auf allen Arbeitsgebieten des Menschen’ – recall Moholy-Nagy above – might resemble any nineteenth century panorama product, including *Die Gartenlaube*, for that matter. Or not?

## 2.2 Case Studies

Turning to concrete cases, let us review, by way of an exemplary selection, three ‘synthetic’ candidates that were in existence in the 1920s – the French *L’Esprit Nouveau* and two Czech periodicals, *Pásmo* and *ReD*. Although these periodicals differ in a number of ways, a comparison should prove heuristically useful.

### 2.2.1 *L’Esprit Nouveau*: Synthesis Declared

The first issue of *L’Esprit Nouveau* (Paris, October 1920) has an unsigned five-page statement of purpose entitled ‘Domaine de *L’Esprit Nouveau*,’<sup>19</sup> which repeatedly stresses the contemporary nature of the enter-

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<sup>18</sup> *Das Panorama des Universums zur erheiternden Belehrung für Jedermann und alle Länder* (Prag 1834–1848). Note the expression *erheitern* ‘amuse’ in the title.

<sup>19</sup> Anonymous, *Domaine de L’Esprit Nouveau, L’Esprit Nouveau*, 1921, no. 1, unpaginated (preceding the main text).

prise<sup>20</sup> and promises, in formal terms, to be ‘une encyclopédie’ and ‘un tableau de production esthétique international.’ Subsequently, in a two-page opening statement signed *L’Esprit Nouveau*, we get beyond the encyclopaedia and the tableau by reading about synthesis. It includes the often-quoted lines, ‘Il y a un esprit nouveau: c’est un esprit de construction et de synthèse guidé par une conception claire,’<sup>21</sup> which continued with the assertion that the New Spirit touches on all elites in arts and letters, sciences and industry. In fact, so we read, society was currently organizing itself along the New Spirit across the board. Before the introduction closes, the idea of ‘l’esprit de construction de synthèse’ is repeated once again, and everything ends with the assertion: ‘Working on the synthesis of diverse activities of the present time means working on the arrival of the new spirit.’<sup>22</sup> In the end then, we end – or begin – with a marriage of the New Spirit and synthesis: the New Spirit invites synthesis – and synthesis is the sign of the New Spirit.

The journal presents itself as a journal of modern aesthetics, and its background is strongly humanistic. This did not come out of the blue – the project was in many ways a result of Parisian debates that had started during the First World War. Inspired in part by Apollinaire, Parisian artists and literati concluded that a step beyond isms was badly needed and that the era of isms was over, or soon should be. But assuming our standard image of the avant-garde as a project that generates innovation through tension and conflict, *L’Esprit Nouveau* was really not so avant-garde. By declaring itself to be a journal of (a ‘peaceful’) synthesis, it emerged as a journal of a new type. A distinction between modernism and avant-garde may perhaps provide a productive angle here, allowing us to label *L’Esprit Nouveau* as a modernist rather than an avant-garde magazine, i.e. a panorama magazine framed by a rational, planned ‘regular modernism.’

But what was synthetic about *L’Esprit Nouveau*? Browsing through the twenty-eight issues, we find a lot about the arts (from Ingres to Willy

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<sup>20</sup> The title page boldly states that ‘L’ESPRIT NOUVEAU est la première Revue du monde consacrée à l’esthétique de notre temps, dans toutes ses manifestations’ and a kind of delayed frontispiece on the next page repeats this idea by stating that the journal is ‘la première revue du monde vraiment consacrée à l’esthétique vivante.’

<sup>21</sup> *L’Esprit Nouveau* [signed *L’Esprit Nouveau*], *L’Esprit Nouveau*, 1921, no. 1, 3-4.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Travailler à la synthèse des divers activités de l’heure présente c’est travailler à l’avènement de l’esprit nouveau.’ Ibid, 4.

Baumeister) and literature (from Knut Hamsun to Jean Cocteau) but also about theatre, music and architecture. Furthermore, there are foreign reports from a number of countries including Germany, Latvia and Czechoslovakia and more.<sup>23</sup> While all this points to internationalism, despite the fact that *L'Esprit Nouveau* was monolingual, I believe that what changes the balance here is the inclusion of architecture and, above all, science. Recall that architecture had become an attractive site of synthesis because it merged art and technology.<sup>24</sup> As for science and technology, their presence in *L'Esprit Nouveau* may not seem impressive if measured by the number of pages, but articles about scientific subjects are nonetheless a very clear indication of a move toward an encompassing contemporary project.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, there is also a certain degree of coverage of sociology, economy and politics, including articles on Wilson and Lenin, and the Czech reader might have been thrilled to hear that of all conceivable specialists, it was the art critic Emanuel Siblík who contributed an article on the first Czechoslovak president, T. G. Masaryk (1921, no. 10). However, in a final assessment, *L'Esprit Nouveau* is somewhat academic and the tone is often surprisingly elitist. The summary of the journal's accomplishments that opens the last issue of the first volume no longer mentions synthesis, although there is no change in the overall profile. Instead, one is assured that the magazine did a good job in connecting contemporary movers and shakers – the intellectual elites.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For a full bibliographic account of contributions in *L'Esprit Nouveau* see Simone Rümmele, *L'Esprit Nouveau 1-28: Index*, in *L'Esprit Nouveau: Le Corbusier et l'industrie, 1920-1925*, Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg Ancienne Douane, Strasbourg, 1987, 284-292.

<sup>24</sup> See Theo van Doesburg above and Gropius, footnote 16.

<sup>25</sup> Besides articles on Einstein we find 'L'Origine des pétroles' (1921, no. 6), 'Rayons X et lumière' (1921, no. 7), 'La constitution de la matière' (1922, no. 14), 'La transmutation de la matière et l'énergie' (1922, no. 15), 'L'Origine des mondes' (1924, no. 23), to name a few titles.

<sup>26</sup> It is generally agreed that synthesis continued to be an important concept in Le Corbusier's thought, perhaps even increasingly so: '[Le Corbusier] pursued the Holy Grail of 'synthesis', the combining of seemingly irreconcilable elements into a logical, coherent, unexpected but inevitable whole.' Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century*, Basic Books, New York, 1977, 164. See also Stanislaus von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elemente einer Synthese*, Huber, Frauenfeld, 1968.

### 2.2.2 *Pásmo*: Synthesis Implied

Searching for a magazine that looked neither academic nor elitist, I turn to the Brno-based *Pásmo*. After all, it is logical to ask whether the magazine that chose to publish Moholy-Nagy's 'Guidelines' was not thinking of itself as a synthetic platform.<sup>27</sup> *Pásmo* opens with a statement by Karel Teige directed against the conception of *L'Art pour L'Art*, possibly indicating a desire for an encompassing project, but not, overall, constituting a statement of purpose that might help us measure the content of *Pásmo* against a clearly defined programme.<sup>28</sup> *Pásmo* was certainly international and multilingual. The foreign language that appeared most frequently during the two years of the journal's existence was German, and issue 11/12 of the first volume ([May?] 1925) is a half German issue, which compromises the idea that the interwar Czech avant-garde was predominantly Francophile. Among the regular German-language contributors were Adolf Behne and, most relevantly, László Moholy-Nagy.<sup>29</sup>

Since *Pásmo* does not open with a proper editorial statement, we may look for help from a flyer that advertised *Pásmo* in another avant-garde magazine, *Disk*. The flyer simply stated: 'Only for modern people' [Pouze moderním lidem]. Thus instead of outlining *Pásmo*'s content, the flyer enumerated its readers, or rather projected readers: 'Our friends are modern poets / young intellectuals without the little petty-bourgeois soul / courageous and alert people.'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For a bibliography of contributions to *Pásmo* see Jaromír Kubiček, *Pásmo 1924–1926 – Index 1929–1939* (Rejstříky moravského tisku, 7), Moravská zemská knihovna, Brno, 2010. Further see Nicholas Sawicki, The View from Prague, in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker and Christian Weikop (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*. Volume III: Europe 1880–1940, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2013, 1074–1098.

<sup>28</sup> Meghan Forbes (current work) presents epistolary evidence indicating that activists around *Pásmo* were actually familiar with *L'Esprit Nouveau*. A prominent poet Jaroslav Seifert even suggested *L'Esprit Nouveau* as a point of departure.

<sup>29</sup> Other German-language contributions came from Baumeister, Gropius, Kiesler, Schwitters, Schlemmer, Walden, Richter, and Van Doesburg; French by Cocteau, Le Corbusier, Goll, Malespine, and Seuphor; in addition, some Czechs published in German (Teige, Václavěk, Markalous). Translations from Hungarian and Romanian, and a contribution in Polish also occur.

<sup>30</sup> 'Našimi přáteli jsou moderní básníci / mladí intelektuálové / revolucionáři bez *maloměšťácké* dušičky / odvážní a bystrí lidé.' The flyer is reproduced in Marta Sylvestrová and Jindřich Toman (eds.), *Horizonty modernismu: Zdeněk Rossmann, 1905–1984*, Moravská Galerie, Brno, 2015, 34.

But what was synthetic about *Pásmo*? While the word synthesis does not appear in it, the magazine's openness gives it a great chance to be called synthetic. Besides being multilingual, it includes a modern synthetic topic, architecture, and most importantly, there are contributions that distinctly transcend the range of art: articles by a lawyer and sociologist, Josef Hrdina (1877–1947); a linguist, Roman Jakobson (1896–1982); and a scientist with a focus on physics, Vilém Santholzer (1903–1972). Hrdina was clearly a Marxist<sup>31</sup> and Jakobson's article, based on the study of poetic language, was a foundational articulation of functional linguistics,<sup>32</sup> but it is perhaps Santholzer who deserves most attention, as his essays about matter, light, mathematics and even automobiles reveal a lyrical line that connects with the idea of lyricism propagated in *L'Esprit Nouveau*. His articles about mathematics and physics often stress aesthetic aspects of these disciplines.<sup>33</sup> It is with these contributions that *Pásmo* embarks on a synthetic journey.

To conclude this brief survey, I will turn to Moholy-Nagy's manifesto at the point when it turns into a list. We may use this passage as a kind of checklist and ask whether *Pásmo* qualifies as synthetic:

Moholy-Nagy's List	Represented in <i>Pásmo</i>
1. Requirements of the contemporary man	YES
2. Architecture	YES: Behne, Gropius
3. Film	YES: Teige, Santholzer

<sup>31</sup> Josef Hrdina was the author of *Stát, právo a třída* [State, Law, and Class, Prague, 1923], which followed Lenin's interpretation of the state as a class-determined construction; his articles included 'Bucharinova sociologie' [Bucharin's Sociology], *Pásmo*, 1924/1925, no. 3, 6-7. His persuasion may have affected his career, cf. Helena Bretfeldová, Josef Hrdina – zamyšlení nad odkazem jednoho z propagátorů marxismu u nás, *Sborník prací filosofické fakulty brněnské univerzity, B: Řada filozofická*, 1984, 65-72.

<sup>32</sup> Jindřich Toman, *The Magic of a Common Language: Mathesius, Trubetzkoy, Jakobson, and the Prague Linguistic School*, 95-97.

<sup>33</sup> Santholzer was apparently a student when *Pásmo* was appearing. His book *Krásá matematiky a stroje* [The Beauty of Mathematics and Machines], announced in *Pásmo*, 1924/1925, no. 7, is not documented. He eventually became a radiologist, closing his career at the Hradec Králové medical school in the 1960s.

4. Workshop and laboratory	PERHAPS?
5. Political-spiritual position on universal questions	YES: Hrdina, Václavek
6. New inventions and experiments: Music, gramophone, mechanical speaking machine, pure speech, photography, etc.)	YES
7. Criticism (as a permanent rubric) of works of art, technology, science: Productive reflections about medicine, mathematics, geometry: Bolyai, Euclid, Geometry	YES: incl. Santholzer
8. New phenomena and types: New Word, New Typography, Wireless photography, etc.	YES: Moholy, Černík
9. New film scripts, Performance art, Theatre, Electric Variété	YES: 'films on paper'
10. Optophonetics	PERHAPS?
11. Questions of organization: Forms of propaganda, etc.	PERHAPS? (Hrdina?)
12. Art: Filmstrips, X-ray images, Gymnastics, Glass buildings, etc., etc.	YES: Moholy (photograms)

The answer is, as we can see, mostly in the positive, but I will return to the matter when discussing the nature of lists in modernism.

### 2.2.3 *ReD*: Synthesis Declared Again and Again

The next Czech candidate for a synthetic avant-garde journal is *ReD* (1927–1930), largely meant by its editor-in-chief, Karel Teige, to be an organ of Poetism. Unlike *Pásmo* – and just like the introduction to *L'Esprit Nouveau* – *ReD* has an editorial, moreover, one that declares synthesis as a high ideal:

*ReD* (the journal of Devětsil) wants to be a synthetic journal of modern international cultural work. Its content will simply be the life of modern work [tvorba], birth of new forms, victory of inventions and the tension of experiments. *ReD* wants to be a catalogue [prospekt] of ideas that have been implemented and ideas that have not or cannot be implemented, a reporter from workshops and studios [...] wants to be a review [věstník] of all fields, artistic or scientific, in

principle a holistic [celistvý] and complete panorama of the world and an atlas of poetry.<sup>34</sup>

Teige continued to repeat the idea of synthesis throughout. In the editorial to volume two he even spelled out great expectations, stating that *ReD* ‘must become a grand synthetic review’<sup>35</sup> and in the preface to volume three he repeated the phrase ‘synthetic journal of modern international work,’ proceeding to explain what modern and international were, but not bothering to explain what synthetic meant.

By 1927, there were examples to follow. By and large, Teige seems to draw on *L’Esprit Nouveau*, but Moholy-Nagy is present, too, as is evident from a certain lexical convergence – like Moholy-Nagy, Teige stresses the predicate *productive*, cf. ‘productive work.’ He also uses the key term *panorama* (a rubric entitled *Panorama* appears in *ReD* throughout). Another potential parallel to *ReD* is the single issue of a sequel to *L’Esprit Nouveau* edited by Michel Seuphor and Paul Dermée, entitled *Les Documents Internationaux de L’Esprit nouveau* (1927). Interestingly, after enumerating a dozen isms, the editors of this magazine declared its value in expressing *l’ésprit nouveau* worldwide, thus marking the spirit of decentralization – certainly a remarkable notion in the context of a discussion of synthesis.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> ‘ReD (= revue Devětsilu) chce býti synthetickým časopisem mezinárodní moderní kulturní tvorby. Jeho obsahem bude prostě život moderní tvorby, zrod nových forem, vítězství vynálezů a napětí experimentů. Chce býti prospektem ideí, které se realizují, i těch, které dosud nejsou či nemohou býti realizovány, reportérem z pracoven a ateliérů [...], chce býti věstníkem všech oborů t. zv. uměleckých i naučných, zkrátka celistvým a úplným panoramatem světa a atlasem poesie.’ Karel Teige, [Untitled introduction], *ReD*, 1927/1928, no. 1, 1.

<sup>35</sup> ‘...musí se státi velikou synthetickou revuí,’ Ibid. We note in passing period literature suggesting that Poetism was a synthetic movement, cf. Bedřich Václavěk, O novou synthesesu [New Synthesis], *ReD*, 1929, no. 7, 207-210.

<sup>36</sup> The only issue opened with a program for a “panorama’ des tendances actuelles’: ‘Il n’y a qu’un seul esprit nouveau / le futurisme – l’expressionisme [sic] – le cubisme – le dadaïsme – le purisme – le constructivisme – le neo-plasticisme – le surréalisme – l’abstractivisme – le babilisme – le soporifisme – le mécanisme – le simultanéisisme – le suprematisme – Tultraïsme – le panlyrisme – le primitivisme et tous les ismes à venir (jusqu’à concurrence d’isme réactionnaire ravageur des grandes conquêtes de notre temps) valent un seul esprit nouveau mondial: decentralization.’



Unlike *L'Esprit Nouveau* and Moholy-Nagy, but like *Pásmo*, Teige is political. He speaks about *ReD* as 'collaborating on the social revolution,' sees the 'young structure of socialist life,' and concludes the editorial with an explication of the pun that is embedded in the title of the magazine: 'ReD is the red signal of the new coming epoch of culture.'<sup>37</sup> In volume three, instead of saying what synthetic is he simply states that *ReD* continues to be the voice of 'international modernism, modern spirit and modern resolve: the revolution.'<sup>38</sup> In doing all this, Teige satisfies our previous definition of an 'amalgamated panorama' by practicing the panoramic perspective, but adding the consolidating frame – a utopian vision of a social (and socialist) change.<sup>39</sup>

Closing with a brief judgement, *ReD* makes a more academic and static impression than *Pásmo*. Despite a strong interest in film and architecture and a political bias towards the Soviet Union, science is nearly invisible. In the first volume, *ReD* carried only one article by Vilém Santolzer, who was so prominent in *Pásmo* and elsewhere. *ReD*'s foreign language texts are rather scarce and limited to poetry. Moreover, of 29 issues altogether, seven are monothematic.<sup>40</sup> But although this practice is perhaps not always convincing, there is a clear intent, and that is what we must pay attention to.

### 3. Non-Euclidean Conversations: Lists and Frames

Let us finally turn to one formal feature of Moholy-Nagy's 'Guidelines,' namely the presence of lists that itemize modernity. Moholy-Nagy never says what synthesis is, but he is able to provide extensive lists of topics a synthetic magazine should cover. In the rest of this essay I will argue that the presence of such lists is in fact crucial in performing synthesis.

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<sup>37</sup> 'ReD je rudým signálem přicházející nové epochy kultury'. Karel Teige, [Untitled introduction], *ReD*, 1927/1928, no. 1, , 2.

<sup>38</sup> '...mezinárodní moderny, moderního ducha a moderní vůle: revoluce'. Karel Teige, [Untitled introduction], *ReD*, 1929/1931, no. 1, 1.

<sup>39</sup> For a recent analysis see Lenka Bydžovská, On the extreme left? The Devětsil monthly *ReD* in international networks (1927-1931), presented at the *Local Contexts / International Networks* conference in the Kassák Museum, further see Meghan Forbes (ongoing work).

<sup>40</sup> *ReD*, 1927/1928, no. 2: Anniversary of the October Revolution; 1927/1928, no. 9: Manifestoes of Poetism; 1928/1929, no. 3: Apollinaire; 1928/1929, no. 6: Futurism; 1929/1931, no. 5: Bauhaus; 1929/1931, no. 6-7: Teige: Sociology of architecture; 1929/1931, no. 8: Le Grand Jeu.

Two sections of Moholy-Nagy's text are really no more than topic itemizations. Here is the abbreviated list that forms section IV, entitled 'Plan for initial issues' (for a more detailed version see the Appendix below):

1. Requirements of the contemporary man; 2. Architecture; 3. Film; 4. Workshop and laboratory; 5. Political-spiritual position on universal questions; 6. New inventions and experiments (Music, Gramophone, Mechanical speaking machine, Pure speech, Photography, etc.); 7. Criticism (as a permanent rubric) of works of art, technology, science (Productive reflections about medicine, mathematics, geometry: Bol-yai, Euclid, Geometry); 8. New phenomena and types (New Word, New Typography, Wireless photography, etc.); 9. New film scripts, Performance art, Theatre, Electric variety show; 10. Optophonetics; 11. Questions of organization (Forms of propaganda, etc.); 12. Art (Film-strips, X-ray images, Gymnastics, Glass buildings, etc., etc.)<sup>41</sup>

Before Moholy-Nagy, the editors of *L'Esprit Nouveau* also proceeded by way of a list, and so did Teige in 1927, as in the *ReD* editorial of volume one, number one:

Poetry – literature – music – dance – theatre – music-hall and circus – paintings and sculptures – film and photo – aesthetics – philosophy – psychology – architecture and urbanism – technical culture – hygiene – physical culture – industry and organization of work – sociology – socialism and class struggle – USSR – events and images from the world – journalism and news coverage – agitation and advertisement – typography and polygraphy – documents and news.<sup>42</sup>

In terms of textual genres, these and similar lists relate to catalogues, outlines, inventory records, etc., the understanding being that discourse

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<sup>41</sup> László Moholy-Nagy, *Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift*, 5.

<sup>42</sup> 'poesie – literatura – hudba – tanec – divadlo – music-hall a circus – obrazy a sochy – film a foto – estetika – filosofie – psychologie – architektura a urbanismus – technická kultura – hygiena – fyzická kultura – průmysl a organisace práce – sociologie – socialismus a třídní boj – SSSR – události a obrazy ze světa – žurnalismus a zpravodajství – agitace a reklama – typo- a polygrafie – dokumenty a zprávy'. Karel Teige, [Untitled introduction], *ReD*, 1927/1928, no. 1, 2.

can legitimately move onward by enumerating the contents of a domain item by item, position by position. No wonder that manifestoes of all sorts made significant use of lists. Indeed, we can ultimately consider manifestoes, at least some of them, as lists *sui generis*, although differences remain clear – manifestoes usually do not merely itemize the contents of a movement, but assert a distinctly mobilizing move and want the reader to agree and join. The ‘bulleted’ lists of Futurist manifestoes are among the best known.<sup>43</sup>

The device is protean, though, since a list of examples is not only instructional but may be a way out of a situation when the statement of a simple principle or a higher-order conclusion is not in sight. In and of itself, itemization does not count as an argument. In this situation, there are essentially two ways of reading lists – inductive and deductive. The inductive way is based on the expectation that a list rhetorically implies a unifying principle; the user is invited to negotiate – another word for guess? – what the principle is. The deductive way is applicable whenever the higher-order principle is known; the user is then invited to check the list against the principle and, again, negotiate its contents. The two perspectives are in a constant conversation.

It is at this point that the concept of the ‘amalgamated panorama’ comes back, for lists, including the lists of modernity, are close to panoramas, thus essentially dependent on framing. And, indeed, lists often come embedded in a programmatic text that frames them. In our cases the structure looks approximately as follows:

‘Guidelines’	Framing concept: ‘the new form of life’ List to be framed: {architecture, design, new typography, optophonetics,... }
L’Esprit Nouveau	Framing concept: <i>New Spirit</i> List to be framed: {poetry, art, science, ...}
<i>Pásmo</i>	Framing concept: ‘for modern people’ List to be framed: {poetry, art, science, sociology, ...}
<i>ReD</i>	Framing concept: Revolution List to be framed: {poetry, film, hygiene, USSR, ...}

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<sup>43</sup> At the same time, lists are not limited to manifestoes, cf. Hannes Meyer’s article ‘Das neue Leben’ in *Das Werk* in 1926, probably by far the longest and most concrete enumeration of modern objects and behaviours.

We have to take some liberties in evaluating these formulae – and so do the authors/users. In any case, merely searching for an ‘exhaustive’ or ‘consistent’ list would be putting the cart before the horse.<sup>44</sup> On the whole, however, the dynamic aspect of this negotiation is asserted in what I termed a postscript in Moholy-Nagy’s ‘Guidelines,’ specifically the somewhat convoluted sentence in which he says that it is necessary resort to a journal format that is open: ‘There must come a synthetic newspaper [Zeitung], which [...] uses a format [Gestaltung] that does not see the binding frame in a law book of isms, but is based on elements that have a living function.’<sup>45</sup> It is not exaggerated to see here a call for a permanent synthesis.

#### 4. An Optimistic Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that we now know a bit more about the way a ‘synthetic magazine’ and – by way of extension – synthesis was meant to function in the formation of the modernist discourse, at least as of 1925.

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<sup>44</sup> Students of modern times will appreciate the following list right from modernity’s early days, the French revolution: ‘The world has changed, and is bound to change again. What is there in common between that which is and that which was? Civilized nations have taken the place of savages wandering in the desert; fruitful crops have taken the place of the ancient forests that covered the globe. A world has appeared beyond the limits of world; the inhabitants of the earth have added the seas to their immeasurable domain; man has conquered the lightning and averted the thunderbolts of heaven. Compare the imperfect language of hieroglyphics with the miracles of printing; set the voyage of the Argonauts beside that of La Perouse; men of Asia and the discoveries of Newton, or between the sketch drawn by the hand of Dibutade and the pictures of David...’ (<http://bunniesandbeheadings.tumblr.com/post/52461676712/robespierre-gave-the-following-speech-on-the>) This is a narrativized list based on binary contrasts between the past and the present, a popular rhetorical pattern. It was delivered before the National Convention on May 7, 1794, the occasion being the proclamation of the Supreme Being. The speaker was Maximilien Robespierre. He was executed two months or so later – not because of this list, though.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Es muß eine synthetische Zeitung kommen, welche [...] in ihrer Gestaltung von den Elementen einer Zeitschrift ausgeht, welche das Bindende nicht in einem Ismusgestzbuch, sondern nur in ihrer lebendigen Funktion sieht.’ László Moholy-Nagy, *Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift*, 5.

Moholy-Nagy's manifesto emerges as a project to create a broadly conceived tool of modernity, a platform that would transcend the 'standard' synthesis of arts and address contemporary reality. Today, synthesis has been overshadowed by a number of successors and competitors such as interdisciplinarity, transdisciplinarity and multimediality. Nonetheless, synthesis – and even its successors, whose labels have long deteriorated into grant application clichés – remains a significant 'soft utopia.' Although it did not drive any political revolutions in the days of post-1918 crises and upheavals, it required courage, as we heard from the Prague linguists. László Moholy-Nagy's article is one such courageous example.

## APPENDIX

### László Moholy-Nagy: Guidelines for a Synthetic Journal\*

[I.]

We have demands which have already become demands of many – not explicitly and often subconsciously. The task of a synthetic journal consists in making these demands conscious and multiplying the sources of that intuitive power that draws on man's overall disposition.

The content of this journal is *the new form of life that can in many ways be realized already today*. This new form of life determines a complete re-evaluation and continuation of all researches and accomplishments in *all* fields of human work. All available powers are to be placed into their service. There are two necessary reasons for this. First, we want to place our individually crafted will to work into the service of collectivity. Second, the nature of today's tasks of the present life makes it impossible for a single person or a few individuals to master them even to one's individual satisfaction. But our life and the lives of all can be built in a most economical, most potentiated and most constructive manner by way of a concentration of all powers. In other words, we no longer need to yield to the pressure of all possible events; we must *shape* them.

All work [Gestaltung] and production are determined by their time. Our era is that of *clarification* and purification.

From this point of view, there are no compartmentalized ranks of art, science, technology, crafts etc., but only forces that are equivalent and mutually associated.

A journal that wishes to work towards a genuine crafting [Gestaltung] of life must not restrict its efforts to particular components, such as art, but should potentiate in itself [in sich summieren] the works of all of today's *productive* forces (scientists, artists, engineers and craftsmen).

The only work we can call *productive* is that which fulfils the maximal demands of life at the moment of their origin.

\* Originally in German as 'Richtlinien für eine Synthetische Zeitschrift' in *Pásmo* (Brno), vol. 1, no. 7-8, p. 5. The adjective 'synthetisch' appears capitalized, possibly by a mistake. Translated by Jindřich Toman with a kind permission of Hattula Moholy-Nagy.

II.

In order not to produce only fundamental theoretical works, whose immediate application is not always practically possible, we must in parallel keep in mind all possibilities that are available now, inasmuch as they are part of our world view [Weltbild]. In particular:

Pedagogy: from the elementary to the highest levels of education.

Architecture. Film.

Essential questions of city construction.

Doing away with all kinds of romanticism (Biedermeier and skyscrapers; the use of the horizontal escalator in horizontal complexes is equally fast and economic as the use of vertical escalators in highrises).

Relations of painterly, plastic and other forms among themselves and with respect to architecture.

Questions of hygiene: illumination, sewers, etc.

New film scripts (which today do not make it to production because of short-sighted film companies).

New methods of news service.

Means for the construction of a 1,600,000,000-strong intellectual community: radio, aviation, international language, possibilities of exchange, etc.

The new physician should first find the nature of functions, not what violates the order.

Social, economic problems. The new state.

The machine.

A brief survey of technology.

Reflections. Evaluation. Productive ideas. Criticism.

New forms of work [Gestaltung] in	<table border="0"> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">painting,</td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">music,</td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">plastic arts,</td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">literature,</td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">philosophy,</td></tr> <tr><td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">psychology</td></tr> </table>	painting,	music,	plastic arts,	literature,	philosophy,	psychology	} and their workshop applications.
painting,								
music,								
plastic arts,								
literature,								
philosophy,								
psychology								

Theatre, variety show, circus.

Questions of material: glass, metal, etc. New chemistry.

Typography.

Americanism and European questions.

As regards the forms of communication, we must demand the highest precision *with no personal concessions*. Preconditions for the evaluation

of submissions: objective work on the creation of a *new* world image. *The ethical code of the future order is mathematical certainty, not merely a matter of feeling.*

Contact with all fields of work [Schaffen].

‘Je sais tout’ (without becoming ridiculous!)

### III.

*Editorial Board:* A committee whose members can have specialized tasks; nonetheless, everything will be discussed jointly.

*Contributors:* all creative men, who will participate with their creative works (and not those who merely wish to see their personal opinions printed).

*Language:* National language: with short foreign-language summaries of individual articles. After three or four issues, possibly an international issue in diverse languages.

### IV.

Plan for initial issues:

1. What are the demands of the contemporary man? Anticipation of a new construction of life.

2. Architecture.

3. Film.

4. Workshop.

Laboratory.

Practical matters.

Speculative matters.

Short directives [Leitsätze] regarding essential problems interspersed all over. Close contact with readers and encouragement to participate. Special emphasis on young people.

5. Political-intellectual stance on universal questions.

6. New inventions and experiments.

Music. Gramophone. Mechanical speaking machine. Pure speech.

Photography.

Constructive-kinetic power system.

7. Criticism (as a permanent rubric) of works of art,

technology,  
science



Productive reflections about medicine,  
mathematics,  
geometry: Bolyai.  
Euclid. Geometry.

8. New phenomena and types

New Word		{	poets
New Typography	Photographs of	{	artists
Wireless photography		{	technicians

Wireless film newspaper. Ads. Posters.  
Their works.

New exhibitions, etc.

9. New film scripts

Performance art.  
Theatre.  
Electric variety shows.

10. Optophonetics

Unity of organ functions                      Tactile — olfactory

11. Questions of organization

Design of propaganda  
Unheard-of concentration of forces

12. Art

Filmstrips  
X-ray images  
Gymnastics  
Glass buildings  
Projects for room lowering  
Projects for room elevation  
Work space, sleeping space, baths  
Type homes  
Etc., etc.

*Many pictures everywhere* in the text or with brief explanations as this  
is one of the ways to make the most efficient communication.

1922

V.

We already have a number of very beautiful journals in Europe, often outstanding in details they bring. What one misses in most of them, though, is vividness, freshness and openness. The editors' tendency to outline directions ('isms') and make academies out of them is too big.

There must come a synthetic newspaper [Zeitung], which – without *constantly* showing the editor's face – uses a journal design that does not see the binding frame in a law book of isms, but is based on elements that have a living function.

1924

## The Self-Description of Lajos Kassák's Avant-Garde Magazine *Dokumentum* (1926–1927)

Probably less revolutionary than Kassák's previous magazine *Ma, Dokumentum* (1926–1927) was limited to the act of 'documenting' contemporary artistic and social phenomena. It carried notes, analyses and even artistic interpretations of technical, industrial, social and artistic innovations from buses to surrealist poetry, treating them as 'representations' of a new epoch. Here, I address the contradictions between the self-description of *Dokumentum* as an almost academic journal and the perception of the critics, who viewed it as Kassák's newest radical 'left-wing futurist' magazine. The critics expressed themselves in aesthetic terms, but their motivation appears to have been primarily ideological, and their judgements show up as attempts to preserve the contemporary cultural situation in Hungary. They interpreted the complex artistic message of *Dokumentum* as a statement of Kassák's intent to disarrange and restructure contemporary Hungarian cultural life. Taking up this view, Hungarian intellectuals who defended the aesthetic and political status quo of the institutionalized cultural life in Hungary vigorously attacked the artistic and social aspects of *Dokumentum*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This publication was supported by the NKFI-K 120779 projec. About *Dokumentum* and its cultural context see: Judit Karafiáth, 'À la recherche du surréalisme Hongrois', in Judit Karafiáth and György Tverdota (eds.), *Les avant-gardes nationales et internationales*, Argumentum, Budapest, 1992, 65-72; György Tverdota, 'La première mort de l'avant-garde Hongroise' in Judit Karafiáth et György Tverdota (eds.), *Les avant-gardes nationales et internationales*, 73-80; Timothy O. Benson (ed.), *Central-European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2002; Edit Sasvári, Franciska Zólyom, Katalin Schulcz (eds.), *Lajos Kassák, Botschafter der Avantgarde 1915–1927 [Ambassador of the Avantgarde (1915-1927)]*, Exhibition Catalogue, PIM, Budapest, 2011; Éva Forgács and Tyrus Miller, The Avant-Garde in Budapest and in Exile in Vienna, in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, Volume III, Part I-II, Europe 1880–1940, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, 1129-1156.

## 1. Political Consolidation and the Limitation of Public Sphere in Mid-1920s Hungary

The position of *Dokumentum* in literary affairs can only be understood in the wider political context of Hungary in the mid-1920s. This was the period when the interwar Horthy regime, under Prime Minister István Bethlen, pursued the ‘politics of consolidation.’ This was an attempt to stabilize the economic, political and cultural situation of a country that had just come through two revolutions following the First World War and to bring it out of international isolation. The measures included a partial amnesty for political émigrés in 1926. This permitted many left-wing intellectuals who had been involved in the brief communist state of 1919 to return from exile.<sup>2</sup> Among them were Lajos Kassák and the former editorial staff of the magazine *Ma*, as well as other future contributors to *Dokumentum*. A condition of allowing their return was that they would not participate in any political activity.<sup>3</sup>

This condition inevitably influenced *Dokumentum*’s editorial policy. The regime considered the press to be an extremely powerful tool for manipulating the masses, believing it to have such a direct effect on public opinion as to constitute public opinion itself. Indeed, it was not uncommon for the failure of the First World War and the subsequent revolutions in Hungary to be attributed to the harmful effects of the media. This view was behind the government’s measures to regulate the press and keep it under strict control throughout the lifetime of *Dokumentum*. Although the Bethlen administration eliminated preliminary censorship in 1921, it passed the ‘State Protection Law’ the same year,<sup>4</sup> allowing the authorities to limit publication, distribution and even the launch of certain periodicals for certain periods of time. Furthermore, journalists and writers constantly risked facing legal proceedings, with accusa-

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<sup>2</sup> See: Thomas Lorman, *Hungary, 1920–1925: Istvan Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> See: Merse Pál Szeredi, ‘Budapest – Berlin – Budapest: magyar művészek Berlinben az 1920-as években’ [Hungarian Artists in Berlin during the 1920s], in *Berlin – Budapest 1919–1933: Képzőművészeti kapcsolatok Berlin és Budapest között* [Network of artists between Berlin and Budapest], Virág Judit Galéria, Budapest, 2016, 11-147.

<sup>4</sup> Act III of 1921 on More Effective Protection of State and Social Order (Az állami és társadalmi rend hatályosabb védelméről).

tions of ‘political provocation’ ‘lèse majesté’ or ‘blasphemy.’<sup>5</sup> Intellectuals, including the editors of *Dokumentum* (Kassák, Tibor Déry and Gyula Illyés), were frequent targets of such measures throughout the interwar period.

## 2. The Politics of the Depoliticized

Given these limitations on freedom of expression, *Dokumentum* intentionally avoided direct political involvement. The editorial strategy to this effect may be inferred from a comparison with Kassák’s earlier publications and from various remarks made by the magazine’s contributors. *Dokumentum* editor Andor Németh, for instance, described the editorial staff of the magazine as ‘new men who live their extraterritorial and experimental life’ as a ‘foreign embassy of a new society in 1927 in Budapest.’<sup>6</sup> For this reason, Németh noted, they ‘cannot and do not even want to intervene in the internal affairs of the host state.’ The metaphor represents the general condition of avant-garde artists within the political context of Hungary at that time. In addition to Németh’s note, direct references of self-censorship can be found in the correspondence of Tibor Déry in connection with the editing of *Dokumentum*. In a letter addressed to the philosopher Vilmos Szilasi on 19 January 1927, Déry wrote:

I had objections concerning the general character of the magazine (I don’t know if I mentioned it), its attacking edge was not sufficiently specified, by which I mean that its contents are only aggressive by virtue of our existence, but not in form. Certainly the opposition we represent is so general that it cannot be expressed by means of purification or reform and cannot be fitted into the framework of the existing order. But there is an expression of this refusal that is attainable and even fits into the current face of the world: satire. We were unable to imple-

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<sup>5</sup> Balázs Sipos, *Sajtó és hatalom a Horthy-korszakban* [Press and Power in the Horthy Era], Argumentum, Budapest, 2011. See the chapter on ‘The concept of influential media and propaganda’; on ‘The basic features of political publicity’ and on the ‘Press policy in practice: press regulation between 1919 and 1938’.

<sup>6</sup> Andor Németh, Új folyóiratok, régi hangok (rovat) [The section of New Journals, Old Voices], *Láthatár*, 1, 1927, no. 3, 34-35.

# DOKUMENTUM



W. BAUMEISTER

**Művészeti és társadalmi beszámoló**  
**Berichte über Leben und Kunst**  
**Bilan de la vie sociale et artistique**  
**Megjelenik 1927 január ■ Ára 1.60 P**

**Szerkeszti: Kassák Lajos Budapest Sziget u. 16. I. 14**

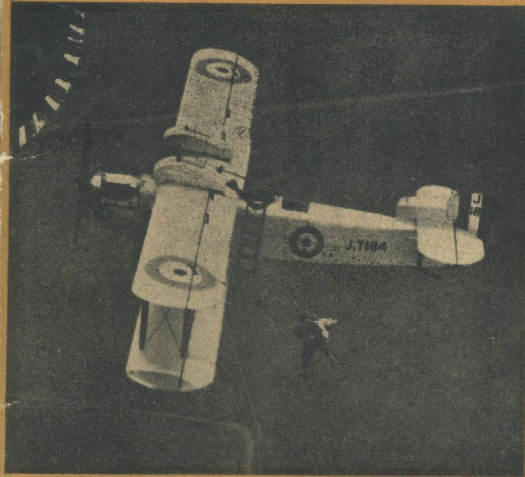
Figure 1. Dokumentum, 1927, no. 2. Front cover designed by Lajos Kassák

ment this idea of mine in the magazine because Kassák, above whom the sword of Damocles always hangs, did not want the first issue to be too conspicuous – what we might call the state of health of our country cannot be written down, you have to watch every word you write if you don't want them to seize [the magazine].<sup>7</sup>

Whatever the truth of Déry's concerns, *Dokumentum* unquestionably touched on politics, if through an idiosyncratic and highly abstract art-theory terminology. The magazine imagined the artist as an engineer, or rather a social researcher. The idea of artistic research embodied the thinking behind *Dokumentum*. Although his notion strikes a parallel with broader international trends, it stands out as unique in Hungarian literary criticism. Accordingly, the agenda of *Dokumentum* suggests that it was intended as a medium through which a new world would be made to appear to contemporary readers. Indeed, as the subtitle of the magazine suggests, it wanted to 'report about art and society' and to 'document' contemporary phenomena. This merely descriptive ambition of *Dokumentum* appears to diverge from the revolutionary spirit of the avant-garde movements of the 1910s. However, the aspiration of 'documenting' contemporary issues considered to be representative of a 'new epoch' is in sync with other avant-garde and modernist journals of the mid-1920s, such as *L'Esprit Nouveau* (Paris), *Manomètre* (Lyon) and *Zenit* (Belgrade–Zagreb). In contrast to the journals of the 1910s, which criticized the artistic, technical, industrial, and scientific features of the contemporary world, the tendency of the magazines of the 1920s was to register and develop these trends. Indeed, it is possible to say that the avant-garde movements of the 1920s paradoxically took up a *rappel à l'ordre* [return to order]. They certainly tended, in general, to promote construction rather than destruction and revolution, but I would argue that it is more appropriate to interpret the main goal of avant-garde movements of this period, as 'creating an order,' rather than as 'returning to order.' The avant-garde movements of

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<sup>7</sup> Ferenc Botka (ed.), *Déry Tibor levelezése, 1927–1935* [The correspondence of Tibor Déry between 1927 and 1935], Balassi, Budapest, 2007, 10-11.



**MŰVÉSZETI ÉS TÁRSADALMI BESZÁMOLÓ**

**BERICHTE ÜBER LEBEN UND NEUE KUNST**

**BILAN DE LA VIE SOCIALE ET ARTISTIQUE**

**SZÉRK : KASSÁK LAJOS  
BUDAPEST 1927 IV. HÓ  
EGYES SZÁM 2 PENGŐ**

**DOKUMENTUM**

Figure 2. Dokumentum, 1927, no. 5. Front cover designed by Lajos Kassák



the 1920s had a coherent conception how to change life through art.<sup>8</sup>

The aim of changing society through art is clearly apparent in *Dokumentum*. Kassák's editorial strategy was to create an apparently descriptive, objective, almost scientific journal that proposed radical and even utopian ideas for Hungarian cultural life. Indeed, the notes published by *Dokumentum* on the contemporary world give a purely imaginary synthesis of modern life. Kassák arbitrarily selected news that supported his own vision on how to create a new world. Accordingly, the major subjects and world affairs that appear in *Dokumentum* primarily represent Kassák's ideas on art and society, several of which are unmistakably connected to radical left-wing ideologies. Among the ideas that found support in Kassák's *Dokumentum* were education of the masses with new art forms, modern urban design that could change people's lives, and the application of rational biopolitics to change life and society. A series of articles about how these ideas were being realized in the Soviet Union left no doubt about the magazine's political sympathies. For Kassák, as for many left wing artists of that time, the Soviet Union seemed to represent the ideal of how to change society through art.

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<sup>8</sup> See: Mark S. Morrisson, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception 1905–1920*, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2001; Anne-Rachel Hermetet, *Les revues italiennes face à la littérature française contemporaine (étude de réception, 1919–1943)*, Honoré Champion Éditeur, Paris, 2003; Vincent Giroud e Paola Pettenella, *Documenti: Futurismo, Dall'avanguardia alla memoria, Atti del Convegno, Rovereto, Mart 13-15 marzo 2003*, Skira, Ginevra-Milano, 2004; Stephen Bury, *Breaking the Rules: the Printed Face of the European Avant Garde*, The British Library, London, 2007; Evanghélia Stead and Hélène Védérine (eds.), *L'Europe des revues (1880–1920)*, PUPS, Maison de la Recherche Université Paris-Sorbonne, Paris, 2008; Anne-Rachel Hermetet, *Pour sortir du chaos: trois revues européennes des années vingt*, Presses Universitaires De Rennes, Rennes, 2009; Robert Scholes and Clifford Wulfman (eds.), *Modernism in the Magazines: an Introduction*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2010; Detlef Mertins and Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923–1926*, Getty, Los Angeles, 2010; Claudia Salaris, *Riviste futuriste*, Collezione Echaurren Salaris, Gli Ori, Pistoia, 2012; Catherine Grenier (ed.), *Modernités plurielles, 1905–1970*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2013; Claudia Salaris, *Futurismi nel mondo*, Collezione Echaurren Salaris, Gli Ori, Pistoia, 2013; and in this volume: Jindřich Toman, 'Permanent Synthesis: László Moholy Nagy's Idea of a Synthetic Journal'

### 3. Avant-Garde Ambitions for Restructuring Hungarian Literary Life in the Mid-1920s

Kassák and his associates founded their magazine as soon as they returned to Hungary. *Dokumentum* was similar to dozens of other periodicals founded at that time. The terms of the amnesty required small magazines to abstain from direct political messages. However, those involved in magazines acted as group of collaborating artists, or even as a movement, and considered themselves representatives of their generation. These new magazines had a clear overall intention to restructure cultural life in Hungary, acting as a group or a movement. Perceiving this, each editor strove to formulate a programme that would distinguish his magazine from the others. This phenomenon also generated a heated debate with the established figures of Hungarian literary affairs. Participants in the debate were obliged to clarify their aesthetic and ideological premises, and in so doing, they established or strengthened their positions in Hungarian cultural life.

#### 3.1. The Self-Positioning of *Dokumentum*

*Dokumentum* attempted to establish its identity and art-renewal strategy in terms of the broad international horizon of its talented young staff. It thus conveyed to its readers an impression of being up-to-date and well connected to the international network of contemporary culture and life. It attempted to demonstrate its ability to connect international initiatives with Hungarian cultural life by carrying articles written and edited in three languages: Hungarian, French and German. By regularly publishing articles from Western-European avant-garde journals, Kassák advertised his position in the European art world (among others *Der Sturm*, *Noi*, *Stavba*, *Dav*, *Bauhaus*, *Manomètre*, *Zenit*, *La Révolution surréaliste*, *L'Esprit Nouveau*, *De Stijl*, *Pásmo*). He also listed his international sources and references at the end of every issue. *Dokumentum* declared that its ability to synthesize 'high art' with contemporary marketing techniques, graphic design and popular culture would make it factor to be reckoned with on the Hungarian art scene. Kassák's project was thus in profound opposition to the prevailing aesthetics of Hungarian cultural life and the crucial distinction of 'high' and 'low' art. Nonetheless, *Dokumentum* maintained that independent, 'pure' art has priority over politics, economics and social affairs. Indeed, the magazine declared that *art* should effect innovations in these fields and not vice versa, thereby provoking the ire of

left-wing party intellectuals who claimed that art should be subordinated to political propaganda and education.

### 3.2. Promoting New Ideas Through Old Debates: Dialogue between *Dokumentum* and the Established Figures of Hungarian Cultural Life

The aims of *Dokumentum* were also voiced beyond the pages of the magazine, particularly in debates among prominent figures of Hungarian cultural life. Kassák strove to air the identity of his magazine and distinguish it from the rest of the literary field by making theoretical statements and engaging in aesthetic debates with other cultural groups. His strategy was thus to effect gradual change in the mind-set of Hungarian readers rather than launch into subversive, shocking avant-garde actions. The extended discussions that went on in literary magazines allowed Kassák to present himself as a key figure in the literary field and an influential voice in the current artistic discourse. He addressed several notions that were current in mainstream cultural life, but ultimately formulated his own interpretation about the role of the artist as the representative of 'new art.' The self-description of *Dokumentum* identified three major debates in which Kassák and his colleagues were involved.

First, *Dokumentum* was active in a debate about the extent to which contemporary Hungarian literature was defined by the struggle between consecutive generations of writers, and what was involved in that struggle. The magazine's first manifesto contrasted the 'young' generation of writers who found their own magazines with the editorial apparatus of the established, moderate modernist magazine *Nyugat*, which had been founded twenty years before. The article clearly suggested that 'young people' should replace their older counterparts, although Kassák attempted to distinguish himself from those of similar ages to him on the editorial staff of *Nyugat* by appealing to the notion of social, rather than biological age. The article treated 'youth' as meaning avant-garde artists, while *Nyugat* was the symbol of older, institutionalized writers. In Kassák's usage, 'energetic youth' ('életerős fiatalság'), opposed to the 'fruitless vegetation' ('gyümölcsstelen vegetálás') of *Nyugat*, was a metaphor for a supposed constant change in cultural life. Thus the 'young' *Dokumentum* should replace the 'old' *Nyugat*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Lajos Kassák, Tibor Déry, Gyula Illyés, József Nádass, Andor Németh, A *Nyugat* húsz éves [The *Nyugat* is twenty years old], *Dokumentum*, 1926, no. 1, 2-3.

Kassák also took part in a debate in the columns of *Népszava* [People's Voice], a journal of the parliamentary social democrat movement. A series of articles published in the mid-1920s compared the relative potential of 'sporting activities' and 'art' for educating the working class. The *Népszava* writers stated that only highly comprehensible, even propagandistic art and poetry could have the kind of educational value for the working class that was offered by sport. In a series of articles for the newspaper, Kassák argued that 'new' – i.e. avant-garde – art was able to educate masses and create a new world and a new society. Kassák remained alone with this opinion, although *Népszava* continued to publish his avant-garde poems.

The third discussion which Kassák entered in the mid-1920s concerned the supposedly 'programmable' art of *Dokumentum*. Indeed, the critics of the moderate modernist *Nyugat* considered *Dokumentum*'s artistic project to be something artificially formulated or designed (*programos* – being programmed) rather than 'inspired' by the supposed 'genius' of individual artists. This view, shared by many contemporary writers, rejected the distinctly avant-garde method of *Dokumentum*, the conception of art as something collective. The conservative, 'official' critics, the 'heteronomous pole'<sup>10</sup> of the literary field also rejected the avant-garde conception of artistic production. Conservative critics condemned *Dokumentum* as an 'artistic tendency imported from abroad' and impossible to reconcile with the national character of the Hungarians.

#### 4. The Hegemonic Discourse and the Stigmatization of Avant-Garde Art

Arguments against the avant-garde art represented by Kassák, whether put forward by moderate modernist and conservative figures, all tended to follow a logic based on the instrumentalization of essentialist aesthetics. The ostensibly aesthetic arguments of both groups set out to defend the status quo of a highly institutionalized cultural life and to reject any restructuring of the literary field according to the ideas of what they decried as politically charged artistic movements. Both groups contrasted the substance of art with the supposedly programmed, artificial, even imported ideas of the avant-garde artists. For the moderate modernists, the substance that gave validity to an artwork was the 'genius' of the artist;

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<sup>10</sup> Using the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu.

for the conservative critics, it was ‘national character’. One can deduce that the hegemonic discourse at that time was informed by an essentialist conception of art. Although the moderate modernist writers of *Nyugat* opposed the conservative intellectuals (and vice versa) in many respects, they used very similar means to condemn Kassák’s initiative.

The nature of essentialist aesthetics offers an explanation of the analogous interpretations that moderate modernist and conservative writers applied to *Dokumentum*. For example, both groups compared *Dokumentum* to Italian Futurism. The stigma of being a ‘Futurist’ associated with any kind of avant-garde initiative in Hungary from the 1910s determined the framework in which Kassák’s work was interpreted. Futurism in Hungarian criticism meant a new, but destructive artistic initiative, as well as something ‘fantastic,’ a subject fit for tabloid newspapers rather than ‘serious’ literary criticism. While the moderate modernist critics of *Nyugat* connected Kassák’s work to Futurism through its adoption of artificial design in opposition to artistic inspiration, the conservative critics associated *Dokumentum* with the supposedly ‘incomprehensible,’ even ‘mentally ill’ and ‘idiotic’ characterizations of the Futurists.<sup>11</sup>

## 5. Conclusion: Declining Movements, Emerging Writers

The ambitious avant-garde project of Kassák and his colleagues did not meet with acceptance in the Hungarian literary field, and *Dokumentum* ceased publication after five issues. However, the former staff continued their activity as contributors to *Nyugat*, later becoming members of staff and even editor-in-chief. Even Kassák’s former co-editors abandoned their radical avant-garde ambitions and got closer to the aesthetically inclusive *Nyugat*. Kassák himself published in *Nyugat* in the late 1920s and 1930s. Through his autobiography, published in instalments in *Nyugat* starting in the mid-1920s, he became the symbol of the socialist autodidact, a self-made man in Hungarian culture. The former contributors to *Dokumentum* pursued successful writing careers, and some were included among the foremost writers of the late 1920s. Their activity was still vigorously opposed by conservative critics, but they stabilized their

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<sup>11</sup> See: Gábor Dobó, A futurizmus Magyarországon, 1909–1944 [Futurism in Hungary, 1909–1944], *Irodalomtörténeti Közlemények*, 2016, no. 6, 709-728; Gábor Dobó, ‘Framing Futurism in Hungary (1909–1944)’, in Günter Berghaus (ed.), *International Yearbook of Futurism Studies*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 2018, forthcoming.

position in the literary field around the *Nyugat* circle. This was made possible by an unspoken concession: they abandoned any collective aspiration to destabilizing the cultural status quo in Hungary.

## Tadeusz Peiper's Strategy for Zwrotnica

'He came swarthy and bearded like a Spaniard,  
He was visited at night by the Muse who told him: Write'

Bruno Jasiński<sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Attractive Stranger

After six and a half years in Spain and six months in Vienna, Tadeusz Peiper returned to Kraków some time (not known exactly) at the beginning of 1921. His Vienna chronicles, published in Madrid's *La Publicidad*, come to an end in November 1920, and his first correspondence from Kraków was published by the Madrid based daily *El Sol* on 17 January 1921.<sup>2</sup> So it seems likely that the poet was already back in his home town to see in the New Year. He almost immediately took up journalism, continuing in the profession he had adopted in Spain. Peiper already hinted at such plans while still in Madrid, in letters to his slightly older cousin Emil Breiter, a literary critic writing for the Warsaw based *Skamander*. In November 1919, writing on paper with the letterhead of Madrid's Ateneo hotel, Peiper mentioned how his publication in *Gazeta Polska* [Polish Gazette], where his cousin had recommended him, had been mutilated by the editors. Two months later, Peiper wrote again:

My heart felt thanks for your willingness to help in relations with publishers. I would gladly write for *Skamander*, but first I would have to acquaint myself with that publication [...]. Would they find space for sharp criticism – most sharp! – of Sobeski's book about Don Quixote? For *Świat* [World] I shall begin by sending you [...]

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: Jalu Kurek, *Mój Kraków* [My Kraków], Literackie, Kraków, 1978, 129.

<sup>2</sup> The most complete bibliography of Peiper's publications was compiled by Stanisław Jaworski, in Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkich i jeszcze o czymś. Artykuły, eseje, wywiady (1918–1939)*, Literackie, Kraków, 1974, 629-650. Beata Lentas has listed Peiper's Hispanic publications in *Tadeusz Peiper w Hiszpanii, Słowo/Obraz Terytoria*, Gdańsk, 2011, 145-157. This also contains detailed thoughts on the poet's departure from Spain and return to Poland, 22-24.

an article about Landowska's visit to Madrid, along with some photographs.<sup>3</sup>



Tadeusz Peiper

Figure 1. Tadeusz Peiper, photography from the early 1920s

We thus see a journalist and publicist, a thirty-year-old newcomer to the recently reborn Republic. But Peiper was also an aspiring poet who would shortly find himself at the centre of bohemian circles in Kraków and Warsaw. As early as June 1921, his name, admittedly distorted (Tad. Teiper), was listed among the editors of *Formiści* [The Formists], the most important periodical of the moderns, and featured on its pages as the translator of a poem by Humberto Rivas.<sup>4</sup> 'Swarthy as a Spaniard' quickly become a popular personality in the Formist-futurist milieu of Kraków, and later of Warsaw. This was a period, starting during the war and continuing into the first years of Poland's independence, abundant with the arrivals of much better-known writers and artists, many of them survivors of revolutionary

Russia. As Tymon Niesiołowski recollected, Kraków and Zakopane were literally invaded by newcomers.<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of 1921, the local scene in terms of poetry and modern art was shaped above all by the Formist group and its exhi-

<sup>3</sup> Both these letters are stored in the Museum of Literature in Warsaw, ref. 680. My thanks to Dr. Jacek Olczyk for bringing these materials to my notice.

<sup>4</sup> From the most recent Spanish poetry, H. Rivas, *Ocean*, *Formiści*, 1921, no. 6, 16; Emilio Quintana and Jorge Mojarro Romero, Tadeusz Peiper como traductor de la poesía ultraísta al polaco (1921–1922), *1611 – Revista de Historia de la Traducción*, 2009, no. 3, <http://www.traduccionliteraria.org/1611/art/quintana-mojarro.htm>. These indicate that the choice of Rivas was a gesture of good will to *Ultra's* editor, at the same time a friend of Władysław Jahl.

<sup>5</sup> Tymon Niesiołowski, *Wspomnienia*, Czytelnik, Warsaw, 1963, 90-91.



bitions, the Kraków and Warsaw based Futurists, the Warsaw 'Pod Piekadorem' club and Skamander group, the Poznan Expressionists, and the Jewish circle of avant-garde artists and writers. At that time, Futurism and Formism in Kraków were still vibrant movements to which aspiring poets could turn. If we are to believe that Breiter, 'being a member of the bohemian painters' circle under the sign of rebellious art'<sup>6</sup>, was the originator of the name Formists, we may presume that he was also the person responsible for introducing the Polish ex-pat from Madrid to Kraków's artistic circles. And it would be most surprising if Peiper were not present at the fourth exhibition of the Formists, which opened at the headquarters of Kraków's TPSP (Society of Friends of Fine Arts) in January, shortly after his return.

While most artists were about ten years older than Peiper, many of the Futurists, with their debuts and first publications of poetry already behind them, were his juniors. Many commentators cited this as an explanation for the delayed-start complex that troubled Peiper. Karol Irzykowski ribbed him on this point, and the author of *Nowe usta* [The new mouth] himself wrote repeatedly about its consequences, complaining about the theft of manuscripts, his famous little suitcase, a subject of dispute and conjecture, in which the poet's earlier literary output had allegedly been stored.

The appearance of Tadeusz Peiper in Kraków may have been quite an event – he arrived, after all, from a part of the world completely unknown to Poland in terms of modern art and literature. Having resided in Madrid in the company of Władysław Jahl and Marian Paszkiewicz, important participants in the Ultraist movement, the newcomer with the 'Spanish beard' had experienced something more than a stay in Paris would have afforded him. This was less the result of his familiarity with the modern culture of Spain, which was, after all, compared to Paris or Berlin, as provincial as Kraków or Warsaw, than of his encounters with Latin American modernism – the poets and artists of Argentina, Chile and Uruguay! If we add to this Peiper's role as 'correspondent from Poland' in *Ultra*, the leading journal of Madrid's avant-garde, his name included in the editorial line-up in May 1921 alongside those of Jorge Luis Borges and the editors of Prague's *Volné směry*, it becomes easier to comprehend how this author, unknown to almost anyone in Po-

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<sup>6</sup> Jalu Kurek, *Mój Kraków*, 118.

land, was viewed as a desirable associate in the new art and literature circles.

Peiper was to recollect the gloom, despair and suicidal thoughts that accompanied him following his return, the primary reason apparently being the loss of his prior literary output.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, he had a most attractive and charming personality. 'An eminently Mediterranean handsomeness: an olive complexion, curly jet-black hair, and the beard he brought from Spain.'<sup>8</sup> 'The pleasing, slim figure of a Frenchman or Italian, a swarthy brunet, with an artistic style of dress. [...] Brilliantly intelligent, and assertive in his opinions.'<sup>9</sup> 'It's hard to forget a man with such a mercurial, absorbent mind, with such an extraordinarily perverse manner and way of expressing his opinions, which are always independent, ever contrary to those generally held.'<sup>10</sup> 'In Peiper's head [...] burned a fierce genius, from which sparks flew, shining new light on everything about which he wrote.'<sup>11</sup> In those days, there were few in Kraków or anywhere else in Poland who could boast such cosmopolitan habits, an insight far beyond local parochialism, or such an aura of exoticism!

'And here we are, with our backwardness, apathy, boredom, and a strange faintness of soul and heart, in a word, a backwoods, and a hundred times worse than before the war' – wrote Konrad Winkler in the last issue of *Formists*, dated June 1921. Peiper participated in the creation of that issue, which was devoted to foreign art. Peiper was attributed with the translation of a poem by Rivas, and probably also submitted to the editors a woodcut by Norah Borges which had already been printed in Madrid's *Ultra*. For the editors, especially Tytus Czyżewski, it was important at that time to break away from mere local news and bring in associates and materials from abroad. The magazine had begun operating in the autumn of 1919, and its editors had inevitably been cut off from the world due to the war. The main centre from which they could glean cur-

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7 Wanda Kragen, 'Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Peiperze', in Maria Janion and Stanisław Rosiek (eds.), *Maski*, Wydawnictwo Morskie, Gdańsk, 1986, 231 and 240-241.

8 Zygmunt Leńniodorski, *Wspomnienia i zapiski*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 1959, 105.

9 Jalu Kurek, *Mój Kraków*, 122.

10 Wanda Kragen, *Wspomnienie o Tadeuszu Peiperze*, 231.

11 Julian Przyboś, 'Zwrotnica Tadeusza Peipera', in Janina Bogucka-Ordyńcowa et al., *Cyganeria i polityka. Wspomnienia Krakówskie 1919–1939*, Czytelnik, Warsaw, 1964, 28.

rent information on the new art was Paris, via their temporary correspondent there, Louis Marcoussis.<sup>12</sup>

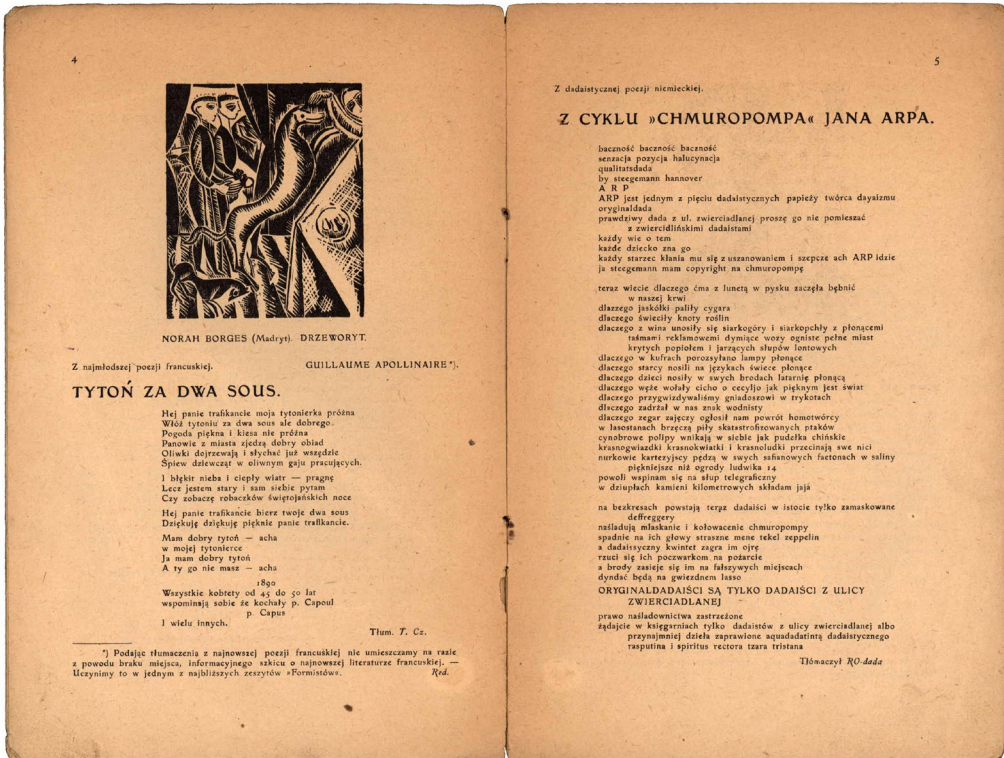


Figure 2. Norah Borges' woodcut in *Formiści* 1921

An important ritual for the emerging network of avant-garde centres in Europe and beyond was mutual acknowledgment of complimentary copies of periodicals devoted to the new art and literature, sent back and forth between editors. Another was the devotion of a separate page to reprints of exceptionally graphic front pages of fraternal magazines.<sup>13</sup> Czyżewski

<sup>12</sup> See Przemysław Strożek, *Pismo 'Formiści' i początki międzynarodowych kontaktów polskiej awangardy (1919–1921)*, *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, 2013, 76-79.

<sup>13</sup> Juan Manuel Bonet and Monika Poliwka write about this 'network' in 'Czasopisma awangardy w Europie', in Paulina Kurc-Maj (ed.), *Zmiana pola widzenia. Druk nowoczesny i awangarda*, exhibition catalogue, Art Museum in Lodz, Lodz, 2014, 166-194.

and the entire editorial board in Kraków were delighted to be able to read in *Ultra*, in the column entitled *Publications received*, mention of issues 4, 5 and 6 of their *Formists* periodical, along with information about ‘ultraist poetry beautifully translated’ by Peiper, and the inclusion of a woodcut by Borges.<sup>14</sup> However, issue number six turned out to be their last, and the closure of the magazine was a clear sign of crisis within the group.

## 2. A ‘Spaniard’ Among the Modernists

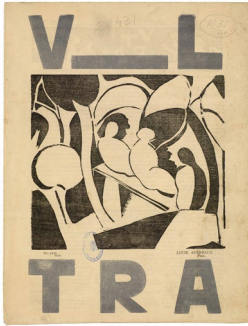


Figure 3. *Ultra*, 1921, no. 18. Front cover designed by Lucie Auerbach and Władysław Jahl

Within a few months of his return, Peiper became a fully-fledged member of the new poetry and art circles in Poland. He wrote newspaper and magazine articles about Spain, participated in poetry readings, and in November, appeared at the opening of the Gałka Muszkatowa [Nutmeg] club of the Futurists and Formists. A little earlier, in the summer of 1921, he met up in Warsaw with Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, probably while entering into talks with *Skamander*, the editors having announced (in the winter of that year) their intention of launching translations of the new Spanish poetry. However, the poet backed out of these plans, declaring his allegiance to *Nowa Sztuka* [New Art], an ephemeral magazine edited by Iwaszkiewicz and Anatol Stern. Peiper’s name appeared on the magazine’s editorial line-up without his knowledge, for which he reproached them years later, but he nevertheless provided a short text on Moïse Kisling, and above all, a selection of verse by Spanish poets in his own translation, with a foreword entitled ‘New Spanish poetry.’<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Ultra*, 1921, no. 16. For a history of Polish avant-garde magazines see: Przemysław Strożek, Cracow and Warsaw: Becoming of the Avant-garde, in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker and Christian Weikop (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*. Volume III: Europe 1880–1940, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York, 2013, 1184–1206.

<sup>15</sup> See Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, 78–81. Tadeusz Kłak discusses in detail the circumstances surrounding the appearance of the ‘New Art’ and Peiper’s involvement in *Czasopisma awangardy. Część I: 1919–1931*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1978, 14–19.

Quite a lot has been written about these translations, but some points concerning them should be emphasized. One's attention is drawn to the choice of poets translated – among them Spaniards (Juan Rivas-Panedas, Humberto Rivas, Guillermo de Torre, Ernesto López Parra and Rafael Lasso de la Vega), the Chilean Vicente Huidobro and the Argentinean Jorge Luis Borges. All of the poems came from the journal *Ultra*<sup>16</sup> except for Huidobro's, which were taken from books that Peiper had brought back from Spain or received in the post. As a correspondent for the Ultraists' magazine, he must have received copies of it, and he also corresponded with Huidobro from the beginning of 1921, to whom in April of that year he confirmed receipt of the books *Ecuadorial* and *La Torre Eiffel*, beautifully produced with a cover by Robert Delaunay.<sup>17</sup> As the new – and indeed the only – expert on matters of modern Spanish and Latin American culture, Peiper must have found it vitally necessary to obtain new publications. 'The effects of the war [...] have left the intellectuals of the Eastern European countries starving for information. [...] We are alienated from the West by a most disconsolate compulsion of silence' – he wrote to Huidobro in April 1921. In encouraging this Chilean poet, so important for the new poetry in Spain, Peiper was backed up by Władysław Jahl, the most important graphic editor and illustrator of the Ultraist movement after Rafael Barradas, who wrote letters from Madrid to the founder of Creationism in February and March of that year.<sup>18</sup>

The article on the new Spanish poetry was an important publication for the poet; written with precision and zest, it placed him in the role of expert on the new literary trends in Europe. It included the first use of the term 'avant-garde' on Polish soil.<sup>19</sup> These Spanish poems also seem to have had some influence on modern Polish poetry at this time, as shows up

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<sup>16</sup> Quintana and Mojarro Romero conducted a detailed analysis, *Ibid*.

<sup>17</sup> Beata Lentas came forward with Peiper's preserved correspondence to Huidobro, together with its translation into Polish, *Ibid*, 161-166. The Chilean poet's letters to Peiper have not been found.

<sup>18</sup> Jahl's unpublished letters are to be found in the archive Fundacion Vicente Huidobro in the Museo de Santiago, Chile, Ref. C347, C782. Published in Piotr Rypson (ed.), *Papież awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper w Hiszpanii, Polsce, Europie*, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warszawa, 2015, 238-249.

<sup>19</sup> Tadeusz Kłak, *Czasopisma awangardy*, 22.

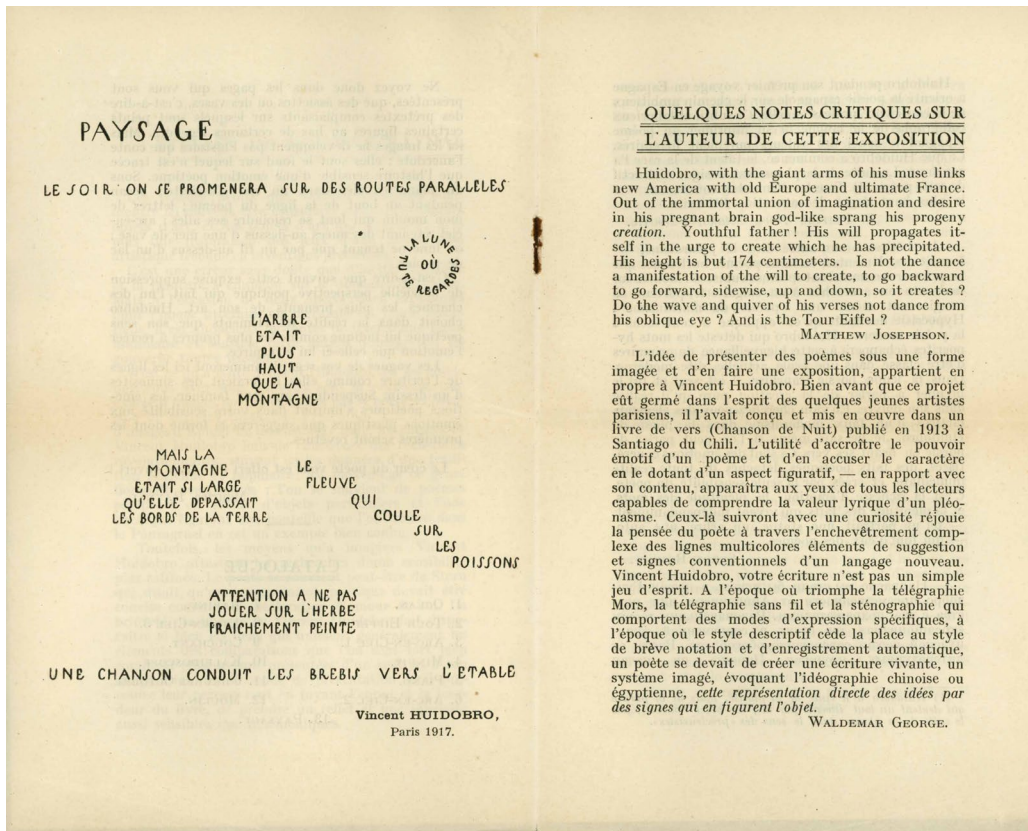


Figure 4. Catalogue of Vincente Huidobro's Paris exhibition, 1922

in a comparison of Huidobro's *Telephone* with Tytus Czyżewski's *Lalka* [Doll] published in the same year, 1922.<sup>20</sup> Contact with the Chilean poet was important to the Pole at this stage. True, Peiper spoke about a conflict between them concerning the term 'symbolism', which he had used to describe Huidobro's poetics, but this did not prevent his correspondent from twice citing Peiper's laudatory comments in his publications. Already in May 1922, a modest catalogue of an exhibition of Huidobro's visual poetry in the Paris gallery of G. L. Manuel Frères featured a portrait drawn by Picasso, an introduction by the renowned critic and promoter of Cubism Maurice Raynal, and comments by Waldemar George, Matthew Josephson, the Russian critic and translator Sergei Romoff, Juan Larrea,

<sup>20</sup> Tytus Czyżewski, *Noc—dzień. Mechaniczny instynkt elektryczny* [Night—day. Mechanical electric instinct], Gebethner i Wolff, Kraków, 1922, 38.



Figure 5. *Ultra*, 1921, no. 18. Tadeusz Peiper's article

Gerardo Diego and – Tadeusz Peiper.<sup>21</sup> Four years later, Huidobro reprinted Peiper's text in the book *Vientos contrarios*.<sup>22</sup>

The influence of Spanish and Latin American Ultraism (Huidobro and Borges) on Peiper's poetic concepts remains a point of debate and has not been sufficiently researched.<sup>23</sup> Although his publication in the November 1921 issue of Madrid's *Ultra* was restricted to a review of Leon Chwistek's book *Wielość rzeczywistości* [Multiple realities],<sup>24</sup> he conscientiously fulfilled his duties as its correspondent, since consecutive issues of *Ultra* mention receiving the Polish magazines – *Skamander*, *Nowa Sztuka* and the special Futurist edition *Nuż w bżuhu* [Nife in the stumick].<sup>25</sup> He also sent a considerable

<sup>21</sup> *Exposition de poèmes de Vincent Huidobro*, exhibition catalogue, Galerie G. L. Manuel Frères présentes au Théâtre Edouard VII, Paris, [16 mai – 2 juin] 1922. Huidobro's poems were published in the portfolio *Salle XIV*, published as a facsimile in 2001 by Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.

<sup>22</sup> Vicente Huidobro, *Vientos contrarios*, Nascimento, Santiago de Chile, 1926, 14.

<sup>23</sup> The debate concerning these Spanish influences has been going on for decades and reaches as far back as the Baroque poetics of Góngora and the renaissance of Gongorism in the 1920s. See Agnieszka Kluba, Peiper w Madrycie, czyli hiszpański topos, *Przestrzenie Teorii*, 2011, no. 17, 163-192. The author challenges the relevance of the influence of Huidobro's poetry on Peiper. On the other hand, Krystyna Rodowska points to the links between the Pole's poetic concepts and the four basic principles of Ultraism, as formulated by Jorge Luis Borges, *Hiszpański ultraizm po polsku (z Tadeuszem Peiperem w roli głównej)*, *Literatura na Świecie*, 1996, no. 3, 312. Likewise, the relationship between the work of Ramón Gómez de la Serna, the author of *gregerías*, and the Peiper concept of metaphor deserve attention. Peiper must have come across numerous publications by the leader of the poetic salon in Madrid's Café Pombo, although in Poland, news about him only appeared in an article by Edward Boyé, *Współczesna literatura hiszpańska*, *Wiadomości Literackie*, 1927, no. 15, 1-3.

<sup>24</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, Una nueva teoría de arte [A new art theory], *Ultra*, 1921, no. 18, 1.

<sup>25</sup> Issues 21 and 24, January and March 1922.

amount of correspondence to Spanish and Catalanian newspapers, finding it a means of bolstering his financial situation. Nevertheless, he failed to make much of a name for himself among the avant-garde artists in Spain and was outshone in this respect by Władysław Jahl, one of the three leading graphic artists of the Ultraists, and the very well known and respected Marian Paszkiewicz, an oracle on matters of modern painting.<sup>26</sup> Peiper's name is almost totally absent from publications devoted to the poetry and art of that period. Better remembered was Lucia Jahl (née Auerbach), the most mysterious figure among the Polish community of Madrid, to whom the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez, the future Nobel Prize winner, dedicated a beautiful reminiscence.<sup>27</sup>

In the absence of archives from that period, it is difficult to determine whether the author, engrossed in national affairs, and mixing with the Formists and Futurists, maintained contacts with his previous circle of associates after 1921. He certainly corresponded with Jahl, who helped him in his efforts for new publications, and perhaps also with Paszkiewicz, who was very active in those years. Nothing by Peiper was published in the magazine *Horizonte* (1922–1923), with which both Poles were strongly linked; their names appearing in the pages of that Madrid based periodical of the Ultraists, edited by such individuals – translated by Peiper – as P. Garfias and J. Rivas-Panedas, along with a galaxy of innovators in literature and art such as Gómez de la Serna, Machado, Buñuel, Barradas, Borges, Alberti and Lorca.<sup>28</sup> Only in its third issue, dated December 1922, in a list of the magazines received by *Horizonte's* editors, is there a mention of issue 3 of *Zwrotnica*, with the note 'Un estudio de Peiper interesante sobre la moderna metaphor' [An interesting study by Peiper on modern metaphor].

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<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Emilio Quintana and Ewa Palka, Jahl y Paszkiewicz en Ultra (1921–1922). Dos polacos en el nacimiento de la vanguardia española, *Rilce*, 1995, no. 11, 120–138. Currently in preparation is an article by Piotr Rypson, Marjan Paszkiewicz – zapomniany krytyk, *Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie*.

<sup>27</sup> Juan Ramón Jiménez, *Españoles de tres mundos*, Editorial Losada, Buenos Aires, 1942, no. 1119 – Lucia Jahl (1926). Peiper's name does not even come up in Ernesto Giménez Caballero's paper on Spain's links with Polish culture (*Gaceta Literaria* 1927, dated 15 December), although the future Falangist mentions Jahl, Paszkiewicz, as well as Słonimski, Pankiewicz, Zegadłowicz, Irzykowski and others.

<sup>28</sup> *Horizonte. Revista de arte 1922–1923*, Facsimile edition, Editorial Renacimiento, Seville, 1991.



### 3. Switchmen

By the spring of 1922, Tadeusz Peiper was engrossed in a new venture, a magazine of which he was to be the only sovereign editor. The circumstances surrounding the creation of *Zwrotnica* that spring, and the content of the material published in it, have been repeatedly described and analysed,<sup>29</sup> and I will only highlight the issues relevant to the avant-garde strategy of the author, editor and theorist.

It could be argued that Peiper immediately set out bring a close to the first phase of the offensive mounted by the new art and literature in Poland, as turbulent as it was eclectic. Generously endowed with the gift of meticulous, analytical thinking, and precisely planning the titles of his next publications, he wisely gave his magazine a title that, with its reference to the switching of tracks, was as technical and directional as it was dashing. He himself wrote that the stimulus for this was his disgust with the eclecticism

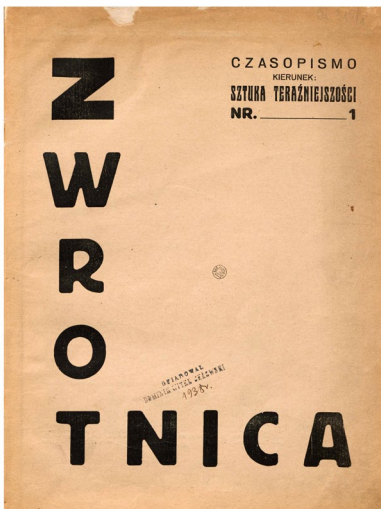


Figure 6. *Zwrotnica*, 1922, no. 1. Front cover designed by Tadeusz Peiper

of the 'New Art', in which 'newly acquired thinking and stale thoughts were mixed together so bizarrely that they resulted in a 'confusion of notions' [...].'<sup>30</sup> True, in the first issue's editorial manifesto, Peiper still kept to generalities: '*Zwrotnica* aims to be a turn towards the present. It means to be the womb of a new soul. It wishes to sew into our humans a nerve sensitive to the present,' and he ended with an open question: 'the rest depends solely on the publication. So let us be prescient: *ZWROTNICA* will be what it wishes to be, and something else besides. But what?'<sup>31</sup> However, in the content of the six issues that he published between May 1922 and October 1923, we perceive a consistently implemented strategy.

<sup>29</sup> See Stanisław Jaworski's comments, in Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, Literackie, Kraków, 1972, and Tadeusz Kłak, *Czasopisma awangardy*, 22-33. An International Congress of Progressive Art was held in Düsseldorf in May 1922.

<sup>30</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, 314.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 28-29.

The editor attracted a considerable group of artists and writers to *Zwrotnica*. The magazine found room for Futurists from Kraków and Warsaw: Tytus Czyżewski, Stanisław Młodożeniec, Bruno Jasieński, Aleksander Wat and Anatol Stern, and Formists: August Zamoyski, Zygmunt Waliszewski, Leon Dołżycki, Henryk Gotlib, Tymon Niesiołowski, Leon Chwistek and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz. This circle, with their energy and their optimism concerning the future, were not only close to Peiper's heart,<sup>32</sup> but essential if he was to gather relevant editorial material.

The Futurists had shortly before, in November 1921, published their second, scandalous special edition *Nuż w bżuhu* [Nife in the stumick], in which Peiper's name appeared. As Julian Przyboś wrote, 'so it might have seemed that a periodical edited by Peiper was just another tribune for the Futurists. Only a careful reader could then distinguish the editor's intention from futurist manifestations.'<sup>33</sup> Finding himself at the centre of the new art, the editor of *Zwrotnica* was aware that the Formists group, as had just been announced by Chwistek, was winding down<sup>34</sup> and that the Futurists were losing momentum. He mentioned the occurrence of a split in the first issue of *Zwrotnica*. Experiencing at first hand the elemental, anarchic Futurist formula, devoid as it was of a strong theoretical basis, Peiper could also see in the Ultraists he knew so well a movement whose genesis and heterogeneous nature were similar to those of its Polish counterpart.<sup>35</sup>

The only visible thread that connected *Zwrotnica* with the Madrid periodical was the graphic layout of the cover page, with its title composed of large-caps, broken in half (to emphasize the intention of altering the

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<sup>32</sup> On this subject see Przemysław Strożek, *Marinetti i futuryzm w Polsce 1909–1939*, IS PAN, Warszawa, 2012, 119.

<sup>33</sup> Julian Przyboś, 'Zwrotnica' Tadeusza Peipera, 29.

<sup>34</sup> Leon Chwistek, *Tytus Czyżewski a kryzys formizmu* [Tytus Czyżewski and Formism's Crisis], Gebethner i Wolf, Kraków, 1922; on the break-up of the Formists group see Marek Bartelik, *Early Polish Modern Art. Unity in multiplicity*, Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York, 2005, 83-85.

<sup>35</sup> See Inés Artola, Kontrasty, konwergencje I przypadki: formiści i ultraiści, in Piotr Rypson (ed.), *Papież awangardy*, 150-181. On futurist influences in Spain see Juan Agustín Mancebo Roca, La influencia del futurismo en España, XVI. *Congreso Nacional de Historia del Arte*, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria 2006, <http://www.uclm.es/profesorado/juanmancebo/descarga/publicaciones/LainfluenciadelfuturismoenEspa%C3%B1a.pdf>.

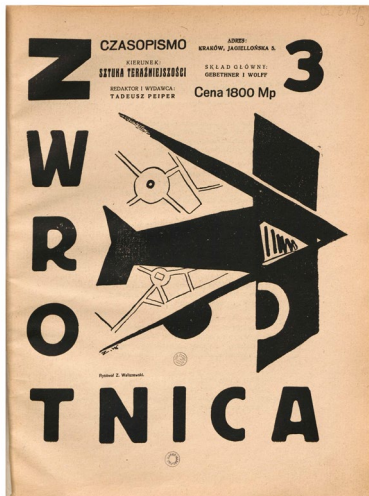


Figure 7. *Zwrotnica*, 1922, no. 3. Front cover with an illustration by Zygmunt Waliszewski

direction of art's development) and graphics or drawings by various artists in turn. The large format, although smaller than *Ultra's*, also distinguished *Zwrotnica* from among the more modest Polish publications devoted to the new art. Peiper himself designed the covers and layout, emphasizing the economics of print principle, and anticipating some of the principles of functional printing.

It is significant that his recent comrades from Madrid never appeared on the pages of *Zwrotnica*. Peiper was looking for totally new allies to shape the course he was taking. The main characters here were mostly to be artists: Władysław Strzemiński (who, having left revolutionary Russia, arrived in Vilnius at the begin-

ning of 1922), Kazimir Malevich, Fernand Léger and the Purists Amédée Ozenfant and Jeanneret, defining at that time new directions for art after cubism,<sup>36</sup> along with the young Mieczysław Szczuka. It was their images and texts (as well as articles the editor devoted to them) that illustrated the direction defined in Peiper's famous manifesto *Miasto. Masa. Maszyna* [City, Mass and Machine], which filled much of the second issue of *Zwrotnica*. This put forward the basic postulates: the organic construction of a work, harmonizing with social structure and urbanization, recognition of the links between aesthetics and economy, and a re-evaluation of the importance of technology for creative work. In developing his

<sup>36</sup> And having, in those years, an increasing influence on the younger generation of artists in Northern Europe, from Denmark to the Baltic states; see G. C. Fabre, T. Hansen and G. E. Moerland (eds.), *Electromagnetic. Modern Art in Northern Europe 1918–1931*, exhibition catalogue, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Høvikodden and Kumu Art Museum, Tallinn, Hatje Canz Verlag, Ostfindern, 2013. The French artist probably also inspired Mila Elin, who designed costumes for Peiper's theatrical play *Szósta! Szósta!* [Sixth! Sixth!], published in *Głos Literacki* [Literary Voice], 1928, 22–24. The only surprising thing is the absence of Henryk Berlewi from the authors of *Zwrotnica*, perhaps owing to the artist's absence from Poland at that time.

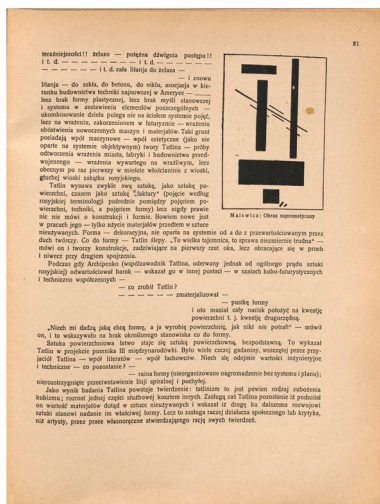


Figure 8. *Zwrotnica*, 1922, no. 3. Władysław Strzemiński's article with an illustration by Kasimir Malevich

theory, Peiper introduced new concepts to the aesthetic discourse, and his chosen artists proved the best possible partners.

For the young Julian Przyboś, 'the most important event [...] was the inclusion in issue number 3, and so in 1922, of Władysław Strzemiński's article *Notes on Russian art*, illustrated with prints of lithographs by Kazimir Malevich.'<sup>37</sup> The painter sent his article from Vilnius, asking Peiper at the same time to 'involve himself in bringing Malevich, our compatriot, to Poland [...]'. Paving the way for Strzemiński, who would soon become another pillar of avant-garde art in Poland, the editor showed an excellent sense of timing, at the same time establishing cooperation with the creator of Suprematism in Russia and widening his circle of contacts to

include some totally new forces. In the next issue (February 1923), alongside the second and final part of the Strzemiński article, featuring the works of Alexandr Drevin and Katarzyna Kobro, appeared Mieczysław Szczuka's manifesto and reproductions of his sculptures. This Warsaw based Constructivist artist very much agreed with Peiper's contentions, emphasizing the importance of material resources and technology in art and the inseparability of creative and social issues.<sup>38</sup> He had probably been recommended to the poet by Strzemiński, then preparing together with Vytautas Kairiūkštis an Exhibition of New Art in Vilnius (May 1923). The exhibition catalogue featured a truncated version of a text originally printed in *Zwrotnica*.<sup>39</sup> Thus the material included in the fourth issue of *Zwrotnica* prepared the ground for the reception of the first exhibition of Polish Constructivists. Kairiūkštis also made an attempt to cooperate

<sup>37</sup> Julian Przyboś, 'Zwrotnica' Tadeusza Peipera, 32. See *Zwrotnica*, 1922, no. 3, 79-82 and Andrzej Turowski, *Malewicz w Warszawie*, Universitas, Kraków, 2002, 268-270.

<sup>38</sup> *Zwrotnica*, 1923, no. 4, 104-106.

<sup>39</sup> See Janina Ładnowska (ed.), *W 70. rocznicę Wystawy Nowej Sztuki. Wilno*, exhibition catalogue, Art Museum in Lodz, Lodz, 1993.

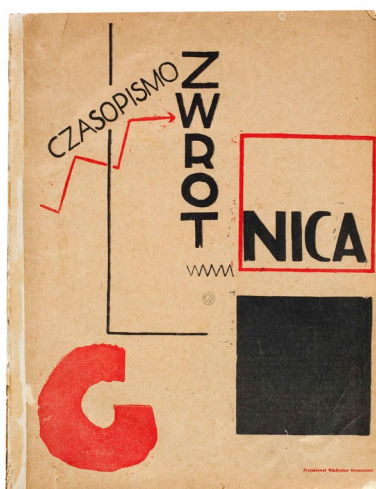


Figure 9. *Zwrotnica*, 1923, no. 6. Front cover designed by Władysław Strzemiński

with *Zwrotnica* at this time, preparing designs for the cover of the next, fifth issue, but Peiper did not, in the end, use any of them.<sup>40</sup>

Completing an important stage of the editor's strategy was a summary of Futurism in the sixth and final issue of *Zwrotnica* (October 1923). This covered the main objectives of the programme and its achievements, dotting the i's and crossing the last t's concerning the finiteness of the movement. It included texts and reproductions of works by Italian Futurists – Umberto Boccioni, Fortunato Depero and Giacomo Balla, a letter from Filippo Tommaso Marinetti,<sup>41</sup> and balance sheets of the movement's successes and failures, drawn up by Jasieński, Czyżewski and Peiper. This

exceptionally important issue featured an excellent design by Władysław Strzemiński. In his 'narrative' cover, as Andrzej Turowski was to describe it, the first part of the word 'Zwrotnica,' traditionally broken in half, was made even more dynamic by a rampant, broken directional arrow, its remaining fragment being located in one of two squares, probably a reference to Malevich's compositions.<sup>42</sup> It is also significant that the last text of this final issue was devoted to the Vilnius exhibition of the New Art. The penetrating Irzykowski, tracing Peiper's activities with some reserve, but also respect, reacted at once to the appearance of this issue with a review in *Wiadomości Literackie* [Literary News] entitled 'The liquidation of Futurism.'<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> See Viktoras Liutkus et al., *Vytautas Kairiūkštis i jego otoczenie. Vytautas Kairiūkštis and his milieu*, exhibition catalogue, Lietuvos dailės muziejus, Vilnius, 2010, 106, Viktoras Liutkus also writes about them in *Vytauto Kairiūkščio (1890-1961) suprematistinė kūryba ir fotomontažai*, *Menotyra*, 2008, no. 2, 6.

<sup>41</sup> See Przemysław Strożek, *Marinetti i futurizm w Polsce*, 123-125.

<sup>42</sup> See Andrzej Turowski, *Malewicz w Warszawie*, 270-271.

<sup>43</sup> Karol Irzykowski, *Pisma*, Literackie, Kraków, 1976, 155. This did not make Peiper popular among the innovators of poetry, especially those in Warsaw, who preferred to launch a frontal attack on Irzykowski.

#### 4. 'Zwrotnica Decided to Be an Organ of Construction'<sup>44</sup>

Another important issue that needs to be emphasized was Peiper's attitude to the state, a subject that was almost totally absent or even ostentatiously rejected by the majority of young participants in the new art movement. *Zwrotnica's* editor distanced himself from the anarchism and lack of restraint shown by *Pikador* and the Futurists; in his fourth issue, in February 1923, he repeatedly defined the role of new art in the construction of the new state. 'Our country is now in a completely new position. Everything is being built from scratch. And it has been a long time since our country enjoyed an atmosphere so favourable for the flowering of the new. We mean to take advantage of this general momentum and create something new of our own,'<sup>45</sup> he wrote. His demands for construction, linking issues of aesthetics and poetics with the momentum of organizing the new state, just as much as his deliberations linking the famous '3 x M' (City, Mass and Machine) slogan with social issues and socialism, were of a positivist nature. Peiper also wanted to see the presence of just such state-building elements in Polish Futurism, which

feels the demands of the time in which we live, which is not irrelevant to the task of building a vital Poland, i.e. appropriate to the demands of life today, and to the need for building it from scratch, i.e. beginning with the people. So I would not be at all surprised to learn that our government circles have had the idea of nationalizing Futurism for some time [...] why shouldn't Polish Futurism be government run. If this had been understood before, perhaps the sincerest ode in honour of Pilsudski would have come from Stern, and during the Silesian Uprising, *Młodożeniec* would have perhaps been Korfanty's poet laureate.<sup>46</sup>

These ambitions immediately drew the attention of Karol Irzykowski, who commented sarcastically on Peiper's attempts to 'nationalize' Fu-

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<sup>44</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, 259.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

<sup>46</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, 48. See on this subject Przemysław Strożek, *Marinetti i futuryzm w Polsce*, 239. Peiper years later distanced himself from these formulations in a letter to the editor of *Miesięcznik Literacki* [Literary Monthly], see also Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, 198-199.

turism.<sup>47</sup> In doing so, he made an only partially accurate diagnosis: the unreality of these demands stemmed as much from a lack of interest in them by the Futurists themselves, as from the blindness to their meaning shown by the state's elite, deriving as they did from the landed gentry or peasant tradition, for whom the ideals of modernization held by the middle-classes of the West were hard to grasp, and even alien. So, while Polish Formism, representing a national variant of Modernism, was acceptable to the governing spheres, they could not become a comprehending addressee of the values represented by the 'modern socialists', among whom both Peiper and Strzemiński may be counted.

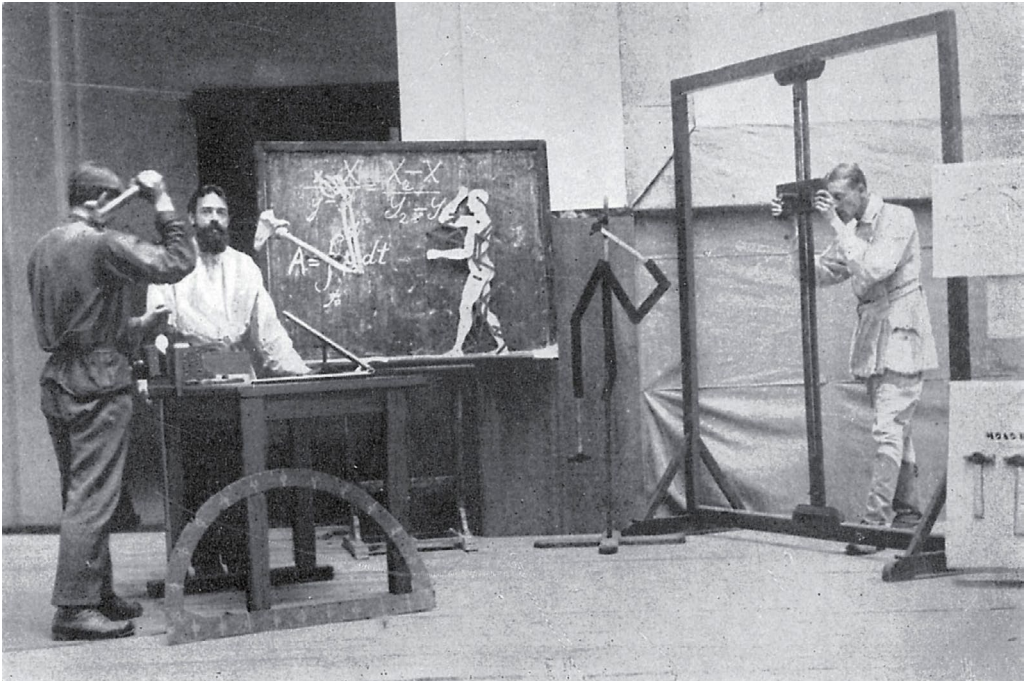


Figure 10. Motion tests in the Central Institute of Labor, Moscow, 1923

We are constrained here to omit the key concepts of economics,<sup>48</sup> urbanity and mass scale made in other parts of this publication. Nor can

<sup>47</sup> Karol Irzykowski, *Pisma*, 156. Peiper later distanced himself from his own statement.

<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting the likely influence of the works of Georg Simmel and his concept of 'man in the economy' on Peiper's theories; his crucial early book was published in several Polish editions at the beginning of the century in Warsaw in 1903 and 1904, the latter printed by K. Kowalewski.

we consider the key machine in Peiper's '3 x M', the universal symbol of modernity since Marinetti, not to mention earlier texts on culture. The positive role of technology in the organization of metropolitan life and work (Taylorism), determining the experience of time by the individual and the collective and thus affecting aesthetic experiences, was in the first two decades of the century omnipresent in Europe, from Spain to Russia, from the poetry of Guillermo de Torre and the painting of Barradas to the machined cubism of Léger and his *Ballet mécanique*, Meyerhold's biomechanical theatre, Boris Pilnyak's prose, the communist poet Alexei Gastev's Central Institute of Labour (1920), Platon Kerzhentsev's League of Time, and Karel Teige and Milča Mayerová's geometric alphabet of the body.<sup>49</sup> The question of the mechanization of life and art was naturally also present in the works of the Polish Futurists, who endowed the machine with animistic features. Przemysław Strożek had recently written about Peiper distancing himself from the idolatrous worship of the machine practised by Marinetti and his successors.<sup>50</sup> True, the author of the '3 x M' slogan put man in the centre of the discourse on the role of machines, but his uncritical affirmative attitude to technological progress makes one wonder about the extent of Peiper's differentiation caused by the experience of the Great War, from which he was saved by his refugee status, distancing him from many Western European writers.<sup>51</sup>

Summing up the first series of *Zwrotnica*, Irzykowski's claim must be emphatically repeated, namely that Tadeusz Peiper created independent Poland's first international avant-garde periodical. He re-evaluated the country's delayed Futurism and eclectic Formism, and pointed out a new direction for modern art and literature, building a serious theoretical basis for them. It was undoubtedly one of the best avant-garde maga-

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<sup>49</sup> See Marina T. Pao, *The View from the Wheel: De Torre, Salinas, and Hinojosa*, *Revista Hispanica Moderna*, 2001, no. 1, 88-107; Lynn Mally, *Culture of the Future: The proletkult Movement in Revolutionary Russia*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990; Julian Kutyla, *Zabawa w nic*, *Muzeum*, 2009, no. 8, 45-47; Rolf Hellebust, *Aleksiej Gastiew i metalizacja rewolucyjnego ciała*, in *Materialność*, exhibition catalogue, Instytut Sztuki Wyspa, Alternativa Editions, Gdańsk, 2012, 211-246.

<sup>50</sup> Przemysław Strożek, *Marinetti i futurizm w Polsce*, 120.

<sup>51</sup> The same applies to Peiper's disdainful attitude towards the psychological literature that multiplied after the First World War. However, a range of concepts bring Peiper closer to the philosophy of José Ortega y Gasset.





Figure 11. Karel Teige and Milca Mayerová, Abeceda, 1926

zines in Europe of the early twenties. Through the pages of the six issues of *Zwrotnica's* first series paraded a galaxy of great, famous and sometimes random names. Let us recall just a few – among the critics Florent Fels and Waldemar George; among the poets – Blaise Cendrars, Tristan Tzara, Pierre Reverdy, Luc Durtain, Émile Malespine, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Sergei Yesenin, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. The composer Darius Milhaud wrote about modern music, while Leon Chwistek covered Zonist theatre. Peiper made every effort to ensure no art form was left out, whether it was cinema, theatre or the latest technical inventions.

## 5. Pope of the Avant-Garde

'Without Peiper and *Zwrotnica* that vast poetic movement in pre-war Poland known as the 'Avant-garde' would have been impossible,' wrote Julian Przyboś.<sup>52</sup> 'That periodical turned out to be a revelation and a shock for me' was how *Zwrotnica* was recalled years later by Jalu Kurek,<sup>53</sup> who began appearing in Peiper's orbit together with the equally young Przyboś and Jan Brzękowski in 1923, and soon became a colleague and co-creator of the *Awangarda Krakowska* (Kraków Avant-Garde) group. However, the poet in the end suspended the operations of the periodical in order to focus on his own work. By 1924, when Irzykowski wrote about T. Peiper, the 'editor of *Zwrotnica*', as an exceptionally powerful figure in the field of aesthetic analysis and criticism,<sup>54</sup> the latter already had two volumes of poetry under his belt and would shortly have the first

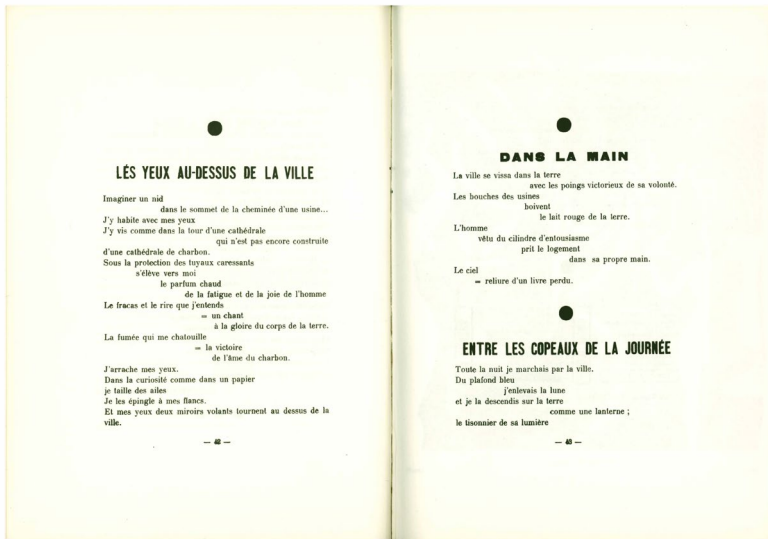


Figure 12. Manomètre, 1923, no. 3. Tadeusz Peiper's poems

<sup>52</sup> Julian Przyboś, 'Zwrotnica' Tadeusza Peipera, 32.

<sup>53</sup> Jalu Kurek, Z Gwoźnicy do Gwoźnicy, in Janusz Sławiński (ed.), *Wspomnienia o Julianie Przybosiu*, Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, Warszawa, 1976, 60. *Zwrotnica*'s editor invited Kurek to cooperate on the sixth and last issue of the periodical, devoted to Futurism; the 'young Futurist', signing his film reviews with the alias 'mafarka' borrowed from Marinetti, remained in close contact with the Italian Futurists and the leader of the movement himself.

<sup>54</sup> Karol Irzykowski, *Pisma*, 155.

collection of his theoretical texts ready. He was also surrounded by a group of talented students and colleagues.

His creation of a distinctive platform for the exchange of ideas identified Peiper as a promoter of the avant-garde, and not only in Poland. His first poems, published to begin with under the pseudonym Jan Alden in the first issue of *Zwrotnica*, next appeared under his own name in the Lyon based periodical *Manomètre*, probably in his own translation. In this magazine, edited by Émile Malespine, Dada and Ultraism collided with Constructivism and Surrealism (and Sur-idealism, the editor's own concept), and Peiper's verses appear next to the graphics of Norah Borges and the poetry of Guillermo de Torre.<sup>55</sup> Next, in the Kaunas based *Keturi Vėjai* [The Four Winds] the first magazine of the Lithuanian avant-garde, Peiper appears next to Huidobro, Mayakovsky and Tzara.<sup>56</sup> He probably also played a role in giving shape to the special issue *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège* (1925), devoted to Poland, Constructivism and Surrealism.<sup>57</sup>

And finally, Peiper even turned up as a poet in Poland! Following the suspension of *Zwrotnica*, his two debut volumes were published under the banner of a publishing house of the same name. Firstly *A*, with its title as the first sound, the beginning of the alphabet and language, bringing together works written – as the author informs us – in the years 1914–1923. Peiper invited his friend Moïse Kisling, a painter then very popular in Paris, to decorate the book's pages. The second volume, entitled *Żywe linie* [Living Lines] appeared in the autumn. This time Peiper engaged Juan Gris, the renowned Spanish artist, whom he may have met while still in Madrid. These two volumes, bringing entirely different poetics to Polish literature, placed the author in the role of leader in avant-garde

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<sup>55</sup> *Oczy nad miastem, We własnej dłoni and Wśród wiórów dnia, Manomètre, 1923, no. 3, 42-44.* This magazine was issued as a re-print in Éditions Jean-Michel Place, Paris, 1977. It is worth noting that de Torre's poem was reprinted from the volume *Hélices* (Madrid 1923) and could have been used, like the famous picture by Léger, as inspiration for the title of the first volume of poems by Julian Przyboś *Śruby* [Screws] (1924). See Janusz Sławiński (ed.), *Wspomnienia o Julianie Przybosiu*, 54.

<sup>56</sup> *Keturi Vėjai, 1924, no. 1* contains an abbreviated translation of Peiper's text about the new Spanish poetry.

<sup>57</sup> See *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège, 1925, no. 3-4.* This periodical was edited by Georges Linze, with whom the Blok group established contact.

poetry. Little understood, abruptly rejected by the *Wiadomości Literackie* [Literary News] salon, Peiper nevertheless found a group of supporters and followers; it can probably be argued that after six issues of his magazine and two volumes of poetry, he had deposed Marinetti as ‘chief of modernity’ in Poland.

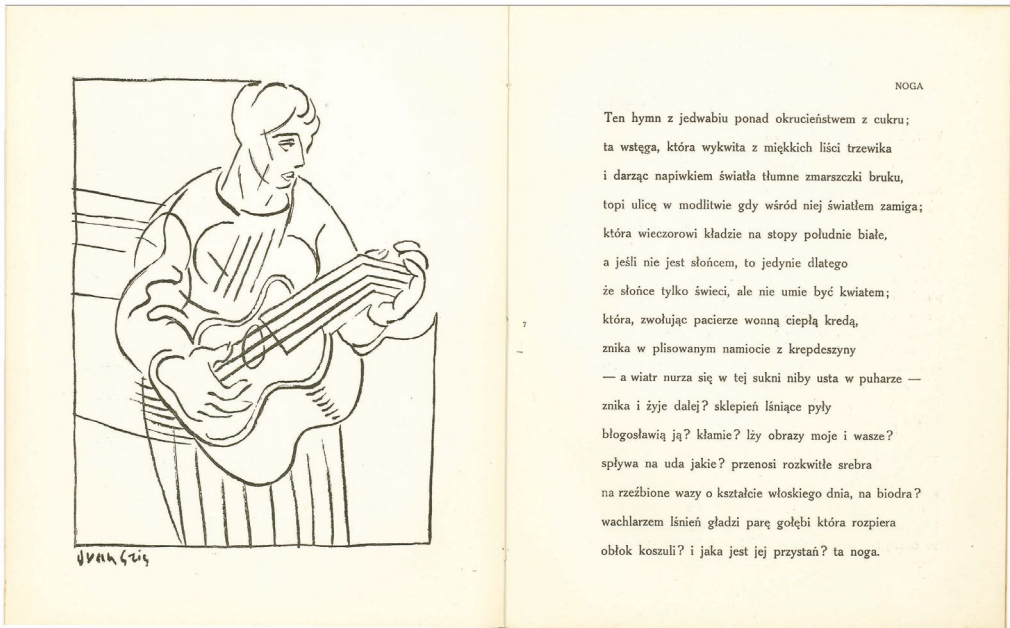


Figure 13. Tadeusz Peiper, *Żywe Linie*, 1924. Illustration by Juan Gris

Much has been written about Peiper’s poetics and literary concepts. For the present deliberations, what is important are Peiper’s links with art and the influence he had on the culture of his time. Both his volumes are important publications in the history of modern printing. The minimalist cover of the first was composed in the spirit of what we would now call functionalism. We can be pretty sure that the designer of the layout for both was the author himself, who also handled the composition of the pages, and even the typographic variation in some of the verses, such as *Z mięsnego zegara...* [By the meat clock...]. In that same year, the Blok group commenced its activities, publishing the first magazine of the Polish Constructivists. However, Peiper invited the cooperation of foreign artists, thus achieving the internationalization of his early steps. It was only the covers of *Zwrotnica*’s later issues – with works by Przyboś,

Brzękowski and Ważyk – that were designed by Władysław Strzemiński and Rafał Malczewski.<sup>58</sup>

The next logical step for Peiper was a lecture on the new poetics; published under the title – what else – *Nowe usta* [The New Mouth] in 1925. Translating the author's contentions concerning strictly literary issues, we can say that he re-evaluated Futurism and Formism (the discussion on primitivism and folk art), Dada, and neo-Romantic tendencies – to point to categories of order and structure and the achievements of civilization as the most important components of the new creativity. He chose Léger to illustrate the book, although he could probably have asked Malevich for drawings. It is significant that while many Polish avant-garde poets and artists remained strongly under the influence of the revolutionary art of the East, Peiper chose to associate himself with the Western cultural orientation from which he had emerged.

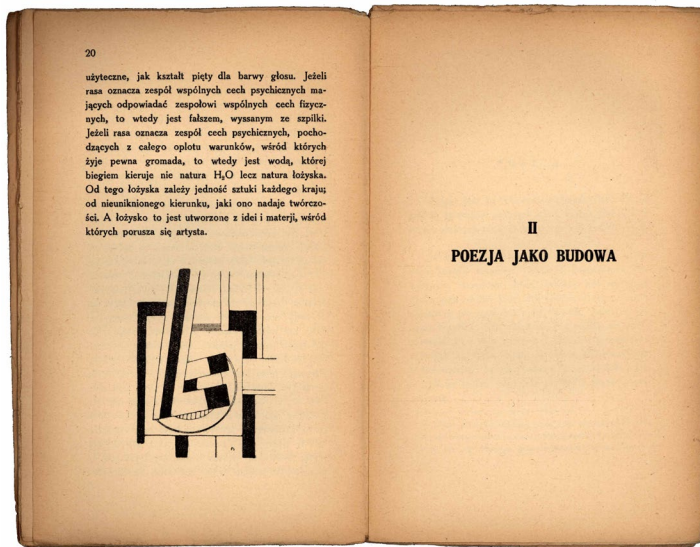


Figure 12. Manomètre, 1923, no. 3. Tadeusz Peiper's poems

The titles of his publications indicate further stages of a strategy conducted with an iron will, from *Zwrotnica* (1922) to *A* (1924), *Nowe usta* (1925) and *Tędy* (1930). However, the poet was troubled by the lack of a

<sup>58</sup> Julian Przyboś, *Śruby*, Zwrotnica, Kraków, 1925; Jan Brzękowski, *Tętno. Poezje* [Pulse. Poems], Zwrotnica, Kraków, 1925; Adam Ważyk, *Oczy i usta* [Eyes and mouth], Zwrotnica, Kraków, 1926. The cover of the last volume is by an anonymous artist.

platform for his critical texts and polemics: following his brief co-operation with *Almanach Nowej Sztuki* [Almanac of the New Art] (1924–1925), he revived his own periodical *Zwrotnica* (from 1926 to 1927), now in collaboration with Brzękowski, Kurek, Przyboś and the painters Władysław Strzemiński and Kazimierz Podsadecki. The latter was to be responsible for the graphic design of the new series and for a whole range of layouts for publications by the Awangarda Krakowska group.

The second series of *Zwrotnica*, whose editors were a number of poets, was dominated by literature, texts concerning the periodical's programme, polemics, and of course poetry. Gone were the presentations of individual artists that were a feature of the first series of the periodical. Now it was dominated by works from the Bauhaus and De Stijl circles – the new architecture and design: Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Józef Szanajca, Robert Mallet-Stevens, Theo van Doesburg, Vilmos Huszár, Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Marcel Breuer. Art here fulfilled the function of illustrating the issues raised, as in the case of the Julian Przyboś's manifesto *O rzeczach* [On things] in issue 7 and *Nowa karykatura* [New caricatures] in issue 8, Władysław Strzemiński's *Notatki* [Notes] in issue 11, and Kazimir Malevich's *Deformacja w kubizmie* [Deformation in Cubism]. It should be remembered that the periodicals *Blok* and *Praesens*, primarily devoted to the new art and architecture, were both in existence at this time, so that the editors of *Zwrotnica* did not feel obliged to provide a broader presentation of these phenomena. Its regular sections presented news regarding radio, theatre, film, new music, dance and the latest technology.

The poetics propounded by the author of *Nowe usta* had a significant impact on the younger generation of writers, particularly the poets of the Kraków Avant-Garde group, but also such names as Mila Elin, Michał Rusinek and the now totally forgotten Juliusz Grot.<sup>59</sup> In the 1930s, however, despite being at the top of his form and presiding over the café life of Kraków, the poet seemed to be increasingly downcast. Dissociating himself from Brzękowski's *L'Art contemporain* (1929–1930), he chose

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<sup>59</sup> Mila Elin's poems were published by Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz; see: Mila Elin, *Wachlarz z białych kwiatów*, Warszawa, 1974, and *16 wierszy*, Gdańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuki, Gdańsk, 1999. See also Michał Rusinek, *Bunt w krainie maszyn* [Rebellion in the land of machines], Biblioteka Premiowa, Kraków [1927]; Juliusz Grot, *Zakochany elektron* [The love-struck electron], Warszawa, 1929 and by the same author *W przededniu* [On the eve], Księgarnia F. Hoesicka, Warszawa, 1933.

**MIESIĘCZNIK**

**MAJ** 1926. **7**

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KIERUNEK:  
**SZTUKA  
TERAŻNIEJSZOŚCI**

ADRES:  
**KRAKÓW, Jagiellońska 5.**

REDAKTOR:  
**TADEUSZ PEIPER**  
WYDAWCA: **PIĄTKA**

<b>„ZWRÓTNIKI”</b>	<b>== KSIĄŻKI</b>	T. PEIPER: „A”. POEZJE.	<b>1924</b>	RYUNKI: KISLING.
		T. PEIPER: „ŻYWE LINJE”. POEZJE.	<b>1924</b>	RYUNKI: J. GRIS.
		J. PRZYBOŚ: „ŚRUBY”. POEZJE.	<b>1925</b>	OKEADKA: W. STRZEMIŃSKI.
		T. PEIPER: „SZÓSTA! SZÓSTA”! UTWÓR TEATR.	<b>1925</b>	OKEADKA: W. STRZEMIŃSKI.
		J. BRZĘKOWSKI: „TĘTNO”. POEZJE.	<b>1925</b>	OKEADKA: R. MALCZEWSKI.
		J. KUREK: „KIM BYŁ ANDRZEJ PANIK”?	<b>1926</b>	
	F. KRASSOWSKI: „SCENA NARASTAJĄCA”.	<b>1926</b>		
	A. WAŻYK: „OCZY I USTA”. POEZJE.	<b>1926</b>		

UKŁAD OKEADKI: **K. PODSADDECKI**

Figure 15. Zwrotnica, 1926, no. 7. Front cover designed by Kazimierz Podsadecki

not to join the editorial board of *Linia* [Line], the successor to *Zwrotnica*, which ran from 1931 to 1933. There was also a parting of the ways with Strzemiński and those connected with the a.r. group (though Strzemiński never ceased to emphasize the poet's importance for the development of avant-garde art). At the same time, as the thirties come to a close, the very notion of avant-garde underwent a reassessment. The world economic crisis, the intensification of authoritarian tendencies in the governments of Poland's Moral Cleansing Party and Europe's progressive militarism and descent into fascism all ate away at the positivist foundations of optimism regarding civilization in that transition from a decade of 'light' to one of the 'dark.'<sup>60</sup> Writers and critics of the younger generation, such as Leon Kruczkowski or Ignacy Fik, with their political sympathies leaning to the left of Peiper's socialism, deposed the 'Pope' and questioned the relevance of his aesthetic and social thinking. Despite these attacks, communist-leaning authors such as Jerzy Putrament, Marian Piechal, and Lech Piwowar remained loyal to Peiper, and the poet still founds his imitators and successors. And although Karol Irzykowski, the poet's most prominent critic and adversary, proclaimed him to be 'the mayor of uninhabited dreams,' Kazimierz Czachowski in his book *Obraz współczesnej literatury polskiej 1884–1933* [An Image of contemporary Polish literature 1884–1933]<sup>61</sup> called Tadeusz Peiper's group and *Zwrotnica* the only significant creative environment with a new literary programme.

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<sup>60</sup> On this subject see Aleksander Wojtowicz, *Dziwna proza awangardy*, *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, Section FF*, 22 (2004), 15-16.

<sup>61</sup> Kazimierz Czachowski, *Obraz współczesnej literatury polskiej 1884-1933, T. 3: Ekspresjonizm i neorealizm*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych, Lvov, 1936.



## Zwrotnica Shows the Way? Journals of the Kraków Avant-Garde in the 1930s

June of 1927 saw the publication of the twelfth and final issue of the avant-garde journal *Zwrotnica* [Switchpoint]. It must have been a sad moment for the Kraków avant-garde: young poets had lost a channel for conveying their literary and theoretical output to the public. The journal had somehow consolidated them into group, although the editor, Tadeusz Peiper, never considered the Kraków avant-garde to be a programme group. Neither did he believe *Zwrotnica* to be an aesthetically and ideologically coherent periodical.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the writers concentrated around the journal considered themselves inheritors of Peiper's thought. Wiesław Paweł Szymański noted how aptly the term 'pope of the avant-garde' applied to Peiper:

All historians and literary critics, then and now use the terms: 'leader' or 'pope' not to designate Peiper as the head or organizer of a group or movement, but to show that he was the leader of thought, the major codifier [...] of certain truths, which were later adopted by his followers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In the very first issue of *Zwrotnica*, Peiper left options open to his collaborators, who were to chart the new directions of development of the new art. In the article *Punkt wyjścia* [Starting Point], he wrote, 'ZWROTNICA will be what it wants to be, and something still different. What?' (*Zwrotnica*, 1922, no. 1, 4). In issue 2, he stated straightforwardly: 'we are not an order. We do not require a vow to obey the rule. Under the broad vault of our leading thought, there is room for a number of parallel aisles. We do not want uniformity. It is all about the affinity of assumptions or – should they differ – about the affinity of accomplishments. All those willing to work with us in this spirit are welcome. Our journal is open to everyone who is willing to open it with a key fitting its shape' (*Zwrotnica*, 1922, no. 2, 46). However, as rightly noted by Wiesław Paweł Szymański, it was Peiper who decided which keys fitted the lock of the avant-garde and which did not tally with his 'leading thought'. See Wiesław Paweł Szymański, *Świadomość estetyczna polskiej awangardy (o 'Zwrotnicy')*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Kraków, 1971, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. If not otherwise stated, all translations are by the author.

To the *zwrotniczanie* – those who published in *Zwrotnica* – and most of all to his most loyal followers, notably Julian Przyboś, Jan Brzękowski and Jalu Kurek, Peiper was a mentor, an initiator of new artistic formulas, the shaper the phenomenon of the Kraków avant-garde. It was these writers, however, who did most of the programme-shaping work in the second series of *Zwrotnica* (published 1926–1927). The most prominent was Przyboś, through whom the periodical ‘gained a more militant, aggressive and polemical character’.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Peiper retained the responsibility for the final tone of the journal. In Przyboś’s memoir we read: ‘*Zwrotnica* is Peiper, mainly Peiper.’<sup>4</sup>

The closure of *Zwrotnica* deprived avant-garde thought of its centre. Peiper channelled his integrationist thinking into several narratives about new art, often contradictory or mutually polemical. Janusz Sławiński aptly describes that moment (1928–1930) as a time of ‘the group’s chance,’<sup>5</sup> and the late the 1920s did indeed turn out to be a test for the *zwrotniczanie* in terms of both creative self-reliance and the ability to make productive use of the programme capital accumulated by Peiper.

## 1. Squaring Accounts

In *Mój Kraków* [My Cracow], Jalu Kurek enthusiastically recollects the ‘interregnum’ in the market of literary periodicals in Kraków after 1927:

Although *Zwrotnica* was no longer published, the ideas behind it were still alive, losing nothing of their attractive freshness. What is more, the seeds sowed were just sprouting. Deprived of the periodical – the platform of movement – we could only march together, producing thin volumes of verse to prove that we did live and create, forcing space for our postulates in the atmosphere which was, softly speaking, uneasy.<sup>6</sup>

A similar view was put forward by Jan Brzękowski in the second issue of *Linia* in 1931:

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Julian Przyboś, *Sens poetycki*, Literackie, Kraków, 1967, vol. 1, 168.

<sup>5</sup> Janusz Sławiński, *Koncepcja języka poetyckiego awangardy krakowskiej*, Universitas, Kraków, 1998, 57.

<sup>6</sup> Jalu Kurek, *Mój Kraków*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 1978, 196-197.

After the twelfth issue was published, *Zwrotnica* accomplished its mission as a laboratory of new views. The critics and the public needed several years to assess and assimilate these ideas, behaving like a slow-thinker who will only laugh tomorrow at a joke heard today. The third series of *Zwrotnica* (intended for 1927 or 1928, but never published), could have been useful, but was not indispensable, as its ideological content was not ready then and the literary world was only slowly absorbing the ideas from series one and two. The ideology was created only later, when – after several books had been published – we were lacking a journal.<sup>7</sup>

Both of these poets appreciated the value of *Zwrotnica* and considered it a ‘laboratory of the new art’, a space for thought and aesthetic experiments desperately needed by Polish literature in the 1920s. At the same time, they discerned the necessity to broaden their horizons, abandon Peiper’s school and modify the master’s concept. They certainly never disowned the legacy of the author of *Tedy*, but they felt a growing need to stratify his programme.<sup>8</sup> As summed up by Brzękowski:

Nevertheless, time is not only with us, but also comes between us. The fact that we promote the same ideas and write in the same way as five or six years ago is not a proof of stability of ideas but rather of stagnation. The truth is that time flows and the reality around us is changing. A lot has changed since we started publishing *Zwrotnica*. We have achieved and accomplished a lot.<sup>9</sup>

The group did not experience a deep split immediately after publication of *Zwrotnica* came to an end in 1927. The poets cooperated with one another, making joint efforts to publish their texts in *Głos Prawdy* [Voice of the Truth] or *Głos Literacki* [Literary Voice]. In particular, there

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<sup>7</sup> Jan Brzękowski, *Życie w czasie* [Living in Time], *Linia*, 1931, no. 2, 49.

<sup>8</sup> It is the ‘questioning of Peiper’s monopoly’ that Sławiński considers the major cause of the group’s disintegration: ‘Where the crucial factor consolidating the group was the leader’s programme assumptions, the emerging competitive views must have been dysfunctional [...] and the disintegration of the team’s organizational ties was inevitable.’ Janusz Sławiński, *Koncepcja języka poetyckiego awangardy krakowskiej*, 53.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

were many traces of continued agreement between Peiper and Przyboś. In their letters, they discussed the strategy of functioning of the Kraków avant-garde and deliberated on where to send their articles and how to support each other in polemics.<sup>10</sup> One polemic article by Przyboś, *Przeciw frazesom w poetyce* [Against Clichés in Poetics], published in 1928 in *Głos Literacki*, edited by Józef Podhalicz, particularly shows up the intention of maintaining the homogeneity of the group and consolidate Peiper's leading position. It includes a footnote stating that the '[a]rticle is published in the name of high impartiality only'.<sup>11</sup> Here, the author of the well-known *Chamuły poezji* presents the avant-garde as a non-understood movement that opposes contemporary literature and criticism. The major assumptions have been accurately summarized by Tadeusz Kłak:

The author appeals to the use of substantive criticism and writing only about what can be presented, measured and assessed by experience, i.e., about the form of poetry. Przyboś found 'the construction of visions, composition, rhythm and rhyme of his verse; metaphors or sentence structure more important than the poet's experiences. Nevertheless, he could see no one, except for Peiper, who was capable of exercising formal criticism.'<sup>12</sup>

Przyboś thus unequivocally supported the theses promoted by the author of *Śrubby* and served as the propagator of his critical activity. He wrote in the article:

When the overrated 'theoreticians' of poetry babble about the universe and conquest of planets and about everything except what they were planning to say, Peiper, having precisely defined the range of subjects, builds modern poetic art. When they 'explode' with the strength of their words, he becomes the model of conciseness and logic. While others use scruffy language when writ-

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<sup>10</sup> See letters of Przyboś collected by the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw.

<sup>11</sup> *Głos Literacki*, 1928, no. 16, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Tadeusz Kłak, *Czasopisma awangardy. Część I: 1919–1931*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1978, 105-106.

ing about beauty, in his theoretical prose Peiper clears the way to a new style, which is to be precise like a machine and light as a line.<sup>13</sup>

Kłak rightly pointed out that Przyboś ‘implemented the attacking assumptions previously stated by Peiper with a view to popularizing the ideas of *Zwrotnica*’.<sup>14</sup> Thus, he spoke on behalf of the entire Kraków group, aiming to stoke intellectual debate around Peiper’s *Nowe usta* [New Lips], which had gone unnoticed in the literary environment. The notions he most wanted to popularize were the primacy of structure, the perception of an artistic text as a describable, transparent structure, and the objectivization of criticism so that it becomes a machine recording formal transformations rather than a medium of sensations. He thus consolidated the position of the avant-garde and presented Kraków as the centre of modern thinking about art.

In issue 17 of *Głos Literacki*, I. Ryon (a pseudonym used by Józef Podhalicz, the editor-in-chief) took issue with what Przyboś had written. He opposed the exaltation of Peiper and argued against his notion of embracing reality, accusing him of hypocrisy and calling his poetry a ‘dancing feed pan’.<sup>15</sup> There were also other opinions voiced either in favour of or against the critical activity of the ‘pope of the avant-garde’.<sup>16</sup> The discussion in *Głos Literacki* thus focused almost completely on one figure and his impact on the shape of the new art in Poland. It shows the importance of Peiper to the young *zwrotniczanie*, who considered him to be the synonym of innovation, progress and avant-gardism.

The subsequent absence of Peiper’s work from the initiatives of these admiring followers is somewhat surprising. Although the author of *Nowe usta* kept encouraging Przyboś – usually without success – to publish articles favouring *Zwrotnica* (in *Meteor*, *Głos Prawdy* or Stanisław

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<sup>13</sup> Julian Przyboś, Przeciw frazesom w poetyce [Against Clichés in Poetics], *Głos Literacki*, 1928, no. 16,

<sup>14</sup> Tadeusz Kłak, *Czasopisma awangardy*, 106.

<sup>15</sup> See I. Ryon [Józef Podhalicz], Właśnie przeciw frazesom [Exactly Against Clichés], *Głos Literacki*, 1928, no. 17, 1.

<sup>16</sup> See M. Jutkiewiczowa, Marinetti–Peiper, *Głos Literacki*, 1928, no. 19, 2; Jerzy Jodłowski, Obrona oskarżonego. Tadeusz Peiper jako poeta społeczny [Defense of the Accused. Tadeusz Peiper as a Social Poet], *Głos Literacki*, 1928, no. 20, 1-2.

Baczyński's *XX wiek*) and supported endeavours to have them reprinted in *Gazeta Literacka* (also without success),<sup>17</sup> he deserted his followers as soon as their first independent initiatives appeared (notably Brzękowski's *L'Art contemporain*). Neither was he willing to cooperate with Strzemiński in the creation of the a.r. group or to respond to entreaties for him to work on *Linia*. In the mid-1930s, after he once again succeeded in gathering a group of young enthusiasts around him (Lech Piwowar and Stanisław Piętak), he started to discredit his former colleagues. In the article *Odróżnienia* [Distinctions] published in issue 30 of *Nowe Pismo* in 1933, he wrote:

Serious mistakes made by a critic of the ilk of Miller can only be explained in one way: the wrong light shed on me from the outside, from one face or another from among the ones seen with me in or near *Zwrotnica*. The physiognomies that surrounded me and interspersed with mine, making up a scarecrowish apparition. I must admit that the behaviour of my companions favoured the creation of such an apparent scarecrow. They used my ideas but would pervert them acutely, whether through bashfulness or lack of understanding [...]. The weird ideas which they would couple with one another were regarded as the outpourings, or at least splashes, of my currents. Hence the damage, hardly ever repairable.<sup>18</sup>

The text exposes animosities that arose among *zwrotniczanie* after the publication of Przyboś's article *Chamuły poezji* [Cads of Poetry] in *Zwrotnica*, denounced by critics as iconoclastic, crude and vulgar.<sup>19</sup> This prompted Peiper to publish a statement defending Jan Kasprówicz in issue 8:

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<sup>17</sup> Its editor of the time, Adam Polewka, even promised to create a special two-page insert, to be published once a month. It was probably Polewka himself who had the original idea, and he contacted Brzękowski on the matter. See Tadeusz Kłak, *Czasopisma awangardy*, 94.

<sup>18</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, *Odróżnienia*, in Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś. Artykuły, eseje, wywiady (1918–1939)*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 1974, 282.

<sup>19</sup> Julian Przyboś, *Chamuły poezji* [Cads of Poetry], *Zwrotnica*, 1926, no. 7, 203-204.

Kasprowicz is the great restorer of Polish poetic rhythmicity. [...] No other poet of the Young Poland period can boast achievements that would equal Kasprowicz's. It was from verse by Kasprowicz that I first heard the important truth that rhythmical diversity is the most subtle kind of rhythmicity. From that moment on, the aim of my poetic quest has been to present this diversity in a manner matching our time.<sup>20</sup>

Although in his assessment of *Mój świat* [My World], he theoretically agrees with Przyboś ('Unfortunately, the last book by Kasprowicz is a degradation of poetry even in terms of ideology'), he is very gentle in his opinion. There are probably two reasons for this. One was that Peiper suffered highly unpleasant consequences of Przyboś' contribution. Many booksellers were no longer willing to sell *Zwrotnica*, or they accepted but purposefully refrained from selling it. The critics had never been favourably inclined towards *Zwrotnica*, and now they started to ignore it.<sup>21</sup> The other reason was obvious: Peiper was making every theoretical effort to build the ideological foundations for the new art in Poland. Through his manifestos, he was attempting to acquaint the readers – inspiringly, yet accurately and transparently – with the modern thinking of reality and artistic activity. The frolics of Przyboś, regarded as hooliganism, would not win him supporters and might even undermine his credibility. Peiper wanted to build rather than destroy and to show new ways rather than fight against the past. The second series of *Zwrotnica*, in which the younger generation took the floor, became more polemical, rebellious and unpredictable. Przyboś used the ideas voiced by the master in a direct fight against tradition (in *Chamuły poezji* and *Człowiek w rzeczach* [Man in Things]), as a result of which some of them became oversimplified or trivialized to a

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<sup>20</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, W obronie Kasprowicza [In Kasprowicz's Defense], *Zwrotnica*, 1927, no. 8, 214.

<sup>21</sup> See Peiper's comment in *Zakończenie*: 'Przyboś's article 'Chamuły poezji' caused such indignation that, with a few exceptions, the press would cease to publish the paper's comments; some bookstores refused to sell it or accept it and deliberately withheld from the sales.' Tadeusz Peiper, *Zakończenie* in Tadeusz Peiper, *Tędy. Nowe usta*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 1972, 325.



Figure 1. L'Art contemporain – Sztuka Współczesna, 1929, no. 2. Front cover designed by Hans Arp.



degree.<sup>22</sup> Wiesław Paweł Szymański was certainly right in stating: ‘the views of Peiper were always integrating and uniting in nature, in both his thinking about the world of ‘outside reality’ his thinking about art.’<sup>23</sup>

The dispersion and gradual modification of his ideas contributed to the break-up of the coherent whole, which he had created so painstakingly over the years. He thus kept defending his theory. Instead of ‘delegating’ it to his students, he demonstrated that they were unable to use it. In *Bardziej szczegółowo, ale nie za bardzo* [More Precisely But Not Too Much], he declared:

Przyboś calls for the uniformity of vision and speaks about images, simultaneously assuming my demand for metaphorization, while metaphorization constitutes an inner denial of the uniformity of vision. [...] Unfortunately, none of my colleagues took up my most advanced achievements, although they mark the beginning only, and the door to continuation is still open.<sup>24</sup>

Although Peiper swore that he would like the young to elaborate on his theories, he was never satisfied with their elaborations. In an interview with Helena Wielowieyska, he admitted, ‘There is no *Zwrotnica*. No control, no ideological and poetic compasses.’<sup>25</sup> Perhaps it was all about control? His deliberations on poetry by Przyboś in *Bardziej szczegółowo* suggested that he was hurt by Przyboś going over to the side of Władysław Strzemiński and by his idea of combining Peiper’s ideas with Unism. This implies that the author of *Tędy* had designed a model of poetic cooperation aimed at clarifying the mottos of his programme without leaving room for attempts to modify its underlying ideas. This is no doubt why he later allied himself with Piwowar, who fiercely

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<sup>22</sup> For instance, the processed concept of the ‘shamed feelings’ in *Człowiek w rzeczach*: ‘Poetry is not about the childish straightforwardness of reflexes, but about the shaping of manly will. [...] Be men! Be ashamed of the childish unruliness of feelings in poetry. Do not cry! Do not clown around!’. Julian Przyboś, *Człowiek w rzeczach* [Man in Things], *Zwrotnica*, 1926, no. 8, 210.

<sup>23</sup> Wiesław Paweł Szymański, *Świadomość estetyczna polskiej awangardy*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, *Bardziej szczegółowo, ale nie za bardzo*, in Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, 395-396.

<sup>25</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, *Dyskusje o poezji*. Wywiad Heleny Wielowieyskiej, in *Ibid*, 488.

defended the foundations of Peiperism and turned it into a kind of new artistic religion.<sup>26</sup>

Given these conflicts, the attempts (above all by Przyboś) to solicit Peiper's presence in subsequent initiatives are all the more puzzling. Brzękowski repeatedly pestered the mentor to write for *L'Art contemporain*, and Peiper's eloquent silence in the matter recurs in correspondence with Przyboś. The thread of the master's withdrawal is also mentioned in Strzemiński's letters to Przyboś. Nevertheless, the messages sent in 1930 prove that the a.r. group was already distancing itself from both Peiper's programme and his aesthetic assessments. The deliberations of Strzemiński tended to be polemical in tone; having read Peiper's *Tędy*, he noted:

This cubism of Peiper, which I previously suspected, and which he is now confessing himself, explains a lot: his lack of radicalism, palatal hypertrophy, the absence of construction (which he calls expanding composition [układ rozkwitający] like cubists, camouflaging the inhomogeneous construction with central or axial composition). [5 August 1930.]<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Obviously, such a fierce defence of the 'purity' of his theses also have biographical explanations. As Jarosław Fazan rightly notices in his book, *Od metafory do urojenia*, the first symptoms of Peiper's schizophrenia were noticeable as early as in the 1930: 'Peiper was haunted with obsessions from around mid-1930s. Above all, he was afraid of conspiracy organized by secret institutions [...]. Conspiracy, the main aim of which was to steal or destroy the priceless thoughts and philosophical concepts (aesthetic, psychological, concerning political science and philosophy of history). Secondly, he was terrified that his strength would be overtaxed, making him unable to work creatively. At times, in the works allegedly created or inspired by secret forces he would find the concepts 'stolen' from him, while on other occasions he would maintain that while he was asleep or absent, spiteful or compromising annotations were made in his manuscripts.' Jarosław Fazan, *Od metafory do urojenia. Próba pantografii Tadeusza*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, 2010, 16. The deliberate search for any signs of misinterpretations and the growingly unpleasant tone of utterance of the editor of *Zwrotnica* might be regarded as a manifestation of the disease.

<sup>27</sup> A. Turowski, Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego do Juliana Przybosia z lat 1929–1933, *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, 9 1973, 245.

In 1932, although still cooperating with the author of *Nowe usta*, he wrote straightforwardly about the misunderstandings between them, pointing to the poet's growing reluctance to enter into a discussion concerning substance and his increasingly pathological attachment to his own ideas:

Peiper has arrived. On Sunday he is holding an author's evening in the local IPS [Institute for the Propaganda of Art]. He is very touchy about each and every thought uttered being acknowledged as his property. [9 December 1932.]<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems that the founder of *Zwrotnica* returned as the great absent one in the correspondence between Przyboś and Kurek preceding the publication of the first issue of *Linia*. As early as December 1930, Przyboś asked, 'is Peiper in Kraków? I will write to him on the issue; I would like to talk to him as well.'<sup>29</sup> The subject keeps recurring:

Is Peiper in Kraków? [8 January 1931.]

What is the status of the case; what is Peiper doing? Write to me as soon as possible! [5 March 1931.]

Is Peiper back? [16 March 1931.]

Why hasn't Peiper written about it? [27 March 1931.]

I was alarmed by the information about Peiper's 'fudging'. Weren't you supposed to write a synthetic article together? Without it the publication loses its deep sense. [1 April 1931.]

What about Peiper?! [9 April 1931.]<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 265.

<sup>29</sup> Letter of 29 December 1930. Quoted after: Tadeusz Kłak (ed.), *Materiały do dziejów awangardy*, Zakład. Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, 1975, 97.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, 98, 100, 101, 103.

As seen from the correspondence, Przyboś was afraid to begin his own activity without his master's blessing and kept postponing the publication. He wrote categorically to Kurek:

There is only one firm piece of advice: to wait. There is no way for us to start without Peiper. We have been waiting 4 years, so another 3 months will make no difference; let's wait until autumn. [...] We will start in September, having consolidated *Linia* in detail – great! Let's wait. [10 April 1931.]<sup>31</sup>

But his friend did not listen to him, and *Linia* appeared in May 1931. Przyboś could not come to terms with what Kurek did, and in his assessment of the first issue he did not fail to refer to Peiper. In a letter of May he expressed his dissatisfaction with the final version of the editor-in-chief's introductory article:

In short: your introductory article, as it is, makes a highly unfavourable impression. Simply speaking, at some points I felt sad. All the more that with minor changes only, it would be acceptable and would not put the entirety in bad light. [...] I wish you had had this hastily scrawled article censored by Peiper! What a pity. Even quotations from *Z ponad* – are copied with errors. [11 May 1931.]<sup>32</sup>

Przyboś' strenuous efforts to revive the group's activity and return Peiper to the Kraków avant-garde ultimately failed. The pope of the avant-garde was very disapproving of Jalu Kurek's deeds. In an article published after Marinetti's visit to Kraków (*Naprzód* 1933, issue 22; *Czas* 1933, issue 23), he pointed out Kurek's lack of competence and the superficiality of his journalism:

In the report written by Jalu Kurek for one of the journals of Kraków, there is a statement suggesting that Marinetti gave birth to cubism, formism, expressionism, ultraism, dadaism, constructivism etc. All that is missing here is impressionism, romanticism, Phidias and the constructor of Egyptian pyramids. Marinetti himself shall laugh

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 107.

heartedly at Jalu Kurek's statement. I, too, have no choice but to join him and laugh at the concern about the prestige of the Polish 'avant-garde'.<sup>33</sup>

Peiper's dispute with his younger colleagues was mainly ideological in nature: he did not appreciate their theoretical attempts and neither did he support them in the development of their individual poetics. Meanwhile, the late 1920s brought major turning points in the understanding of the tasks of lyric poetry. This was true for both Przyboś and Brzękowski, that they abandoned the staffage typical of constructivism,<sup>34</sup> explored the possibilities of metaphor and pondered on how to introduce the 'realism of the physiological rhythm' into poetry.<sup>35</sup> As Przyboś developed an interest in the painting of Strzemiński, he started to use the concepts presented in *Kompozycja przestrzeni* [Composition of Space] (written together with Katarzyna Kobro). Brzękowski, on the other hand, left for Paris, where he tried to combine constructivism with surrealism, eventually coming up with the idea of integralism and subsequently materialism, coming still closer to French work.

Peiper perceived these changes as a 'small betrayal' and punished his students with silence on their subsequent initiatives, including *L'Art contemporain*, which was published in Paris by Brzękowski and Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska in 1929–1930, and the projects initiated in the years 1930 to 1936 by the a.r. group in Lodz, led by Władysław Strzemiński.

## 2. Points of Contention

What was the point of contention ruled out any renewal of cooperation? The simplest answer arises in connection with *L'Art contemporain*,

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<sup>33</sup> Tadeusz Peiper, Po wizycie Marinettiego, in Tadeusz Peiper, *O wszystkim i jeszcze o czymś*, 278.

<sup>34</sup> The remark by Andrzej K. Waśkiewicz concerning the huge impact of Peiper on the shape of the first two volumes of verse by Przyboś seems justified, although exaggerated, in this context: 'Let us hazard a guess – as there is no direct evidence to support this thesis – that the poetic debut of Przyboś was edited by Peiper'. Andrzej Krzysztof Waśkiewicz, *O poezji Juliana Przybosia*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, 1977, 6.

<sup>35</sup> See Julian Przyboś, Realizm rytmu fizjologicznego in: Julian Przyboś, *Linia i gwar*, Wiadomości Literackie, Kraków, 1959, vol. 1, 139.

and Peiper gave it directly in a letter to Przyboś. First of all, he was dissatisfied with the translations of Polish poetry, which in his opinion distorted the sense of the poems and failed to present their structural features adequately. Second, he was appalled by the excessive presence of surrealism:

All they have chosen from French poetry is surrealism. Why didn't Brzękowski write a note on this poetry in his introductory article? The Polish reader will mistake it for some insane, imbecilic creation. The publication doesn't meet its purpose, either from our vantage point or from theirs.<sup>36</sup>

Peiper, I contend, would have been able to accept the presentation of surrealist poetry, but only if it had had an educational dimension. Brzękowski should have introduced the Polish reader to the novelties of French literature by examining the aim and meaning of the literary devices found in those works. Otherwise, such new art would be perceived as an extravagant, scandalous experiment and its meaning would have been impossible to decipher and discuss. The role of *Sztuka współczesna* (*L'Art contemporain*), in his view, was to inform the Polish public about French avant-garde activities and vice versa. The journal was thus meant to promote Polish art abroad, but how would the *zwrotniczanie* be promoted if the translations failed to convey the qualities of their work?

Brzękowski, who only knew Peiper's reaction through letters from Cieszyn, replied to Przyboś that both George Hugnet and Michel Seuphor appreciated the reprints of Peiper's and Przyboś's poems. He also explained his editorial mistakes. Nonetheless, the critical remarks discouraged him, and he believed that his colleagues – mainly Strzeмиński, but also Przyboś and Kurek – were intent on starting collaboration with Baczyński's *Europe*. The end of the 1920s was, indeed, a time when constructivist thought was flourishing. Brzękowski's attempts at incorporating into the journal an array of ideas (from surrealism through Dada to functionalism) clashed with Strzeмиński's vision of creating programmatically transparent groups that would protect their own interests. Brzękowski's attitude was integrationist, cosmopolitan and conciliatory, although he did

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<sup>36</sup> Letter of 16 May 1929, kept in the Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw.

not shun the critique of either surrealism or Picasso. He tried to show that the avant-garde had passed through the phase of sterile debates and entered a new stage of communal work. In the second part of the article 'Mileage,' we read:

Nothing new in the West for the last ten years. And the East? Silence as well. After this period of impatient searching for novelty and its cult resulting from our desire to oppose the old, we've entered the stage at which we're settling down to our work, using whatever we've gained from those new ideas.<sup>37</sup>

The idea of 'mileages' was about presenting the then relevant 'isms' and pointing to their unifying features and possible fusions among them. The very act of publishing poems by Robert Desnos and Tadeusz Peiper in the same issue illustrates the editor's intention to search for unexpected connections and similarities, such as traces of surrealist poetics in Peiper's poems.<sup>38</sup>

As Tadeusz Kłak aptly noted, 'Kraków innovators opposed [...] the format of the journal, which was not in concert with the direction taken by *Zwrotnica*; others did not approve either.'<sup>39</sup> In *Sztuka współczesna*, we see a hint of the way Brzękowski's thought was evolving in his attempts at moving surrealist ideas further into the field of Polish avant-garde art, which would eventually lead him to propose a fusion of free association and constructivism.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, he advocated the need for a

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<sup>37</sup> Jan Brzękowski, Kilometraż / Mileage (2) [Mileage], *L'Art contemporain*, 1930, no. 2, 52.

<sup>38</sup> The thread of 'surrealizing' the Kraków avant-garde returns in later treatises by Brzękowski. In *Poezja integralna*, he writes: 'The new poetic images are seemingly anti-logical, or a-logical, they do not blindly follow the existent reality but create it instead; they are not real – they are surreal!' Jan Brzękowski, *Poezja integralna*, in Jan Brzękowski, *Wyobraźnia wyzwolona. Szkice i wspomnienia*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków, 1976, 36.

<sup>39</sup> Tadeusz Kłak, *Czasopisma awangardy*, 135.

<sup>40</sup> More on the 'movements' by Brzękowski can be found in Michalina Kmieciak and Małgorzata Szumna (eds.), *Awangarda Środkowej i Wschodniej Europy - innowacja czy naśladownictwo? Interpretacje*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków, 2014, 316-319.

journal that would be the voice of the entire avant-garde.<sup>41</sup> Polish innovators, on the other hand, wanted more decisive ideological and aesthetic declarations and more precise direction. Brzękowski offered them a journal aimed at juxtaposing various literary and artistic activities and presenting the continuous clash of divergent currents of thought, with a view to learning from them. That is why *Europe* dismissed his periodical as 'naïve':

Sztuka współczesna (*L'Art contemporain*) seems to have the most creative attitude. A journal on an international scale should not show such infantile naivety in its form and content. It's a journal full of pictures and little poems, as banal in its graphics as those old-fashioned monthlies. It's such a shame, because the expenses could cover several modest, well-organized and seriously modern periodicals. Art paper, plenty of space on the pages, and poems by Peipr [sic] or Ważyk imposed on French readers – is all that supposed to mean that it is modern? These poems may be interesting, but is that a sufficient reason to translate them? Such blends and syntheses are no longer in vogue. A truly modern journal needs a lasting theoretical framework. Some odd visual art and poetry doesn't make a journal.<sup>42</sup>

Lack of a clear programme was an accusation frequently levelled against Brzękowski, usually alongside remarks about the collagist character of the journal, in which 'little pictures and poems' appear side by side without any commentary from the editor. The *Europe* critic certainly failed to decipher the idea that guided Brzękowski when he conceived *L'Art contemporain*. Przyboś, however, was the one to summarize it aptly when he promoted the journal in his 1929 interview for *Głos Literacki*. In response to a question about the possibility

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<sup>41</sup> Brzękowski was clearly the fiercest defender of the thesis that the avant-garde needs a common platform and joint efforts. In his letter to Przyboś of 2 June 1929, he wrote, full of regret, 'I do not understand these people, why they are incapable of solidarity or cooperation, but choose to waste their energy in a totally fruitless manner.' (*Źródła do historii awangardy*, ed. T. Kłak, Wrocław 1981, 37).

<sup>42</sup> Jan Brzękowski, Nowe czasopisma [New Magazines], *Europa / Europe*, 1930, no. 4, 127.



of reviving *Zwrotnica*, the poet mentioned *Sztuka współczesna* and pointed out the journal's mission of 'establishing connections between Polish and French art'.<sup>43</sup> This meant getting in touch with other artists and collaborating on activities like creating graphics for books of poetry. (Brzękowski's efforts bore fruit when the International Collection of Modern Art of the a.r. group was set up.) He also had in mind new aesthetic possibilities for fusing avant-garde poetics. Przyboś cleverly recognized Brzękowski's surrealist experiments, noting in his review of *na katodzie* that the book was 'the first to document surrealism in Poland'.<sup>44</sup>

Despite his approbative views on *Sztuka współczesna*, Przyboś did not commit himself to aiding Brzękowski in editing that journal because of his commitment to another initiative. In 1929, Strzemiński asked him to join a new group:

Together with my wife we want to break Praesens and [organize] a new group that's going to bring all modern forms of art together – poetry, visual arts and architecture. Would you like to join us?' [27 June 1929.]<sup>45</sup>

For Przyboś, the a.r. group promised several advantages over Brzękowski's activities, principally the unity of its members – in the aesthetic and general senses – and its clear functionalist programme. Przyboś's ideas lay closer to Strzemiński's precise thinking than to the French experiments of his *Zwrotnica* colleague: a.r. was to become an advocate of new art in Poland, combating all kinds of intellectual muddle and laziness (hence attacks on the inadequately radical Praesens) and focusing on publishing (the a.r. Library series), disseminating information (lectures at the Institute for Art Promotion), organizing exhibitions (a collection of modern art, exhibitions of functional printing) and educating (functional printing textbooks, Strzemiński's work in vocational schools). Przyboś's purpose in abandoning Brzękowski was not to thrust himself into *Eu-*

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<sup>43</sup> Józef Podhalicz, [Interview with Julian Przyboś], *Głos Literacki*, 1929, no. 10, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Julian Przyboś, Rybne sny [Dreams of Fish], *Głos Literacki*, 1929, no. 11, 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego do Juliana Przybosia*, 225. The proposal is made once more in the letter of 1 December 1929.

rope<sup>46</sup> (which he was suspected of) but to engage deeply in activities that offered a future for himself and his increasingly crystallized theory of poetry.

In the meantime, Peiper seemed to be at odds with this – ideologically closer – initiative of the *zwrotniczanie*. Indeed, he agreed to give a lecture at the Institute for Art Promotion in Lodz, but Strzemiński assured Przybóś that Peiper was mentally unstable and ‘lost’ to new art:

Peiper. He was in Koluszki. I have an impression that there is something wrong (with his nerves?). I keep assuring myself that this is because his times were hard, that both ‘Skamander’ and ‘Wiad[omości] Lit[erackie]’ eventually achieved their aim through the boycott, thus throwing Peiper off his track. He appears to be a man who has lost his orientation and momentum and is unable to regain it [...]. Now he keeps contradicting himself. On the one hand he maintains that the new art has been wrecked and that it no longer exists, all because there have been no people. On the other, he keeps saying that the new art won out, because a reporter happened to repeat one of Peiper’s sentences. [...] He hides his address from everyone. He is terribly nervous and keeps talking and talking, but I can’t understand him without knowing his issues. He will not associate with anyone and will print wherever he is invited. No groups accepted. When I was saying that we needed to focus and start it all over again, a new attack – he would only provoke failures, stating that everyone needed to act on their own. [21 February 1930.]<sup>47</sup>

Strzemiński clearly articulated what the former *Zwrotnica* collaborators would not admit: Peiper was not engaged in anything. As his paranoia advanced, he was shying away from people and mistrusting his former

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<sup>46</sup> Strzemiński informs him vividly of the problems with ‘Europe’: ‘What is going to happen to ‘Europe’? I do not know myself. Baczyński is becoming elusive, and, additionally, has problems with the nerves and appendix, so that he does not give a precise answer to any question. All he is doing is moaning and dying. Meanwhile, there is something being done there, of which I know nothing. Or maybe nothing is being done.’ [17 September 1929.] Ibid, 226.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 236.

colleagues. In the painter's view, Peiper's judgement could no longer be trusted. The a.r. group made it possible for everybody to work on their own. Strzemiński's plan was to push a.r. to the forefront of avant-garde activity in Poland.<sup>48</sup> He created recognizable visuals for the group, sought attention from periodicals that would promote a.r. books and made plans to start his own journal, *Linia Awangardy* [The Line of the Avant-Garde].

It is worth devoting a paragraph to this unrealized idea, which bore an affinity to the Kraków *Linia*. Two communications from a.r., published in 1930 and 1932 respectively, constituted an announcement of the journal's programme. The 1932 communication proved that Strzemiński had not abandoned the idea of establishing his own journal, since neither he nor Przyboś were satisfied with how Kurek's periodical functioned. In a letter of September 1930, Strzemiński defined his publishing plans:

'The Line of the Avant-Garde' (a good name), *L'Art contemporain* as the organ of a.r. [...] I think the best way would be to get Brzękowski to join a.r., and have 'The Line of the Avant-Garde' as the organ of a.r. (we could print other people too). Communications from a.r. would cease to be and so would *L'Art contemporain*. We could also have illustrated supplements to the Line every six months or annually [...]. All in all, I think the Line could publish not only a.r. people, but everybody who would meets its requirements.<sup>49</sup>

Here, Strzemiński clearly stated an intention to stop issuing communications from a.r. and persuade Brzękowski to close down *Sztuka współczesna* and team up with a.r. This suggests that Strzemiński was adopting Brzękowski's dream of a unified avant-garde front, even though he supported functionalism in every field of art and Brzękowski did not. That direction had already been set in the first communication from a.r., which reads:

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<sup>48</sup> He wants to create a very strong brand, persuading Przyboś to blatantly promote a.r. in all possible media: 'We must fill everyone's eyes and ears with 'a.r.'. It is not only ideological homogeneity but also the unity of the firm, a brand that would matter and be remembered' [3 March 1930.]; 'A word, a name has the power of a motto, so we need to promote 'a.r.', 'a.r.' everywhere' [8 September 1930.] Ibid, 237 and 247.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, 247.

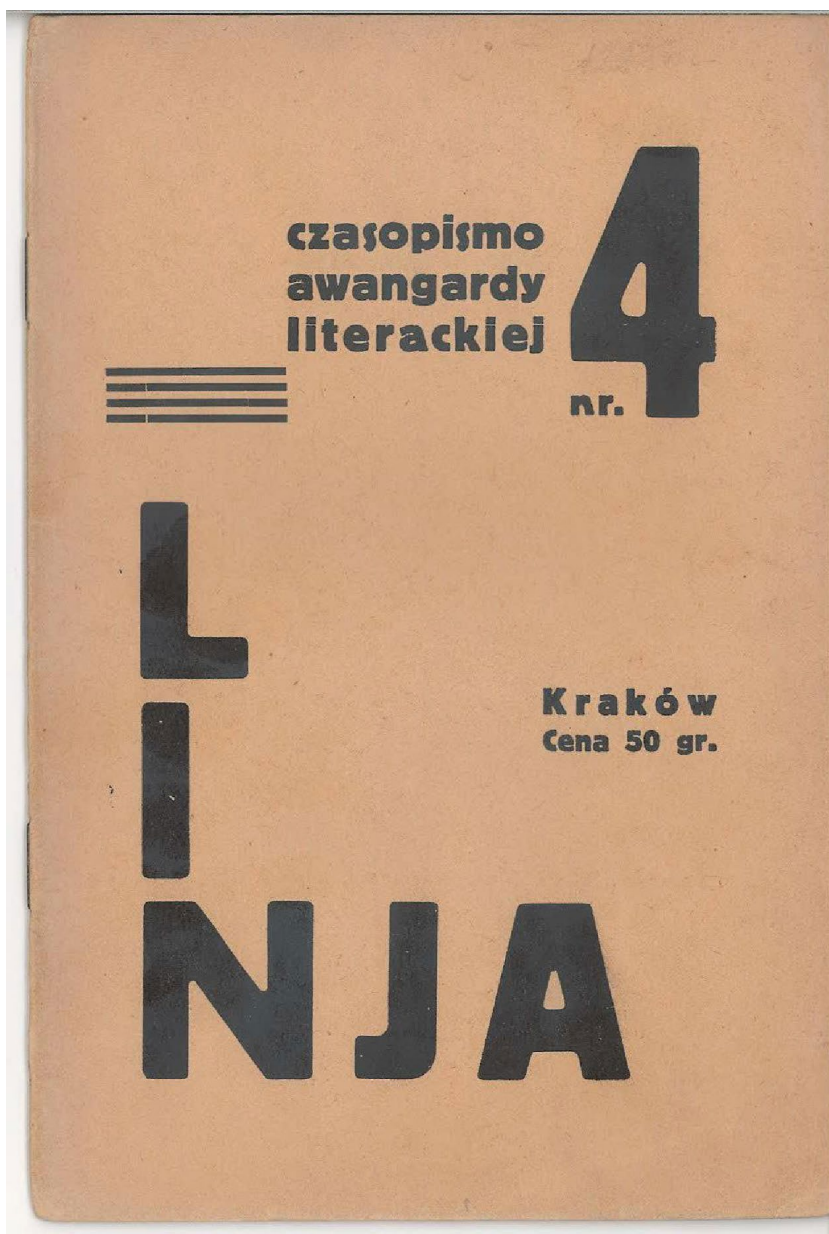


Figure 2. Linia, 1932, no. 4. Front cover designed by Kazimierz Podsadecki.

A.R.' WANTS TO CREATE ART THAT RESULTS FROM THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES: CONCISENESS, ELIMINATION, CONCENTRATION. A WORK OF ART IS A RESULT OF CALCULATING AESTHETIC ELEMENTS.<sup>50</sup>

This communication distils economy of expression into a radical mathematical equation. It was the yielding of visual arts to the structural unification present in the Unist manifesto, dismissing all experiments with organic shapes ('a rectangle-unity painting, instead of playing with sophisticated shapes or textures'<sup>51</sup>). a.r. artists negated the art presented in *L'Art contemporain*, whose main representatives were Hans Arp and the editor, Wanda Chodasiewicz-Grabowska. Their plan of transforming the French-Polish periodical into a supplement to *Linia Awangardy*<sup>52</sup> seemed rather misguided. Perhaps it was this lack of ideological unity that stifled *Linia Awangardy*, just as it contributed to the collapse of *Sztuka współczesna*. The truth is that only by joining forces could the Kraków avant-garde have 'taken their chance'; only by acting together again, having recognized their internal differences, could they have been heard as an active voice in cultural debates. Contrary to Strzeмиński's intuition, the incoherence of their programme could attest to their consolidation. As Janusz Sławiński aptly noted:

Polemical engagement in the opinions of the other members, expressive of their eagerness to solve problems together, means that the group is tight-knit.<sup>53</sup>

### 3. The Final 'Line' of Division

All those failed initiatives made avant-gardists realize they had lost a platform of communication with the public. Eventually, it was *Linia* that took up the mantle of *Zwrotnica*. Jalu Kurek was appointed its editor-in-chief, because he was the only one living in Kraków who was able to devote enough time to the new project. Contrary to all expectations, how-

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<sup>50</sup> Komunikat grupy, *a.r.*, 1930, no. 1, 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> See *Listy Władysława Strzeмиńskiego do Juliana Przybosa*, 247.

<sup>53</sup> Janusz Sławiński, *Koncepcja języka poetyckiego awangardy krakowskiej*, 56-57.

ever, it was Kurek and his journal that would seal the fate of the Kraków avant-garde.

So what was *Linia*'s programme? The very first issue clearly demonstrates a decision by Kurek to continue along the direction set by *Zwrotnica*, picking up on the issues left unsolved in 1927. In the introductory article we read about the negation of lyricism, interpreted in the light of Przyboś's 'masculine' poetry:

I long for Kurek rid of lyricism, a tree that never sways in the wind  
[...] One has to be strong and well-built, like a tree.<sup>54</sup>

The idea of keeping emotion shackled to poetic discipline<sup>55</sup> resulted from the belief in the primacy of constructivism and the necessity to transform reality. Kurek's reluctance towards free imagination and association techniques found its expression in a critique of surrealism, which immediately turned into a critique of Brzękowski's work:

Surrealism introduces chaos into the artist's consciousness. The way it transforms reality may have a purpose and may even be original; its metaphor is strong, but its construction is weak and it lacks continuity. Brzękowski's coquetry with surrealism makes him fail at creating a (narrative) poem.<sup>56</sup>

The journal certainly appreciated Przyboś's line of acknowledging Peiper's undisputed authority and most of all his idea of poetic economy, as had been disseminated in the communications of a.r. Przyboś's programme articles focused on a critique of musical qualities, metrical regularity and melodiousness in poetry<sup>57</sup> and on propagating the kind of rhythmical pattern that would yield to creating lyrical 'ways of seeing.' In Przyboś's manifesto *Rytm i rym* [Rhythm and Rhyme], we read:

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<sup>54</sup> Jalu Kurek, Ostatni etap [The Last Stage], *Linia*, 1931, no. 1, 4.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>57</sup> Julian Przyboś, Kataryniarze i strofkarze [Organ-grinders and Poets], *Linia*, 1931, no. 1, 10-14.

My assumptions are Unist. I strive for unique rhythm for every poem that I write. What I mean is the freedom of certain phrases, a unified rhythmical expression of the whole poem. It is too difficult to define it any further.<sup>58</sup>

Przyboś himself confirmed that he did not quite know what Unism in poetry was. He borrowed the term from Strzemiński to accentuate the unity of literature, visual arts and architecture, an idea important to the a.r. programme. 'Strong unity of all elements in the poem'<sup>59</sup> consisted in rhymes yielding to the construction of a lyrical image and not to the structural demands of the poem: 'rhyme, which serves as the sound closing of the period, should become a link between poems that in some sense correspond to one another (in terms of vision, feelings, rhythm etc.)'.<sup>60</sup>

Peiper must have found Przyboś's response to *Tędy* inadequate. Przyboś took up the problem signalled in *Modern Rhythm* without being able to clearly explain what he meant. In place of a sentence's 'own rhythm', he put rhythmical unity that was not based on mechanical repetition. We do not learn from him, however, what it is was based on. *Rytm i rym* is thus an example of a failed manifesto, in direct contradiction to Peiper's idea of clarity and technical accuracy, which Przyboś had vehemently defended in a polemic in *Głos Literacki*.

Quite a number of such manifestos appeared in *Linia*. Their authors do not seem to have had a theoretical framework, so that poetry remained an intuitive art to them. Jalu Kurek specialized in creating catchy slogans, and his sketches contain elements of both constructivism and futurism without a hint of contradiction. Kurek chose prominent motifs (such as Marinetti's velocity and the grid idea introduced by abstractionists) and created out of them collages that hardly made sense. He expressed a resolute demand in the fourth issue of *Linia*:

Man stood beyond the Earth's natural law. His pathway is straight. Cars tend to use the shortest connections. Trains get through mountains or tunnels whenever obstacles are encountered. Airplanes link the start with the finish in a straight line. Speed. [...] Remember.

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<sup>58</sup> Julian Przyboś, *Rytm i rym* [Rhythm and Rhyme], *Linia*, 1931, no. 2, 53.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

Shortcuts and speed. To say a lot without saying much. Tame this army of uncontrolled words that can't wait to be poured on paper. Moderation and choice are the two basic elements of artistic creation. Plus a straight line. The shortest connection of the vision with the object. Telegraphic lyricism.<sup>61</sup>

Kurek reiterated Przyboś's theses on economy of expression, as were included in the first communication from a.r. He also indirectly returned to Peiper's idea of 'embracing reality.' He emphasized the modern urban imagery typical of all avant-garde schools: 'purpose, economy, pace, synopsis/summary, condensation'.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, Przyboś sometimes expressed himself in generalities. In *Forma nowej liryki* [The Form of New Lyric], he attempted to emphasize how the sensation can be manifested in modern lyrics:

The mere method of combining words and sentences, the mere alignment of poetic vision, is supposed to evoke a specific 'lyrical' sensation in the reader; a sensation which, although incommensurable with (the corresponding) life's sensation in its nature, is somehow deeply connected therewith (how? – this is the mystery of the author's form), makes it a deep synthesis of the 'life's' sensation.<sup>63</sup>

The use of words like 'specific' or 'any', the emphasis put on the 'mystery' of the factual poetic creation, and the search for the unspecified 'synthesis' are all devices that make Przyboś's manifesto seem unspecific and imprecise in its recognitions. Returning to the question of the 'shamed feelings', the manifesto tried to remove the poet's actual 'life's sensation' from the area of critics' interest and proposed in its place the 'lyrical sensation' arising between the poem and the reader. This was consistent with his statement that he was trying to detach the emotions from the subject and inscribe them in the object-work. Nevertheless, there are ostensible contradictions in his article: he is defending both structuralism

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<sup>61</sup> Jalu Kurek, Elementy: linja prosta [Elements: Straight Line], *Linia*, 1932, no. 4, 85-86.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>63</sup> Julian Przyboś, Forma nowej liryki [The Form of New Lyric], *Linia*, 1931, no. 3, 65.



(‘purposeful organization of the poetic vision’<sup>64</sup>) and associationism (‘unconscious instinctive resonations of the subconscious’<sup>65</sup>).

I call the contradictions ‘ostensible’ because I believe the poet introduced them on purpose. The article clearly enters into polemics against Kurek’s remarks on surrealism and defends the new poetological diagnoses of Brzękowski (fully expressed only in *Poezja integralna*). Przyboś sees it as full of potential for the development of new techniques, and enumerates its merits:

It smashed the former patterns of structure, exposing their rigid triviality. And this negative achievement is among his most important achievements. Secondly, by liberating the poet from the yoke of the fossilized arrangements, he permits the unusual agility of imagination, the collation and approximation of distant visions.<sup>66</sup>

For the author of *Równanie serca* [The Equation of the Heart], surrealism did not need to be in contradiction with the idea of organization of the poem. What is more, his definition of a poetic image made use of both traditions, and getting still closer to perceptive poetics,<sup>67</sup> Przyboś wandered off the meaning of the metaphor proposed by Peiper. In an essay entitled *Nieco o realizmie w malarstwie* [A Bit on Realism in Painting], the poet emphasized its significant property of bringing together distant images, thus showing the seemingly non-existent links between them. Such a definition is closer to the statements of surrealists concerning poetic image<sup>68</sup> than to deliberations on the language typical

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 66.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> For differences between constructivist poetics and perceptive poetics see Elżbiety Rybicka, *Modernizowanie miasta. Zarys problematyki urbanistycznej w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Universitas, Kraków, 2003, 100-180 and 228-253.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. the definition of poetic imagery by Pierre Reverdy: ‘Image is a pure product of the mind. [It is created as a result of] the approximation of two more or less distant elements of the reality. The more distant and accurate the connection between the two approximated elements of the reality, the stronger the image, the bigger its emotional power and poetic reality’. André Breton, Manifesto of surrealism, in A. Ważyk (ed.), *Surrealizm – teoria i praktyka literacka. Antologia*, Czytelnik, Warszawa 1976, 73.

of *zwrotniczanie*. Metaphor is seen as something that can be visualized, something that reflects relations between objects in space. It is born as a result of the establishment of the individual relationship between man and the world and brings an individual closer to the reality in question. As noticed by Barbara Sienkiewicz: 'in Przyboś's concept, metaphor is almost equivalent to image. Its basic function is to [...] record and transfer poetic vision. It becomes a 'figure' of recognition, revealing epistemological engagement.'<sup>69</sup>

Similar observations can be found in Brzękowski's theoretical deliberations. His most important article in *Linia, Nowa budowa poetycka* [New Poetic Structure], repeated Przyboś's ideas about economy of expression and the need for poetic self-limitation. One could argue that it was those points that all *Linia* collaborators eagerly agreed upon. At the same time, Brzękowski took up the problem of associationism, which proved to be a bone of contention between Kurek and the rest of the group. In his manifesto the poets notes:

Associationism consists in ellipsis as its driving force. Well-applied ellipsis should be expressive of certain forms, images or sounds gravitating towards each other; it should disclose the chemical kinship of words.<sup>70</sup>

Here we can see a conception of distant associations gravitating towards each other (the poet discusses it in detail in his analysis of a fragment of his poem *Piersi Anity* [Anita's Breasts]). The metaphor of 'chemical kinship' sends the reader back to Peiper: words or images do not result directly from the unconscious and cannot be automatically recorded, otherwise there would be nothing but chaos and gobbledygook. They have to be made of the same substance and show their unity through difference.

Brzękowski tried to bring his new fascinations together with his old duties: he deliberately stressed the role of ellipsis, mentioned image and

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<sup>69</sup> Barbara Sienkiewicz, Strzeziński, Przyboś i konstruktywizm, in Barbara Sienkiewicz, *Między rewelacją a repetycją. Od Przybosia do Herberta*, Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, Poznań, 1999, 59.

<sup>70</sup> Jan Brzękowski, *Nowa budowa poetycka* [New Poetic Structure], *Linia*, 1932, no. 4, 92.

sound construction, and sought new musicality in poetry. Such theses, however, did not satisfy Kurek, who – in the final issue – published a rather paradoxical introductory article emphasizing the constructive program of *Linia* ('All we care about is discipline and construction'<sup>71</sup>), recalling the old slogans from *Zwrotnica*, ('Someone said that poetry is the creation of beautiful sentences. Yes: because word is a scallywag'<sup>72</sup>), and attacking Brzękowski's musical fascinations and the automatism of imagination. Simultaneously, he assured his opponents that there was no discrepancy between Brzękowski's thought and his own. Quite the contrary, they meaningfully complemented each other. The ending reads:

Ellipsis is a tool used in poetry-making. It has no formal equivalent in geometric shape. A straight line is an idea and an indicator of the principle of creation. There's no contradiction here.<sup>73</sup>

The most important category in Brzękowski's thinking about poetry is here reduced to a purely instrumental role. This seems to have been in opposition to Brzękowski, who wanted to make ellipsis a conceptual key to understanding the structure of the poem. Kurek's 'straight line' is a functional calque: it is the shortest way from one word to another and does not form any theory of the image. It can be treated as yet another synonym for condensation or objection to ornamentation. Thus Kurek, Brzękowski and Przyboś parted ways just as the representatives of Praesens did: they seemed to believe in the same principles but in completely different ways. The discussion on ellipsis and line can be summarized in Strzemiński's statement directly aimed at his colleagues from Praesens: 'Employing straight lines, but a flat roof and standardized windows do not make modern architecture.'<sup>74</sup>

The breakup of *Linia* certainly had many different causes, including organizational and financial matters. It is illustrative of the gradual atrophy of team spirit, the development of individual aesthetic attitudes and – es-

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<sup>71</sup> Jalu Kurek, Świadome pisarstwo. Jeszcze elementy: wiązanie [Elements Again: Bonding], *Linia*, 1933, no. 5, 105.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>74</sup> Władysław Strzemiński, Zasady nowej architektury [Rules for New Architecture], *Linia*, 1932, no. 3, 69.

pecially in Przyboś's case – the primacy of creative practice over anything else. Paradoxically, *Linia* turned out to be too 'straight' and, as a result, it did not allow for any theoretical diversity. Attempts at unifying its theoretical framework lead to trivialization of ideas, which turned them into meaningless slogans. As an author of manifestos, Jalu Kurek turned out to be one of Tadeusz Peiper's bad students.

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## *The Chapliniade, Proletarian Art and the Dissemination of Visual Elements in Avant-Garde Magazines of the 1920s*

In recent years, there has been a growing scholarly interest in how the figure of Charlie Chaplin was perceived in the 1920s avant-garde milieu of France,<sup>1</sup> Germany,<sup>2</sup> Russia,<sup>3</sup> Serbia/Croatia,<sup>4</sup> Czech,<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jennifer Wild, The automatic chance of the modern tramp: Chaplin and the Parisian avant-garde, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 2010, no. 3, 263-283; Libby Murphy and Charlot Français, Charlie Chaplin, The First World War, and the Construction of a National Hero, *Contemporary French & Francophone Studies*, 2010, no. 14, 421-429; Amy Sargeant, Dancing on Fire and Water: Charlot and L'esprit Nouveau, in Tom Paulus and Rob King (eds.), *Slapstick Comedy*, Routledge, New York, 2010, 193-206; Christophe Wall-Romana, *Cinepoetry: Imaginary Cinemas in French Poetry*, Fordham University Press, New York, 2013; Jennifer Wild, *The Parisian Avant-garde in the Age of Cinema, 1900–1923*, University of California Press, Oakland, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Sabine Hake, Chaplin Reception in Weimar Germany, *New German Critique*, 1990, no. 51, 87-111; Thomas J. Saunders, *Hollywood in Berlin: American Cinema and Weimar Germany*, University of California Press, Oakland, 1994; Sherwin Simmons, Chaplin smiles on the Wall: Berlin Dada and the Wish-Images of Popular Culture, *New German Critique*, 2001, no. 84, 3-34.

<sup>3</sup> Clare A. Cavanagh, Rereading the Poet's Ending: Mandelstam, Chaplin, and Stalin, *PLMA*, 1991, no. 1, 71-86; Yuri Tsivian, Charlie Chaplin and His Shadows: On Laws of Fortuity in Art, *Critical Inquiry*, 2014, no. 3, 71-84; Owen Hatherley, *The Chaplin Machine. Slapstick, Fordism and the Communist Avant-Garde*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago–London, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Bojana Jović, *Junaci Modernih Vremena. Čarli Čaplin u očima evropske avangarde*, Službeni glasnik, Belgrad, 2012; Bojana Jović, Šarlo i Sloveni - Čarli Čaplin u poetikama slovenskih avangardista između dva rata, *Zbornik Matice srpske za slavistiku*, 2013, no. 83, 119-132.

<sup>5</sup> Giuseppe Dierna, Due miti contigui nell'avanguardia ceca degli anni '20: Amundsen e Charlot, in Maria Ciccarini et al. (eds.), *Kasarevo Kesarju: Scritti in onore di Cesare G. De Michelis*, Firenze University Press, Firenze, 2014, 109-127.

Poland,<sup>6</sup> and even Latin America,<sup>7</sup> and the role the famous film tramp played in manifestations of new art. These studies are engaged with the broader issue, positioning Chaplin as a pop cultural icon not only in the context of newly established avant-garde groups, but also the social and geopolitical changes that were taking place in Europe during the 1920s. In the aftermath of World War I, the great popularity of Chaplin's image as the instantly recognizable figure of a poor fellow in torn trousers and ill-fitting shoes, wearing a bowler hat and a walking cane, proved how widely his persona resonated among the working classes and international artistic circles alike. All social spheres revered him: the proletariat, the intelligentsia, conservatives, and those looking for new ways of expressing themselves through art.

The character of Chaplin was probably the first example of how accurately a movie actor could reflect the collective imagination. His face represented the strong emotional expressions felt by the people, while his costume reflected the attributes and class distinctions, demonstrating the degradation of a bourgeois class condemned to proletarianization. The bowler hat, oversized boots and pants, moustache, and dandy cane signified someone from an era that had long passed. Traditional manners, naivety, humility, modesty, and kindness condemned him, in equal measure, to social alienation. The fact that his poverty seemed accidental suggested that anyone could face a similar fate. In films such as the *Immigrant* (1917), *Dog's Life* (1918), or *The Kid* (1921), Chaplin portrayed a poor proletarian, always *vis à vis* a wealthy bourgeois figure, one that was also made fun of in the majority of his other films. In his productions, the artistic left-wing circles saw a clear critique of the bourgeoisie and a hope for bettering the condition of the working class. This political message was able to reach the masses via the silver screen.

One of the most important instances linking Chaplin with left-wing ideologies is the writing of Ivan Goll, much of which was translated and circulated in the 1920s avant-garde circles. This generated a strong resonance in leftist environments. In my study, I intend to investigate the reception of Goll's writing to explore how avant-garde artists, especially

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<sup>6</sup> Przemysław Strożek, *Chaplinaida w kręgach lewicy literackiej i artystycznej lat 20*, *Kwartalnik Filmowy*, 2015, nos. 89-90, 288-306.

<sup>7</sup> Jason Borge, *Latin American Writers and the Rise of Hollywood Cinema*, Routledge, London, 2008.

those associated with International Constructivism, created the image of Chaplin as a hero of the radical left. I also intend to demonstrate that, to a great extent, it was Goll who set a certain direction for interpreting Chaplin's films from the perspective of propagating communist ideas. For example, Goll's cinema-poem *The Chapliniade* (1920) with Fernand Léger's four illustrations of *Charlot* gained wide recognition in a number of books and journals published by the International Constructivist movement, preoccupied as it was by the idea of creating a basis for a new proletarian art.

What was the role, then, of visual examples such as Léger's *Charlot*, as copied from *The Chapliniade* in other avant-garde magazines and publications? Were they simply strengthening the popularity of Chaplin's avant-garde image among the artistic left-wing circles of the time? Or was the strategy of disseminating these images via an international journal and magazine circuit of greater importance? Parallel to an analysis of the significance of the *Charlot* illustrations in the publications of the artistic left, I aim to outline the problem of reproducing and sharing visuals (the idea of 'viral' in relation to 'network' and 'software') in order to shape a perspective for future studies of the relationship between the 1920s avant-garde and today's new media and digital cultures.

## 1. Recognition of Ivan Goll's Writings on Chaplin in Avant-Garde Publications

During the First World War, the French recognized Chaplin as a national hero, renaming him 'Charlot.' At the time, American films were major sources of entertainment in Paris, because cinemas were free of charge for military personnel.<sup>8</sup> Guillaume Apollinaire, Louis Aragon, and Phillippe Soupault all praised the master of slapstick. The famous cartoonist, Cami, depicted Chaplin defeating Prussian soldiers while Blaise Cendrars stated that Chaplin was the secret weapon of the Triple Entente in the fight against the Central Powers. In May 1919, Jean Cocteau also described his admiration for the 'anti-German' film, *Shoulder Arms*.<sup>9</sup> Not without rea-

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Abel, The Contribution of the French Literary Avant-Garde to Film Theory and Criticism (1907–1924), *Cinema Journal*, 1975, no. 3, 23.

<sup>9</sup> Jean Cocteau, 'Carte blanche,' in Richard Abel (ed.), *French Film Theory and Criticism, 1907–1939*, vol. I: 1907–1929, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1993, 173.

son, Chaplin films were seen as hostile to the German nation and this was among the causes of the Weimar Republic's introduction of an embargo on all American films until 1921.<sup>10</sup>



Figures 1–4. Iwan Goll, *Die Chapliniade. Eine Kinodichtung*, 1920. Illustrations by Fernand Léger

Iwan Goll, a left-wing poet and dramatist who studied in Germany and spent the war in Switzerland, had a chance to experience Chaplin's films and the popularity they aroused upon moving to France in 1919. Having settled in Paris, he began to publish – in Germany – texts focusing on the phenomenon of Chaplin's films. While the embargo still prevented audiences from seeing Chaplin's films, Goll's writing emerged as one of the first German voices on the comedian's work. *The Chapliniade*, published in 1920 in Dresden, cited short vignettes from Chaplin's movies including *The Adventurer* (1917) and *Sunnyside* (1919), and depicted a crazed poetical variation on the adventures of the famous tramp.

Goll's cinema poem begins with Chaplin's image from a kiosk poster becoming animated. The image starts to live its own life and Chaplin's personalities begin to multiply.<sup>11</sup> First he is Jesus Christ, then a king, a soldier, a chef. Wandering through cities, countryside, and even the centre of the Earth, he triggers various events. At one point, upon arrival in

<sup>10</sup> Sabine Hake, *Chaplin Reception in Weimar Germany*, 88.

<sup>11</sup> Iwan Goll, *The Chaplinade: A Film Poem*, translated by Clinton J. Atkinson and Arthur S. Wensinger, *The Massachusetts Revue*, 1965, no. 3, 497-514.



Marseille from Hong Kong, Chaplin encounters *The Leader of the mob*, who kneels before him and shouts:

[*The Leader*]

Give us back our laughter

And pour the heavens back into our eyes.

We can no longer think!

We can no longer recognize ourselves!

Release us from work!

Bring us the Communism of the Soul!

[...]

Bring us the Revolution!<sup>12</sup>

*The Leader's* statement uncovers Goll's own outlook on the role Chaplin could play as an initiator of a communist revolution. Goll also discussed this view in an article *Apology of Charlot* (February 1920) in *Die Neue Schaubühne*, a magazine published in Dresden:

[...] Do not hate the bourgeois, ignore him! Otherwise he can never be finished off. One man is already doing this, and he is more popular in Paris than *Poincare*, *Carpantier* or *Gemier*. This man is Charlot, Charlie Chaplin

Charlot is the genius of our times. Who pays him millions for a single movie?

A fat, sweaty bourgeois?

Charlot is the best man of our times.<sup>13</sup>

Published in 1920, Goll's *The Chapliniade* and *Apology of Charlot* designated Chaplin as someone affiliated with communism, which struck a nerve with the avant-garde and their considerations for the future of proletarian art. *Apology of Charlot*, as published in *Die Neue Schaubühne* was soon translated into Polish by Witold Wandurski in *Nowa Kultura*, an instrument of Polish left intelligentsia featuring, among others, discussions about projects of new proletarian

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 511.

<sup>13</sup> Ivan Goll, *Apologie des Charlot*, *Die Neue Schaubühne*, 1920, no. 2, 31-33.

culture.<sup>14</sup> Simultaneously, *The Chapliniade* was translated into French, Italian, Czech, English, and Hungarian, as noted by Goll in a letter to Lajos Kassák.<sup>15</sup>

Goll's poem was also discussed in the Serbian journal *Zenit*,<sup>16</sup> of which Goll was one of the editors. It is worth mentioning that its co-editor, Ljubomir Micić, published a piece entitled *Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Graveyard* imagining Chaplin, Goll, and other avant-garde authors extolling proletarian revolution from the tower of Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*.<sup>17</sup> In this way, one symbol of the new cinema became one with another – a symbol of Constructivist art.

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<sup>14</sup> Polish Futurists and Constructivists had strong links to *New Culture*. In his introduction to the translation, Wandurski emphasized Chaplin's active part in political groupings of the American left: 'Any worker in America, England, France knows him... [...] Chaplin – a bitter satirist of the mechanized, besotted in its pursuit of profit, bourgeois world. [...] For many years, a member of the radical workers' party in America, a friend of Upton Sinclair and Bernard Shaw, an active member of the English Labour Party. Witold Wandurski, *Słowo wstępne*, Ivan Goll, *Apologia Chaplina, Nowa Kultura*, 1924, no. 4, 85. Wandurski's views on Chaplin's supposed active participation in the political life of American leftist's organizations, was far exaggerated. Indeed, in 1922, Chaplin supported William Z. Foster, the leader of strikes and member of the Communist Party, and also donated thousands of dollars for the party's activities. It is possible that Chaplin joined the party, but in any case it only existed for a very short period of time. See Joyce Milton, *Tramp: The Life of Charlie Chaplin*, Da Capo Press, New York, 2014.

<sup>15</sup> See Ivan Goll's letter to Lajos Kassák (10 August 1922), in Edit Sasvári, Franciska Zólyom and Katalin Schulcz (eds.), *Lajos Kassák, Botschafter der Avantgarde 1915–1927*, exhibition catalogue, Berlinische Galerie, Budapest, 2011, 83; Ivan Goll (translated by Imre Bolgár), Chaplin. Az emberiség kis mozija. Filmköltemény, *Ma*, 1923, no. 4, 6-12.

<sup>16</sup> Bosko Tokin, Evropski pesnik Ivan Goll [Ivan Goll European Poet], *Zenit*, 1921, no. 1, 5-6, 8. Thanks to Bojano Jović for directing me to this text.

<sup>17</sup> Ljubomir Micić, Šimi na groblju latinske četvrti, Zenitistički Radio-Film od 17 sočinenija [Shimmy at the Latin Quarter Graveyard, Zenitist Radio-Film in 17 Parts], *Zenit*, 1922, no. 12, translated in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds. A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-gardes, 1910-1930*, LACMA and MIT Press, Cambridge, 2002, 505-508. For more on Chaplin and Serbian and international avant-garde, see Bojana Jović, *Junaci Modernih Vremena* and *Šarlo i Sloveni*.

Who is currently the most popular man in France, England, Italy and other countries? There are two of them – LENIN and CHARLOT. With the caveat, however, that Lenin’s name brings awe, fights, and disputes, while the name of CHARLOT brings only a BLESSED GAIETY<sup>18</sup>

– wrote Ilya Ehrenburg in his 1922, Moscow-Berlin-published *A vse taki ona vertitsja. O novom stile v iskusstve*, described as the ‘bible of Constructivism.’ It also included *Charlot* illustrations, as did the first issue of the Berlin-based influential avant-garde journal *Veshch – Objet – Gegenstand* (1922, no. 1-2), published by Ehrenburg and El Lissitzky. *Veshch – Objet – Gegenstand*, together with Ehrenburg’s book, popularized ideas of Soviet Constructivism in Central Europe while suggesting its European variations. Texts about Soviet Russia’s cultural revolution were intentionally juxtaposed with articles on new technologies and inventions, alongside Cubist depictions of the cinematic hero revered by the Berlin and Paris avant-garde sets – that is, Charlie Chaplin.



Figure 5. Вещь (Veshch) – Objet – Gegenstand, 1922, no. 1-2. Illustration by Fernand Léger

<sup>18</sup> Ilya Ehrenburg, *A vse taki ona vertitsja* [And yet the world goes round], Gelikon, Berlin and Moscow, 1922, 127.

серебристых постановок. Работа ведется учебным методом. Заключается постановка «Судьбы», где из центрального плана будет демонстрироваться работа металлического материала по чистоте осевого движения. Иная постановка еще не имеет названия. Цепочка ее построена по типу американского действия современного театра и характера.

В этой постановке будут применены сложные парадоксы построения действия. Каждое действие лишь из себя состоит, поэтому имеет парадокс, в который закономерно вытекают различные моменты несомненного материала из митического и детического подлин.

1. ЛИНЕЙКА, выявляющая вес натурщика.

2. ЛИНЕЙКИ, выявляю-

щие осевое построение и формальную сторону жеста.

3. ЛИНЕЙКА концентрации и эксцентрики (свертывания и развертывания) натурщика.

4. ЛИНЕЙКА площадки.

5. ЛИНЕЙКА напряжений.

Заключается работа над постановкой и фотировкой «Судьбы». Для того, чтобы показать важность известных моментов в работе натурщика, указанные моменты резко выделяются друг от друга по яркости. В одной — главным образом темное и жалобное, в другой — быстрое и яркое. Действие происходит в Г.С.Ф.С.Г.

и Америке. Другая постановка более медленная по монтажу и по существу более театральная с главной йогой действия на мизансцене. Главная режиссура на сцене производится в светлые моменты. Главные материалы условия учебной техники и руководящей; а также отсутствие сложного монтажного оборудования и материала очень обращается на производительно-сти учителя и руководящей техники. Во время летнего периода этот материал строится в виде. Системы с программой «С» показанного времени — вынужденные не будут, так как метод построения считается для настоящего времени представляется слишком привлекательным и опасным, что в свое время было вынуждено изобретательной подготовкой к более точной и более сложной работе материала (аутрипу).

Государственный Технический Кинематографический институт

И Государственный Институт Кинематографии.

Вся кинематографическая печать Америки и Европы поощряет большое исследование и статьи последней фазы **ДЖИМ** и единственного кино-режиссера **ЧАРЛИ ЧАПЛИНА** (Ш.ро).

В этой фазе **ЧАРЛИ** и вчерашние звезды итальянской киноиндустрии и она по справедливости может быть названа **Трагедией—Буффом**.



Чарли Чаплин родился в Лондоне в 1894 году и Чарли был ребенком, который очень любил. Его родители были парижскими. После смерти родителей Чарли, он переехал в Нью-Йорк вместе с родителями и остался в семье. Чарли был на год старше своего друга и, подобно ему, был очень добрым и открытым. Он и Чарли были друзьями и вместе они работали в театре. Они работали в театре и вместе они работали в театре. Они работали в театре и вместе они работали в театре. Они работали в театре и вместе они работали в театре.

Впервые же его увидели в театре с Чарли Чаплином, и с тех пор Чарли начал работать на сцене. Чарли, который был очень добрым и открытым, начал работать на сцене и вместе они работали в театре.

Кроме того на нем же исполнили все роли, что Чарли, который, исполнил, все роли в театре. Чарли, который, исполнил, все роли в театре.

Исторически Чарли был, мальчик и кино. **Чарли Чаплин**

Величайшему художнику мира и верному делу искусства против запрещения демонстраций в Германии кино-фильм с участием Чаплина.

(19 января 1922 г.)



Figure 6. Кино-фот (Kino-Fot), 1922, no. 1. Illustration by Fernand Léger

Recognition of *The Chapliniade* within the Russian Constructivist circles in Berlin eventually – in 1922 – brought Léger's *Charlot* images to Soviet Russia. They were published by the influential Constructivist magazine, *Kino-Fot* (1922–1923), where Alexander Rodchenko, just as two years prior Goll had already discussed Chaplin's affinity with the Communist ideology:

His colossal rise is precisely and clearly – the result of a keen sense of the present day: of war, revolution Communism. Every master-inventor is inspired to invent by new events or demands. Who is it today? Lenin and technology The one and the other are the foundations of his work.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Rodchenko, *Charlot*, *Kino-Fot*, 1922, no. 3, translation from Jed Rasula and Tim Conley (eds.), *Burning City. Poems of Metropolitan Modernity*, Action Books, Indiana, 2012, 437.

The Russian Constructivists saw the embodiment of a new left-wing ideology, emerging at a time of new inventions, in the films about the famous tramp. On a visual level, this was depicted in *Kino Fot* by reprints of Léger's *Charlot* and also illustrations created by Rodchenko's wife, Varvara Stepanova in 1922. In one of these, Chaplin is turning the propeller of an airplane; in another he becomes a propeller himself.<sup>20</sup> In a sense, he evokes an image of a brand new, mechanical Don Quixote, fighting not the windmills but an attribute of modern civilization – the propeller. Stepanova was most probably inspired by *The Chapliniade* images, and so this represented another Cubist take on Chaplin.

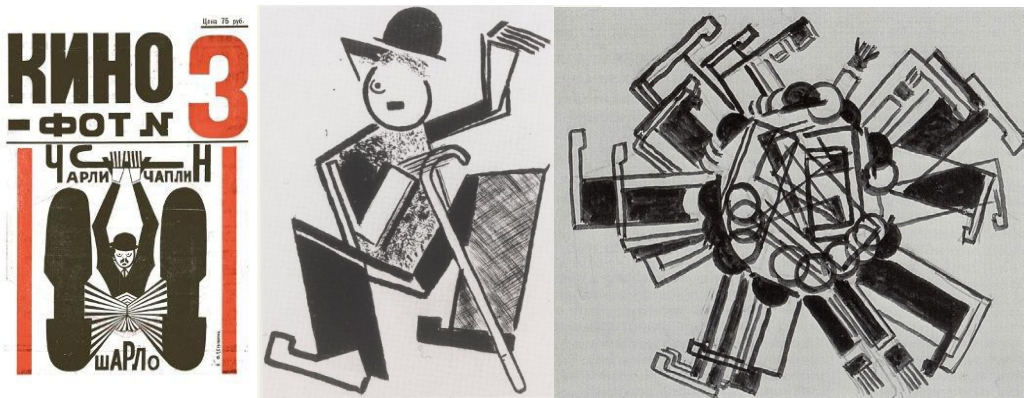


Figure 7. Кино-фот (Kino-Fot), 1922, no. 3. Illustration by Varvara Stepanova  
 Figures 8–9. Chaplin-Illustration by Varvara Stepanova

Czech Constructivists also published reproductions of Léger's *Charlot*. These appeared in *Devětsil* (1922) and *Život* (1922) and books by Karel Teige – *Film* (1925) and *Svět, který se směje* (1928).<sup>21</sup> A translation of *The*

<sup>20</sup> According to Yuri Tsivian, Stepanova referred in her sketches to the film *Dizzy Heights*, 1915, that was mistakenly attributed to Chaplin when shown in Russia. Chester Conklin played the lead. See Yuri Tsivian, *Charlie Chaplin and His Shadows: On Laws of Fortuity in Art*, *Critical Inquiry*, 2014, no. 3, 71-84.

<sup>21</sup> Teige first noticed Goll thanks to his piece *Paris is Burning*, which appeared in October 1921 with the journal *Zenit*, and then later appeared in Czech translation in *Červen*, the first organ for *Devětsil* views. Matthew Witkowsky, *Surrealism in the Plural: Guillaume Apollinaire, Ivan Goll and Devětsil in 1920s*, *Papers of Surrealism*, 2004, no. 2, 1-14.

*Chaplinskiade* appeared in *Divadlo i Srsatec*<sup>22</sup> and likely inspired Vitezlav Nezval's 1922 short film script, *Charlie in Court*. Both Teige and Nezval were the leaders of Devětsil – a Czech avant-garde group taking inspiration from Soviet Constructivism – and regarded phenomena like film and jazz as the highest order of art, moulding the awareness of the modern man and the new proletarian culture.<sup>23</sup> In this sense, Teige's photomontage for *Reflektor* (1925, no. 9) proved to be quite an eloquent commentary. Commemorating Mayday, it depicted a crown of proletarians and, among them two recognizable silhouettes – those of Lenin and Chaplin – next to a sign reading 'Long live the 3<sup>rd</sup> International.' Chaplin's figure, emerging from behind a wall, similarly to the dominating figure of Lenin, was meant to symbolize the destruction of the set social order. In this context, the above excerpt from Ehrenburg's 'bible of Constructivism', which linked Chaplin with Lenin, turned out not to have lost any of its urgency.

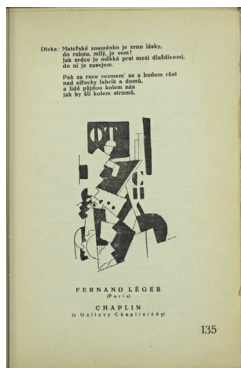


Figure 10. Jaroslav Seifert and Karel Teige (eds.), *Devětsil*, 1922. Illustration by Fernand Léger



Figure 11. *Reflektor*, 1925, no. 9. Front cover designed by Karel Teige

<sup>22</sup> Giuseppe Dierna, *Due miti contigui nell'avanguardia*, 125.

<sup>23</sup> Czech artists linked to these ideas recognized Chaplin as an honorary member of their circles. The following letter to Rudolf Myzet, working with Chaplin in Los Angeles, appeared in the Brno-based magazine *Pásmo*: 'Dear Mr Myzet: Will you please accept Mr. Charles Chaplin's sincerest thanks and appreciation for your enclosure of the letter from Bohemian Literary Avant-garde 'Devětsil of Brunn, Czechoslovakia, stating they have elected him an honorary member of Their Society. In conveying his thanks to the society please also accept the same for your interest in acquainting him of their action in honouring him. Yours faithfully, Alfred Reeves, Manager.' Lloyd, Ch. Chaplin and Fairbanks D. členy Brněnského Devětsilu, *Pásmo*, 1925/1926, no. 1, 14.

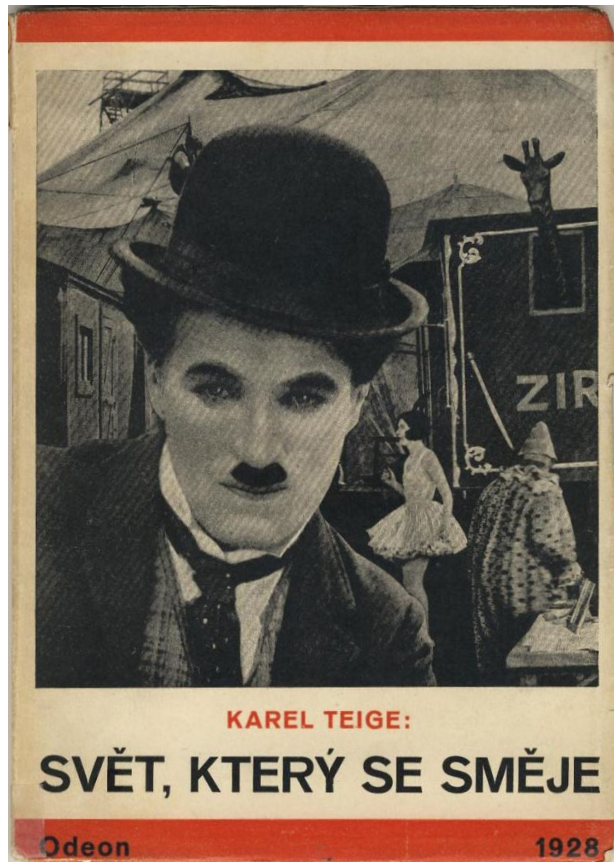


Figure 12. Karel Teige, *Svet ktery se smeje*, 1928. Front cover designed by Karel Teige

The leftist avant-gardes of Poland, Germany, Hungary, Serbia and Croatia, Soviet Russia, and Czechoslovakia clearly saw Chaplin as related to the communist rhetoric of the times. Chaplin's own statements and texts seemed to play a small part in this context. The left's reception of his work and persona, and the way in which his engagement with leftist ideology was being written about at the time, seemed to prove more crucial than what he actually wanted to say through his work (films). Consequently, Goll's publications *The Chapliniade* and *Apology of Charlot* from 1920, widely translated and commented upon, were to a considerable extent the starting point for future interpretations of Chaplin's films in left-wing circles. Wandurski (Warsaw), Kassák (Buda-

pest/Vienna), Micić (Zagreb/Belgrade), Ehrenburg (Berlin), Rodchenko and Stepanova (Moscow), Nezval and Teige (Prague) were all familiar with *The Chapliniade* and Léger's cubist illustrations, which strengthened the belief that the avant-garde's fine art experiments should maintain a connection between avant-garde aesthetics and cinematic culture, as well as the debate concerning the future of proletarian art.

The *Charlot* illustrations by Leger circulating in avant-garde publications showed up the emerging connections between the avant-garde tradition of Cubism, modern cinematic culture, and leftist art. In the end, on the level of the visual, Cubism could no longer compete with the popularity of the cinema. Slapstick turned out to be the perfect medium for communicating content and ideas by appealing both to the most international and the most revolutionary passion of the masses: laughter.<sup>24</sup> This stance was reflected on by Walter Benjamin in his later observations on how the technological reproducibility of film altered the masses' approach to the medium of film. He drew analogies between their attitudes towards Picasso and Chaplin, seeing the former as an example of a 'backward' attitude to art while the latter was more 'forward' thinking.<sup>25</sup>

But Léger's illustrations showed not only a kind of transition from plastic avant-garde (Picasso) to modern cinematic culture (Chaplin). They also declared a certain faith in the potential socio-political influence of Chaplin's films. Plastic avant-garde of the 1920s did not have the strength that would allow it to reach wider social masses. This strength and potential belonged to film and the circuit of publications fulfilling the aims of leftist propaganda projected by the majority of avant-garde circles in 1920s.

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<sup>24</sup> Discussed by Phillippe Soupault and later commented upon Benjamin. 'In his films, Chaplin appeals both to the most international and the most revolutionary emotion of the masses: their laughter,' Walter Benjamin, Chaplin in Retrospect, in Rodney Livingstone et. al (eds.), *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings*, vol. 2: 1927–1930, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2005, 222-223.

<sup>25</sup> 'The technological reproducibility of the artwork changes the relation of the masses to art. The extremely backward attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into a highly progressive reaction to a Chaplin film' Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, in Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (eds.), *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings*, vol. 4: 1938–1940, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2003, 264.





Figure 13. Ilya Ehrenburg, A vse tako, 1922

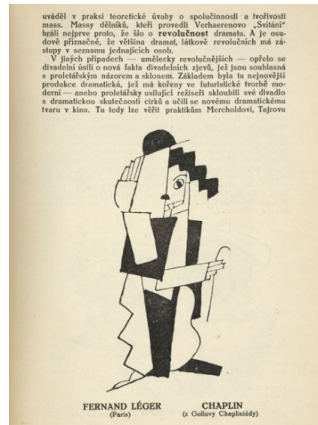
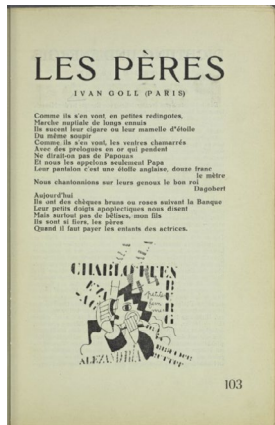
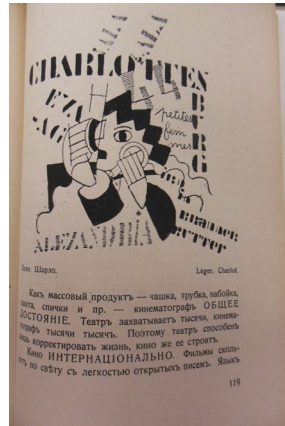
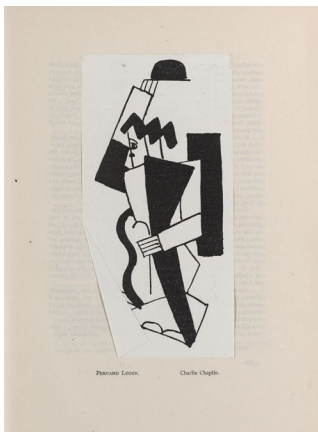


Figure 14. Revoluční sborník Devětsil, 1922



Figure 15. Broom, 1922, no. 3.



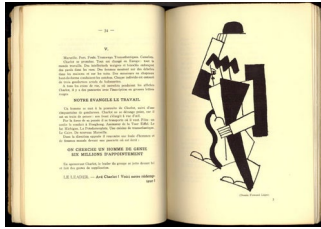


Figure 16. Le nouvel Orphée, 1923.

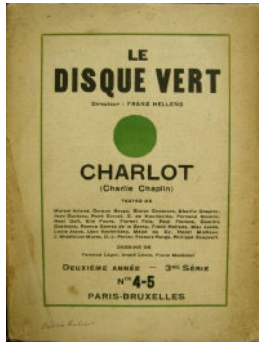


Figure 17. Le Disque Vert, 1924, no. 4-5.

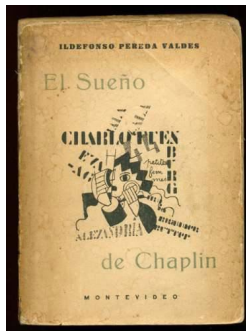


Figure 18. Ildefonso Pereda Valdes, El Sueño de Chaplin, 1930

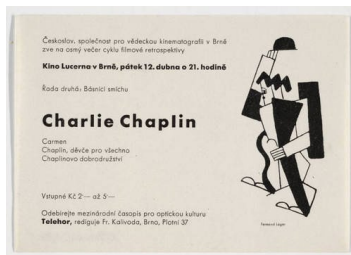


Figure 19. Invitation to film screening in Brno, c. 1936

## 2. Chaplin Goes Viral? Questions for Further Research

Léger's *Charlot*, as noted above, was reproduced in numerous avant-garde publications. It appeared in books, including *A vse taki ona vertitsja* by Ehrenburg (1922); the collection *Le Nouvel Orphée* (Paris, 1923); the Czech translation of Louis Delluc's *Charlie Chaplin* (1924) and *Film* (1925); *Svět, který se směje* (1928) by Teige and *El sueño de Chaplin* by Uruguayan avant-garde writer Ildefonso Pered Valdes (1930), as well as in international avant-garde periodicals published between 1922 and 1924: *Veshch – Objet – Gegenstand* (Berlin); *Kino-Fot* (Moscow); *Broom* (Rome-Berlin-New York); *Le Disque Vert* (Brussels/Paris); *La Vie des Lettres* (Paris); *Devětsil* (Prague) and *Život* (Prague). By being reproduced and shared in these publications, often separately from the contents of Goll's *The Chapliniade*, the *Charlot* images circulated internationally.

During the 1920s, the primary medium for activities of avant-garde groups/formations were journals and periodicals. They served as platforms for the vanguard 'isms' in general, directing attention to other groups, initiatives, and publications. They were a gathering point, a place for sharing programmes and discussions and for public debates and confrontations with readers. They were also channels for the collective efforts by artists mainly (but not only) of the left-wing. In this sense, they were regarded as nodes and lines in a 'network', setting out the ideas of artistic and ideological exchange, providing the fastest possible international flow of information on new experiments and events in art and literature.

Today, the notion of the network is a favourite issue in the field of avant-garde scholarship. In *Between worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes* (2002) Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács employ the notion of the network in relation to the creation of contacts and connections between the varied circles of the avant-garde, in which art movements embodied the tensions between the regional and the cosmopolitan.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the editors of the recent Oxford volume *Modernist Magazines* (2013) underlined the idea of avant-garde activity as a 'networked exchange' across borders and the role of magazines in characterizing European modernisms.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds.), *Between Worlds*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> See Peter Brooker, 'General Introduction. Modernity, Modernisms, Magazines', in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker and Christian Weikop (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, vol. III, Europe 1880–1940, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, 1-21.

Elsewhere, Hubert van den Berg pointed out that ‘from a socio-historiographical point of view, the avant-garde may be profitably thought of as a non-hierarchical network.’<sup>28</sup> His thought was further developed by Malte Hagener who emphasized:

If we see the avant-garde as a network [...] nothing is a centre by itself and in every respect, a periphery can just as well be central from a different angle. [...] My suggestion would be to rather look at the flow within the network, to examine the information, materials, ideas, persons and discourses going back and forth, as this not only maps the avant-garde, it also shows more adequately the practice of exchange, production and transformation.<sup>29</sup>

If the notion of the network can be considered in terms of the practice of artistic-ideological exchange in a non-hierarchical circuit of avant-garde publications (i.e. with no centre or periphery), it seems more productive to examine the process of copying/reproducing and sharing visual elements itself. If journals and periodicals can be seen as a platform for ‘network exchange’, can we then consider the *Charlot* images as prefiguring what we today term ‘viral’ – i.e. understood as the process of copying, sharing, and spreading of the visual elements of today’s new media culture? Can it be said that the distribution of these images of Chaplin in various avant-garde periodicals has foretold the current model of ‘going viral’ – i.e., the spread of viral images, today regarded as part of the cultural politics of network culture, or the virality of the age of networks?

This question is definitely worth asking and exploring further in future avant-garde studies linking the recent discussion on ‘networks’ and theories of network (for example the concept of Rhizome developed by Deleuze and Guattari or the idea of ANT [Actor-Network Theory] developed by Bruno Latour), with Lev Manovich’s new media studies, which

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<sup>28</sup> Hubert van der Berg, *The Early Twentieth Century Avant-Garde and the Nordic Countries – An Introductory tour d’horizon*, in Hubert van der Berg et. al (eds.), *A Cultural History of the Avant-Garde in Nordic Countries 1900–1925*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York, 2012, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Malte Hagener, *Mushrooms, Ant Paths and Tactics. The Topography of the European Film Avant-Garde*, in Per Backström and Benedikt Hjartarson (eds.), *Decentring the Avant-Garde*, Rodopi, Amsterdam and New York, 2014, 162.

claim that ‘the techniques invented by the 1920s left-wing artists became embedded in the commands and interface metaphors of computer software.’<sup>30</sup> In his view, the circulation of information and visual elements has materialized avant-garde techniques in a global culture of mass media and computers (for example collage ‘re-emerged as a ‘cut and paste’ command, the most basic operation one can perform on any computer data).’<sup>31</sup>

When we look at avant-garde magazines as a ‘networked platform of exchange’ and the avant-garde as ‘software’, my approach to future studies is to combine recent international research taken up by avant-garde scholars (van den Berg and Hagener) with Lev Manovich’s new media theories. This will enable us to take a closer look at the importance of visual elements that were copied and shared within avant-garde publications, or to put it simply, ‘went viral’. To put a visual element into a ‘viral’ process, we need to operate within the notions of ‘software’ and ‘network’. Recognizing, analysing and linking ‘Software’ and ‘Network’ with avant-garde studies would allow for an expansion of research perspectives on practices of modernist artists whose visions were often ahead of their time. In this context, the *Charlot* images could function as a perfect case study to trace the meaning of copying and sharing strategies in regards to ‘networking exchange’, i.e. the avant-garde periodicals and publications issued in Dresden, Berlin and moving through Prague, Paris, Moscow and Brussels to Montevideo.

Léger’s illustrations could then be used to illustrate the function of avant-garde as a platform for transnational dissemination, exemplifying the idea of the spread of ‘viral images’, anticipating today’s cultural politics of network culture. Although the images were also circulated separately from the written content of Goll’s *The Chapliniade*, they most often appeared side by side with discussions regarding the Constructivists’ desire for working towards the foundation of a new proletarian culture (for example, in *A vse taki ona vertitsja* by Ehrenburg, *Veshch – Objet – Gegenstand*, and the discussions of Devětsil circles). The analysis of Léger’s *Charlot* should take into account the historical background, which includes the idea of Chaplin as an international leftist hero. This was made possible by spreading his avant-garde image within the ‘network’.

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<sup>30</sup> Lev Manovich, *Avant-garde as a Software*,

<https://www.uoc.edu/artnodes/espai/eng/art/manovich1002/manovich1002.html>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

Stemming from a leftist political orientation, the idea of an international progressive art accessible to the social masses encouraged the practice of artists in new directions. Dissemination of Goll's texts and Léger's images undoubtedly fitted these goals, simultaneously bringing out practices similar to those currently observed in the realm of 'software' and 'internet phenomena'. Further research into the relationship between the avant-garde and new media theories can be seen as the future of modernist studies that, on many levels, could lead to enriching reflection on the problems of contemporary culture.

## Slovenská Grafia: The Magazine that brought New Typography to Slovakia

Albeit with a certain delay, but certainly by the end of the 1920s, Bratislava rapidly developed into a cultural centre of considerable significance at least within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia, if not on a European scale. The School of Applied Arts (Škola umeleckých remesiel, ŠUR, 1928–1939), staffed mostly by Czech lecturers who were familiar with – and often actively participated in – the artistic scene in Prague, Brno and other large cities, played a substantial role in this development. Although the School of Applied Arts never published its own school magazine, in contrast with institutions such as the Bauhaus, its lecturers were closely involved with the launch of *Slovenská Grafia*.

### 1. The School of Applied Arts as a Centre of Progressive Thought

The School of Applied Arts (ŠUR)<sup>1</sup> became a hub of the avant-garde soon after it was founded in Bratislava in 1928. It was the first state school of the visual arts in Slovakia<sup>2</sup> and was built completely from scratch. That was one of the reasons why the school's principal, Josef Vydra, could afford to follow the latest trends in arts education. The school thus earned the name 'Bratislava Bauhaus', and like that famous German art school, it placed most stress on practical mastery, knowledge of materials and production processes, aiming to 'create *new forms and a new beauty* suited to the new life functions of the twentieth century.'<sup>3</sup> Among its most successful departments were Graphics and

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<sup>1</sup> ŠUR developed out of evening drawing courses launched by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1928.

<sup>2</sup> ŠUR was founded by the Czechs Josef Vydra and Antonín Hořejš. Most of the staff were also Czech visual artists who were active in Slovakia as teachers. Among the most prominent of them were architect Zdeněk Rossmann, photographer Jaromír Funke, architect František Tröster, ceramicist Júlia Horová and ethnographer and film director Karel Plicka.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report 1934/1935, Bratislava City Archives, File ŠUR, 2.

Advertising,<sup>4</sup> Photography, Window Dressing and Fashion. In 1938, ŠUR opened the first department of film in Czechoslovakia. The school's ambitions, however, were much loftier than merely to prepare young, innovatively minded artists for work in advertising and industry. At the end of the 1920s, ŠUR staff stood behind a whole array of activities aimed at disseminating progressive thought and eventually modernizing Slovakia. In pursuit of this semi-utopian end, the school's lecturers held exhibitions, organized lectures by national and foreign figures,<sup>5</sup> and issued publications and magazines. Besides the school itself, work began on the creation of an arts and industry museum with a public reading room for periodicals.

## 2. Foreign Magazines at ŠUR

The teaching staff at ŠUR appreciated the importance of foreign art magazines in providing access to ongoing discussions and developments in the major European centres. They began working on a public reading room only a few months after the school was founded. In 1930, the reading room subscribed to more than 50 different magazines, most of which were foreign or published in Czech.<sup>6</sup> These included established art magazines<sup>7</sup> and professional magazines from the fields of architecture, commercial art and advertisement.<sup>8</sup> Among them were the foremost avant-garde periodicals of the late 1920s, namely *Bauhaus*,

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<sup>4</sup> The graphic department at ŠUR attained European standards under the guidance of architect and graphic designer Zdeněk Rossmann. Rossmann arrived in Bratislava in 1931, after a several month-long study visit at the Bauhaus in Dessau and a short stay in Paris. He remained there until 1938, when he was compelled to leave Slovakia like his other Czech colleagues.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the 1930s, lectures at ŠUR were delivered by speakers such as László Moholy-Nagy (1931), Jan Tschichold (1932), Karel Teige (1934), Ernst Kállai (1935) and Hannes Meyer (1936).

<sup>6</sup> A listing of these magazines has reached us by way of an advertising brochure published with a second-year issue of *Slovenská Grafia*.

<sup>7</sup> These included magazines such as *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, *Innendekoration* and *Die Kunst*.

<sup>8</sup> These included the German magazines *Gebrauchsgraphik*, *Die Reklame*, *Die Form*, *Neue Dekoration*, *Auslage*, *Typographische Mitteilungen*, the French *Le jardin de modes* and Czech magazines *Horizont*, *Stavba* and *Výtvarní snahy*.



*Das neue Frankfurt, Das neue Berlin, SA and ReD*. This selection of magazines evinced a deep familiarity with the European scene and an effort to acquaint the Slovak public with the most progressive currents in modern art. When ŠUR was founded in 1928, however, there were still no modern Slovak art magazines that could react to the avant-garde art of the post-war period. Yet on a notional map of the European avant-garde, a country without a modern magazine could hardly be said to exist.

Obtaining periodicals for the reading room was entrusted to Antonín Hořejš, one of the most active promoters of modern commercial art in Slovakia in the late 1920s. Hořejš supported practically every activity connected with the presentation and spread of modern art. He was a co-founder of the School for Applied Arts, together with Josef Vydra, and taught there until 1934. In addition, he laboured tirelessly to organize modern commercial art exhibitions, worked on the establishment of the arts and industry museum, sat as member in the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and was active as a journalist. In the early 1930s, Hořejš published a series of monographs on modern architecture in Bratislava and an anthology of modern commercial art with a contribution by Karel Teige. Considering all of these activities, it hardly comes as a surprise that Hořejš stood behind the creation of the Slovak magazines *Slovenská Grafia* and *Nová Bratislava*, periodicals of European quality in terms of form and content. Hořejš was well aware that the publication of independent magazines in Slovakia was crucial to the spread of progressive ideas in the country and to the acquisition of publicity abroad.

### 3. Slovenská Grafia: A Critical Magazine that Fostered New Typography

Until *Slovenská Grafia*<sup>9</sup> was launched in 1929, Slovak typographers had no professional magazine concerned with the typesetting of modern books and printed material. The official organ of Slovak printers, *Slovenská Grafika*, had ceased to exist in 1927. Attempts to revive it failed, and at a time when the advertising industry was thriving, there was a sore

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<sup>9</sup> The *Slovenská Grafia* magazine and the sociocultural background of its inception is dealt with at length by Ľubomír Longauer in his publication *Vyzliekanie z kroja. Úžitková grafika na Slovensku po roku 1918*, Slovat, Bratislava, 2014.



ŠUR Škola umeleckých remesiel  
v Bratislave

# škola umeleckých remesiel

pri obchodnej a priemyselnej  
komore v Bratislave, budova  
učňovských škôl, vazová ul. 1

# ŠUR

školský rok od 1. októbra do 31. mája  
vyučovacie hodiny: od 18<sup>00</sup> do 20<sup>00</sup>  
účelom školy je umelecká výchova remeselného  
a obchodného dorastu k tvorbe a zoslačeniu  
nových foriem výrobných, obchodných a reklamných

## vyučuje:

všeobecné kreslenie  
textilné kreslenie a móda  
modelovanie  
nauka o výtvar. kompozícii  
písmo a grafické kreslenie  
moder. typografia, reklama  
perspektíva  
prednášky o súčasnom vkuse  
figurálne kreslenie  
bytové zariadenie  
dekoratívna maľba  
kurzy pre deti

Umelecko priemyselná čítarňa obch. a priemyselnej komory	V čítarňi môžete čítať tieto časopisy:	
umiestnená v pavilone UBS je otvorená dennodňo 5.h.do 8.v.	Architektúra Architekt Archiv für Buchdruckerkunst Archiv für Grafik Austage Baukunst Baumeister Bildwelt Bildsfera Cahier d'arts Casson Časopis modná Časopis obrázkové Časopis děsné Český čas. historický Die Dame	Innovationsforum Kámen Keramische Rundschau Kerika Kunst u. Kunstler L'Art vivant Mallards listy Neue Dekoration Panorama Pavillon Propaganda Pudy Reclame Red Slov. Grafik Slov. Pahlady Slov. remeselník Sovremenn. architektura Stavba Stickeren u. Spitzen Trübschick listy Typografie Typogr. Mitteilungen Umsatz Výstavné zprávy
Ziadajte o legitímácie: v kancelárii obch. a priemyselnej komory v Bratislave Ondrejová 4, alebo v kancelárii Umeleckej Besedy Slovenskej, Bratislava, Šatníkova n. Zápisné Kč 10.—.	Die deutsche Kunst u. Dekor. Die Form Das schone Heim Der neue Funkler Das neue Berlin Die Kunst Die Kunst Czechoslovakia Houzevi Hospodárske ročníky	PROSPEKT: NÁVŠEV. C. FULLA.

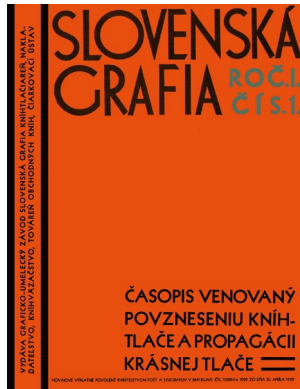


Figure 1. Advertisement brochure for ŠUR

Figure 2. Advertisement brochure for ŠUR

Figure 3. Supplement of Slovenská Grafia, 1929. Advertisement brochure designed by Ľudovít Fulla

Figure 4. Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 1. Front cover designed by Ľudovít Fulla

Figure 5. Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 1. Page designed by Ľudovít Fulla

need for a professional periodical that covered developments in the field.<sup>10</sup> Although *Slovenská Grafia* was dedicated to issues in the graphic design of printed materials, it was not a successor of *Slovenská Grafika*. Rather than the official journal of any professional organization, *Slovenská Grafia* was the outcome of a collective effort to modernize typesetting and advertising in Slovakia. The project was mostly the work of the Czechs Karel Jaroň and Antonín Hořejš, both of whom had close links to the School of Applied Arts. The publisher was Karel Jaroň, the director of the eponymous printing house and a member of the college advisory board. Hořejš became the editor-in-chief. The Czech graphic designer and critic Josef Rybák, who had already been active in the office of the Slovak communist magazine DAV,<sup>11</sup> was an active editor, and Zdeněk Rossmann began collaborating with the magazine after his arrival at ŠUR. Ľudovít Fulla, one of the most important modern Slovak painters who also worked in ŠUR at the time, was responsible for the magazine's graphic design.

The magazine was published between 1929 and 1933, and every issue included samples of work by the Slovenská Grafia printing house. Although its subtitle, 'A magazine for the cultivation of printing and promotion of fine art printing', gave no indication of the magazine's exclusive focus on the promotion of modern trends in commercial graphic design and commercial art, the editorial 'What Do We Want???' clearly identified the editors' agenda: 'It is necessary that we gradually work towards the ennoblement of magazine design and it is necessary to influence the whole Slovak graphic industry so that it may in time adopt the newest technical developments and the newest artistic efforts, for its products as it were translate – on the large scale – into the sensitivity of the nation to current advancements.'<sup>12</sup>

This kind of critical-educational tone pervaded the magazine's articles throughout its lifetime. It acquainted the Slovak public, in an accessible form, with new production principles in the fields of typography, advertising and the commercial art industry, emphasizing the utility of modern works and critically contrasting the fashionable use of new forms with

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<sup>10</sup> Lubomír Longauer, *Vyzliekanie z kroja*, 78.

<sup>11</sup> Ľubomír Longauer, Zdeněk Rossmann a Slovensko, in Marta Sylvestrová and Jindřich Toman (eds.), *Zdeněk Rossmann – horizonty modernismu*, Moravská galerie, Brno, 2015, 172.

<sup>12</sup> Čo chceme??? [What Do We Want???], *Slovenská Grafia*, 1929, no. 1, 3.



2

ci knihárstvom a knižničným prostredím - v interpretácii duchovnej kultúry, myšlienky a činu.

V tomto boji uverovali si knihárstvom svoje úlohy, vrátilo sa v rámci kultúrnych kruh, zároveň požadovalo výrazové prostredky, ovládajú si umelci, rozvíjajú techniku, zohľadňujú formu svojho výstupu. Reálnosťou sa dúhajú písmo, združujú sa so svätením odborného vzdelanosti personálu, kladie sa dôraz na jeho výchovu výstavu a pod. Reorganizácia literárnej odbornosti hľadí najmä v Bratislave, kde najobľúbenejší študent malára Pavlika ovláda výstavu výstavou dosahu, úloha zážitosti mýtich výstavníkov v tunajších grafických podnikoch (zvlášť Slovenskou Grafiou: akad. maliari J. Jareš, Jar. Votava, L. Fulla, Puffík, Vodárik, Mánes, J. Alroy, M. Benka), to všetko viedlo k doľadnej praxi, k záchrane tvorivej práce na Slovensku.

Spočítame, ako chýbali elite krásno po prevrate bratislavské knihárstvom svoje výstavky bez vstielneho výstavného záznamu, ako nešťastné sa na vlas a knožecky obcovstvo, vtedy musíme sa dohodnúť pred vykonanou písom, pred inštruktívou a redakčným postupom, ktorý takmer revolučne vytváral v krásnej dobe zastaralé názory, a musíme odhaliť význam s akou sa knihárstvom vstúpilo do nových pomerov a novými myšli. Dôležité podrobujeme vielo do nových pomerov a novými myšli, ako rýchlo viedlo do seba čítanie prostredia a ako uverilo sa malo, aby si prezískalo okienko do Európy.

Knihárstvom na Slovensku štít pred ďalším rozvojom, rozostalo sa jeho úlohu, podľa pôsobnosti. Knihy výroba sa vyvíja a rozšíri. Sfére vanká prenáša do nášho ozvlášť moderné čítanie výstavne a vkus prekonáva premeny.

Ke tu ďalej premeny úrýchli. Slovenská Grafia štít spol., knihárstvom v Bratislave, rozhodla sa vydávať časopis, ktorého pred číslom predchádzala literárnej verejnosti. Jeho úlohu vybrané a okolnosti vší nameraných. Chceme nim pracovať pre povznesenie knihárstvom na Slovensku, chceme jeho snahy verejnosti, zjednotiť mu záujem, informovať o podrobnosti grafického priemyslu. Mnoho jeho čínov závisí jedine od porozumenia a záujmu literárneho obcovstva, čo platí hlavne o výrobe knižnice, zvlášte bibliofilských edícií. Chceme informovať záujemcov o významných podrobnosti knihárstvom, prinášať

práklady modernej tvorby grafickej v Európe, zaznamenávajú porovnateľné výkony knihárstvom slovenského.

Máme na myslí nielen krásnu úpravu kníh, ide nám tiež to, aby akčionári liter, obchodní štátni, pláky, pozvánky, programy slávností a koncertov boli krásne, aby do všetkých výstav odovzdať poznane zanechávajú prenosnú tvorbu duši, ktorú už zachvátil vstiek umelcov priemysel a vytvárané umenie.

Každý prieraj grafického priemyslu má širokú činnosť výchovnú, má však tiež neodociteľný význam kultúrnej reprezentácie takého národa. Je potrebné postupne pracovať k zoskoleniu úpravy časopisov, je potrebné pôsobiť "na cely grafický priemysel na Slovensku, aby si všane otvoril najnovšie poznanky technické a najnovšie snahy výstavne, lebo jeho vývojky hromadne tlačnicou čítavot' rozpravna národa na silnane pokolov.

Knihárstvom historických vemi dobylo si už mnohokrát úmoria vo Francii, Anglii, Nemecku a inde a knihárstvom Slovenska nami naproti vstety aby, aby si k týmto úspechom pridužilo. Slovenská Grafia štít spol., knihárstvom v Bratislave, rozhodla sa už v posledných rokoch dosiahnuť vysokej úrovne svojich prác jak v obore plákatov, komerčných štátov, tak i v obore výroby knižnice a dva Vačivák "Podnájmká dedina", prof. dr. A. Pražák "Občerstvá Bratislava a Hlavnovei" "Dva sa pred dala, ktoré mali na Slovensku prežiť záujem o krásnu bibliofilsku knihu slovenskej výroby. Nimi viak mal byť naznačený i smer, ktorým slovenské knihárstvom má íti, aby dosiahlo šľachtu úroveň, na ktorej stojí grafický priemysel v umenách historických.

Teraz podjímame sa "Slovenská Grafia" taboto úlohu a poslaním, ktoré bolo vykonané. Úlohy postupne obhája a doplnia sa samy. V závide viak chce svojím časopisom pracovať:

- k povzneseniu grafického priemyslu na Slovensku,
- k propagácii krásnej tlače,
- k zoskoleniu úpravy plákatov, inzerátov,
- k povzneseniu komerčného tlače,
- k usadeniu spolupráce umelcov a tlačiarní,
- k uplatneniu moderných znah výstavnych a grafickej priemyslu,
- k budovaniu záujmu širokých vrstiev o grafické umenie.

VYDAVATELSTVO A REDAKCIA



3

## Typografia a výtvarníctvo

JOZEF RYBÁK

Rozdiel medzi typografom a výtvarníkom je ten, že typograf je predovšetkým len a len výtvarným prostriedkom a jazykom a konkrétnym cieľom. len a len formou určitého materiálu (čierne). Výtvarník, ktorý je umenou podľa svoj číste vstielné emócie trasou a farieb, môže byť tak jednoducho a typograf naproti tomu musí sledovať tendencie prírody výtvarníctvom. Ide tu o dve odlišné estetiky, ktoré sa ne môžu raziť tu a tam aplikovať. Jediné možnosti výtvarníka číta typograf ako oblasť novej

výtvarníckej práce a uplatňuje v nej prvky rýchleho výtvarne. Je to zaujímavé len ako experiment a pre samotný typograf je to úloha ochotnosti, ako obudovať. V ňom pripadá ide len o neobozremanie. Nové možnosti v modernej typografii sú a budú vždy silno občerstvené. Typograf je vo svojej podstate obcovom a funkciou len reprodukčnou a silou funkcia ustane jej navrhovať. To znamená, že účelom a záujmom má byť jej hlavným predpokladom. A tento fakt musíme mať na zreteli vždy modernej snahy typografickej.

## Papier na balenie

LES

Papier na balenie musí mať každý obchodník. Je však rozdiel akého papiera užívá a k akému účelu. V mnohých oblastiach je druh papiera dávno určený potrebou a sí sa nerozvíjajú, lež by sa mala nejaká zmena. Sú však obchody hračkami, miednymi ostrom, galaktickým, skladávaním a pod. Tu užívajú papiera na balenie je rôzne. Buď sú papiere jednobarevné, čiarkate, v ktorých zabalený tovar nie je nápadný, ale sú papiere, na ktorých firma nezabudla vybrať silnými tiskami celú svoju adresu a pomenovanie všetkého čo predáva. Viak tieto firmy dajúce poznať, lebo sa vane záujem prichodilo veľmi často, že nie tieto balenia, na ktorom stojí tuže: Obchodný dom - Warenhaus - arkiba: Friede Weinberg, Bratislava: gramofony, bicykly, osobny tovar, hračky a pod.

Tieto papiere používajú firmy, ktoré dajúce poznajú ľudskú bláhosť a nedostatok ľudského myslenia. Čiastka totiž neprejdú, keď nakupujú, lež X. firma na oťavare zasa, lež musia byť za tovar zaplatiť a k tomu ešte s balíkom (názovom určujúcej) alebo firme národnou reklámou

po uliciach. Nota bene hereť sa pozná bol naposkráť u Poppers boy, u Freistadta hračky, u Mayera skladá atď.

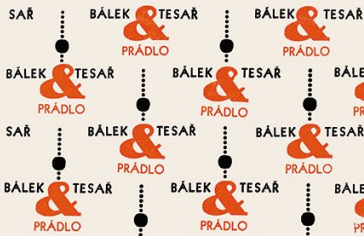
Nemá sa vám, lež je to nekraťme komické a zároveň od firmy prítliť prosebníkmi, aby vás takto vyvolávajú?

Po druhé - nemáme po uliciach takto baťky na úlohu firmy, ktoré sú balili tovar do diárneho papiera, na ktorom nie je k poznaniu čo reťavie, do papiera, na ktorom firma nie je označená proukážkou.

Každý obchodník má možnosť zaplatiť si papier výstavne vankovými, lenže a umelctvy privedený, ktorý výstavne zákazníkova vkuša a nebuha sa ujma jeho obhajobu.

Obchodník mal by sa roziť vemi premyšľat, mal by si získať názor konzumentom, pri zhotovení baleného papiera mal by na pozrad so záujmom výtvarným a mal by zakaňovať, že do ruky vždy balíček elegantne vypravený, jednoducho, jednoducho, jonne vybarvený a pevné balení.

Je to prítliť veľmi nekonzistent, keď ľudia na zakaňujú, aby mu mohli po ulici ľahco držať podobný reklamou.



Príklad riešenia papiera na balenie.

## Plakát

ROBERT DELAUNAY

Plakát je alebo farbou, alebo nie. Forma nie je v podstate nielen inými, ale dimenziami farby. Z frázického stanoviska je teda najlepšími plakát, ktorý je najlepší a najvýššie dušou výstavny, ako letený štít. Ako dopreje k najlepšímu realizácii? Tým, že sa budovanie vyžaduje a jedine snahou o výstavu farieb, lež neupadá v ústavu. Nemáme teda farby farbovať neprirodzene, štatistovne, aby sme vyvolali zoľno peľavbu: "á, krásna!". Musíme snahou a far-

banú znobochť vedieť a dať im vkravať ako tónom. A musíme vyvolať a predpobádať, lež plakát nie je vrodem pre oko, ale výstav, lež adekvatnou. Musíme a ním tak zachádzať. Nepodobá sa už, aby sme a plakatu umieli nejaký viac či menej výstav obrat, napodobujúci určité predmety, lež musíme od plakatu žadať a vymožiť, aby nás podmalil viac či menej intenzívne vberujúci dopájaní, ktorých výroba. (Red. dr. 4)

4

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Figure 6. Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 1. Page-spread designed by Ludovít Fulla  
Figure 7. Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 3-4. Page-spread designed by Ludovít Fulla

genuine modernity.<sup>13</sup> *Slovenská Grafia* also published translations of articles by prominent European figures and informed of events abroad. The Slovak public was thus introduced to figures such as Jan Tschichold and Adolf Loos, and a special double issue was dedicated to the work of Ladislav Sutnar. A planned issue on Karel Teige,<sup>14</sup> for unknown reasons, did not see the light of day, but his name appeared several times in short reports. A remarkable amount of space was given over to Russian work, particularly in typesetting and poster design, and the magazine published a translated article by Russian theoretician Y. Tugendhold. Unfortunately, these articles were not accompanied by examples of Russian graphics. Hořejš also informed of current events in Germany through reports on the Bauhaus, and short reports by the editors adverted to magazines available at the ŠUR reading room, *Das neue Frankfurt* and *Gebrauchsgraphik*. Since ŠUR had no magazine of its own, the editors also used the pages of *Slovenská Grafia* to promote the school and the graphic works of its students, who were under the guidance of Zdeněk Rossmann after 1931.

The magazine's contents, however, could not have had such a revolutionary impression on Slovak readers as Ľudovít Fulla's graphic design.<sup>15</sup> In the spirit of the New Typography, Fulla made exclusive use of the simplest typographical elements such as stripes, lines and discs, broke away from symmetric typography and used a sans-serif typeface for the headline and author's name. Fulla would commonly design the magazine's title page as a typographic montage, and in one first-year issue, he also published an abstract composition entitled *Typographic Illustration*. It served as a sample of an abstract artwork, a 'typographic poem' that

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<sup>13</sup> The most critical proponent of the principles of the New Typography was Josef Rybák. In an article in the magazine's first issue entitled *On modern typography*, he stressed that modern typography demanded keeping view of functionality as the primary standard of production rather than merely mechanical reproducing a formal layout. He also engaged in sharp polemic against the decorative use of simple elements. He revisited the topic in articles published as *Malé písmená* [Small Letters] and *Módna a moderná typografia* [Fashionable and Modern Typography].

<sup>14</sup> The extent to which Slovak periodicals gave coverage to Teige was dealt with by Iva Mojžišová, *Giacomettiho smiech?*, Vysoká škola výtvarných umení v Bratislave, Bratislava, 2009, 151-155.

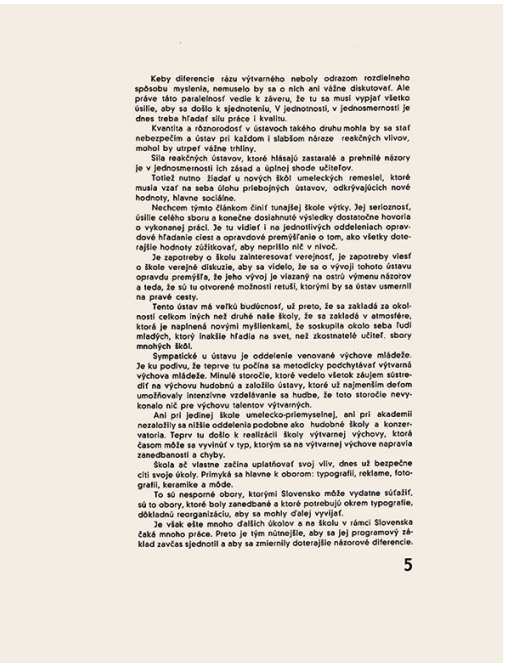
<sup>15</sup> Fulla worked for the magazine during its first two years and was succeeded as graphic designer by Josef Rybák. See Ľubomír Longauer, *Zdeněk Rossmann a Slovensko*, 175.



a i výrobkom dávok celkom iný smer než majú doteraz. Činnosť takých absolventov, ktorí majú byť elitou pracovníkov v jednotlivých oboroch výroby, nemali byť hrovou záležitosťou kombinovania prvkov výtvarných, technických a umeleckých. Ich činnosť musí byť oprísaná o jasný svetový názor a v prvom rade dokonale vybudovaná v rozporovaní hodnoty sociálnych a nesociálnych.

Ještri dnes sa nijako nezdá či rôzne veci majú alebo nemajú dostatočnú hodnotu sociálnu, neznamená to, že tento stav bude trvať večne, a že sa nepodarí možnú výrobu zmeniť v ľapšiu a že strobnosť a procesivnosť, ktoré podporujú vzrast nesociálnych vlastností umelcov, bude kvitovať ďalej.

Je úkolom takých škôl, aby sa ich učiteľský zbor dôkladne zoznámil s filozofickými názormi, ktoré ľudstvo vedlo do novej vývojovej a spoločenskej epochy a aby škôlčivo učili nielen svojím novým vedomím, nového vzhľadom, ale predovšetkým naučili myslieť a sledovať vývoj spoločnosti, ktorej sú členom.



Keby diferenciácie rázu výtvarného neboli odrazom rozdielného spôsobu myslenia, nemuselo by sa o nich ani vôbec diskutovať. Ale práve táto paralelnosť vedie k záveru, že tu sa musí vyplíť všetko učilo, aby sa došlo k sjednoteniu. V jednotnosti, v jednoduši je dnes treba hľadať šiu prácu i kvetu.

Kvantita a rôznorodosť v ústavoch takého druhu mohla by sa stať nebezpečná a ústav pri každom i slabšom nároze reálnych výtvor, mohol by utŕpieť vážne ťžby.

Sila reakčných ústavov, ktoré hlásajú zastaralé a prehnaté názory je v jednotnosti ich záasad a jednoty ich učiteľov.

Totiel nutno hľadať u nových škôl umeleckých remesiel, ktoré musia vzárť na seba úlohu príslušajúcich ústavov, odstraňujúcich nové hodnoty, hlavne sociálne.

Nechcem týmto článkom činiť tunajšej škole výtky. Jej seľnosť, ústia celého zboru a konkrétne dosiahnuté výsledky dostatočne hovoria o vykonanej práci. Je tu vidieť i na jednotlivých oddeleniach opravdové hľadanie cesty a opravdové premýšľanie o tom, ako všetky dostupné hodnoty zúžitkovať, aby nepritlo nič v riev.

Je zapotreby o škole zainteresovať verejnosť, je zapotreby vísť o škole verejnú diskusiu, aby sa videlo, že sa o svojej ľuboz ústavu opravdú premýšľa, že jeho vývoj je viazaný na ostrú výmenu názorov a ľudí. Je tu tu otvorené možnosti rešiť, ktorými by sa ústav usmernil na pravé cesty.

Tento ústav má veľkú budúcnosť, už preto, že sa zakladá za okolností celkom iných než druhé naše školy, že sa zakladá v atmosfére, ktorá je naplnená novými myšlienkami, že sotkupila okolo seba ľudí mladých, ktorí inakšie hľadajú na svet, než zkusomskiel učiel. Sborny mnohých škôl.

Sympatické v ústavu je oddelenie venované výchove mládeže. Je tu podoba, že teprve tu podoba sa metodicky podrobujú výtvarná výchova mládeže. Minulé storočie, ktoré vedelo viesteť záujem sústredil na výchovu hudobnú a stalože ústavu, ktoré už napríklad deťom umožňovali inerentne vzdelávať sa hudba, že toto storočie nevykonalo nič pre výchovu talentov výtvarných.

Áni pri jedinej škole umelecko-pedagogickej, ani pri akadémii nezačali sa ništka oddelenia podobne ako hudobné školy a konzervatória. Teprv tu došlo k realizácii školy výtvarnej výchovy, ktoré časom má sa vynívať v výz, ktorými sa na výtvarnej výchove naprovia zanebanosť a chyby.

Škola až vlastne začína uplatňovať svoj vliv, dnes už bezpečne cíti svoje školy. Prímýká sa hlavne k oborom: typografii, reklame, fotografii, keramike a móde.

To sú nesprávne obory, ktorými Slovensko má vydatne súťažiť, sú to obory, ktoré boli zanedbané a ktoré potrebujú okrem typografie, dôkladnú reorganizáciu, aby sa mohly ďalej vyvíjať.

Je však ešte mnoho ďalších okolov a na školu v rámci Slovenska čaká mnoho práce. Preto je tým nímajšie, aby sa jej programový základ zavčas spoznáť a aby sa zmerilými doterajšie nekorektné diferenciácie.

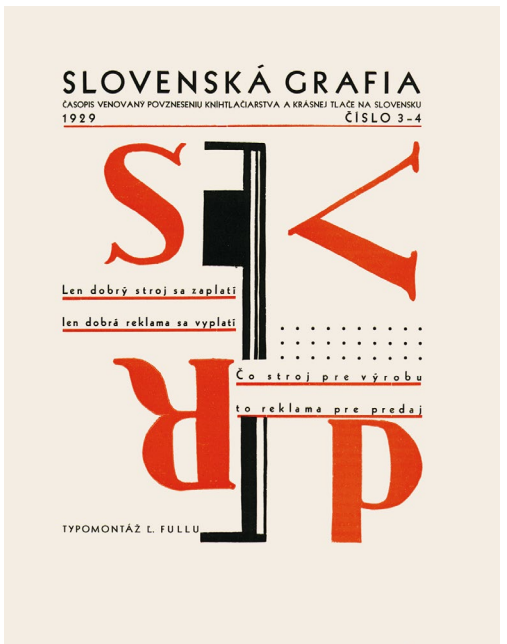


Figure 8. Slovenská Grafia, 1932, no. 4-5. Page-spread designed by Josef Rybák  
 Figure 9. Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 3-4. Front cover designed by Ľudovít Fulla  
 Figure 10. Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 5. Front cover designed by Ľudovít Fulla

Fulla was working on but discarded shortly prior to publication.<sup>16</sup> Fulla was also the author of many of the supplements featuring the output of Slovenská Grafia printing house. He received a grant from the Union of Czechoslovak Art to pursue research at Slovenská Grafia in 1930,<sup>17</sup> and this no doubt goes some way to explain his involvement in many of its commercial orders.

The graphic design of *Slovenská Grafia* far surpassed the typical quality of commercial graphics in Slovakia. The magazine was exceptional even on a European scale. Industry magazines were usually the official media of professional organizations, and their editors found it difficult (and often impossible) to pursue the principles of modern typography without compromise. This can be best illustrated by comparing *Slovenská Grafia* with the official journal of the educational German Printers' Union, *Typographische Mitteilungen* the first professional magazine to give substantial coverage to the New Typography. A special issue devoted to elementary typography, designed by Jan Tschichold without any interference on the part of the editorial office, was published in 1925. Among those who collaborated on the issue were El Lissitzky, László Moholy-Nagy, Natan Altman and Herbert Bayer. The articles included a ten-point program of elemental typography formulated by Tschichold and a translation of the Constructivist Manifesto, and they were accompanied by samples of graphic artworks by El Lissitzky, Herbert Bayer, László Moholy-Nagy and Tschichold himself. This undoubtedly bold move by *Typographische Mitteilungen* testified to a progressive attitude, but it failed to alter radically the magazine's character. Tschichold's authoritative proclamations on the New Typography roused such vigorous debate among German compositors that, in the same year, the editorial office was forced to produce an explanation of its choice to publish the special issue and launch a professional discussion of the topic on its pages. It took several years until voices supportive of the New Typography prevailed in *Typographische Mitteilungen*.

*Slovenská Grafia* took up a starkly different position. Because the magazine was the work of a small, like-minded group of individuals, it could afford complete consistency in terms of content and form. Throughout the

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<sup>16</sup> Lubomír Longauer, *Vyzliekanie z kroja*, 164.

<sup>17</sup> Letter from the Union of Czechoslovak Art to Antonín Hořejš of 21 July 1930, Bratislava City Archives, Antonín Hořejš papers.

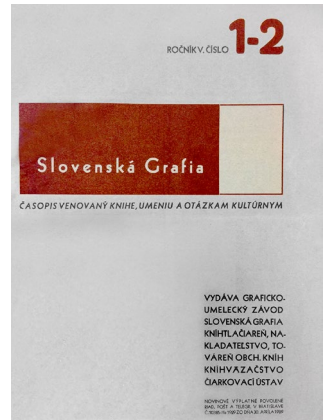
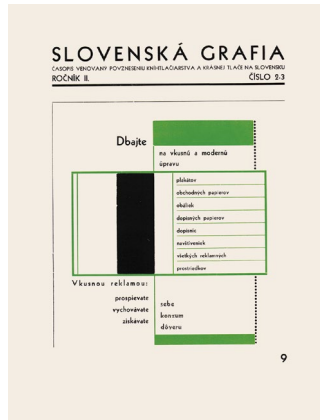
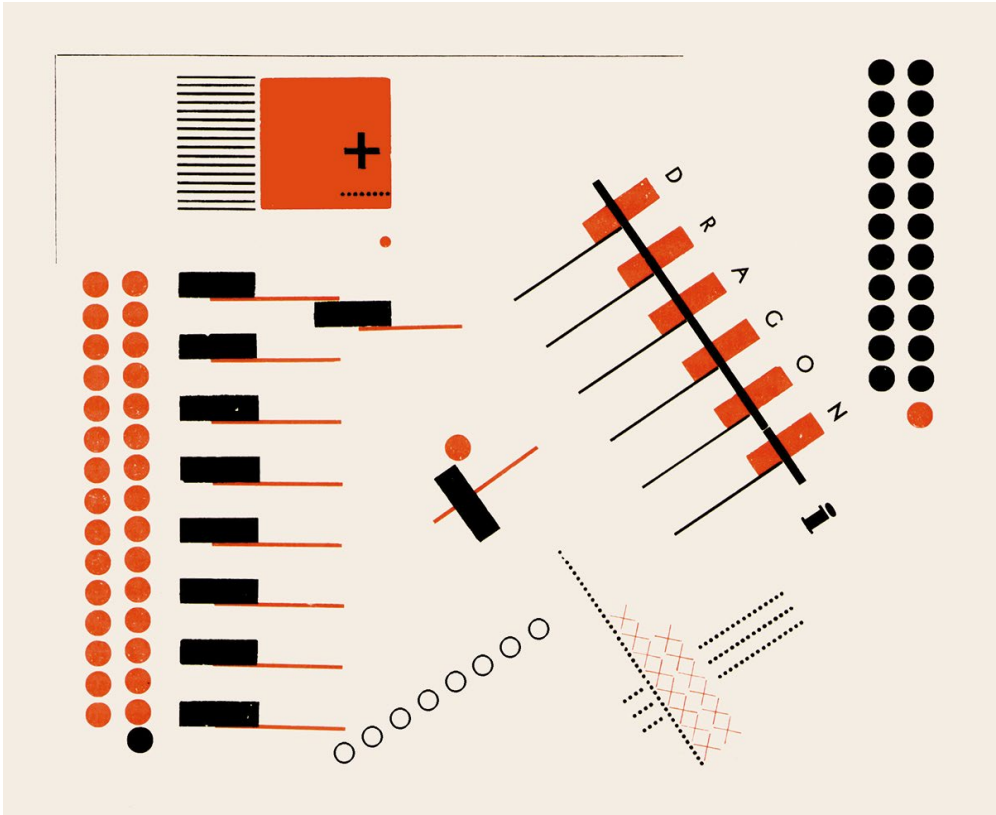


Figure 11. Ludovít Fulla, Typographic illustration published in Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 5.  
 Figure 12. Slovenská Grafia, 1929, no. 6. Front cover designed by Ludovít Fulla  
 Figure 13. Slovenská Grafia, 1930, no. 2-3. Page designed by Ludovít Fulla  
 Figure 14. Slovenská Grafia, 1933, no. 1-2. Front cover designed by Josef Rybák or Zdeněk Rossman



four years of its existence, the editors uncompromisingly championed the principles of the New Typography. There was no debate on the pages of *Slovenská Grafia* – conservative opinions were simply given no hearing. Only once did Hořejš rail at an editor from the magazine *Typografické listy*, who had complained that national typography received little attention and was subordinated to trends imported from abroad. In an article titled ‘Towards a national typography’, he addressed the issue for the first and last time, replying: ‘So far, the only typography we have taken as ‘national’ has been good typography, perfectly suited for its purpose, tasteful and effective, technically flawless.’<sup>18</sup> This resolute modern-mindedness, of course, adversely affected the magazine’s readership, but this was partly made up for by its being published for free.

It is difficult to determine exactly what caused the demise of *Slovenská Grafia*. Ľubomír Longauer, the foremost specialist on the history of Slovak commercial graphic design, connects the end of *Slovenská Grafia* with the retirement of Karel Jaroň as director of the eponymous printing house. The magazine certainly underwent a complete makeover in 1933. The first (and last) double issue from early 1933 carried a new subtitle, ‘A Magazine Dedicated to Books, Art and Cultural Questions,’ signalling a change from professional journal to interdisciplinary cultural magazine. This double issue carries the strong signature of Antonín Hořejš, echoing the style of a magazine of which he was the publisher, *Nová Bratislava*. Hořejš contributed the main article on the topic of children’s courses at the School of Applied Arts and may have been the author of an unsigned interview with Zdeněk Rossmann on the significance of standardization in typography; a logical attribution given that Hořejš was a close colleague of Rossmann’s from ŠUR and the already-defunct *Nová Bratislava*. Most short reports also had to do with the School of Applied Arts in one way or another. One novelty was the presence of short news on music and theatre, which, once again, reminded the reader of *Nová Bratislava*.

The magazine’s graphic design also changed substantially. The cover was arranged in a plainer and simpler manner, sans-serif typefaces were dropped everywhere but for the cover, and a stripe that had until then visually structured the text was completely disposed of. Hořejš remained editor-in-chief and Karel Jaroň was executive editor, but one can only guess who was responsible for the new graphic design. In his memoirs,

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<sup>18</sup> *Slovenská Grafia*, 1933, no. 4, 4.

Josef Rybák recounts taking over from Fulla as graphic designer for the final years of the magazine's existence. It is uncertain, however, whether Rybák changed the design of the final issue or whether a revision of content was also accompanied by a change of graphic designer, as the cover especially is reminiscent of the work of Zdeněk Rossmann. Rossmann had been contributing to *Slovenská Grafia* for some time and had collaborated with Hořejš on *Nová Bratislava* and in the Redopa advertising agency. His continuing collaboration with Hořejš may be adduced from the above-mentioned interview. On the other hand, Rybák was acutely aware of the newest trends in modern typography and of his colleague's work. Since *Slovenská Grafia* never mentioned the name of its graphic designer, it is difficult to judge, without further evidence, whether the final issue was designed by Rossmann or by Josef Rybák working in 'Rossmannesque' style.<sup>19</sup>

In any event, transformation into an interdisciplinary magazine did not save *Slovenská Grafia* from closure. Slovakia thus lost a magazine of European rank. It had made significant contribution to the spread of modern thought among the Slovak public and created publicity abroad. Although there are no surviving records of the magazine's foreign distribution, we can confidently state that it found its way to one of the most competent figures. Jan Tschichold without doubt knew of *Slovenská Grafia* and considered it to be an interesting periodical. Otherwise, he would have not enquired of the printing house in 1934 as to why his issue was no longer delivered. The printing house's reply was prosaic – the magazine no longer existed.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> I am thankful to Ľubomír Longauer for a consultation on this section.

<sup>20</sup> I am thankful to Sonia de Puineuf for this information.

Sonia de Puineuf | *Université de Bretagne Occidentale, Brest*  
**'The Synthetic Journal' – Study Cases *Nová Bratislava* and *Nový Svet***

In 1925, the Czech magazine *Pásmo* published a short article entitled 'Richtlinien für eine Syntetische Zeitschrift' [Guidelines for a Synthetic Journal], in which László Moholy-Nagy described the complex nature of a true modern magazine. Appealing for transdisciplinarity (art, science, techniques, crafts etc.), the Hungarian artist was convinced that it was the only way to reach the 'organization of life', the ultimate aim of the international avant-garde movement:

Ours is the time of clarity and purity. From this point of view, there is no separation between arts, science, techniques, crafts etc., but only simultaneous strengths organized in relation to each other. A magazine wishing to work on a true organization of life should not be limited to only one component, for example art, but has to summarize the work of all the productive strengths of today (scientists, artists, engineers, craftsmen etc.).

This statement by Moholy-Nagy is the ideal starting point for examining the origins and particularities of avant-garde magazines. We can ask some fundamental questions: was the avant-garde magazine a completely new and unique item among the periodicals of the Europe in the 1920s and 1930s? In which respects did the avant-garde magazine differ from other newspapers or magazines of that time? Were there some points specific to the Central European area? To answer, let us compare two magazines published during the inter-war period in Slovakia: *Nový Svet* and the much more short-lived *Nová Bratislava*.

## **1. Editorial Contexts**

The origins of avant-garde magazines are surely to be found somewhere in the nineteenth century, when Symbolists started to use the printed medium to spread their aesthetics, particularly through engravings and poems. In the twentieth century, the printed medium was used by Italian Futurists, Dadaists and other new artistic groups wishing to bind art and life. The contents of such magazines became more and

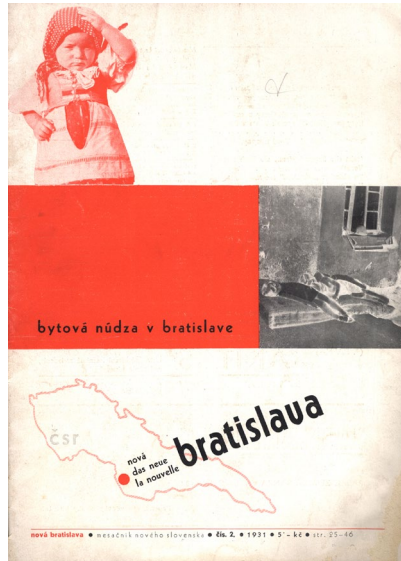


Figure 1. DAV, 1925, no. 2. Front cover

Figure 2. Nová Bratislava, 1931, no. 2. Front cover designed by Zdeněk Rossmann. Photo by Jaromír Funke

Figure 3. Nová Bratislava, 1932, no. 3. Front cover designed by Zdeněk Rossmann. Photo by Jaromír Funke

Figure 4. Nový svet, 1926, no. 3. Front cover

more various, and included pictures, poetry, polemical texts and artistic manifestos. The most important activity of these magazines was, of course, to exchange ideas internationally by ‘spinning a web’ of local points and avoiding the hierarchical organizational diagram of centre and periphery.

In Central Europe, the magazine *Ma*, the product of a Hungarian group led by Lajos Kassák, was the first magazine completely devoted to artistic creation and its relationship with the contemporary world and society. In the period immediately following the Second World War, magazines became an essential artefact of avant-garde groups and their number increased along with the number of cultural locations. In Czechoslovakia, the Devětsil group published some very well-known magazines in Prague, Brno and Olomouc, including *Pásmo*, *Disk*, *ReD* and *Index*, but all of them focused on Czech art and literature (with international news) and almost completely ignored what was happening in Slovak culture. Activity in Slovakia, admittedly, produced no real counterparts to the Czech magazines. The Slovak artistic community struggled to organize itself into solid groups with international influence.

Nonetheless, in winter 1924, a group of Slovak poets and artists started to publish the magazine *Dav*. It aimed at being ‘the magazine of pioneers of socialist ideas in the new generation of Slovakia.’ The group had been formed in 1922 – in Prague(!) – to gather together young Slovak left-oriented intellectuals. The editors of *Dav* immediately set about trying to define what Slovakia exactly was and what was meant by the ‘Slovak nation.’ This questioning of national identity in literature and art runs through every issue of *Dav* and to some extent inhibited its further flourishing. *Dav* never reached the international level of the Czech magazines I mentioned above.

## 2. Nový Svet: an Ambitious Illustrated Magazine

Another magazine appeared in Slovakia in August 1926. Its name, *Nový Svet* [New Word], seemed to match perfectly the progressive *Zeitgeist* of the twenties. The first issue included this statement by the editors:

Until now, Slovakia has not had a magazine capable of depicting our literature and art and life of the country’s society in general. We are publishing *Nový Svet* to satisfy the global cultural demand. It

is a Slovak illustrated magazine which groups together prominent writers, poets, artists and people enthusiastic about Slovak culture. *Nový Svet* is an apolitical magazine which lauds awakening of the new direction in the life; it is to serve to culture, art and literature overall.

A close look shows that this first ambition was only partly accomplished. The editorial circle of the magazine was not defined very clearly, the contributors were rarely 'prominent' and there was no group organized around the magazine (unlike *Dav* or *Devětsil*). It seems that anonymous readers were sometimes contributing to the contents in the form of pictures or short articles.

The 'apolitical' nature of the magazine in fact seemed to incorporate some allegiance to the official political line. The editors accorded importance to the religious question, especially in some special periods such as Christmas or Easter. A change came in 1931, when the magazine moved from Bratislava to Prague with a new editor-in-chief and became more involved in political questions and stressing 'regional problems' similar to those that *Dav* aimed at solving.

The contents of the magazine were more than varied: business, sport, cinema, short extracts of poetry and prose and more, all with an obvious lack of unity! Changes from issue to issue seem to echo a gradual change in the profile of the readership. Pages dedicated to women, for example (fashion, romantic stories, and advertising for cosmetics), became more important in the late 1920s.

The most interesting feature of *Nový Svet* is the systematic use of photographs as illustration, typically in a very simple traditional layout, but sometimes in quite complicated compositions. Many pictures showed beautiful things or strange aspects of the world, often arranged in playful photomontages. This was the feature which above all made the magazine appear 'modern' in its time. *Nový Svet* was in fact imitating many illustrated magazines in Western Europe just after the First World War. In Germany, for example, such magazines provided Dadaist artists with source material for their collages and photomontages. Wieland Herzfelde (John Heartfield's brother) described very well the change of paradigm in art due to the easy access to these new and numerous pictures: 'While in the past, an unbelievable quantity of time, love and effort was expended to paint a body, a flower, a hut, a shadow etc., nowadays it is enough to

take scissors and cut out all we want to see in paintings and graphic representations of these things...'<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this inventive – if somewhat unsystematic – inside layout, typical of lowbrow magazines, *Nový Svet* had covers designed in very different styles with varying fonts and picture layouts. The visual quality of *Nový Svet* reached its apogee in the years 1930–1932, and it was in the same period that the magazine embraced some characteristically avant-garde issues. A series of articles in 1930 dealt with modern architecture and the new organization of domestic life. These were mainly written by new contributors to the magazine, including Antonin Hořejš, Jindřich Halabala and Zdeněk Rossmann, three names closely related to the Czech and Slovak avant-garde movement. Hořejš was a brilliant critic of architecture and design and very active in Slovakia; Halabala, working for the firm UP, was later known as an outstanding furniture designer; and Rossmann, just one year after completing his architectural studies, became a teacher of graphic design in the school ŠUR recently established in Bratislava. In 1931, Hořejš and Rossmann were also involved in the publishing venture *Nová Bratislava*, a journal which appeared in the Slovak capital city for few months only – from November 1931 to March 1932.

### 3. *Nová Bratislava*: a Truly Avant-Garde Magazine

The product of a short but intensive burst of editorial activity, *Nová Bratislava* lasted for five months and came out in a total of four issues. A fifth was planned, if we are to believe the announcement of the deadline for submission of articles, but, as far as can be determined, it was never published. The magazine's title, subtitle and graphic design immediately plunge us into the atmosphere of a particular realm of modernity, the international avant-garde. The outlines of this movement had emerged during the 1920s in Central Europe, and its creative energy was concentrated in Germany. In the early 1930s, the Slovak avant-garde, the heir of the Czech *Devětsil*, shared many ideals with Germany, the country that had given birth to New Architecture, New Typography and New Photography.

This affiliation manifests itself above all in format and layout and the purposeful choices of the editorial team. The first page announces that

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<sup>1</sup> Wieland Herzfelde in the catalogue of the *Erste Internationale Dada Messe*, 1920. Cited after Götz Adriani (ed.), *Hannah Höch Collages*, DuMont, Köln, 1980, 22.

# NOVÝ SVET

V Ročník

číslo 16



obrázkový časopis Slovenska

Cena Kč. **3**

Figure 5. Nový svet, 1930, no. 16. Front cover



the magazine 'is published in normalized format norm cs A4 (210 × 297 cm).' The 'norm cs' means Czechoslovakian norm, which was a pure and simple transposition of the norm worked out by the famous German Institute for Normalization (DIN). The creator of the A4 format used today was an engineer Walter Porstmann, whose erudite book on language and writing, *Sprache und Schrift*, published in 1920, oriented the thinking behind Bauhaus in the field of typography. Porstmann dreamed of finding the universal language of humanity through writing, and his book advocated the abrogation of capital letters in favour of lower case – an idea adopted unconditionally by Bauhaus and proponents of the New Typography. It was precisely for this reason that lower case letters were used for the title and all other words appearing on the cover, including the subtitle, 'monthly magazine of the new Slovakia.' The cover really acts as an advertisement poster for the magazine, a requirement formulated by Karel Teige, leader of the Czech avant-garde, whose writings on typography were among the most noteworthy in Europe of the twenties. The covers of the four issues, designed by Zdeněk Rossmann, are characterized by a certain boldness. A large part is devoted to the white background, on which the words of the title and a photograph are arranged in neat composition. One could compare these covers with some book jackets designed by Teige during twenties and with some covers of the magazine *Index*, launched in Brno in 1929, designed by Rossmann. The purity of these covers creates the image of a dynamic magazine offering forthright engagement with the ideas of modernity. The title of the magazine, besides its typography, begs a question of a linguistic order. Why *Nová Bratislava*, that is to say 'New Bratislava'? It is somewhat reminiscent of *Nový Svet*, and links the magazine to activities in Germany, where magazines specializing in art and architecture had been launched in the 1920s with similar titles: *Das Neue Frankfurt*, *Das Neue Berlin*, *Das Neue München*, etc. In Germany, energetic support for the expansion of cities had given an unsurpassed impulse to construction, and these magazines worked as tools of propaganda for the progressivist mindset. They carried articles addressing specific urban problems such as the social dimension of city architecture, urban advertising as an economic element structuring the metropolis, and other topics with varying degrees of association with these, such as theatre and sport. These articles were concerned with mass society of the present and future and strove to demonstrate the wealth of the urban laboratory and its eminently modern character.

Having found in them the inspiration for their title, the members of the editorial team of *Nová Bratislava* must have had a very good knowledge of these German periodicals. Rossmann worked for the Czech modernist magazine *Index*, which made references to *Das Neue Berlin* and *Das Neue Frankfurt*. This international emulation was undoubtedly formative on *Nová Bratislava*, which only started publication in 1931. It also shows up in the trilingual title: *Nová Bratislava — Das Neue Bratislava — La Nouvelle Bratislava*. Multilingualism continued inside the magazine: there were articles in Slovak, Czech and German. Such cosmopolitanism was not new to Czechoslovakia: the magazines of the Czech avant-garde in the twenties had a similar tone. It should be remembered that in its first issues, the magazine *Pásmo*, published by the Brno section of *Devětsil* in 1924, was called *Pásmo – Die Zone – La Zone*. *Nová Bratislava* was taking up the legacy of Czech avant-garde magazines such as *Pásmo*, *Index* and *ReD* and numerous avant-garde magazines abroad, especially in Germany. Clearly, *Nová Bratislava* was intended as a piece of the international modernist mosaic, even if it was addressing Slovak 'regional' questions.

Indeed, the members of the editorial team frequently reported on the hardship of the Slovak people, an unusual practice for an avant-garde periodical. In the first number of the magazine, a 'typomontage' by Rossmann introduced the problems of Slovak traditional architecture, threatened with disappearance by consequence of badly applied standardization. Other articles in the same issue and in subsequent issues analysed architectural problems on the national and even international scale. The magazine also gave space to poetry, music, theatre and other branches of the arts, provided that the subjects were rooted in the territory of the country. Some articles were openly polemic: the subject of present-day life, a sensitive question for the Slovak National Theatre, was discussed in all issues. The illustrations in the magazine displayed modern painting in Slovakia. They included pictures by Ludovít Fulla and Mikuláš Galanda in the third issue and František Malý in the fourth issue, which also carried a picture by Max Ernst. Finally, *Nová Bratislava*, in marked contrast to its German counterparts, also had ambitions that went beyond the borders of the city. It was the magazine 'for the new Slovakia,' the self-proclaimed voice of the country. Indeed, in one of his letters, Jaromír Funke, the Czech photographer who taught in the ŠUR and was a friend of Zdeněk Rossmann, mentioned a project to publish a new modernist magazine



Model sochy čsl. legionárov od profesora K. Dvořáka pre Paríž.

# nový svet

slovenská revue  
obrázková,  
spoločenská  
a kritická

ročník siedmy ■ číslo 10 ■ cena Kč 3.- ■ Bratislava, 1932

Figure 6. Nový svet, 1932, no. 10. Front cover

which would be called *New Slovakia*. The title was finally changed to *New Bratislava*, to better express its cosmopolitan spirit (Bratislava was in fact a very cosmopolitan city at the time, much less exclusively ‘Slovak’ than the rest of the country.)

This last reflection leads us to the relationship between the *Nová Bratislava* and *Nový Svet*. Were they competitors or did they operate on the same level with ambitions to share the same network? I dare say that neither of these apply. *Nový Svet* did not aim to open up internationally as Central European avant-garde magazines typically did. As I explained, it was the first tribune of modernity in Slovakia for people such as Hořejš and – especially – Rossmann. But they probably found their great ambitions to express modernism thwarted in *Nový Svet*, whose readership was used to an ‘apolitical’ or at least ‘moderate’ discourse. The avant-garde implied some radicalism in political consciousness, and that required a global editorial project: a regular group of editors, judicious choice of contributors from an international network and exceptional visual discipline. These were the features which made avant-garde magazines true and collective works of art, and whose efficacy was based on a clear editorial intention. They added up to the formal and conceptual homogeneity that László Moholy-Nagy named ‘synthesis’.

Consequently, we can suppose that Hořejš and Rossmann’s involvement in *Nový Svet* was for both of them an introductory experience to an authentic avant-garde editorial adventure. *Nová Bratislava* used more radical means, especially its ‘perfect’ graphic design, to show Slovak readers the modern way in the organization of life. The visual impact of *Nová Bratislava* found a happy continuation in several covers of *Nový Svet* in 1932, designed in the spirit of the New Typography by an anonymous graphic designer.

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**Between Poland and the Low Countries –  
Mutual Relations and Cultural Exchange  
between Polish, Dutch and Belgian Avant-  
Garde Magazines and Formations<sup>1</sup>**

The network of European interwar avant-garde united artists and formations from various countries and cultural/linguistic backgrounds – be it in the East or West, North or South. Although the history of the interwar avant-garde has gradually been studied and described, some of its aspects and dimensions are still lacking an in-depth analysis, for instance the relationships between Poland and the Low Countries.<sup>2</sup> The magazines of Polish, Dutch and Belgian provenance, and the cor-

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<sup>1</sup> Supported by the National Science Centre in Poland (2014/13/N/HS2/02757). This paper presents an overview of the results of my ongoing research. For more detailed publications see for instance: Michał Wenderski, Mutual exchange between Polish and Belgian modernist magazines as a case study in cultural mobility within the interwar network of the avant-garde, *Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies*, 2015, no. 37, 37-52; idem, The influence of interpersonal relationships on the functioning of the constructivist network. A case study of Poland and the Low Countries, *Journal of Dutch Literature*, 2015, no. 6, 1-20; idem, Literary, artistic and architectural exchange between Dutch and Polish avant-gardes: A case study in European cultural mobility in the 1920s and 30s, *Dutch Crossing*, 2016, no. 20, 1-16.

<sup>2</sup> The existing works on the relationships and cultural mobility between Poland and the Low Countries are limited, quite dated and far from exhaustive; see for instance: Felix A. D'Haeseleer, Pools Constructivisme in Belgische avant-garde tijdschriften tussen de twee wereldoorlogen [Polish Constructivism in Belgian avant-garde periodicals between the two wars], in *ICSAC cahier 2/3*, International Centrum voor Structuuranalyse en Constructivisme, Brussel, 1984, 109-117; Sjarel Ex, De blik naar het oosten: De Stijl in Duitsland en Oost-Europa [A glance eastwards: De Stijl in Germany and Eastern-Europe], in Carel Blotkamp (ed.), *De vervoljaren van De Stijl 1922–1932*, Uitgeverij L.J.Veen, Amsterdam, 67-112; idem, *Theo van Doesburg en het Bauhaus: de invloed van De Stijl in Duitsland en Midden-Europa* [Theo van Doesburg and Bauhaus: the impact of De Stijl in Germany and Central Europe], Centraal Museum, Utrecht, 2000; Ceri-Anne van de Geer et al., L'internationalisme des revues modernistes, in Johan De Smet (ed.), *Modernisme*. ▷

respondence between their representatives, reveal numerous traces of direct contacts and mutual exchange of texts and artworks between them. In this paper I will reflect on such traces in order to reconstruct the history and the dynamics of mutual relationships between avant-garde formations from Poland and the Low Countries as an example of supranational cultural mobility within the interwar avant-garde network.

## 1. Avant-garde formations from Poland and the Low Countries

One of the milestones in the history of the Polish avant-garde was the foundation of *Zwrotnica* [The Switch] by Tadeusz Peiper in 1922. Having spent the war and first post-war years abroad, Peiper returned to Poland in 1921 as a great advocate of avant-garde art and soon he launched a new literary and artistic movement and magazine *Zwrotnica*. It was published in two series, each with six issues: May 1922 – October 1923 and May 1926 – June 1927. *Zwrotnica* contained numerous theoretical essays which later proved to have had fundamental influence on the Polish avant-garde movement, e.g. 'Punkt Wyjścia' [Point of Departure] or 'Miasto. Masa. Maszyna.' [Metropolis. Mass. Machine].<sup>3</sup> Peiper himself was regarded as 'the pope of the Polish avant-garde' by his contemporaries, who tried to engage him, unsuccessfully, in almost every artistic project which they were to establish after *Zwrotnica*.

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▷ *L'Art abstrait belge et l'Europe*, Fonds Mercator – Museum voor Schone Kunsten Gent, 2013, 165-186; Joanna Kleiverda-Kajetanowicz, *Elementen van de Nieuwe Beelding in het werk en de theorie van Henryk Stażewski 1923-1936* [Elements of Neoplasticism in the work and theory of Henryk Stażewski 1923-1936], unpublished thesis, University of Utrecht, 1985; eadem, Henryk Stażewski. De Nieuwe Beelding in zijn werk en theorie' [Henryk Stażewski. Neoplasticism in his work and theory], *Jong Holland*, 1989, no. 5, 5-17; Phil Mertens, Constructivisme in Polen en België: Contacten en parallelen [Constructivism in Poland and Belgium: Contacts and parallels], *Bulletin des Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, 1988, nos. 1-3, 371-380; Krisztina Passuth, De Stijl and the East-West Avant-Garde: Magazines & the Formation of International Networks, in Gladys Fabre – Doris Wintgens Hötte (eds.), *Van Doesburg & the International Avant-Garde: Constructing a New World*, Tate Publishing, London, 2009, 20-27; Andrzej Turowski, De Stijl i polska awangarda [De Stijl and the Polish avant-garde], in Paul Overy, *De Stijl*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warsaw, 1979, 140-163; idem, L'avant-garde polonaise et Theo van Doesburg, in Serge Lemoine (ed.), *Theo van Doesburg*, Philippe Sers Editeur. Paris, 1990, 172-179.

<sup>3</sup> The latter was also reprinted in *La Vie des Lettres et des Arts* 1922, no. 13.

Two years later than *Zwrotnica*, one of the most significant Polish constructivist formations *Blok* [Block] was established. Its program, however, appeared already in 1923 in the catalogue of the *Exhibition on New Art* in Vilnius which featured artists who were soon to establish *Blok*. Between March 1924 and March 1926 it published articles and works of among others Van Doesburg, Oud, Van Eesteren, Werkman, Le Corbusier, Léger, Marinetti and Malevich.<sup>4</sup> Following the split-up of *Blok*, some of its former contributors became involved in another modernist association *Praesens*, initiated by the architect Szymon Syrkus. Although architecture stood in the centre of attention of *Praesens*, other forms of art, such as painting, sculpture, theatre, were also present in the two issues of the journal (from June 1926 and May 1930). In 1927 the group co-organised Malevich's exhibition in Hotel Polonia in Warsaw – his first exhibition outside Russia<sup>5</sup> – and several members of *Praesens* participated in the Machine Age Exposition in New York. Nevertheless, the General National Exhibition held in 1929 in Poznań, a collective achievement of *Praesens* architects and painters, led to conflicts within the group and a split between those two fractions.

As a consequence, in 1929 Strzemiński, Kopro and Stażewski left *Praesens* to establish the *a.r.* group ('revolutionary artists' or 'real avant-garde') together with two poets Julian Przyboś and Jan Brzękowski. The *a.r.* did not create its own magazine but issued short bulletins instead and published avant-garde books as parts of the *a.r.* collection. The first bulletin was published in March 1930 and the second one with a major delay in December 1932. The *a.r.* group failed to form a new organ of the Polish avant-garde, probably due to the fact that at that time the Polish avant-garde scene, instead of one firm base, established a number of small, weak and short lasting magazines which actually competed against each other: among others *Europa* [Europe] edited by Stanisław Baczyński or the Pol-

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<sup>4</sup> 'O Sztuce' [On Art], one of the very first theoretical texts by Kazimir Malevich to be published out of Russia, appeared in *Blok 2* from April 1924.

<sup>5</sup> In 1930 Malevich wrote to Strzemiński asking the *a.r.* group to organize his second exhibition in Warsaw. Moreover, according to Strzemiński, Malevich wanted to dissociate himself from *Praesens* due to its fascination with Le Corbusier (see Strzemiński's letter to Przyboś from 21.09.1930 quoted in Andrzej Turowski, *Listy Władysława Strzemińskiego do Juliana Przybosia z lat 1929–1933* [Władysław Strzemiński's letters to Julian Przyboś from 1929-1933], *Rocznik Historii Sztuki*, 1973, no. 9, 248.

ish-French *L'Art Contemporain* – *Sztuka Współczesna* [Modern Art] run in Paris by Brzękowski and Chodasiewicz-Grabowska (also known as Nadia Léger). However, one of *a.r.*'s major achievements was the foundation of the International Collection of Modern Art in Łódź, a unique collection of modern European twentieth century art.

The Dutch-speaking avant-garde network had a few important nodes such as *De Stijl*, *The Next Call* and *Het Overzicht*. The most renowned one, *De Stijl* [The Style] propagated new ideas on visual arts, architecture and literature, and it had a considerable impact on the development of European modern art. It appeared quite regularly between 1917 and 1928 and had its last issue published in 1932 (in commemoration of its late editor, Theo van Doesburg). *De Stijl* was far from being a coherent or homogenous artistic collective and throughout the years the journal had numerous contributors who usually did not manage to cooperate with Van Doesburg for long and successively left the group (for instance Jan Wils, Robert van 't Hoff and J.J.P. Oud, which temporality left *De Stijl* with no architect among its members). Alongside *De Stijl*, the Dutch constructivist scene was influenced and reflected also by other periodicals, among others *The Next Call*, *Internationale Revue i10* and *Het Woord*.

*The Next Call* was published in Groningen between 1923 and 1926 by Hendrik Nicolaas Werkman. It had nine issues which included audacious typographical and printmaking novelties as well as poems and texts. In spite of his numerous attempts to engage more artists and to broaden the magazine's international reception,<sup>6</sup> Werkman ran *The Next Call* – one of the most creative, colourful and cohesive avant-garde journals – practically alone, and stayed rather alienated from other avant-garde circles. The Amsterdam-based revue *i10* (1927-29) was led by Arthur Müller-Lehning who engaged some former contributors to *De Stijl*, such as Oud, Vantongerloo, Rietveld or Huszár. It published internationally-oriented texts in Dutch, German and French, but noteworthy none of Van Doesburg's works or texts were published in *i10*, due to personal conflicts with its contributors. The short-lived magazine *Het Woord* [The Word] was

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<sup>6</sup> Werkman's list of addresses to 23 magazines and 21 artists, serving for the mailing of *The Next Call*, has survived until now. It included a wide range of magazines, e.g. *Blok*, *Zwrotnica*, *De Stijl*, *Mécano*, *Het Overzicht*, *7 Arts*, and *De Driehoek*. This list, as well as Werkman's correspondence with other journals revealing his efforts to broaden his journal's outreach, are to be found in Werkman Archief in Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.



published in 1925-26 in The Hague by Jan Demets in cooperation with Herwarth Walden, Ljubomir Micić and Edgar du Perron while *Mécano* was a Dadaist magazine created and edited by I.K. Bonset (one of Van Doesburg's pseudonyms).

The Belgian avant-garde produced a very wide spectrum of 'little magazines', e.g. *Het Overzicht*, *De Driehoek*, *7 Arts* and *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège*. *Het Overzicht* [The Overview] was established in Antwerp in June 1921 by Fernand Louis Berckelaers (who later adopted the pseudonym Michel Seuphor, used hereinafter) and Geert Pijnenburg. Its initial nationalist Flemish character changed in November 1922 when Jozef Peeters replaced Pijnenburg as co-editor and the magazine became internationalist-orientated – a shift which took place as a consequence of Seuphor's encounter with Peeters and Van Doesburg in Antwerp in 1921.<sup>7</sup> The final issue of *Het Overzicht* appeared in February 1925, after which Seuphor moved to Paris and Peeters established a publishing company *De Driehoek* [The Triangle] as well as a journal under the same name, in line with the Dutch *Het Woord*. The lifespan of this new magazine, however, was quite short and its international outreach was unparalleled to *Het Overzicht*.<sup>8</sup>

By some means as a counterpart to the Dutch-written journals from Antwerp, the French-written reviews *7 Arts* and *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège* [Anthology of Modern Art Group in Liege] were published in Brussels and in Liege respectively. *7 Arts* (1922-29) was edited by Victor Bourgeois, Karel Maes and others, whilst *Anthologie* (1921-40) by Georges Linze, and both magazines presented a wide selection of European avant-garde novelties. When it comes to Seuphor, after having settled in Paris in 1925, he planned to establish about a new journal *Code* with Van Doesburg, somehow as a reaction to Jozef Peeters's doings.<sup>9</sup> Later Seuphor got engaged in international initiatives such as *Documents Internationaux de l'Esprit Nouveau* (together with Belgian poet Paul Dermée; one issue appeared in 1927) or *Cercle et Carré* (co-edited with Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres García in 1930), and Van Doesburg co-established *Art Concret* (Paris, 1930).

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<sup>7</sup> Michel Seuphor – Alexandre Grenier, *Michel Seuphor: un siècle de libertés*, Hazan, Paris, 1996, 27-35.

<sup>8</sup> August den Boef – Sjoerd van Faassen, *Van De Stijl en Het Overzicht tot De Driehoek* [From De Stijl and Het Overzicht to De Driehoek], Garant, Antwerpen, 2013, 139.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 136.

## 2. Mutual exchange between avant-garde magazines from Poland and Belgium

Tadeusz Peiper, the editor of *Zwrotnica*, exchanged letters with Seuphor since the early 1920s. Subsequently, in October 1923 *Het Overzicht* – as one of few international journals – published a note on the aforementioned Vilnius exhibition from May 1923 and six months later *Het Overzicht* published an article on modern Polish art written by Jan Brzękowski (see Figure 1).<sup>10</sup> In 1923 Seuphor must have asked Vytautas Kairiūkštis – one of *Blok* artists, co-organiser of the Vilnius exhibition and co-author of its catalogue – for some information on Polish modern art, who then asked Peiper to answer on his behalf.<sup>11</sup> Although Peiper offered to write two texts on Polish modern art and poetry, in February 1924 he sent only one text written by Brzękowski. Peiper informed Seuphor that he had been too busy publishing a book, therefore he had asked Brzękowski to write the article.<sup>12</sup> The article translated from French into Dutch was published with a certain delay in April 1924 and the same issue of *Het Overzicht* included a short note on Peiper's poetry volume *A*, and the following issue mentioned his *Żywe Linie* [Living Lines] with Juan Gris's drawings. Both books were published in 1924 and one of them would be the book Peiper mentioned in his letter. What is more, in January 1924 *Het Overzicht* published a list of its congenial magazines which named *Zwrotnica* next to other titles from France, Germany, Brazil, the US and the Low Countries (see Figure 2). Noteworthy, its title 'Het Netwerk' [The Network] explicitly indicates that avant-garde formations and their magazines perceived themselves as parts of a world-wide network. *Zwrotnica* too referred to *Het Overzicht* and to *7 Arts*, as did *Blok* in most of its issues.

Not only the Flemish *Het Overzicht*, but also the French-written *7 Arts* maintained close relationships with both Cracow- and Warsaw-based avant-garde groups. Correspondence between the editors of *7 Arts* and respectively *Zwrotnica* or *Blok* reveal their reciprocal interest in each other's works and novelties. Letters between Victor Bourgeois and Tadeusz

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<sup>10</sup> Jan Brzękowski, Nieuwe Kunst in Polen [Modern art in Poland], *Het Overzicht*, 1924/21, 155.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Peiper's letter to Seuphor from 15.12.1923, Archief van Michel Seuphor, Letterenhuis in Antwerp (LH), inv. nr. 186877/1.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Peiper's letter to Seuphor from 12 February 1924, LH, inv. nr. 186877/2.

# DE NIEUWE KUNST IN POLEN

De nieuwe kunst was reeds in West-Europa in vollen bloei, toen hare eerste stralen in Polen drongen. De politieke toestand, waarin Polen zich voor den oorlog bevond, was een groote hinderpaal voor de normale evolutie van het intellectueel leven.

Het waren de dichters en schilders, geschaard rond het tijdschrift "Zdrój", (De Bron) te Poznan, die de invoerders der nieuwe kunst in Polen waren. Ofschoon dit tijdschrift onder invloed van het Duitsch expressionisme stond, heeft het een grooten invloed uitgeoefend op het kunstleven van ons land. Het heeft de schrijvers ontvoogd van de dogmatische onderworpenheid aan het romantisme en het "Jonge Polen...". Het ontwikkelde in de jonge geesten de behoefte naar eene nieuwe kunst. Zelf schiep het niets, maar door zeer eerlijke inlichtingen aangaande de vooruitstrevende beweging in het buitenland, bracht het de Poolse kunstenaars op de hoogte der overwinningen op kunstgebied verzelelijkt in Frankrijk, Italië en Duitschland.

De kunstenaars van "Zdrój", waren te weinig modern om op logische wijze den weg te vervolgen, die zij ingeslagen waren bij den aanvang hunner aktie. Na eenigen tijd dwalen gingen zij vastberaden tot de boerenkunst en daar raakten zij de begrippen van het primitivisme. Doch vermits zoowel onze romantiekers, als het "Jonge Polen", de volkskunst aanschouwden als de belangrijkste bron hunner inspiratie, was het onderscheid tusschen de kunstenaars van "Zdrój" en die der oudere generatie schier onmerkbare. Alvoers zij zelf dit resultaat erkenden, ontstond een nieuwe groep te Varsovie, rond het tijdschrift "Skamander".

Dit gebeurde toen het verzen Polen zich vrij kon geven aan de spontane uiting zijner levende energieën. Tot dan toe werd de gansche natie bezig gehouden door den strijd tegen de verdrukking, terwijl de kunstenaars zich geroepen achtten om de nationale ziel te steunen. Doch dezen toestand verholpen, konden de dichters, dichters zijn. Zij konden zonnig zijn, mochten schrijven zoals hunne scheppende gril het ingaf. Het genot te leven, overmaat der instinkten, de gekke jeugd, de roes van 't bestaan, de vervoering op de wijze van Whitman en Rimband waren de voornaamste klanken hunner dichtkunst. Dit was een groote ideologische verdienste voor een land dat steeds een somber en melancolisch uitzicht had. Nochtans blijven dit slechts verdiensten van ideeën — Op een kunstzinnig domein, ten behoeve van poetischen vorm hebben de jonge dichters van Varsovie niets gedaan. Zij zijn epigonen.

De werkelijke nieuwe Poolse kunst is ontstaan te Krakau. Te midden van den atmosfeer dier oude stad, die het middenpunt was van het intellectueel leven van Polen tijdens onze politieke slavernij, bleef de behoefte bestaan zich te verzetten tegen de traditie. Hier grepen de meest belangrijke revoluties plaats, die de Poolse kunst gedurende de 30 laatste jaren onderging.

De eerste kreet van opstand werd geslaakt door een groep schilders die zich zelf "Formisten" noemden. Zij verlangden emancipatie van het kunstwerk en verbanning van het onderwerp; zij streeden tegen het nabootsen der realiteit, zij bevochten het impressionisme en het naturalisme, en verdedigden het recht der zuivere beelding. Zij ondergingen het lot van alle novateurs. Beschimping en alle mogelijke moeilijkheden werden hen veroorzaakt. Sommigen hadden niet de kracht om deze toestand het hoofd te bieden en zij verlieten de banier van het "Formisme", om meer gebaande en erkende wegen te bewandelen.

Anderen hebben zich rond het tijdschrift "Zwrotnica" geschaard.

Op het domein der letterkunde verscheen de nieuwe kunst onde de benaming "Futurisme...". De meest eminente Poolse futuristen hebben eenige jaren in Rusland doorgebracht als krijgsgevangenen en leerden daar de Russische futuristen kennen. Terug in Polen, propageerden zij hunne ideeën op de wijze, welke Marinetti reeds ingeburgerd had in de kunstbeweging. Voordrachten, aangekondigd door alle middelen voor reklaam, gemaskerde bals met treffende verrassingen... Dit alles diende om de massa te boeien, te dwingen hen te volgen. Zij trachten de dichtelijke taal te verwerven. Zij schiepen nieuwe woorden, expressiever, meer geschikt om een rechtstreeksch visioen te verwekken. Zij zochten nieuwe metaphoren, en vormden de schrijfwijze. In den beginne handelden zij in dichte geleerden, met militaire tucht, maar na drie jaren gemeenschappelijk streven, ontbonden zij zich, gedwongen door de meer individualistische evolutie, die hen scheidde.

De meest vooruitstrevenden werken nu mede aan "Zwrotnica", "Zwrotnica", (Spoorwegnaald) is heden het middenpunt van alle werkelijk Poolse novateurs. Peiper, Jasinsky, Przybos, Stern, Czyzwsy, Witkiewicz, schrijvers en Zamosky, Strzeminski, Winkler, Szerzuka, Krynski, plastische kunstenaars. Zwrotnica wil eene kunst toonen, die onze tijd weerspiegelt, wil den mensch de tegenwoordige zenuw toonen, in hem de liefde wekken voor het nieuwe, dat hij zelf schiep, Zwrotnica wil uit de nieuwe ziel de nieuwe kunst lokken, Zwrotnica wil de schoonheids-elementen in het licht stellen ontstaan nit het moderne leven, voor de scène, de vormen en de instrumenten. Zwrotnica wil den stijl onzer eeuw helpen ontstaan (Peiper, vertrekpunten Zwrotn. n° 1) De stad, de massa, de machien, de economische verhoudingen, de bioscoop en de techniek zijn de stuwkrachten voor een modern kunstenaar. Dit wil niet zeggen dat men deze modische zaken moet aanwenden als onderwerp maar wel dat men er zich van bezitten moet om de middelen der kunst te verrijken, en zelfs voor de natuur van zekere kunsten te vervormen. Men moet belang trekken uit de vormen van het tegenwoordig leven om nieuwe kunstvormen te scheppen. Dit is de houding van Peiper tegenover het leven. Niet alle medewerkers van Zwrotnica zijn deze zienswijze deelachtig. Voor Witkiewicz bestaat het leven niet. Hij verlangt den nieuwen vorm ontiaan van allen invloed van het omringende leven.

Jasinsky, futurist, wil het leven vervormen. Ontegenzeggelijk werd Peiper door het Italiaansch futurisme beïnvloed maar het zijn slechts de eerste stellingen die hem met Marinetti vereenigen. De gevolgtrekkingen zijn totaal verschillend (Art. Zwrotn. n° 6. Kritiek op het Futurisme)

De verbandingen, die het tijdschrift uit Krakau met het buitenland heeft, beletten niet dat het voor Polen de lijn trekt die noodig is om onze kunstenaars te drijven tot hun eigen mogelijkheden.

De gevolgen vooruitzien is onmogelijk: "Zwrotnica", bevindt zich aan het begin van een leven. Nu vangt de konstruktie aan.

Tegenwoordig bestaan er twee belangrijke tijdschriften in Polen: "Skamander", en "Zwrotnica". Skamander heeft zijne zending volbracht en voor Zwrotnica ontplooit zich de toekomst.

(vert. J. P.) JAN BRZĘKOWSKI. (Krakau)

Figure 1. Jan Brzękowski's article in Het Overzicht, 1924, no. 21.

# HET NETWERK

Antwerpen :	(Berckelaers-Peeters) " Het Overzicht „ (Jozef Muls) " Vlaamsche Arbeid „
Amsterdam :	(Wijdeveld) " Wendingen „ (Groenevelt) " Het Getij „
Berlijn :	(Walden) " Der Sturm „ (v. Wedderkop) " Der Querschnitt „
Brazilië :	(Serge Milliet) " Klaxon „
Brussel :	(Bourgeois, enz.) " 7 Arts „ (Verwilghen) " La Cité „ (Hellens) " Le Disque Vert „
Lyon :	(Malespine) " Manomètre „
New-York :	(Andersen) " The Little Review „ (Thomas Mann) " The Dial „
Parijs :	(Beauduin) " La Vie des Lettres „ (Ozenfaut-Jeanneret) " L'Esprit [Nouveau „
Polen :	(Haddie Peiper) " Zwrotnica „
Rome :	(Prampolini) " Noi „ (Bragaglia) " Cronache d'Attualita „
Weenen :	(Lajos Kassak) " Ma „

Figure 2. List of congenial magazines in *Het Overzicht*, 1924, no. 20.

Peiper indicate that both artists were to supply one another with texts on Belgian and Polish modern art, which however never appeared either in *7 Arts* or *Zwrotnica*.<sup>13</sup> Earlier Peiper also asked Seuphor to write a text on Belgian avant-garde (it actually never appeared in *Zwrotnica*), and Bourgeois wrote to the editors of *Blok* informing about the launching of the third volume of *7 Arts*, requesting articles and reproductions of Polish art, at the same time offering to supply *Blok* with relevant reproductions.<sup>14</sup> Consequently one finds many traces of reciprocal exchange between *7 Arts* and

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Peiper's letter to Bourgeois from 13 October 1924 and Bourgeois's response from 20 October 1924, Archief voor Hedendaagse Kunst in België – Fonds Victor Bourgeois (FVB), inv. nrs. 12887/2 and 12887/3.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Bourgeois's letter to the editors of *Blok* from 5 October 1924, FVB, inv. nr. 12887/1.

Polish magazines. For instance, *7 Arts* repeatedly referred to titles such as *Zwrotnica*, *Blok* or *Almanach Nowej Sztuki*,<sup>15</sup> and when the third volume of *7 Arts* began with a survey on the international situation of modernism, the Polish reaction was the first to be published [cf. *7 Arts* 3 (5)]. It presented an outline of *Blok*'s main programmatic statements accompanied by five reproductions of works by Stażewski, Strzemiński, Rafałowski, Szczuka and Żarnower. Further examples of Polish art were to be found in nos. 3 (10), 4 (6) and 4 (23) – mostly originating from *Blok* archives.

Like in the case of *Het Overzicht* and its list of congenial periodicals 'Het Network', also on the pages of *7 Arts* one notices that various avant-garde formations from different parts of the world were presented as 'equal' parts of the avant-garde network. As far as the formations from Poland and the Low Countries are concerned, Polish and Dutch works were put side by side for instance in 'Documentation internationale. Pologne Hollande', and a note on the French-written Polish journal *Pologne littéraire* [Literary Poland] claimed: 'Unfortunately we cannot measure the accuracy of this statement, yet we found it useful to demonstrate, based on this foreign example, how much the life of Europe is related to common concerns.'<sup>16</sup> Similar points of view were echoed in letters sent to *7 Arts* from *Blok* and *Zwrotnica* at the occasion of the 100th issue of the Belgian journal. Both letters emphasized the fact that *7 Arts* functioned as a meeting place for Eastern and Western avant-gardes: *Blok* appreciated it as 'a journal which fights for modernism in the East as well as in the West of Europe,' while Peiper emphasised that 'the future of new ideas in every country depends on the future of such ideas in all other countries. Braque needs Peiper as much he needs Picasso,'<sup>17</sup> reflecting the unique supranational character of the European avant-garde network.

*7 Arts* published numerous reproductions of architectural projects of Polish provenance and informed about the architectural exposition of *Blok* in Warsaw in 1926. According to the catalogue of this exhibition, the following Belgian architects and artists participated in the exhibition: Huib Hoste, Victor Servranckx and Henri van de Velde. Nonetheless, a note on its first page informed that not all Belgian participants had been included

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<sup>15</sup> See the following issues of *7Arts*: 2 (30); 3 (18); 3 (25) and 5 (10).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *7 Arts* 3 (10) and 5 (17). Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Polish, French and Dutch to English quoted in this paper are mine – M.W.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *7 Arts* 4 (20) and 4 (24).

due to the delay in transportation of their works.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, in November 1925 *Blok* and *Polski Klub Artystyczny* [Polish Arts Club] sent an invitation to Victor Bourgeois, but whether he participated in the exhibition is unknown as his name was not included in the list of Belgian participants. Yet the catalogue featured two drawings of Bourgeois's 'La Cité Moderne' in Brussels together with a short note regarding proper orientation of houses. The catalogue featured also Van de Velde's article 'Le Style Moderne' and several reproduction of works by Van de Velde, Servranckx and Peeters.

Direct contact and exchange between Polish and Belgian architects were facilitated by their cooperation within the CIAM organization. For instance, after the second CIAM congress in Frankfurt Syrkus wrote to Bourgeois asking for drawings and pictures of Bourgeois's project of workers' housing, which had been discussed during the conference.<sup>19</sup> In the following letter Syrkus thanked Bourgeois for his materials promising to send him the second issue of *Praesens*<sup>20</sup> where one of Bourgeois's drawings was published. *Praesens 2* also included Pierre Flouquet's article on modern painting with reproductions of Belgian works, and reviews of several Belgian books (e.g. by Seuphor and Vantongerloo). The engagement in the CIAM and the cooperation between Polish and Belgian architects also resulted in an exchange with the Liege-based group and magazine *L'Équerre*.<sup>21</sup> It published several articles written by Szymon and Helena Syrkus, and referred to *Praesens* and *Architektura i Budownictwo*.

Other examples of Polish-Belgian exchange may be found for instance in *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège*, *Europa* and Polish-French *L'Art Contemporain – Sztuka Współczesna*. The third/fourth issue of *Anthologie* from 1925 was partly dedicated to Polish Surrealism and Constructivism: it included among others French translations of two significant programmatic statements from *Blok* ('Qu'est-ce que le "Constructivisme"' and Henryk Stażewski's 'L'Art Abstrait'), Szczuka's text on modern Polish art 'Le mouvement artistique en Pologne' and repro-

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18 'L'arrivé des œuvres tchécoslovaques et belges étant en retard, il fut impossible de les reproduire dans ce numéro.' *Blok* 11 from, 1926, no. 11.

19 Cf. Syrkus's letter to Bourgeois from 16 November 1929, FVB, inv. nr. 12887/23.

20 Cf. Syrkus's letter to Bourgeois from 31 December 1929, FVB, inv. nr. 12887/29.

21 Syrkus's correspondence with Paul Fitschy kept in The Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, Special Collections, inv. nr. 860865.

ductions of Polish avant-garde artworks (see Figure 3).<sup>22</sup> The magazine *Europa* featured Paul Dermée's article on proletarian literature and Paul Otlet's utopian vision of *Cité Mondiale* [The World City]. Moreover, when Strzemiński began to cooperate with the magazine, he asked key European artists to answer his short survey on modern art, and consequently *Europa* published several reactions, written for instance by Georges Vantongerloo, and the Dutch artists Van Doesburg and Mondrian.<sup>23</sup>

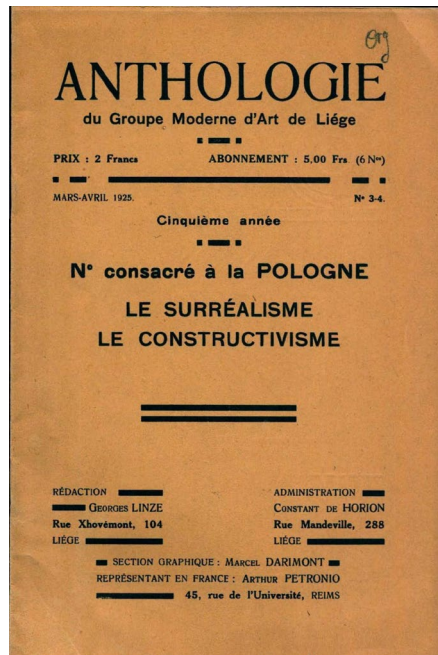


Figure 3. *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège*, 1925, nos. 3-4. Front cover of the issue devoted to Polish avant-garde art

Jan Brzękowski's text on Polish art published in *Het Overzicht* in 1924 begun his long-lasting friendship with Seuphor, which was reflected in *L'Art Contemporain* co-edited by Brzękowski. It published four texts by Seuphor, as well as two reproductions of Vantongerloo's sculptures. Seuphor revised French translations for *L'Art Contemporain* and when

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d'Art de Liège*, 1925, nos. 3-4.

<sup>23</sup> See the first three issues of *Europa* from 1929.

still planning to publish its fourth issue, Brzękowski decided not to include any French translations of Polish poems, due to the fact that Seuphor – at that time away from Paris – would not be able to revise them.<sup>24</sup> *L'Art Contemporain* featured also Michel Seuphor's and Piet Mondrian's 'Tableau-poème (Textuel)' from 16 May 1928. This artwork – the unique example of a cooperation between Belgian poet and Dutch painter – was not to be found in any of the analysed interwar avant-garde magazines from the Low Countries, in contrary to two Polish journals (see Figure 4).<sup>25</sup> Seuphor reflected on it in his postcard to Brzękowski from 1973: 'Dear

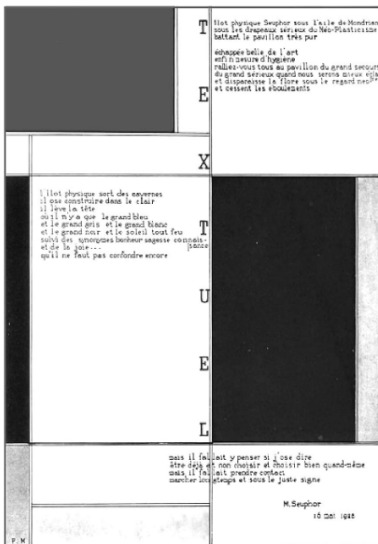


Tableau-poème.

P. Mondrian et M. Seuphor.

## T E X T U E L

Ilot physique Seuphor sous l'aile de Mondrian  
sous les drapeaux sérieux du Néo-Plasticisme  
battant le pavillon très pur

échappée belle de l'art  
enfin mesure d'hygiène  
ralliez-vous tous au pavillon du grand secours  
du grand sérieux quand nous serons mieux éclairés  
et disparaisse la flore sous le regard néo  
et cessent les éboulements

l'ilot physique sort des cavernes  
il ose construire dans le clair  
il lève la tête  
où il n'y a que le grand bleu  
et le grand gris et le grand blanc  
et le grand noir et le soleil tout feu  
suivi des synonymes bonheur sagesse connaissance  
et de la joie...  
qu'il ne faut pas confondre encore

mais il fallait y penser si j'ose dire  
être déjà et non choisir et choisir bien quand-même  
mais il fallait prendre contact  
marcher longtemps et sous le juste signe

mai 28

Figure 4. Michel Seuphor and Piet Mondrian's 'Tableau-poème (Textuel)' published in *L'Art Contemporain* – *Sztuka Współczesna* 1929, no. 1 and *Cercle et Carré* 1930, no. 2

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Brzękowski's letters to Przyboś from 3 June 1929 and 9 January 1930 (quoted in: Tadeusz Kłak, *Źródła do historii awangardy* [Sources for the history of the avant-garde], Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, 1981, 38-41 and 52) and to Jalu Kurek from 14 February 1931 (quoted in: idem, *Materiały do dziejów awangardy* [Materials for the history of the avant-garde], Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, 1975, 45-47).

<sup>25</sup> 'Tableau-poème' was also published in *Praesens* 2 from May 1930 as well as in Prague-based *ReD* 2 (7) from March 1929. Moreover, Seuphor's text (without the layout designed by Mondrian) was also to be found in *Cercle et Carré* 2 from 15 April 1930.



friend, A small image in memory of “L’Art Contemporain” where you were the first one to have published the *tableau*, now so well-known.’<sup>26</sup>

## Exchange between avant-garde magazines from Poland and the Netherlands

The relations between Dutch and Polish avant-gardes date back to 1922 when Berlewi ordered the subscription of *De Stijl*.<sup>27</sup> At that time Berlewi lived in Berlin where he met among others Richter, Moholy-Nagy, Van der Rohe and in May 1922 he participated in the Düsseldorf Congress of Progressive Artists.<sup>28</sup> Berlewi’s contacts with Van Doesburg and *De Stijl* artists were developed later by other representatives of Polish avant-garde formations. Van Doesburg received for instance the manuscript of Szczuka’s 1924 article ‘Le mouvement artistique en Pologne’,<sup>29</sup> which however did not appear in *De Stijl*, but – as mentioned above – in *Anthologie du Groupe Moderne d’Art de Liège*.



Figure 5. *De Stijl*, 1925, no. 12. Front cover designed by Theo van Doesburg

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Seuphor’s postcard to Brzękowski from 6 May 1973, Muzeum Literaturny im. A. Mickiewicza in Warsaw, inv. nr. 2192, k. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Berlewi’s postcard to Van Doesburg from 12 May 1922, Archive of Theo and Nelly van Doesburg, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie in The Hague (RKD), inv.nr. 801.

<sup>28</sup> Andrzej Turowski, *Budowniczoŝwie ŝwiata: z dziejów radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej* [Builders of the world. The history of radical modernism in Polish art], Universitas, Kraków, 2000, 383.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Szczuka’s manuscript in Van Doesburg’s archive, RKD, inv. nr. 202.

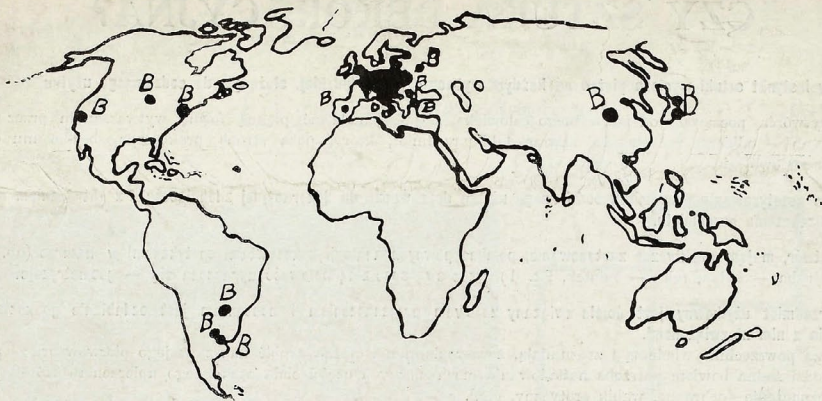
The launching of *Blok* was reflected in *De Stijl* which published a comment on its first two issues. The note acknowledged its resolute layout and claimed *Blok*'s affinity to 'all modern movements from "Rousseau"<sup>30</sup> to "De Stijl"'. The same issue listed *Blok* alongside other avant-garde magazines such as *Mécano* or *The Next Call* as one of journals, which 'deserve particular attention'. Since the following issue the cover of *De Stijl* named Warsaw together with other important nodes of the avant-garde network (i.e. Leiden, Hannover, Paris, Brno and Vienna; see Figure 5) and Librairie des Beaux-Arts in Warsaw was listed as one of distribution points of *De Stijl*. According to Van Doesburg's lists of subscribers the library received four copies of *De Stijl*,<sup>31</sup> and the magazine was also sent to *Zwrotnica*, Biblioteka Politechniki Lwowskiej, Berlewi, Syrkus, Brzękowski and others.<sup>32</sup> Polish books were also mentioned in *De Stijl*, and Poland was included in a chart presenting the impact of *De Stijl* abroad. Interestingly enough, the cover of *Blok*'s tenth issue also featured a similar inventory – world map with the outreach of the magazine, among which the Low Countries (see Figure 6). *Blok* featured more elements of Dutch provenance – it repeatedly referred to *De Stijl* and *Mécano*, and published reproductions of works by Theo van Doesburg, Cornelis van Eesteren, J.J.P. Oud and Werkman. The Polish translation of Van Doesburg's article 'Odnowienie architektury' [The renewal of architecture], based on Van Doesburg's programmatic statement 'Tot een beeldende architectuur' [Towards plastic architecture], appeared in the fifth issue of *Blok*, and excerpts from this article were incorporated in *Blok*'s programmatic manifesto 'Co to jest konstruktywizm' [What is constructivism] published in the following issue (see Figure 7).

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<sup>30</sup> Henri Julien Félix Rousseau (pseud. Le Douanier, 1844–1910) – French post-impressionist painter who had a major impact on avant-garde artists.

<sup>31</sup> The fact that the Warsaw-based library – a distribution point of *De Stijl* – received only four copies of the magazine clearly indicates that *De Stijl*, similarly to other avant-garde initiatives, had a limited outreach, and that the so emphasized international impact of the group was highly exaggerated by Van Doesburg.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Van Doesburg's lists of subscribers 'Abonnees boekhandel buitenland', 'Ruilabonnementen – Abonnements d'échange', 'Abonnees buitenland' and 'Buitenland', RKD, inv. nr. 826.



DOKĄD DOCIERA BLOK

# BLOK

## № 10

ROK II  
KWIECIEŃ  
1925

VARSOVIE-POLOGNE, Wspólna 20-39

Redakcja: T. ŻARNOWER & M. SZCZUKA

NUMER POŚWIĘCONY ARCHITEKTURZE I TEATROWI

**K. MALEWICZ**

Nieutylitarna  
dynamiczna  
suprematyczna  
architektura

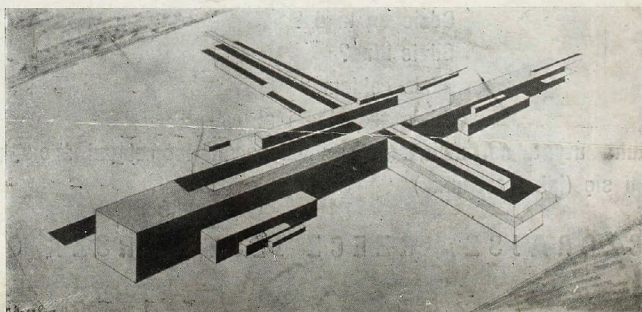


Figure 6. Blok, 1925, no. 10. Front cover

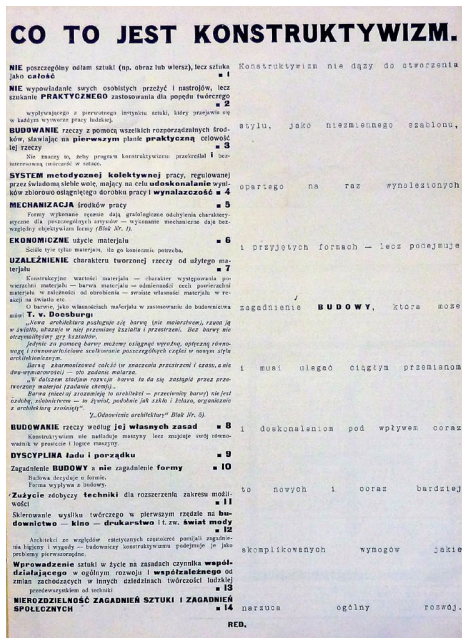


Figure 7. Blok, 1924, nos. 6-7. The manifesto of the journal entitled 'What is constructivism'

Numerous Dutch architects participated in the 1926 architectural exhibition in Warsaw. Its catalogue (the eleventh issue of *Blok*) listed 17 architectural projects by Oud, Van Ravesteyn, Rietveld and Van der Vlugt, and several furniture/interior designs by Van Ravesteyn and Rietveld. Some of these works were also reproduced there, including Oud's plans of Hoek van Holland or Rietveld's Schröder Huis (total of 16 illustrations). What is more, planning to incorporate short articles on modern French, German and Dutch architecture in the exhibition catalogue, in January 1926 Polish artist Szczęśny Rutkowski wrote to Van Ravesteyn and Oud asking for information on architectural innovations in the Netherlands.<sup>33</sup> Whether Oud supplied Rutkowski with a text is unknown, eventually Blok 11 published a short descriptive article 'Nowoczesna architektura holenderska' [Modern Dutch architecture] written by P. Meller and dated January 1926. It presented the accomplishments of the abovementioned Dutch architects, particularly enthusiastically referring to Berlage and Oud.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Rutkowski's letter to Oud from 20 January 1926, Archiw J.J.P. Oud, Collectie Het Nieuwe Instituut (NI), inv.nr. 28/26/14

Having left *Blok* and established *Praesens*, Polish artists quickly informed their Dutch colleagues about their new initiative. In January 1926 Stażewski, Syrkus and Rafałowski wrote to Van Doesburg asking him to send some material for the first issue of *Praesens* and in response Van Doesburg sent one article as well as his and Rietveld's works. Not being able to attend the Warsaw exhibition at the beginning of 1926, Van Doesburg offered to visit Warsaw with a series of lectures, which unfortunately did not come to fruition due to financial reasons.<sup>34</sup> Syrkus also wrote to Oud and informed him about the newly-established *Praesens* and their plans concerning the first issue. Syrkus mentioned that *Praesens* had already received contributions from among others Van Doesburg and Oud's reaction regarding the dissemination of Van Doesburg's works is particularly interesting:

With regard to the cooperation with M. Van Doesburg, let me warn you that it is indeed necessary to strictly control which works of his get published. M. Van Doesburg is a painter with much spirit, who has written excellent articles on modern painting, but who – seeing the painting end in its present form, has fled to architecture without the slightest idea how to build. Having never built he proclaims a speculative architecture which badly hurts the works of serious architects. [...] Therefore it is absolutely necessary to know precisely which works of his will be published, and what will not be published.<sup>35</sup>

Eventually, *Praesens* 1 published works by both Oud and Van Doesburg accompanied by a number of illustrations. A Polish translation of Oud's book *Die Holländische Architektur* was also announced, of which Syrkus informed Oud in his letter from 16 June 1926 asking for reproductions necessary to publish the book. In the same letter Syrkus expressed his interest in Oud's opinion of Van Doesburg's role in architecture and asked him not to associate his viewpoints on architecture with the contents of *Praesens* 1.<sup>36</sup>

Having published the first issue of *Praesens*, Syrkus and Stażewski sent a copy to Van Doesburg and asked him for contributions to the sec-

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<sup>34</sup> Cf. letters between *Praesens* and Van Doesburg from early 1926, RKD, inv. nr. 308.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Oud's letter to Syrkus from 12 April 1926, NI, inv. nr. 29/26/46.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Oud's letter to Syrkus from 16 June 1926, NI, inv. nr. 31/26/108.

ond issue which was meant to appear in September 1926. In his response Van Doesburg wrote: ‘I have indeed received the 1st issue of your beautiful journal and I am grateful for the beautiful page which you have devoted to me. Enclosed you find a short article for the following issue, with photos.’<sup>37</sup> Although Syrkus assured him that the received material would be published in *Praesens* 2,<sup>38</sup> none of Van Doesburg’s works appeared in this issue, in contrary to texts by Oud, Van Eesteren and Mondrian. It also included a list of Dutch books, among others by Oud, Van Doesburg and Mondrian. Noteworthy, a Polish translation of Mondrian’s *Le Néo-Plasticisme* was planned – Mondrian’s letters to Seuphor, Oud and others indicate that he worked on the layout of the Polish version of his famous theory, which however did not appear.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, the second issue of *Praesens* published a short and very enthusiastic review of Lehning’s magazine *i10*, pointing to Oud as head of architecture. Oud and Syrkus maintained a good relationship, and in 1927 Oud invited Syrkus to collaborate with his newly-established periodical.<sup>40</sup> Since the beginning Syrkus was listed as one of the contributors to *i10* alongside the most prominent modern architects and artists such as Rietveld, Van Eesteren, Mondrian, Bourgeois, Vantongerloo, Le Corbusier, Gropius and many others. Its fifth issue from 1927 featured Syrkus’s theoretical article ‘L’architecture ouvrant le volume’ [Architecture opens its volume] accompanied by two reproductions of Malevich’s and Stażewski’s works. However, according to their correspondence, more works of Polish provenance were to appear in *i10* – in September 1929 Oud received 27 reproductions and architectural drawings as well as one issue of an architectural periodical *Dom i Osiedle* [House and Estate] in order to choose relevant material to be published in *i10*.<sup>41</sup> In the meantime though *i10* had already closed: its final issue appeared in June 1929, of which Syrkus was apparently unaware. Other examples of exchange between Dutch and Polish periodicals include for instance reference to *Blok*

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Van Doesburg’s letter to Praesens from late 1926, RKD, inv. nr. 308.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Syrkus’s letter to Van Doesburg from 13 November 1926, RKD, inv. nr. 201.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Mondrian’s letters to Seuphor (8 December 1926), J.J.P. Oud (20 December 1926), Félix del Marle (30 December 1926) and Albert van den Briel (n.d.) Archief van de werkgroep Mondriaan correspondentieproject, RKD, inv. nrs. 20, 23, 63, 75.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Syrkus’s letter to Oud from 12 June 1927, NI, inv. nr. 41/27/154.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Syrkus’s letter to Oud from 29 September 1929, NI, inv. nr. 59/29/131.

on the cover of *The Next Call* (see Figure 8), a reproduction of Van Doesburg's and Van Eesteren's project in *Zwrotnica 8*, and of Mondrian's and Van Doesburg's works in *L'Art Contemporain*. What is more, fragments of the latter's *Classique-Baroque-Moderne* were published in 1928 in *Almanach. Katalog. Salon Modernistów* [Almanac. Catalogue. The salon of modernists], and *Europa* translated the manifesto of Concrete Art 'Base de la peinture concrete'.



Figure 8. The Next Call, 1924, no. 6. Front cover with a list of congenial magazines

Dutch and Polish architectural periodicals from the interwar period also featured numerous references to each other. For instance in a series of articles on new artistic and architectural solutions in Europe published in *Het Bouwbedrijf* [The Building Industry], Van Doesburg described chosen theoretic aspects of Polish architecture coined by Malevich, Strzemiński, Szczuka and their practical implementation exemplified by the works of

*Praesens* architects.<sup>42</sup> In order to gather information for these articles, Van Doesburg repeatedly wrote to Polish avant-garde artists and architects asking them for information and reproductions of their works. In reaction Van Doesburg received a number of journals and materials on the Polish avant-garde art and architecture which he used for the sake of his articles for *Het Bouwbedrijf*. Also *de 8 en Opbouw* [the 8 and Construction] included a number of Polish contributions, for instance Syrkus's article 'Het nieuwe bouwen in Polen. De buitenmuur' [Modern building in Poland. The exterior wall] and a number of illustrations of Polish architectural projects. Dutch architectural novelties were presented in Polish periodicals such as *Architektura i Budownictwo* [Architecture and Construction] and *Architekt* [Architect]. They featured articles and reproductions of architectural projects (among others by Van Doesburg, Van Eesteren, Oud and Rietveld), as well as descriptive texts on Dutch architecture, for instance 'Nowe prądy w architekturze' [New architectural currents] a series of five articles 'Współczesna architektura holenderska' [Modern Dutch architecture].

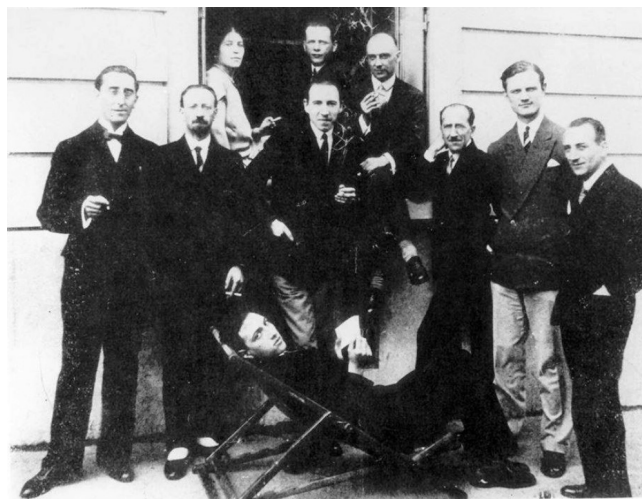


Figure 9. Polish, Belgian and Dutch avant-garde artists (e.g. Mondrian, Rafałowski, Seuphor, Stażewski, Vantongerloo) meeting at Paul Dermée's, published in *MUBA Revue Internationale*, 1928, no. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Theo van Doesburg, Kunst- en architectuurvernieuwing in Polen [Artistic and architectural innovations in Poland], *Het Bouwbedrijf*, 1930, no. 7, 358-361 and 1931, no. 8, 87-90; idem, Belangrijke nieuwe uitgaven over nieuwe architectuur [Noteworthy new publications on new architecture], *Het Bouwbedrijf*, 1930, no. 7, 401-403.



## Exchange with international avant-garde formations

Polish avant-garde artists maintained close ties with international formations such as *Cercle et Carré* or *Abstraction-Création* where Dutch and Belgian artists played prominent roles. Close ties between Brzękowski and Seuphor had a direct influence on the functioning of avant-garde journals – e.g. it was Brzękowski who had put Seuphor in touch with Léon Mickum, head of Polish-French printing house *Imprimerie Polonaise / Ognisko* where Seuphor published *Cercle et Carré*. According to Seuphor, the generosity and care of the Mickum family saved his life when he had serious financial problems.<sup>43</sup> Brzękowski participated in almost all meetings of *Cercle et Carré*<sup>44</sup> and he tried to link Polish artists with the Paris-based group – he encouraged for instance Przyboś to have his poems published in *Cercle et Carré* and tried, in vain, for the first *a.r.* bulletin to appear there (Seuphor refused to do so due to the negative attitude towards Le Corbusier's works expressed in the bulletin).<sup>45</sup> The three issues of *Cercle et Carré* included several examples of Polish artworks and texts, and Polish artists were involved in the group's exhibition organised in Paris between 12 April and 1 May 1930 (see Figure 10). Similarly, Polish elements were also to be found in *Abstraction-Création*, which somehow continued the activities of *Cercle et Carré*. An exposition of the *Abstraction-Création* was also planned to take place in Warsaw and in Łódź in February/March 1936 – although both parties (Vantongerloo as representative of the group, and the Polish Institute for Art Propaganda) were very keen on the idea, the project failed due to financial obstacles.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Michel Seuphor, *Cercle et carré*, Belfond, Paris, 1971, 25 and Michel Seuphor – Alexandre Grenier, *Michel Seuphor: un siècle de libertés*, 173–174.

<sup>44</sup> Marie-Aline Prat, *Cercle et Carré: peinture et avant-garde au seuil ses années 30*, L'Age d'Homme, Paris, 1984, 92.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Brzękowski's letters to Przyboś from 9 January 1930, 2 April 1930 and 20 June 1930 (quoted in: Tadeusz Kłak, *Źródła do historii awangardy*, 45-47, 60-61, 65-66) and to Kurek from 9 January 1930 (quoted in: idem, *Materiały do dziejów awangardy*, 45-47).

<sup>46</sup> Cf. the correspondence between Polish Institute for Art Propaganda and Vantongerloo between 15 October 1934 and 25 February 1936 housed in: Special Collections, Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Science in Warsaw, inv. nr. 70.

# C A T A L O G U E

de l'exposition organisée par le groupe « Cercle et Carré » à Paris (Galerie 23) du 18 avril au 1<sup>er</sup> mai 1930

**HANS ARP**  
1. Feuilles  
2. Boîtes

**WILLY BAUMEISTER**  
3. Mutation en gris  
4. Le jetter

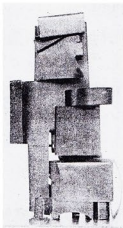
**INOUBERG H. BJARNASON**  
5. Peinture  
6. Peinture  
7. Peinture

**CARL BUCHHEISTER**  
8. Composition (tissu rouge) (1928)  
9. Musée regard (1929)  
10. Composition (disposée)

**MARCELLE GAHN**  
11. La globe  
12. Femme à la cigarette  
13. La Basse  
14. L'éléphant

**FRANCISCA CLAUSEN**  
15. Composition  
16. Peinture  
17. Peinture

**JAIME A. COLSON**  
18. Souvenir d'Alsace  
19. Nive d'escalier



GERMAN CUETO

**GERMAN CUETO**

18. Masque  
19. Masque  
20. Sculpture  
21. Sculpture  
22. Sculpture

**SERGE CHARCOUNE**  
23. Fruit bois  
24. Tirois vert

**PIERRE DAURA**  
25. Ombre  
26. Ombre disséminée

**ALEXANDRA EXTER**  
27. Meuble pour hall  
28. Meuble de bureau pour la salle

**FILLIA**  
29. Architecture sans l'intérieur  
30. Simulacrum  
31. Peinture

**FRANÇOIS FOLTYN**  
32. Rongé  
33. Gris

**J. A. GÖRIN**  
34. Planisphère architecturale  
35. Construction de rapports de volumes  
36. Composition en bois

**CHODASIEWICZ-GRABOWSKA**  
37. Composition  
38. Composition  
39. Composition

**HUBERT HOSTE**  
40. Petit théâtre à Namur  
41. Maison d'un médecin à Namur  
42. Cité jardin près Bruxelles

**VILMOZ HUSZAR**  
43. Composition  
44. Composition  
45. Composition

**VERA IDELSON**  
46. Construction à la détrempe - « Branches »  
47. Construction à la détrempe - « Les Hôles »  
48. Meuble de table  
49. Meuble de table

**WASSILY KANDINSKY**  
50. Deux côtes rouges  
51. Gris

**LUC LAFNET**  
52. Arrière blanche  
53. Silhouette

54. Nature morte  
55. Boîtes

**LE CORBUSIER**  
56. 17 à 18. Immeubles existants et en construction. - Documents d'architecte.

**FERNAND LEGER**  
59. Composition murale  
60. Composition murale

**OSCAR LUETHY**  
61. Peinture  
62. Peinture

**PIET MONDRIAN**  
63. Composition géométrique  
64. Composition géométrique

**MONDRIAN et SEUPHOR**  
65. Tableaux-poissons

**STEFAN MOSZCZYNSKI**  
66. Portrait  
67. Composition

**ERIK OLSON**  
68. Peinture  
69. Peinture  
70. Peinture

**AMEDEE OZENFANT**  
71. Vase, verre et coupe (1928)

**ANTOINETTE PEVSNER**  
72. Construction d'objets  
73. Construction d'objets  
74. Construction

**ENRICO PRAMPOLINI**  
75. Histoire pratique  
76. Exercices avec le matériel  
77. Exercices avec l'argile

**LUDVI ROSSOLO**  
78. Portrait  
79. Portrait en pastels

**ALBERTO BARTORI**  
80. Architecture  
81. Architecture pour habitations, au vases et objets  
82. Exercices avec l'argile

**KURT SCHWITTERS**  
83. Sculptures (1929)  
84. Peinture (idéales à elles)  
85. Musée (1929)  
86. L'oiseau - Musée (1929)  
87. Musée (1929)

**HENRI STAZEWSKI**  
88. Peinture  
89. Peinture

**HECHAMA SZMUSZKOWICZ**  
90. Paysage en relief  
91. Paysage aux deux faces

**STELLA**  
92. Livre  
93. White wall

**HANS THÜCHSEN**  
94. Composition en fonction de la couleur  
95. Composition en fonction de la couleur  
96. Composition en fonction de la couleur

**S. H. TAEUBER-ARP**  
97. Peinture  
98. Peinture  
99. Composition

**JOACHIM TORRES-GARCIA**  
100. Composition  
101. Composition  
102. Objet plastique  
103. Objet plastique  
104. Objet plastique

**YORDBERGERE-GILDEWART**  
105. Peinture K No 28 (1927)  
106. Peinture K No 46 (1928)  
107. Peinture K No 59 (1928)

**ADYA VAN REES**  
108. Composition II  
109. Composition III  
110. Paysage

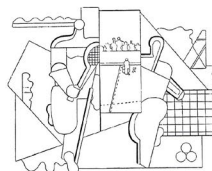
**OTTO VAN REES**  
111. Peinture  
112. Peinture  
113. Peinture  
114. Peinture

**GEORGES VANTONGERLOO**  
115. Composition avec visage  
116. Composition avec visage (série 1929-30)  
117. Type A série A. Longueur: même 300 m.  
118. Type B série B. Longueur: même 300 m.  
119. Type C série C. Longueur: même 300 m.

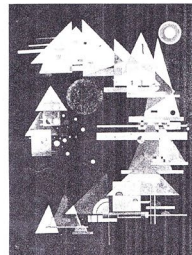
**HANS WELTJ**  
120. Montagne  
121. Montagne et femme

**H. N. WERMAN**  
122. Composition imaginaire  
123. Composition imaginaire

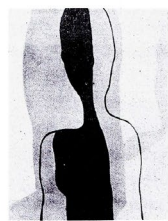
**WANDA WOLSKA**  
124. Grande tête No 1  
125. Coiffe  
126. Peinture



WILLY BAUMEISTER



WASSILY KANDINSKY



LUC LAFNET

Figure 10. Cercle et Carré, 1931, no. 2. Exhibition catalogue of the group

## Conclusions

In this paper I aimed to give a general overview of mutual exchange and relationships between chosen formations from Poland and the Low Countries as an example of international cultural mobility within the interwar European network of the aesthetic avant-garde. One of the features of this complex network was the fact that artists and groups from various parts of the continent maintained direct contacts and relations with one another, despite their geographic, cultural and linguistic differences. Such relationships existed not only in relation to pivotal formations (e.g. from Paris or Berlin), but also between more 'distant' nodes, such as the analysed Polish, Dutch and Belgian magazines. They enabled direct exchange of texts and reproductions which circulated within the network at a rapid pace, as illustrated by the examples described above. Although the case study of Poland and the Low Countries is just one of many, it shows unique and fascinating aspects of the interwar avant-garde network, namely its supranational structure and constant dissemination of ideas taking place across borders and cultures.

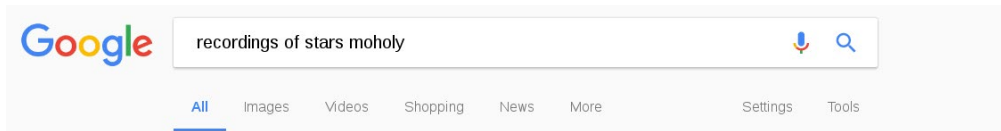
## Body of Thought – Artists' Texts and Their Contribution to Theory

I offer some observations and thoughts on the challenges that artists' texts pose to art historical scholarship today. Although I am not a historian, my work, and particularly one of the projects I am working in as a digital librarian, has engendered a fascination with the ways historical material is being intertwined with recent work and even immediate records of today. On the web, writings from the rarest of the artists' magazines from a hundred years ago are juxtaposed with the most recent art criticism and myriads of other writing.

Several threads emerge from these results. Firstly, the burgeoning digitization of cultural heritage is bringing online material that was previously confined to dusty archives. Now it is accessible to search engines on the same terms as everything else. Historical material previously limited to the highly-specialized researcher can now pop up in anybody's search results. In past decades, interwar artists' magazines were almost exclusively read by art historians engaged in historical analysis and interpretation, but now they are available to the masses, including artists working today. The context in which many people read these texts today is defined by their positioning within online networks. A text from an issue of *A Tett* magazine of 1915 has become a page in 'the book' of the internet whose cover is a search engine.

Secondly, what first appears as a list of random results or even mere noise and chaos is in fact a setting with which we are all too familiar, whether or not we are engaged in research. We have developed a sensitivity to recognise which of the messy results are relevant to our immediate interests. We are able to synthesize discourses out of the results 'on the fly' and to identify modes of writing. Is it an academic study or journalism or a diary or an advertisement? We need only a couple of seconds, or less, to identify a result as a possible artist's text. We may not even have been looking for it. It has just matched our query. Paradoxically, an excerpt, a snippet from this text can be displayed just next to a passage from a scholarly essay discussing it. Written by you.

This is not to say that full-text search has replaced the library and archival research that scholars are used to. Not at all. It does show,



About 202.000 results (0,68 seconds)

### PDF | MOHOLY-NAGY - Monoskop

[https://monoskop.org/.../8/.../Moholy-Nagy\\_Laszlo\\_1922\\_Production-Reproduction...](https://monoskop.org/.../8/.../Moholy-Nagy_Laszlo_1922_Production-Reproduction...) ▼

Mates (170, 172, 216, 217); Milch Fotostudio, Essen (53); H. Moholy-Nagy, (28); István Petrás .... Telescopic recordings of stars as well as radiography represent ...

### Astronomers Recorded This Eerie Music From a 13-Billion-Year-Old Star

[gizmodo.com/astronomers-recorded-this-eerie-music-from-a-13-billion-1780874453](http://gizmodo.com/astronomers-recorded-this-eerie-music-from-a-13-billion-1780874453) ▼

Jun 6, 2016 - In fact, judging by these eerie recordings of the music being thrown off by the oldest stars in the Milky Way, space actually sounds like a bit of a ...

Missing: moholy

### 'Moholy-Nagy: Future Present,' Vision and Precision in a Fluid Braid ...

<https://www.nytimes.com/.../moholy-nagy-future-present-vision-and-precision-in-a-fluid...>

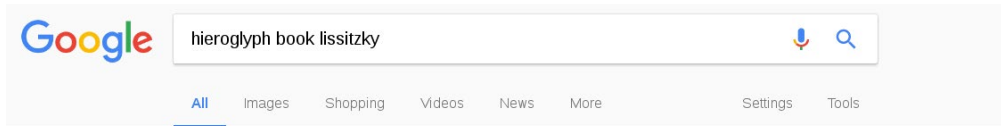
May 26, 2016 - The first large exhibition of Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in this country in ... It packs around 300 works into Frank Lloyd Wright's great spiral — perhaps a record .... The star here is Moholy-Nagy's own "Light Prop for an Electric Stage," ...

### The Elements of Social Scientific Thinking

<https://books.google.nl/books?isbn=0495015857>

Kenneth Hoover, Todd Donovan - 2007 - Political Science

Thomson, the Star logo, and Wadsworth are trademarks used herein under license. .... recording, taping, web distribution, information storage and retrieval systems, ... Printer: West Group Cover Image: "A 19," 1927, by La' szlo' Moholy- Nagy.



About 17.300 results (0,99 seconds)

### Our Book by El Lissitzky - Dani Kim - Atavist

<https://danikim.atavist.com/our-book-by-el-lissitzky> ▼

This is an advantage which the letter-book has lost. So I believe that the next book-form will be plastic-representational. We can say that. (1) the hieroglyph-book ...

### Komiks: Comic Art in Russia - Page 53 - Google Books Result

<https://books.google.nl/books?isbn=1604733675>

José Alaniz - 2011 - Literary Criticism

THE AVANT-GARDE BOOK AND CHILDREN'S PRESS Comics techniques found their ... Lissitzky takes this "hieroglyphic" approach in a longer-form narrative ...

### El Lissitzky: The Future of the Book. New Left Review 1/41, January ...

<https://newleftreview.org/1/41/el-lissitzky-the-future-of-the-book> ▼

the hieroglyphic book is international (at least potentially); the alphabetic book is national, and; the book of the future will be non-national; for it needs the least ...

works into Frank Lloyd Wright's great spiral — perhaps a record .... The star here is Moholy-Nagy's own "Light Prop for an Electric Stage," ...

### Paul Klee: The Visible and the Legible - Google Books Result

<https://books.google.nl/books?isbn=022623360X>

Annie Bourneuf - 2015 - Art

Similarly, Lissitzky implies that the "hieroglyphic mode" of "Chinese or ... as a model for "the book of the future," which, unlike the "alphabetic book," will require ...

Figure 1. google: telescopic recordings of stars art

Figure 2. google: hieroglyph book international

however, that historical scholarship concerning rare publications, of interest to a somewhat specialized audience, takes place in a new setting. Digitization of magazines for online archives and the uploading of research to websites like *academia.edu* invests this setting with a rather different discursivity. Artists' writings from the interwar period now stand next to texts by post-war artists, texts by contemporary artists, and texts of art-historical analysis. Although most of these were no doubt produced within specialized discourses, conditioned by institutional and professional norms, their sudden presence in digital networks augments their performativity, even if this is not always admitted. A 'rare' magazine stops being rare the moment it is digitized and put online. And texts are 'scholarly' only when they are accessed in a scholarly manner.

Further 'complicating' the multiplicity of discursive perspectives produced by digital networks is their dehistoricizing tendency, which is my third point. Linear chronology is one among many modes of ordering. Date of original publication is one of many indicators determining the relevance of a query. Digital networks unfold multiple temporalities at once. A text from 1922 can be relevant, inspiring and productive for an artist in 2015 without much awareness of its historical context. It does not have to be viewed as a text that 'talked' about something, but could easily 'be talking' about something. Examples of such a dehistoricizing tendency in printed form are reviews of books and annotated bibliographies where annotations are narrated in the present tense.

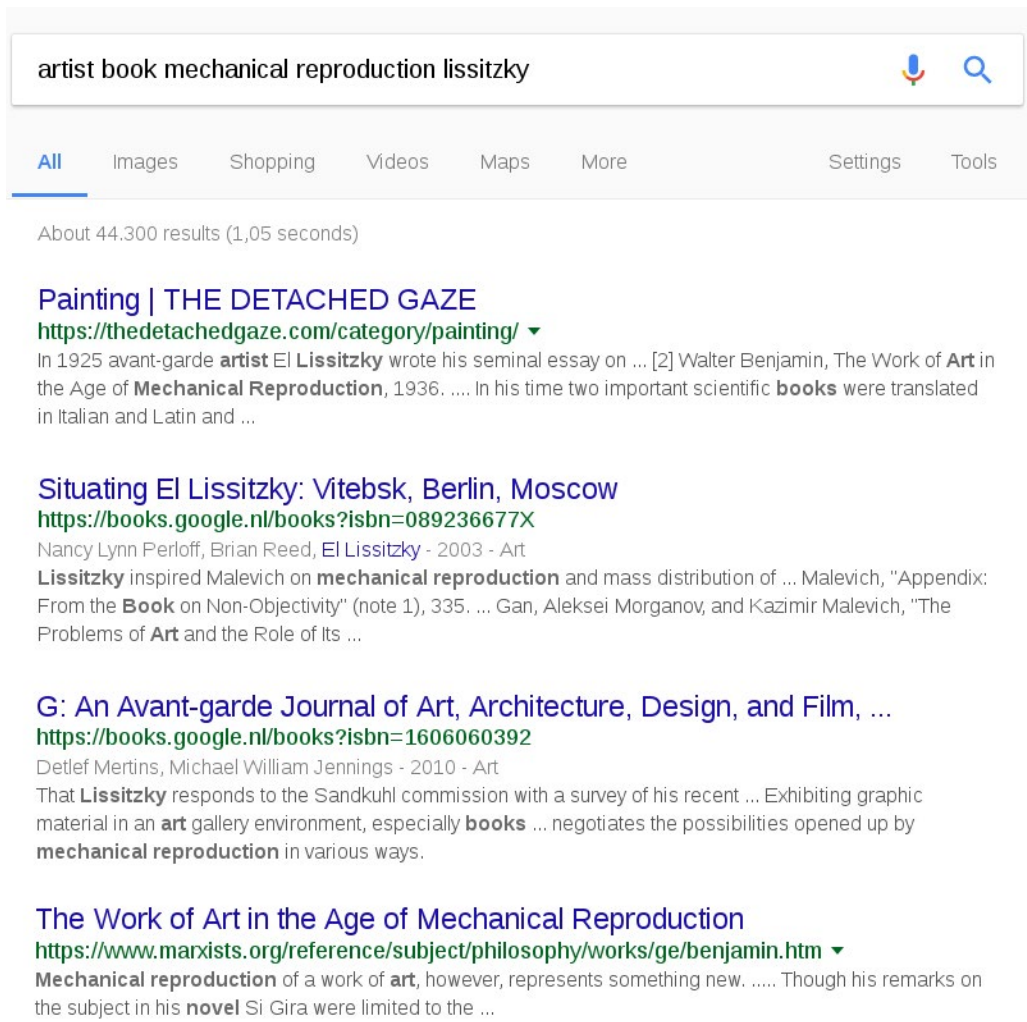
This is not a call for present-tense history but rather a loose attempt to examine a scale of writerly forms between the very personal and vaguely worded text of an artist at one end and the scholarly art-historical study bound to a single linear chronology at the other.

At the artists' end, more is being written and published than ever. A growing number of academies run PhD programs for artistic research. It is not obvious whether dissertations should be evaluated as self-standing works, separate from 'practical' work. In addition, there are many large publishing houses and established journals that release recent artists' writing along with works by art critics and art historians. Berlin's Sternberg Press, Les presses du réel in Dijon, Onomatopée in Eindhoven, and the journal *e-flux* are some examples. There is hardly any consensus on what makes a good artist's text. The rare reviews they receive in peer-reviewed journals are usually concerned with what editors did with them

and the place of texts in the artist's oeuvre and art history, rather than their substance, let alone what they have contributed to scholarship. They are considered too ephemeral, poetic, subjective and, indeed, situated (bound to the work of a given artist), and lacking standards of scholarship normally acquired in specialised institutions. They are looked upon as having only an indirect relevance to scholarship and as constituting part of the body of work of artists, using printed matter as material, or merely an appendix to their art works, offering some hints for their interpretation by scholars. There is something familiar in this from the previous century. Still, art historians have adopted many terms and concepts that originated with artists. Additionally, there are many texts that contain a movement from an artist's own practice towards a more general articulation of the condition of making art.

At the other end, there is an assumed objectivity that does not always hold. Many novel approaches to historiography have emerged in recent decades, challenging established approaches that give primacy to the artist's biography or oeuvre, or to artistic styles. We have seen methods of structuralist literary theory, Marxism, psychoanalysis, feminism, post-colonial theory and other frameworks being imported into the historiography of art. The emphasis on the genius of the male artist and his original work has been challenged by alternatives that analyse the interests, forces and mechanisms at work. So for example, around the 1970s, art historians began to talk about ideologies, machines and apparatuses, almost as if in echo of what avant-garde artists had discussed back in the 1910s and 1920s on the pages of their journals. Rather than treating interwar avant-gardes as having merely celebrated the objectivity and efficacy of the machine, and structuralist art historians as assessing art in order to lay bare the machinery of control, one may look for what they have in common. One perspective would be to view both as attempting to identify technical conditions that define and regulate rules for cultural production, including the production of art. After Michel Foucault's historical-archaeological method and Friedrich Kittler's extension of it, we might consider the media-technological condition in the broadest sense of both media and technology. In this regard, the figures of machine and technique, but also those of synthesis, network, system, program, circulation, connection, information, recursion, virality, software, and so on, are helpful in moving attention to the condition both artists and art historians are embedded and operating in.

The setting in which the central position is shared among internationalism, networks, and little printed magazines gives us cause to rethink art from perspectives that problematize the usual anthropocentric positioning, especially if we acknowledge the presence, protocols and properties of digital networks that ever more condition the historical gaze today.



The image shows a Google search interface. At the top, the search bar contains the text "artist book mechanical reproduction lissitzky". To the right of the search bar are icons for voice search and a magnifying glass. Below the search bar, there are tabs for "All", "Images", "Shopping", "Videos", "Maps", and "More". The "All" tab is selected and underlined. To the right of these tabs are "Settings" and "Tools" links. Below the search bar, it says "About 44.300 results (1,05 seconds)". The first search result is titled "Painting | THE DETACHED GAZE" with a URL <https://thedetachedgaze.com/category/painting/>. The snippet below the title reads: "In 1925 avant-garde artist El Lissitzky wrote his seminal essay on ... [2] Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, 1936. .... In his time two important scientific books were translated in Italian and Latin and ...". The second search result is titled "Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow" with a URL <https://books.google.nl/books?isbn=089236677X>. The snippet below the title reads: "Nancy Lynn Perloff, Brian Reed, El Lissitzky - 2003 - Art Lissitzky inspired Malevich on mechanical reproduction and mass distribution of ... Malevich, 'Appendix: From the Book on Non-Objectivity' (note 1), 335. ... Gan, Aleksei Morganov, and Kazimir Malevich, 'The Problems of Art and the Role of Its ...". The third search result is titled "G: An Avant-garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, ..." with a URL <https://books.google.nl/books?isbn=1606060392>. The snippet below the title reads: "Detlef Mertins, Michael William Jennings - 2010 - Art That Lissitzky responds to the Sandkuhl commission with a survey of his recent ... Exhibiting graphic material in an art gallery environment, especially books ... negotiates the possibilities opened up by mechanical reproduction in various ways.". The fourth search result is titled "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" with a URL <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm>. The snippet below the title reads: "Mechanical reproduction of a work of art, however, represents something new. .... Though his remarks on the subject in his novel Si Gira were limited to the ...".

Figure 3. google: artist book mechanical form reproduction lissitzky

György C. Kálmán – András Kappanyos | *Institute for Literary Studies, Research Center for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest*

## Avant-Garde Studies in the Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences – Past, Present and Future

The Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences was founded in January 1956. It was modelled on the structure of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, and comprised an institute for each major field of scholarship under the auspices of a central body of scholars. The Institute was set up to work on literary history with the long-term aim producing a synthesis of Hungarian literary history. Unofficially, it was also used to prepare and to consult on Party documents on literature and culture. Although subordinated to the control of the Party, it became an asylum for scholars who were denied positions at universities. It was thus a relatively peaceful and free institution.

In the period when Communist Party was consolidating its control of Hungary (1945–1948), the avant-garde was not regarded as an important part of the history of Hungarian culture, but as something ephemeral and even suspicious. Despite its undoubted role in the formation and development of modern Hungarian literature, the avant-garde was represented as a sort of childhood illness, an accident, a dead-end. Not even its influence on a number of important authors made it worth mentioning. There were several factors that gave rise to this view. Firstly, the Soviet line was simply to suppress the avant-garde and even expunge its memory. Secondly, although most artists of the Hungarian movement were close to the left and some were even communists, they did not fit into the image of the communist artist and were regarded as bourgeois, decadent, aberrant or dissident figures. Thirdly, the movement lacked continuity, with no vigorous generation following in the tracks of the ‘old’ (historical) avant-garde.

Since this was the canonical view of Hungarian literary history as dictated by Party ideology, literary historians were forced to comply with these guidelines. The relative freedom within the walls of the Institute did not make it immune from the pressure of official expectations. The





Figure 1. András Kappanyos and György C. Kálmán during the conference Local Contexts / International Networks in the Kassák Museum. Photo by Hajnalka Tulisz.

treatment of the avant-garde at the institutional level, however, contrasts with the work of some of its members. In the huge, six-volume history of Hungarian literature, the avant-garde appears as negligible side-track, merely a bizarre episode in the careers of some major authors. Paradoxically, study of the avant-garde was reserved for members of the Department of Socialist Literature, the part of the Institute intended to be most concerned with ideology. That was because the literature of the socialist movement was inextricably connected – personally, ideologically and poetically – to avant-garde trends. Despite the ideological constraints, some individual scholars interested in the movement did find an opportunity to elaborate important issues of the avant-garde both in the Hungarian (Miklós Béládi and Béla Pomogáts) and the international context (Miklós Szabolcsi and Endre Bojtár – the latter devoted a short but essential book to avant-garde trends in Central and East Europe).

When Party directives and official canons lost their direct effect on scholarly work in the Institute following the political transition of 1989 (the culmination of a trend that had started in the mid-1980s), a new interest in

the avant-garde emerged. The Institute is now preparing a new synthesis of Hungarian literary history, and the third volume will chiefly be about the twentieth century. Its central concept is the 'modern' and all its cognates – modernism, modernity, modern-ness, etc. This at last opens up opportunities for a complex and thorough treatment of all the histories and memories of avant-garde, its branches and afterlife, its predecessors and its hidden influences. Individual inquiries into both historical and present day (neo) avant-garde have also started to flourish again, and both authors of the present report have published monographs and anthologies in the field. The new generation is more and more interested in similar problems.

An outline of a current research plan may serve to give an impression of our present endeavours. We want to capitalize on the fact that our institute is the flagship of textological research in Hungary: several critical editions of great Hungarian authors have been, and are being prepared here. However, the textual corpus of the Hungarian avant-garde has never been assessed from this point of view.

Strangely, the overwhelming presence of Kassák's personality and oeuvre is a hindering factor. Unquestionably, no comparable literary talent emerged in the Hungarian avant-garde, without even mentioning his activities as organizer, editor and visual artist. It is also hard to deny that several of Kassák's followers were epigones, minor talents. But this should not allow us to forget about the truly original authors who either improved on Kassák's inventions or developed their devices independently.

Another factor obscuring our judgement is the relatively short lifespan of the Hungarian avant-garde. The movement itself lasted no more than one and half decades, even including its preliminary activities and aftermath. Its participants, however, went on with their own lives and oeuvres. Some exchanged aesthetic for political radicalism (like Sándor Barta and Aladár Komját); some gave up literature altogether (like, to the best of our knowledge, Mátyás György and Lajos Kudlák); and others started their 'serious' literary career after being 'cured' of the avant-garde (like Tibor Déry, Gyula Illyés and several others). Accordingly, the avant-garde period of these oeuvres, when presented in the accounts of literary historians, tends to appear as some sort of youthful excess.

These factors have so far delayed the objective assessment of the Hungarian avant-garde. The present public image of the avant-garde can best be described through the allegory of the iceberg: almost anything outside the Kassák-oeuvre is invisible, and even most teachers of Hun-

garian would be unable to come up immediately with the name a second avant-garde author. Our research aims at drawing the map of this invisible, 'underwater' territory. It is not an area full of brilliant masterworks so much as a domain of unique cultural-historical documents. They make up more than a footnote to the Kassák-oeuvre, just as the avant-garde is more than a footnote to the era of high modernism. The task is long due, and in the centenary year of the birth of the Hungarian avant-garde, it cannot be delayed any more.

In the Kassák Museum, the process of digitizing Kassák's three avant-garde reviews (*A Tett*, *Ma*, and *Dokumentum*) is already in progress. We have observed these proceedings as invited experts ever since the original planning period, and we have maintained our contribution throughout. The two projects mutually acknowledge and methodically support each other; they do not compete but complement. In a later period, a few years hence, the two projects might be unified and together might provide the full virtual textual corpus of the Hungarian avant-garde.

Our own project in the Institute of Literary Studies starts with the treatment of all of the individual volumes (books, booklets, pamphlets etc.) that were published by *Ma* and *Dokumentum* (except works by Kassák that are available in current editions, which will be dealt with when the idea of critically editing Kassák's oeuvre arises).

The second, and from the philological viewpoint, much more challenging part of the project is to find and digitize the periodicals that emerged outside Kassák's influence, partly in foreign political territories. Since not even the National Library holds full copies of all of these, we rely greatly on our international cooperative network of scholars in Vienna, Novi Sad, Cluj-Napoca and Bratislava.

The third phase will examine the books whose avant-garde character is not indicated by the name of the publisher. They are by authors who either left Kassák's circle or were never part of it. This corpus is quite difficult to define, and we will probably be unable to declare our list of avant-gardes (authors and works) to be complete and final.

The main purpose is to explore the complete textual corpus of the Hungarian avant-garde between 1915 and 1930. We plan digital publication in the first place, although paper-based editions may be warranted in some cases. Our present purpose, however, is to produce a textology-philology-based website that could become the virtual centre of Hungarian avant-garde scholarship.

We plan to present our material at the level of a critical edition, as far as the material itself allows us. We expect to find very few autographs, but will consider all textual variations. We provide the texts with annotations on the formation, impact and references of the texts. The corpus thus created, and our work on it, could serve as a starting point for several other projects. The philological process on the late avant-garde achievements (like the activities of Ödön Palasovszky or Károly Tamkó Sirató) can get off to a new start. Our work will enable some avant-garde-related correspondence (like that of Aladár Komját, Sándor Barta, László Moholy Nagy, Ervin Sinkó and others) to be explored. A potential by-product of the referential annotations, when organized and expanded, could be an encyclopaedia of the Hungarian avant-garde, gathering together all the data and connections of all periodicals, soirees, exhibitions and their participants.

By providing these necessary tools for further research in the fields of Hungarian avant-garde we hope to work off some of the handicap that has been left us by several decades of scholarly negligence.

Irina Denischenko | *Columbia University, New York*

## Whither Comparative Avant-Garde Studies? Conference Roundtable and Concluding Remarks

In the last decade ‘the network’ has become a popular optic for examining the complex interactions of various avant-garde movements. From museum exhibitions to anthologies of primary sources to reference works, several recent surveys of the avant-garde invoke the notion of the network, displacing the traditional lenses of ‘borrowing’ and ‘influence’.<sup>1</sup> Scholarship on modernist periodicals has further propelled ‘network thinking’ in avant-garde studies by defining the network as a series of links not only between individuals, but also between non-agentive entities like magazines.<sup>2</sup> The significance of this conceptual shift lies not only in its concrete explanatory value, but also in its potential as a decentralizing, non-hierarchical paradigm for comparative studies.

*Local Contexts / International Networks: Avant-Garde Journals in East-Central Europe (1910–1935)*, the first international, interdisciplinary conference organized by the Kassák Museum, relied on this conceptual framework. The theme of the conference and its object of investigation was the Central European magazine in the first decades of the 20th century. Inspired by the rising field of periodical

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<sup>1</sup> The notion of the network informs the curatorial principles of the following exhibitions and publications: *Inventing Abstraction 1910–1925*, <https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2012/inventingabstraction/> and *THE ELECTRO-LIBRARY: European Avant-Garde Magazines from the 1920s*, <https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1632?locale=en>, Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács, (eds.), *Between Worlds: A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes, 1910–1930*, LACMA and MIT Press, Cambridge and Los Angeles, 2002, Timothy O. Benson, (ed.), *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, LACMA and MIT Press, Cambridge and Los Angeles, 2002, among others.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker and Christian Weikop (eds.), *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*. Vol. III, Europe 1880–1940, Part VII, Oxford UP, Oxford, 2013.



Figure 1. Roundtable discussion during the conference Local Contexts / International Networks in the Kassák Museum (left to right: Krisztina Passuth, Piotr Rypson, Michalina Kmiecik, Klára Prešnjajderová, Dušan Barok, Clara Royer, Vojtěch Lahoda and Gábor Palkó). Photo by Hajnalka Tulisz.

Figure 2. Roundtable discussion during the conference Local Contexts / International Networks in the Kassák Museum (left to right: Vojtěch Lahoda, Gábor Palkó, Edit Sasvári, András Kappanyos, György C. Kálmán). Photo by Hajnalka Tulisz.

studies,<sup>3</sup> the conference presented the magazine as ‘a discursive space of avant-garde communication, as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and as a historical document.’ The organizers invited participants to conceptualize the modernist and avant-garde periodicals of Central and Eastern Europe as a special node of avant-garde activity that emerged out of particular historical circumstances and ‘local contexts.’ The suggested angle of investigation encouraged presenters to bring into view ‘international networks’ of exchange.

The majority of the conference papers provided overviews of modernist and avant-garde magazines and their tendencies from the ‘local’ perspectives of Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania. Some presentations also engaged with the notion of ‘international networks.’ But it was the roundtable discussion at the end of the conference that made the methodological potential of the network model more explicit. Although the responses of the participants varied in form and content, in one way or another all were concerned with future scholarly endeavours that would enable a better understanding of the Central European avant-garde and wrest it from the persistent centre-periphery model, which relegates avant-garde activity in the region to the background as epiphenomenon.

As several roundtable participants pointed out, before primary texts can be anthologized in a more balanced and comprehensive way, they must, in many cases, be identified. Klára Prešnajderová spoke about the newly founded Slovak Design Museum and its work in building collections. Since Slovakia has never had a museum of applied arts, she noted, the history of Slovak design remains to be archived and written. András Kappanyos echoed a similar concern when he spoke of the Hungarian avant-garde outside of Lajos Kassák’s sphere of influence. Books of poetry and drama, as well as complete runs of several Hungarian-language periodicals published within and outside Hungary remain to be collected. As suggested by the roundtable, the first step in promoting a better understanding of the Central European avant-garde appears to be collection building.

Once materials are collected, a related concern arises: how should they be organized and narrated? In his roundtable presentation, Piotr

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<sup>3</sup> Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, ‘The Rise of Periodical Studies,’ *PMLA* 2 (2006), <https://seeeps.princeton.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/243/2015/03/Scholes-Latham-rise-periodical-studies.pdf>.

Rypson spoke of the effort of the National Museum in Warsaw to rewrite the history of the emergence of the Polish avant-garde by emphasizing the importance of Polish artists working outside Poland. The ensuing rearrangement of the National Museum's permanent collection, in turn, raises the question of how materials should be presented to the general public as well as to researchers in museums and archives.

Permanent collections continue to be physically displayed in ever more innovative ways, as Edit Sasvári's discussion showed. In recent years, the Kassák Museum has brought into focus the Hungarian avant-garde poet's magazine-based networks and reconstructed these complex interactions in visual form as infographics. Alongside creative presentations of archival material in a museum setting, the Kassák Museum's research team is working with the Petőfi Literary Museum on a large-scale digitization project. The project's aim, as outlined by Gábor Palkó, is to digitize all periodicals edited by Lajos Kassák and make them available and searchable on databases like Europeana.<sup>4</sup> Eventually, the digitization team intends to create a platform for collaborative semantic annotation of these texts that would replace and improve upon the idea of collected works in print. Moreover, the team hopes to help other institutions involved in the digitization of their collections by offering concrete suggestions about how to create stable digital versions of texts and collaborative online working environments for researchers.

One of the major issues surrounding digitization is the accessibility and searchability of already digitized resources. To this end, Dušan Barok spoke of his website Monoskop, which indexes already digitized archives of avant-garde periodicals (among many other visual and textual materials) on a single page,<sup>5</sup> thus making available to the researcher materials that s/he might have trouble finding and widening the potential scope of comparative research projects.

As far as digitization efforts are concerned, research on Central and East European avant-garde would also benefit from open-access publications of conference proceedings, museum catalogues, and other resources, according to Merse Pál Szeredi. Such efforts could constitute the first steps of creating a thematic monograph on Central European avant-garde magazines.

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<sup>4</sup> *A Tett* is already online (<http://digiphil.hu/context:atett>) and *Ma* will be available shortly.

<sup>5</sup> <https://monoskop.org/Magazines>



Besides issues of availability and accessibility of resources, comparative studies of the Central European avant-garde also face language barriers. Some scholars spoke of their efforts to address the difficulty of studying the avant-garde in this multilingual region by creating anthologies of translated primary texts. Michalina Kmieciak noted the ongoing efforts at Jagiellonian University to publish an anthology of Central European avant-garde manifestos in Polish.<sup>6</sup> More broadly, both she and Vojtěch Lahoda spoke of a range of activities, from individual lectures to conferences and workshops, related to advancing the comparative study of the Central European avant-garde.

In her closing remarks, Kristina Passuth asked: what is new in avant-garde studies today? She identified two trends: the desire for comparative studies, embodied in the notion of ‘network’, and the various technologies that enable this comparative research. The desire for comparison has yet to become method, but its presence is significant in itself. The efforts to digitize materials respond to this desire for comparison. But this digitization and anthology driven research model, as Jindřich Toman pointed out, must be complemented with concrete research questions and concepts. The Kassák Museum’s conference, *Dada Techniques in East-Central Europe, 1916–1930*, which took place in October 2016, represents the next step towards conceptually driven efforts to map the Central European avant-garde.

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<sup>6</sup> Jakub Kornhauser and Kinga Siewior, (eds.), *Głuchy brudnopis. Antologia manifestów awangard Europy Środkowej* [Deaf Draft. An Anthology of Central European Avant-Garde Manifestos], Jagiellonian UP, Krakow, 2015. This anthology includes manifestos translated into Polish from Czech and Slovak, Serbian and Croatian, and Romanian. The publication of the second volume with Hungarian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Russian and Polish manifestos is planned. Also see the collection of articles that reinterpret the Polish avant-garde in the context of its Central European connections: Michalina Kmieciak and Małgorzata Szumna, (eds.), *Awangarda Środkowej i Wschodniej Europy - innowacja czy naśladownictwo?* [Avant-garde of Central and Eastern Europe – Innovation or Repetition?], Jagiellonian UP, Krakow, 2015.