

**The multilayered identity of Tristan Tzara and
Marcel Janco – the archives of an identity issue**

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Dedicated to
my mother, Cornelia

and the memory of
my grandmother, Lili,
my grandfather, Vasile
and my father, Gabriel

I owe everything to you!

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Abstract

This research focuses on the question of Jewish identity in Romania around the turn of the twentieth century, in the cases of Romanian-born Jews, Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco. It argues that it was neither Tzara's and Janco's Jewish heritage, nor their connection to Jewish culture, that defined their artistic personalities, but a web of interrelated social, political and personal components, all part of their multilayered identity, of which their Jewishness was only one. In Romania, Jews have been variously stereotyped which led to a specific Jewish experience; simultaneously, and paradoxically, Eastern European Jews symbolized backwardness in the eyes of Western Jews. Taking these formulations as a starting point, the concern of this research is with the phenomenon of self-definition, and particularly with Tzara's and Janco's self-definition over against Romanian reality and its clichéd views on national identity and citizenship. By examining how the instability of national and ethnic identities in this part of Europe was manifested in their 'Jewish experiences', this research shows how the lack of national citizenship impacted their mind-set at least the same way that their own Jewishness did, for it only accentuated their marginalisation. By drawing on archival sources and sociological knowledge, this research makes novel use of the Deleuzoguattarian concept of becoming to discuss how Tzara and Janco position themselves in relation to their national identity, arguing for a complex relationship between origin and artistic production that goes beyond simple identity. In short, the discussion is built around the argument that becoming offers a new platform to explore the linkage between Tzara's and Janco's inherited Jewishness, their lack of citizenship and the nation-state amidst which they were living. In conclusion, this research seeks to clear the way for a renewed consideration of the symbolic substance of Tzara's and Janco's Jewish experience and the role it played in defining their national identity.

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Introduction

The present thesis focuses on how *Tristan Tzara* (born Samuel ‘Samy’ Rosenstock, 16 April 1896 – 25 December 1963) and *Marcel Janco* (born Marcel Hermann Iancu, 24 May 1895 – 21 April 1984) relate to their own Jewish heritage in the context of the emergence of the Romanian avant-garde. By Romanian avant-garde, the present research understands the period after First World War. Based on Romanian cultural and historical reasons, which considered modernism as a term too apprehensive to be employed, in Romania what was claimed to be symbolism before the First World War was, in fact, early modernism, and what was claimed to be modernism following the First World War was, in reality, the avant-garde.¹

The time frame of this research begins with the late 1890s, when Tzara and Janco were born, and covers the first three and half decades of the 1900s, ending in 1938, the beginning of anti-Jewish legislation under the Goga-Cuza government.² Based on these two individual case studies, the main purpose of this research is to set out the complexity of the relationship between Jewish modernist artists and the Romanian society of the *fin de siècle* and interwar period, in order to show how the social construction of Jewish identity, based on antisemitic³ concepts, was central to not only the formation of Romanian identity but to much of the cultural creativity of people of

¹ See, Erwin Kessler, ‘The birth of a hobby-horse in Tzara Country’, in *Tzara, Dada, Etc*, ed. by Erwin Kessler et al. (Bucharest: Arcub, 2016).

² In 1938, the Goga-Cuza government, following the governmental order to review the citizenship granted to Jews after 1923 by the Constitution, stripped the citizenships of more than 225,000 Romanian-Jews from Bessarabia and Bukovina. For more on this see, for instance, W. Filderman and S. Manuilă, *Populația evreiască din România în timpul celui de-al doilea război mondial* (Iasi: Ed. Fundația Culturală Română, 1994).

³ Antisemitism is defined as the hatred of the Jews, which arises because of the alleged inferiority of their race, because they are Semites. The present thesis spells the word antisemitic (antisemitism) in lowercase and without a dash because, as Milly Heyd specifies, spelling the word with a dash and with a capital ‘S’ refers to a hatred of all the Semitic people, not only Jews; this thesis therefore prefers to spell it without a dash since, in this context, the violence and hatred was directed solely against the Jewish people. See Rose-Carol Washton Long, Matthew Baigell, and Milly Heyd (eds.), *Jewish dimensions in modern visual culture: Antisemitism, assimilation*, ed. by (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, c.2010), p.12, footnote 1. For a very eloquent study on the subject of antisemitism, including a historical overview, see Hyam Maccoby, *Antisemitism and modernity: Innovation and continuity* (London: Routledge, 2006). See also Murray Jay Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish history?* (Oxford; Portland, OR: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007).

Jewish heritage.⁴ It argues that it was neither Tzara's and Janco's Jewish heritage, nor their connection to Jewish culture, that defined their self-identification, but a web of interrelated social, political and personal components, all part of their multilayered identity, of which their Jewishness was only one. Therefore, this thesis considers that the art that emerged before and during their Dada years does not automatically reveal Jewishness as an explanation for Dada, or vice versa. Simply put, this thesis challenges the idea that the formation of Tzara's and Janco's identities and art (including Dada) is not solely dependent on their Jewishness. Although a similar discussion was carried out by Tom Sandqvist in *Dada East. The Romanians of the Cabaret Voltaire*,⁵ the present thesis makes its main contribution to knowledge by reestablishing the social matrix to which Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco were originally related and discussing it with the help of some philosophical concepts of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Tzara's and Janco's multi-layered identities are analyzed in connection with Deleuze's and Guattari's rejection of standard identities in order to explain the anti-identitarian nonsensical assemblage philosophy of *Simbolul* and, later, of the Dada itself.

This research defines itself by focusing on the Jewish background, concerns and marginal treatment by the Romanian state which fed the creation of Tzara's and Janco's Jewish experiences. It rests on their life experiences, both collective and individual, while considering a communal context of them as Jews born in Romania. This research explores the rarely examined relationship between Tzara and Janco and the manner in which they sustained their ties through their common unique consciousness, their thinking and language. This thesis makes no claim to completeness in discussing Tzara's and Janco's cases and admits that, occasionally, there is a slight imbalance between the two, with emphasis placed more on Tzara's case. This occurs, in part, as a consequence of accessibility to documents and correspondence from their early lives which is higher in Tzara's case rather than in Janco's. Furthermore, Tzara is discussed more throughout this thesis also due to his extensive literary activity in *Simbolul*, activity which enables a more concrete literary and philosophical analysis based on Deleuzoguattarian concepts. The choice of including the case of Marcel Janco in this research, despite all the shortcomings, was determined by the necessity of discussing Tzara's case in relation to another, sharing not only his Jewish experience but also his

⁴ This idea was asserted by Lisa Silverman in her study on Austrian Jews during the interwar period, showing that this intersection contributed to the artist's exploration of the self. Lisa Silverman, *Becoming Austrians: Jews and culture between the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵ Tom Sandqvist, *Dada East. The Romanians of the Cabaret Voltaire* (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 2006).

artistic views for a significant period of time. Janco shared many similarities with Tzara in terms of socio-political context of their young lives, history, cultural aspirations and, most importantly, identity issues. Emerging from a common sphere as Jews living in antisemitic Romania, having a common path throughout their teenage years and similar Jewish experiences, these two avant-gardists do not fall neatly into any preconceived categories. Since both Tzara and Janco only sometimes hint at the experience which was their source, they represent the most eloquent choices for this research.

This thesis intends to add to existent research on Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's Jewishness and the role their Jewish experience played throughout their early lives and careers in order to create a fuller picture by drawing on archival sources and sociological knowledge. Furthermore, it examines to what extent Tzara and Janco diverged in their behaviour from Romanian society, and even the European one, as a result of their *otherness*, explained through Hannah Arendt's concept of *pariah* and *parvenu*, and sees their identity as a *perpetuum process of becoming*, in its Deleuzoguattarian sense.

The aim of this thesis is to illuminate how Tzara's and Janco's otherness helped shape their marginalised identities in their artistic endeavours since Jewishness does not stand at the centre of their work and they do not deploy clear visual stereotypes of the 'parasitic Jewish people'.⁶ Agreeing with Durkheim's wise words about the study of religion – 'what sort of science is it whose principle discovery is that the subject of which it treats does not exist'⁷ – the present research focuses on their Jewishness understood as a sort of self-reflexive process associated with a kind of crisis, and characteristic of the avant-garde, instead of attempting to discover what is authentically Jewish in their artistic endeavours. In order to achieve its aim, it relies on archival materials that emanate from the Kingdom of Romania, as will be discussed later, for they reveal conspicuous influences originating mainly in the socio-political sphere in Romania.

⁶ On the stigmata of stereotypical Jewishness and physical attributes that were negatively attributed to the Jews in order to emphasise their otherness, see Linda Nochlin, 'Starting with the Self: Jewish identity and its representation', in *The Jew in the text: Modernity and the construction of identity*, ed. by Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995). For a discussion on the conceptual categories of the works of art produced by Jewish artists and the themes used by them, see Avram Kampf, *Chagall to Kitaj: Jewish experience in 20th century art* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1990).

⁷ Emile Durkheim, *The elementary form of religious life* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p.88.

Thus, this study never loses focus of the reality of the time and place in which their artistic activities emerged. The context of Tzara's and Janco's early lives was marked by age-old stereotypes about the 'Jew' and later by the the notion of a 'true Romanian.'⁸ These represented the main elements of the world of both Jews and non-Jews living in the Kingdom of Romania. In other words, in Tzara's and Janco's days, the Jews could not easily shed the yoke of the past and escape the reality of who they were, even when they wished it.

The following research seeks to complete its mission by exploring both archival material and primary sources such as the original issues of the Romanian avant-garde journals *Simbolul*, *Chemarea* and *Contimporanul* (in Romanian), the correspondence between Tzara and his family (in Romanian and French), original certificates and personal documents of both artists and their families (in Romanian). Furthermore, it examines semi-autobiographical writings by Tzara (in French) and Janco (in Romanian, English and Hebrew), and original journals and articles by them or about them written in that epoch. To this are added the secondary sources represented by reviews, articles, books, biographies, and anthologies on the artists and their lives, discussed in the following literature review. Given the diversity of the items analysed such as manuscripts, correspondence, books, reviews, photographs and various catalogues of exhibitions, the following research opted for a chronological presentation in order to contextualise the biographical and artistic evolution of the two artists. This thesis seeks to situate itself in the wider field of Jewish cultural history rather than in the field of history of art.

The motivation behind this topic lies in the contemporary endeavour to readdress the account of the Jews in the avant-garde, most recently discussed in Mark H. Gelber and Sami Sjoberg's volume,⁹ and more specifically the Jews in Romanian modernism. This is even more relevant now when the world has just celebrated the Dada centenary (1916-2016), which brought the spotlight back on to the historical avant-garde. This research is answering the need for reviewing the identity formation process in the case of Romanian Jewish intellectuals, part of the avant-garde movements. Concomitantly, it seeks to dispel myths about Tzara's and Janco's Jewish experiences and about their syncretic identity, due to their forced otherness.

⁸ For a description of a 'true Romanian', see Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor*, (Bucharest: Ed. Cultura nationala, 1926).

⁹ This is among the most recent volumes on the topic of Jews in the avant-garde movement: Mark H. Gelber and Sami Sjoberg, (eds.), *Jewish aspects in avant-garde: Between rebellion and revelation* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), p.35.

The need for such a study is even more imperative now since Tzara's and Janco's Jewishness appears to be addressed more frequently as a reason for their Dada creations, while the impact of their Jewish experience on their self-perception has not been analyzed. This thesis offers a new alternative to how their identity should be viewed and analyzed by employing for the first time the Deleuzoguattarian concept of *becoming* in discussing Tzara's and Janco's identities. By viewing the philosophy behind *Simbolul*, and later Dada, as an expression of how the Jews Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, belonging to an oppressed group in Romanian society, paradoxically expressed themselves as (becoming) Jews in their art, despite detaching themselves from their Jewish identity, this thesis opens the door for exploring them as undergoing continuous vital transformations rather than being static figures in twenty-century art. This research fills the gap in knowledge regarding Tzara's and Janco's Jewish experience in connection to the Romanian nation-building process and their relationship to Jewish identity, while keeping at bay the idea that Jewishness explains Dada.

Furthermore, this study takes the opportunity to correct also some mistakes that have at times appeared in the mass-media regarding Tzara's and Janco's participation in the radical movement. Recently, the involvement of the two Romanian-born Jews appears to have been forgotten, as demonstrated by an article published recently in *The New Yorker*.¹⁰ Here, the author presents Dada to readers as the creation of Hugo Ball and 'a loose assembly of fellow artists and exiles' gathered at Cabaret Voltaire, with Tzara and Janco's involvement being completely erased.

If ever there were two avant-garde artists and companions of Romanian-Jewish heritage, Tzara and Janco stand out as exemplary. They are the co-founders of the Dada avant-garde movement and represent a crucial aspect of the Romanian Jewish contribution to European modernism. Previous studies have focused on their significance for European modernism, their involvement in Dada and even Tzara's hidden Jewish complex¹¹ and the connection between his pseudonym and the Romanian Yiddish world.¹² However, none have examined how the instability of national and ethnic identities in this part of Europe was manifest in their 'Jewish experiences',¹³ which

¹⁰ See Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim, 'Dada was born 100 years ago. So what?', *New York Times*, 8 July 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/10/arts/dada-100-years-later.html> [accessed 12 January 2017].

¹¹ See Milly Heyd, 'Tristan Tzara/Sami Rosenstock: The hidden/overt Jewish agenda', *Les cahiers Tristan Tzara = Caietele Tristan Tzara*, 3-4 (2005), p.98-109, 'Tristan Tzara/Shmuel Rosenstock' in *Jewish dimensions in modern visual culture*, pp.193-215.

¹² Sandqvist (2006) attempts this connection.

¹³ Matthew Baigell and Milly Heyd (eds.), *Complex identities: Jewish consciousness and modern art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001).

resulted in Tzara's and Janco's incessant questioning of borders, and their inherent internationalism and multilingualism. It is for this reason that this research observes the identity formation of both Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, and their experiments with their own identity, before and during their displacement to Zurich, focusing on the way they relate to their own Jewish heritage. Another important reason in choosing these two artists of Jewish origin is represented by the fact that although they shared a somewhat bourgeois upbringing, they originated amongst the two main types of Romanian Jews: the rural one, represented by Tzara, and the urban one, represented by Janco. One emerging from a Moldavian shtetl, the other one living in the center of Bucharest, the Romanian capital, these two friends, although relatively antithetical in a sense due to their origins, represent, according to the argument of this thesis, some of the most eloquent examples in the discussion of identity formation of Romanian Jews before and during the World Wars.

This investigation starts from the modernist assumption that Jewish identity is not fixed across time and space but, on the contrary, the social and political parameters of Jewish existence are defined within a specific place and time and the understanding of Jewish life and culture needs to be achieved by treating this as a basic starting-point.¹⁴ This thesis advances the idea that even though European Jews may possess a common sense of a shared identity, their experiences are different according to the specific context in which they lived, and, as will be shown by the particular cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, that even when the context is similar the independent existence will produce very diverse Jewish identities. Furthermore, this study addresses the complexities of the Romanian Jewish history and the relations between Jews and non-Jews, which played a major role in determining how culture was produced and received by the people. The literary critic Ovid Crohmălniceanu explains the overwhelming presence of Jews as founders and members of modernist circles in Romania based on Eugen Lovinescu's claim that the 'Semitic spirit was concerned with negation'.¹⁵ Crohmălniceanu, himself a Romanian-born Jew, appears to agree with the claim that there is an alleged 'Semitic spirit' responsible for the modernist and revolutionary aesthetic manifestation. In other words, although the formulation sounds fairly antisemitic, the statement is strictly correlated to the idea of a somewhat

¹⁴ For a complex analysis of the Jewish identities in the European context, see Jonathan Webber (ed.), *Jewish identities in the New Europe* (London, Washington, DC: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1994).

¹⁵ Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, *Evreii in avangarda-romaneasca* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001), p.33.

absolute spirit of the Jewish identity, ‘anti-classists, modernists, agitated by problems’,¹⁶ which characterises those intellectuals marginalised by the Romanian society due to their ethnic heritage. The idea of a special character reserved only for the “Jewish essence” appears as a consequence of its frequent usage by far-right journals and reviews, and although Crohmălniceanu most certainly did not adhere to any antisemitic ideologies, it demonstrates how easily such ideas penetrated the day-to-day vocabulary.

Even critics sympathetic to the Jews’ status in Romanian artistic fields such as Crohmălniceanu often fell prey to generalisations and insufficiently understood the concept of what it meant to be Jewish in Romania. What Crohmălniceanu does not explain is the relation of Jewish artists, such as Tzara and Janco, to the Romanian Jewish culture and to the Romanian field of fine arts and literature that was struggling to gain international recognition. The critic does not appear to differentiate Jewish avant-gardists from one another but rather treats them as a whole given their shared ethnic heritage. For instance, Crohmălniceanu ascribes some¹⁷ of the courage of self-derision characterising Tzara’s dark humour to Jewish humour that, in its turn, appears only due to the seniority of Jewish culture, as the literary critic argues.¹⁸ Crohmălniceanu goes even further with his analysis and, referring to Tzara’s and Janco’s creation, Dada, argues that its ‘angry anti-idolatry has roots in an ancestral tendency’¹⁹ of the Jewish essence. For Crohmălniceanu, everything is analysed from a place of collective interaction where ‘they’,²⁰ the Jews, share a series of cultural features regardless the specific context in which they lived (i.e. Jewish humour) and therefore everything is explained from the perspective of a universal Jewish culture. Crohmălniceanu’s literary analysis, although impeccable, falls into the trap of seeing Tzara’s works, and that of many others, solely from the perspective of a shared Jewish tradition, constantly searching for elements that sooner or later would ‘send to a Judaic tradition’.²¹ The present research reflects on the perspective of a shared Jewish tradition as Crohmălniceanu does but insists on the specificity of each artist’s experience

¹⁶ George Călinescu, *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent* (‘The history of Romanian literature from its origins to the present’) (Bucharest: Ed. Litera, 1941), p.976.

¹⁷ As Crohmălniceanu himself agrees, it would be ridiculous to assign to Dada Jewish humour as its main creative engine. Crohmălniceanu (2001), p.51.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.52.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.53.

²⁰ In his analysis of Jewish artists, Crohmălniceanu does not shy away from discussing Jewish stereotypes by including himself as a Jew in the conversation; see, for instance, *Ibid.*, p.53: ‘noi, evreii, suntem vechi specialisti’ (us, the Jews, are old specialists).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.54.

instead of treating all Jewish experiences as one. Furthermore, it does not consider the Jewish culture as a whole but rather looks at the Romanian Jewish culture as an independent culture amidst other European Jewish cultures, having as background religious Judaic traditions but differing from other European Jewish cultures, in the same way that Romanian Jews differed from other European Jews. Finally, it regards as a particular source of knowledge for Tzara's and Janco's multilayered identities the relationship they had with 'the racialized construction of the Jews which modernity bequeathed cantered as much around their irreducible otherness as their inferiority'²² by the antisemitic circles of the time.

The special affinity between European Jews and the avant-garde cannot be denied and without any doubt this relationship was extremely complex. Here are sketched some key scholarly approaches that have attempted to explain this relationship. The Russian-born American historian Yuri Slezkine in his book *The Jewish century*, identifies the Jews with the forces that were molding the modern world.²³ Slezkine associates modern literature with the Jews in its preoccupations because modernity meant being literate, articulate, and intellectually intricate. In chapter two of his book, Slezkine, in order to build his argument about the Jewish successes in the modern life, quotes a prominent Jewish historian and folklorist, Joseph Jacobs, although Slezkine does not necessarily agree with his theory of a high intellectual ability of the Jews. Jacobs, interested in his turn in the relationship between Jews and modernity, attributed Jews' success at the turn of the twentieth century to their special genetic heredity:

There is a certain probability that a determinate number of Jews at the present time will produce a larger number of 'geniuses' (whether inventive or not, I will not say) than any equal number of men of other races.²⁴

The idea of an ancestral genetic genius of the Jews appears to be the main connection between this ethnicity and the innovations of the avant-garde in this theory. Some of the arguments in favour of it were brought also by Werner Sombart, who considered that Jews benefit from: "a commercial genius due an ancestral education. [...] they favour the economic development of countries and cities in which they live."²⁵ The

²² In Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (eds.), *The Jew in the text: Modernity and the construction of identity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995), p.23.

²³ See Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp.52-60.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.53.

²⁵ Werner Sombart, *Le juifs et la vie économique* (Paris: Editions Saint-Rémi, 1923), p.10, in *Comunitatea evreilor din Oltenița*, ed. by T. Stefan (Oltenița: Tridona, 2012): '[...] geniul comercial datorat

‘Jewish genius’, perhaps a better formulation than Crohmălniceanu’s ‘Semitic spirit’, stems, according to Sombart, from perennial nomadism. This ‘miraculous gene theory’ seems to be preferred to any other when it comes to explaining the link between the overwhelming majority of Jewish artists among modernist movements. By contrast, this thesis argues that, in order to understand the relationship between the artists’ Jewishness and modernity, it must be observed against the background of the reality in which they lived.

As recent scholarship suggests, ‘Jews constantly predetermined and redefined their self-understanding as Jews through the very act of engagement with non-Jewish individuals and practices’.²⁶ In the Romanian case, the overwhelming presence of Jewish artists in modernist movements is explained solely as a reaction to exaggerated nationalism.²⁷ The visions of the nationalistic circles, as Ovidiu Morar²⁸ argues, conjured up and exaggerated the dehumanising effects of modernist concepts and began to have an increasing antisemitic content – the Jewish spirit being under attack and accused of exploitation and militarism; modernism and political subversion were seen by the nationalists as synonyms. Although Tzara and Janco’s families were fairly assimilated, speaking Romanian rather than Yiddish and not being observant of Judaism, the fact that they were Jews had had many implications for the two future avant-gardists. None of them was a Romanian citizen²⁹ because the state did not grant citizenship to any Jews except under specific circumstances,³⁰ nor were they allowed to attend free public schools, therefore attending private Jewish schools.³¹ Most important of all the implications was their arduous acceptance by the Romanian cultural and artistic fields, both branded as outsiders with limited or no right at all to interfere with the

unei educatii ancestrale [...] evreii favorizeaza dezvoltarea economica a tarilor si oraselor in care se stabilesc’ (translated by the author from the Romanian language).

²⁶ Klaus Hödl, as cited in Lisa Silverman, p.7. See also Klaus Hödl, ‘From acculturation to interaction: A new perspective on the history of the Jews in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna’, *Shofar: An interdisciplinary journal of Jewish studies*, 25(2) (2007), p.82-103. In his article, Hödl departs from the thesis that the relationship between Jews and non-Jews cannot be described adequately by terms such as acculturation but rather by the interactive processes between them.

²⁷ See, Morar, p.4. See also, Crohmalniceanu.

²⁸ Morar, p.4.

²⁹ Tzara’s birth certificate reads ‘Israelite nationality’ (*Directia Judeteana a Arhivelor Nationale, Starea Civila Moinesti*, 2, 1896, fila 30). Marcel Janco applied for naturalisation in 1923; see ‘Request for Naturalization’ in Stern, in Gelber and Sjoberg (eds.), *Jewish aspects in avant-garde*, p.44.

³⁰ The realities of the Romanian socio-political context and its implications for Romanian Jews are discussed extensively in the subchapter *Antisemitism and Jewish reality in the Kingdom of Romania* in the present chapter.

³¹ For an account on Tzara’s school years enrolled at a Jewish school in Moinesti, see Marius Hentea, p.16. Janco’s family initially enrolled the Janco brothers in a Jewish school but, eventually, secular teaching was preferred to the traditional option; see Stern, p.37.

Romanian culture since ‘eliminating the Jews from the cultural domain [...] [was] an existential problem for [Romanians]’.³² Refusing Jews’ participation at the creation of Romanian culture was based, among other things, on an antisemitic myth that ‘Romanian Jews had as [an] essential characteristic the lack of knowledge of Romanian language’.³³ The idea of the alleged ignorance of Jews in terms of the Romanian language circulated even in the case of Tristan Tzara,³⁴ who was accused of not speaking Romanian by the time he left Romania – an accusation that was nonetheless not true, as the archival sources on his education consulted by this research denote.³⁵

This research reveals that instead of aiming at acculturation into the Romanian society, Tzara’s and Janco’s modernist activities contributed actually to emphasise their difference from mainstream Romanian society, which led, paradoxically, to strengthening their position as marginal figures and shaped their quasi-Jewish identity. As Lisa Silverman argues, those Jews who went out of their way to avoid being explicitly associated with being Jews were the ones that most sharply revealed the invisible boundary separating the ‘Jewish’ from the ‘non-Jewish’.³⁶

The present thesis argues that their ‘Jewish experiences’ created different anxieties of being Jewish: for Tzara, it translated into attempts at escaping it while for Janco the antisemitic reactions made him militantly Jewish, later Zionist even – both cases inheriting some sort of Jewishness to which they reacted.³⁷ In other words, this research makes Jewish self-identification the ontological foundation of their Jewish experience. The originality of this research is that these two artists will be studied together, as Romanian Jews, and their independent Jewish experiences are regarded first separately, in their individual familial context, and after as a communal experience during their artistic interactions. This will help draw the conclusion that although their Jewish origin was not necessarily a central issue for research for a long period of time, an examination of their Jewish experience (as in the present thesis) reveals how growing up as Romanian Jews left a significant mark on their sociocultural experience

³² A.C. Cuza, *Nationalitatea in arta: Principii, fapte, concluzii: Introducere la doctrina nationalistă-creștină* (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 1927): ‘Eliminarea jidanilor din domeniul culturii – e o problema de existență pentru noi’.

³³ Nicolae Rosu, *Orientări în veac* (Bucharest: Ed. Cugetarea, 1937), p.216: ‘Pentru că necunoașterea limbii românești este esențială evreilor’.

³⁴ See Rosu, p.76. Rosu accuses him of barely speaking Romanian.

³⁵ See, for instance, Tzara’s early poems written entirely in Romanian, his contributions in *Simbolul*, and *Chemarea*, but also his correspondence with his family.

³⁶ Silverman, p.8. Silverman talks about the avoidance of some Jews of any manifestations that could reveal any Jewish differences in their life and work, those being the ones who, paradoxically, revealed their Jewish heritage more than those who were not trying to suppress it.

³⁷ Milly Heyd argues that Tzara even had a kind of hidden Jewish agenda. See Heyd, (2010).

and their artistic one, with both experiences being inextricably intertwined. This study will finally show how their experiences, each having its own level of Jewish self-identification, can emphasise how their inherited Jewishness affected the way they both created and received culture.

Starting from the Romanian cultural particularities of the period and its infatuation, at times obsession, with the French culture, and focusing on the existent socio-cultural circumstance of the Romanian Jews, this research will analyse whether these overlapping elements created a cultural paradox. This thesis suggests that, in a sense, the spiritual patronage of the French culture over the Romanian one represented on some level the reason behind Tzara's and Janco's involvement in modernism. While many of Romanian Jews sought acculturation into Romanian society, obsessed with finding its own national specificity as reflected in many domains, a small but crucial group of Romanian Jews (and other ethnic minority groups) became deeply committed to fostering French modernism. It argues that because of the Romanian obsession with French culture some Romanian Jews supported French modernism at a time when, as other scholars put it, the main goal of the Jews in Romania was to assimilate into the mainstream of Romanian society and culture.³⁸ This claim is further strengthened by the Israeli-French historian Carol Iancu, who argues that the Romanian Jews wishing for assimilation looked for a long time towards France and towards French Judaism, perceiving the French concept of human rights and emancipation *à la française* as a role model and as a quasi-mimetic reference.³⁹ This came under the influence of the new Romanian cultural sphere, which 'championed the importance of French stylistic models [...] even if the prototypes were poorly understood and awkwardly adapted', in this way creating an illusion of not being isolated from the European civilisation, as will be explored later in this chapter.⁴⁰

As mentioned, an important part of this research examines how central their Jewish self-perception was while still in Romania, a country where the Jews were seen from a populist stereotype point of view based on religious tradition. This specific part of the investigation focuses on a close reading of the articles produced for the journals

³⁸ See, for instance, Carol Iancu, *Emanciparea Evreilor din Romania (1913-1919)* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1998); see also S.A. Mansbach, 'The "Foreignness" of classical modern art in Romania', *Art Bulletin*, 80(3) (1988), pp.534-554.

³⁹ See Iancu, (1998), p.16.

⁴⁰ Mansbach, p.534.

Simbolul and *Chemarea* in search of any reproductions of the ethnic and social hierarchies of that time by elaborating on the stereotype of the degraded Jewish minority and other elements enhancing their marginalisation.

The cases of Tzara and Janco, the most important avant-garde figures in Romania and of great significance to European modernism, represent a crucial aspect of the Romanian Jewish contribution to the definition and dissemination of radical art ideologies, such as *Dada*. The question of their Jewish heritage is treated very carefully in what follows because none of the two ‘participate as Jews’⁴¹ but as integral partners. What this research suggests is that their Jewish upper-middle class upbringing, a class that exhibited aspirations to European cosmopolitanism, in combination with the feeling of marginalisation created by the antisemitic attitudes of that time, resulted in a sort of multilayered identity.

Placing the focus on these two Romanian-born artists of Jewish heritage, it is not aleatory, nor solely based on their international fame. Of course, the fact that they both gained international notoriety initially through their *Dada* endeavours in Zurich helps. The reason, perhaps not very spectacular, lies in the fact that they were both Romanian Jews, part of the historical avant-garde, that their familial background was apparently similar but was, in reality, extremely different, and that their Jewish experiences led them to very different reactions towards their Jewishness. Simply said, by casting light on the misunderstood history of Jewishness, wrongly assumed to be homogeneous, this research shows how important it is to differentiate when defining any *Jewish identity*.

The above-mentioned reasons are all valid, sometimes disregarded by researchers because they are expected to have been already analysed or perhaps because they were considered irrelevant in the study of their art. A final remark on the reason behind choosing these two specific case studies is necessary: even if the main protagonists of this research are Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, it is neither a biography nor a study of their entire oeuvre.

The conclusion of this research is that their status of the *other*, although identical in both their cases from the socio-political perspective, played a completely different role in their self-perception and quite a pivotal one, especially in their artistic activities. The lack of engagement with Jewishness in his artistic endeavours is what

⁴¹ Steven E. Aschheim, ‘The avant-garde and the Jews’, in *Jewish aspects in Avant-Garde. Between Rebellion and Revelation*, ed. by Mark H. Gilber and Sami Sjöberg (De Gruyter: 2017), p.256.

signals Tzara's preoccupation with his Jewish heritage and the anxiety that accompanied it at the historical moment it the avant-gardist produces it. This conclusion stands in strong agreement with other scholars, like Darcy Buerkle⁴² and Lisa Silverman,⁴³ who suggest that the absence of explicit manifestations of Jewish elements in Tzara's and Janco's work signals a preoccupation with the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish. This 'elaborated circumscribed absence', to use Buerkle's terminology, signals the centrality of the Jews as outsiders in their own self-definition. Furthermore, both Tzara and Janco, being consciously aware of their Jewishness and otherness, chose to react to these realities extremely differently: to ignore it and hide it, as Tzara did, or to reinforce the position of the other, developing a process of cultural self-assertion, as was the case with Marcel Janco. This demonstrates, in the words of Zvi Gitelman, that Jewish identity can be either positive or negative, Jewishness being linked to 'the subjective feeling of belonging to a group'.⁴⁴ In this sense, following Gitelman's theory, the two distinct cases of Tzara and Janco demonstrate that Jewish identity can be forced on one because of an encounter with antisemitism or it can be experienced because of pride in Jewish culture and accomplishment, leading to an open awareness of one's Jewishness.

The present thesis contradicts the idea that argues that although Jewish contributions to Romanian culture were interpreted by many to be the equivalent of a 'foreign inopportune infiltration'⁴⁵ into the Romanian nation, the Jewishness of the avant-garde artists played virtually no role in their self-perception and artistic endeavours.⁴⁶ This sort of argument is built on the idea that ethnic art does not necessarily exist. At

⁴² See Darcy Buerkle, 'Caught in the Act', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 8(1) (2009), pp.83-102. Buerkle, referring to the case of Norbert Elias and his work, argues that 'by not appearing so clearly as Jewishness, but as an elaborately circumscribed absence', Elias engages with the question of Jewishness more often than previously thought.

⁴³ Silverman (2012) continues Buerkle's and Steinberg's ideas by arguing that the sense of an ideal Austrian culture was often most apparent in the culture created by those who felt it most lacking in their own self-definitions, and whose cultural products reflect an engagement with that absence.

⁴⁴ Zvi Gitelman, M. Glants, and M.I. Goldman (eds.), *Jewish life after the USSR* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), p.54.

⁴⁵ Octavian Goga, *Mustul care fierbe* (Bucharest: Imprimeria Statului, 1927). This syntagma was first used in Goga's article published in *Tara Noastra*, 50, 16 December 1923. On how Jewish contributions were seen as a foreign invasion, see also 'Insemnari privitoare la istoria culturii ronânesti' (Notes regarding the history of Romanian culture), *Convorbiri literare*, 44 (1910), p.1.

⁴⁶ Alfred Bodenheimer points to the fact that, for many years, the Jewish origin of many avant-gardists was not a central issue for research since it was believed that neither the artists nor their entourages seemed to emphasise it; nor did it become visible in their texts and performances at the time. For more on this, see Alfred Bodenheimer, 'Dada Judaism: The avant-garde in First World War Zurich', in *Jewish aspects in Avant-Garde*, pp.23-33.

times it is argued that there was nothing specifically Jewish about the commitment of European Jews to cultural modernism in general and to art in particular. The groundbreaking and influential study by Carl Schorske denied the significance of the Jewish backgrounds of the creators of or the audience for European modernism. Schorske considers that modernism forced upon the individual, due to its historical change, a search for a new identity and at the same time forced entire social groups the task of revising or replacing defunct social belief systems.⁴⁷ Consequently, ‘the consciousness of swift changes in history-as-present weakens the authority of history as relevant past’.⁴⁸ Schorske goes further with his claim arguing that the lack of significance of Jewish background in European modernism made even Theodor Herzl’s Judaism to ‘amount to little more than [...] *un pieux souvenir de famille*’.⁴⁹

The idea of an ethnic art is confronted also by Meyer Schapiro,⁵⁰ a Jewish art historian, who argues that there is absolutely no connection between one’s race or ethnicity and the art one produces, and that art is not essentially rooted in the ethnic identity. Schapiro denied the biological uniqueness of art style – be it Jewish, French or German – and regarded the tendency of Jewish artists to cultivate a Jewish art as irrelevant since, in his vision, there was no essential Jewish character to be cultivated. For him, the Jewish style was non-existent since the Jews adopted the style of the nationals amongst which they were living for centuries:

The way in which the specific local conditions affect the alleged racial character in art is evident in the art produced by the Jews. The Hebrew ornamental manuscripts of the Middle Ages are usually in the style of the region where they were produced. In Paris, they are Parisians, in Rhineland are Rhenish, in Venice are Venetians. Even the Hebrew writing is affected by the culture of the country.⁵¹

With such conceptual premises, Schapiro took a very clear stance against the idea of ethnic art. He argued that shared history conditions matter more in the definition of

⁴⁷ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.147.

⁵⁰ Meyer Schapiro, ‘Race, nation et art’ (Race, nationality and art), (1936), trans. Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, *Les Cahiers du Mnam*, Paris, 93 (2005).

⁵¹ Schapiro, p.107: ‘La maniere dont les conditions locales spécifiques affectent le prétendu caractère racial en art ressort clairement dans l’art produit par les Juifs. Les manuscrits ornementés hébraïques du Moyen Âge sont généralement dans le style de la région où ils ont été produits. A Paris ils sont parisiens, en Rhénanie rhénans, à Venise vénitiens. Même l’écriture hébraïque est affectée par la culture du pays’.

art and that attributing style to Jews is illogical since it would be possible to impute to them any style of modern art. Nonetheless, Schapiro's views contradict the Romanian intellectuals of that time who saw the avant-garde ethnically linked to the Jews,⁵² solely capable of such anti-traditional art. The present research constructs its argument around the idea that Romanian Jews were in an impossible situation in terms of assimilating to the Romanian culture because of the antisemitic rhetoric of that time, but, on the other hand, due to the shared historical conditions they were Romanian Jews and not simply Jews. Therefore, Tzara and Janco are not seen as European Jews but as Romanian Jews and their art represents a contrast that emerges when Jews and non-Jews are viewed as two groups mutually influencing each other through processes of cultural exchange and societal interaction. In its analysis of the very nature of identity, this study questions not only the content of their works but also the very nature of their personas; therefore, the examination of their Jewishness implies the existence of a predetermined national identity, which they could reject or accept. Thereafter, this research does not argue the existence of an ethnic Jewish art traceable in the works of Tzara and Janco, but how their Romanian Jewish experiences helped them conceive their artistic personas responsible for their artistic productions.

This thesis engages with the question of Tzara's and Janco's Jewish identity with the help of the concept of *becoming* as discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.⁵³ In their work, Deleuze and Guattari develop a multitude of theories with the help of their concept of *becoming*, amongst which are *becoming-intense*, *becoming-imperceptible* of life and language; furthermore, Deleuze and Guattari also engage with the question of Jewish identity as *becoming-Jewish*. Deleuze and Guattari see becoming as a metaphysical experience born due to the proximity between things, a metamorphosis that, however, does not imply a change of identity that would alter the entity metamorphosing to such an extent that would render it impossible to recognise because of the metamorphosis experienced. It is exactly this similarity of the insights of Deleuzoguattarian thought combined with Dada's nonsense and error that allowed the present thesis to explore Tzara's and Janco's ideas with the help of particular technical terms of Deleuze and Guattari.

⁵² There is a significant number of accounts stressing the ethical element of the Romanian avant-garde. See, for instance, George Calinescu, *Principii de estetica* (Bucuresti, 1968); see also Rosu (1937).

⁵³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia* (London: Continuum, 2004).

This thesis also employs Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of majoritarian and minoritarian in relation to Tzara and Janco. Becoming-minoritarian occupies a central place in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. Relying on the writings of Claire Colebrook,⁵⁴ Paul Ardoin, and S.E. Gontarski,⁵⁵ S.E. Wilmer and Audronė Žukauskaitė⁵⁶ and others⁵⁷ has proven to be crucial for the understanding of the Deleuzoguattarian concepts. Colebrook explains that 'a majoritarian mode presents the opposition as already given and based on a privileged and original term'.⁵⁸ Simply said, majority implies a series of dominant features that makes it recognisable, a standard in the universe: 'A majoritarian identity has established its extended unit of measure.'⁵⁹ Of course, the distinction between minorities and majorities is not a numerical one; rather, it is based on types of quantity.

Deleuze and Guattari understand as majoritarian the concept of *man*. For them, man is a majoritarian term that has different variations – cultural, racial and so on – but is also a criterion that excludes those who do not fulfil the set of characteristics specific of *man* — strength, dominance, morality, rationality and so on. The number of men is irrelevant because, from the Deleuzoguattarian perspective, as long as everyone knows what 'man' is, adding members to the group of 'humans' will not alter what the group is. There is no becoming-man because man is majoritarian *par excellence*. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe woman or becoming-woman as minoritarian not based on a numerical point of view but because there is no standard for the term woman since the only norm is man. By acknowledging that there is a possibility of becoming-woman it is acknowledged that man is not the sole element defining human life. Even more, Alain Beaulieu argues that for Deleuze and Guattari all becomings have to pass through a becoming-woman, although this point of view is relatively enigmatic stated through their philosophy.⁶⁰ Applied to the cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, the concept of becoming points out that since Tzara and Janco are men, they are included in humanity but because they are also Jews,

⁵⁴ Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London and New York: Routledge Critical Thinkers, 2002), ch.6.

⁵⁵ Paul Ardoin, S.E. Gontarski, and Laci Mattison (eds.), *Understanding Deleuze, Understanding Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁵⁶ S.E. Wilmer and Audronė Žukauskaitė (eds.), *Resisting biopolitics: Philosophical, political and performative strategies* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁵⁷ See, for instance, Manuel DeLanda *Intensive science & virtual philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2002); see also Richard Pringle and Dillon Landi, 'Re-reading Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*', *Annals of Leisure Research*, 20(1) (2017), p.117-122. For more titles, see footnote 7.

⁵⁸ Colebrook, p.104.

⁵⁹ Colebrook, p.117.

⁶⁰ Alain Beaulieu, 'The status of animality in Deleuze's thought', *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* 9(1/2) (2011), p.76.

humanity needs to recognise them as equal, in the same way that it has to include women, blacks and so on. Consequently, this thesis discusses also the concept of *minor literature* in relation to Tzara's and Janco's productions in *Simbolul*, as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.⁶¹ In regard to the concept of minor literature and *Simbolul*, there are some elements that remain necessary interrelated, as is discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

Another theoretical framework utilised by this thesis to discuss Tzara's and Janco's multilayered identity is provided by Hannah Arendt's concepts of *pariah*, *parvenu* and *conscious pariah* as discussed in her essay *The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition* (April 1944).⁶² Applying Arendt's typologies to Tzara and Janco reveals a series of interesting aspects, shared similarities at times, as well as various elements of the *pariah* identity that are manifest differently in Tzara's and Janco's cases. The *pariah* Jew, who had abandoned Jewish practices or community entirely and was marginalised in the majority culture, revolutionised desperate cultural arenas; nevertheless, connections can be drawn between isolated figures over time, such as Arendt's examples, since 'for over a hundred years the same basic condition have obtained and evoked the same basic reaction'.⁶³ In Arendt's vision, the Jews had no choice about their outsider status, and, as a consequence, their only option was either to become social-climbing *parvenus* by submerging their Jewishness in exchange for the social acceptance of the majority or *conscious pariahs*, participants in a proud, subterranean form of modern Jewish experience. The above-mentioned concepts are part of Arendt's inquiries into Jews' place in societies and represent two contradicting ideal-types of Jews. Seen as reflections upon the efforts of integration of the Jew into modern history, these concepts become fundamental in the analysis of modernity as they provide a theoretical framework for delving into the attitudes and behaviour of Tzara and Janco in the Jewish context.

Arendt's concepts of *pariah*, *parvenu* and *conscious pariah* encapsulate Tzara's and Janco's attitudes towards their Jewishness, closely connected to strands in their work, and also their choice to create mystical, parallel Utopias instead of engaging

⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a minor literature*, trans. by Dana Polan, foreword by Réda Bensmaï'a (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) – referred to in this chapter as *Kafka*.

⁶² Hannah Arendt, ed. by Ron Feldman, *The Jew as pariah: Jewish identity and politics in the modern age* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1978).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.68.

with political action during their early years. In order to make Arendt's examples relevant to Tzara and Janco's cases, this thesis looks at Arendt's historical examples – Heine, Lazare, Chaplin and Kafka – reading that provides this research with a platform to discuss the categories of Jewish self-perception in relation to Tzara's and Janco's cases, as proposed by Arendt. By using her classification, this chapter aspires to determine the role that Tzara and Janco claimed for themselves in regard to their status of Jews in Romania and later in Zurich.



1. Literature Review and Biographical Background

There are various studies on both Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco and on the topic of their artistic endeavours, which have received significant attention over the years. In Tristan Tzara's case, the bibliography is impressive, including the monumental work *Œuvres complètes*,⁶⁴ starting with René Lacôte,⁶⁵ who begins her book with the Zurich years, and including François Buot⁶⁶ and his biography on Tzara, and then on to the monumental work of Henri Béhar⁶⁷ – work carried out in the very same office of his subject, as Behar confesses in his 2005 book⁶⁸ – and, most recently, Marius Hentea and his very well documented *TaTa Dada* (2014).⁶⁹ The entire biographical material consulted while preparing this thesis, from newspaper articles and reviews, to general studies and volumes dedicated to Tzara's personality, is deliberately not

⁶⁴ Tristan Tzara, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Henri Béhar, 6 vols. (Paris: Flammarion, 1975-1991), tome 1, p.110. Hereafter *Œuvres complètes* is cited as *OC*.

⁶⁵ Tristan Tzara. Presentation by René Lacôte. *Choix de textes, bibliographie, dessins, portraits, fac-similé, poèmes inédits* (Paris: Pierre Seghers, collection *Poètes d'aujourd'hui*, n°32, 1952). This is the first book ever published on Tristan Tzara and it lacks any reference to his pre-Zurich life.

⁶⁶ François Buot, *Tristan Tzara. L'homme qui inventa la révolution Dada* (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 2002). Buot presents a very well-documented biography focusing on the various social and artistic environments surrounding Tzara; the focus on his early life is obscured, as Buot mentions, by the difficulty in finding information on Tzara's youth.

⁶⁷ The monumental work of Henri Behar on Tzara is part of the general biography of the avant-gardists. The documentary material used by the present research contains: Tristan Tzara, *OC*, texte établi, présenté et annoté, Tomes 1975-1991 (Paris: Flammarion); Tristan Tzara, *Grains et issues*, chronologie, préface, notes et dossier établis par Henri Behar (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1981); *Catalog Dada* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2005); *Tristan Tzara*, collection 'Les Roumains de Paris' (Paris: Oxus, 2005).

⁶⁸ Tristan Tzara, *Les Roumains de Paris* (Paris: Oxus, 2005), Prologue: 'J'ai longtemps travaillé dans le bureau, plus exactement au bureau de Tristan Tzara, 5 rue de Lille, peu après sa mort'.

⁶⁹ Marius Hentea, *TaTa Dada: The real life and celestial adventures of Tristan Tzara* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014). This is the second biography of Tzara to be published following the one by François Buot. Hentea focuses on thoroughly documenting Tzara's childhood and adolescence, with a special interest in his poetry.

mentioned at this point in order to not generate too long a text in the introduction, as it will be specified throughout the chapters.

While the works dedicated to the life and work of Tristan Tzara reflect the popularity and interest manifested by the world in his persona, having countless reviews, articles and books studying him and his works, at the other end of the spectrum is Marcel Janco, overshadowed by the companion of his youth. This is not to say that he or his work are less interesting than Tzara and his work, but perhaps their different career paths placed one in a more focal point, scholarly wise, than the other. A plausible explanation for Janco's partial obscurity in Western European scholarship might be due to Janco's return to Bucharest combined with his less radical attitude post-Zurich. His change of perspective happened because of his commitment to constructivism, as Alexandru Beldiman notes in the preface of *Marcel Janco's Centenary* (1997), 'one of the most striking features of his character was his constructivist spirit'.⁷⁰ According to Beldiman, this feature 'drew him closer to the Bauhaus positivism rather than to the nihilism of the [Dada] movement' and it is for this reason that his contribution to Dada seems to be overlooked by researchers.⁷¹ In terms of his return to Bucharest, it was not necessarily only the geographical location that placed him in a less focal position amongst the European avant-gardists but also his work carried out in Romanian and later in Hebrew. These languages were less accessible to the greater public, combined with the Communist takeover in 1947, which rejected any study of the Romanian avant-garde for over sixty years. Janco was engaged from 1922 until 1941 in many varieties of artistic activity from journalism, as an editor of *Contimporanul*, a platform for the Romanian avant-garde, to painting and contemporary architecture until his emigration to British Palestine in 1941.⁷²

Of course, there are important publications on Janco such as *Marcel Janco's Centenary* (1997), an extensive catalogue in the field of Romanian modern art, Luminita Machedon's and Ernie Schoffham's *Romanian Modernism: The Architecture of Bucharest, 1920-1940* (1999), which charts a complex map of Romanian modernism with a focus on Marcel Janco and Horia Creangă. There are two very well-documented studies that portrays Janco's less known side as an architect, painter and planner. First is by the Romanian researcher Geo Șerban and it is titled *Întâlniri cu Marcel*

⁷⁰ *Centenar Marcel Iancu: Architect, artist plastic, theoretician* (Bucharest: Muzeul Național de Artă, 1997), Preface.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Glenda Abramson, *Encyclopedia of modern Jewish culture* (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), p.429.

Iancu (Meeting with Marcel Iancu)⁷³, study offered invaluable information to this thesis, and the second one, edited by Shmuel Yavin, is called *Marcel Janco: Interdisciplinary Artist* (2005). There is one study on Marcel Janco, cited by Sandqvist, authored by the German scholar Harry Seiwert⁷⁴ and published in 1993 in German, which has not been consulted in original by the present research due to linguistic barriers; references to his work will be made only as cited by other sources published in English or Romanian.

On the topic of Jewishness as portrayed by the contributors to the European culture and on modern Jewish identities, there is scholarship relevant for this research due to their main concern with the construction of ethnic identity and otherness. Amongst many others, the anthology of several contributors edited by Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb develops the analysis of the ambiguous relationship between Jewish identity and visual representation during the modernist era, arguing that the representation of the Jew in art contributed to the alienation of Jews and their Jewish identity.⁷⁵ The present research contributes to this view by arguing that the antisemitic representations of Romanian society disempowered the Romanian Jews, forcing them to define their Jewishness according to antisemitic reactions. By carefully considering the particular context in which they were active, their background and individual differences in personal beliefs, this research is concerned, to use Baigell's and Heyd's terms, with 'Jewish experiences' rather than with specific Jewish characteristics in their art.⁷⁶

In terms of the information on the presence of Jewish artists in Europe and their identity, the studies of Richard I. Cohen⁷⁷ and Catherine M. Soussloff⁷⁸ constitute a significant source of information. Soussloff is the author of a remarkable anthology on the role played by artists' Jewishness in art-historical discourse in *fin de siècle* Europe, while Cohen approaches the question of Jewish involvement with art as Jewish artists dealing with Jewish themes. Margaret Olin has also written a study based on the Jewish artists who tried to overcome the myths regarding the stigma of

⁷³ Geo Șerban, *Întâlniri cu Marcel Iancu* (Meeting with Marcel Iancu) (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2012).

⁷⁴ Harry Seiwert, *Marcel Janco: Dadaist, zeitgenosse, wohltemperierter morgenländischer Konstruktivist* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1993).

⁷⁵ Linda Nochlin and Tamar Garb (eds.).

⁷⁶ Baigell and Heyd (2001).

⁷⁷ Richard I. Cohen, *Jewish icons: Art and society in modern Europe* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

⁷⁸ Catherine M. Soussloff (ed.), *Jewish identity in modern art history* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

the Jews.⁷⁹ Furthermore, Olin's contribution in Soussloff's study, *Jewish Identity in Modern Art History*, demonstrates how "nationalism imbued art history with pattern of aims and categories it shared with modern antisemitism."⁸⁰ The point she makes, although referring to the German case, makes an important contribution to the development of this thesis' argument in regards to the cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, because Olin's perspective helps avoid the error of identifying Tzara and Janco with a fixed idea of Jewishness:

[if] one thinks of actions rather than being, of narrative positions rather than ontology, then a work of art can speak in several narrative voices. The question of whether it is Jewish art becomes meaningless, since to say something is Jewish is not the same as saying that it may speak "Jewish" at any given moment or for a given historical listener.⁸¹

This perspective allows this thesis to place Tzara's and Janco's identities amongst those of Europe as a whole in the first decades of the twentieth century and see them as intellectuals "speaking" Jewish, at the most, through their artistic productions. However, "speaking" Jewish does not imply addressing Jewish themes in their works where the spiritual Jewish Orthodox family is placed at the center of the discussion, but it can be constituted by the whole idea of distancing themselves from the practicing Jews and therefore operating at a distance from those beliefs and practices associated with Judaism. Furthermore, Olin argues that nationalist identities need others to set against themselves. She gives the example of Germanness, which was synonymous with spiritual Christianity and played a fundamental role in defining the German character in art for the German culture was integrated into modern European Christianity. In short, linking religion and art was a strong interpretive paradigm at the beginning of the twentieth century and therefore, as it is later discussed in this thesis, Tzara's and Janco's ethnic heritage became the main link between them and the avant-garde movement in the eyes of the Romanian nationalists.

⁷⁹ Margaret Olin, *The nation without art: Examining modern discourses on Jewish art* (Lincoln, NE, London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

⁸⁰ Margaret Olin, 'From Beza'el to Max Liebermann: Jewish art in nineteenth century art historical texts', in Soussloff, p. 20.

⁸¹ Olin, p.33.

Without going into much detail, it is necessary to mention the study of Sander Gilman, *Jewish Self-Hatred*,⁸² wherein he investigates whether the stereotypical images of the Jews as other and their marginalised position in society brought any contribution to the shaping of Jewish identity and whether it impacted their Jewish self-identification. He argues that the Jews react to the world by altering their sense of identity in such manner in which they become ‘what the group labeling them as Other has determined them to be’.⁸³

Peter Gay’s *Freud, Jews and other Germans: masters and victims in modernist culture*, is another significant book that challenges the established idea of Jewish modern Germany by rejecting the view that Jews made a distinct contribution, as Jews, to the German culture.⁸⁴ He describes Modernism as a “cumulus” of elements amongst which alienation, the feeling of marginalization and assimilation which he sees as being more positive than previously acknowledged. The most important idea of Gay’s for this thesis is that of the attitude of the German Jews towards immigrants from Eastern Europe. This corresponds exactly to Tzara and Janco’s experiences in Western Europe, which also included encounters with antisemitic reactions from their fellow avant-gardists, some of them Jews. For Gay, the antisemitic reactions of the German Jews against other Jews are the most evident proof of the depth of Jewish commitment to Germany.⁸⁵ Gay’s work complements this thesis’s engagement with Hannah Arendt’s philosophy, especially on assimilation and the discussion on Jews seen as pariah. Gay as well talks of exceptions amongst Jews, but for him there is no half-way as in the case of Arendt’s conscious parvenu. For Gay there can be either an active Jewish participation in culture or none at all. By challenging the idea that Jews contributed to the cultures amongst they were living as Jews rather than as simple citizens, Gay allows this thesis to imagine Tzara’s and Janco’s artistic productions without the stigma of their Jewish roots.

Paul Mendes-Flohr’s work discusses in depth the topic of self-hatred as a particular characteristic of the Jewish intellectual.⁸⁶ This contributes to this thesis’s argument that a perception of the Jewish intellectual as one who, in the realm of ideas,

⁸² Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish self-hatred: Antisemitism and the hidden language of the Jews* (Baltimore, ML: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). He describes the ways in which Jews have understood and, as a consequence, projected the stereotyped notion of otherness applied to them.

⁸³ *Ibid*, p.12.

⁸⁴ Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews and other Germans: Masters and victims in modernist culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁸⁵ Gay, pp.190-214. He develops this idea in relation to the case study of the conductor Herman Levi.

⁸⁶ Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Divided passions: Jewish intellectuals and the experience of modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991).

assumes a particular moral posture based on a quasi-theological category *Jewish*, might lead to the mystification of the whole concept of Jewish intellectual rather than providing a clearer view. Mendes-Flohr's work, although not discussing Janco directly, provides a clearer view on how to approach Marcel Janco's case, a Jewish intellectual for whom "Judaism and Jewishness remain a source of pride and a silent dimension of [his] lives marking a meaningful spiritual, cultural and ethnic affiliation."⁸⁷ Furthermore, Mendes-Flohr's work joins this thesis' analysis of Tzara's and Janco's identity with the help of Arendt's typologies by offering new interpretations to modern Jewish experience and the manner in which the Jews who adopted cultural Zionism, as Janco did, can be discussed.

Still on the topic of Jewish intellectuals, Michael Löwy's *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish libertarian thought in Central Europe: a study in elective affinity* provided much needed support in understanding how identities, religious and ethnic, influenced literary production.⁸⁸ Löwy analyses how Jewish intellectuals' thinking was formed around the Jewish idea of *Tikkun*, a polysemic term for redemption, restoration, reparation, reformation and the recovery of lost harmony, where the restoration of the past is fused with the idea of creating a perfect future. Concomitantly, Löwy attempts to explain why many Central European intellectuals of Jewish origins were drawn towards utopian socialism with the help of the concept of elective affinity. He implies that there is a synergic relationship between meaningful structures within the context of social and historical conditions. Löwy's argument provides a base for this thesis's quest to demonstrate that Tzara's and Janco's identity formation is tightly linked to the transition of Romania to bourgeois industrial capitalism.

Löwy's work brings support to this thesis' claim that although in Eastern Europe there was no strong need for an intellectual riot in the early years of the twentieth century since the bourgeois industrial revolution was belated and therefore there was nothing to rebel against, intellectually speaking:

[if] the revolutionary Jew appeared in Central and Eastern Europe, this was principally due to the delay or failure of bourgeois revolutions -

⁸⁷ Mendes-Flohr, Introduction.

⁸⁸ Michael Löwy, *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish libertarian thought in Central Europe: a study in elective affinity*, trans. by Hope Heaney (London: Athlone Press, 1992).

and the lagging development of capitalism - in that part of the continent, which restricted the emancipation/assimilation of Jews and maintained their pariah condition.⁸⁹

The breeding ground for anarchist and socialist militants was a super-exploited proletariat, argues Löwy, where the intellectuals of Jewish origin were created, and it was for these reasons that they refused all nationalism, including that of a rather abstract Jewish nation. Instead, they opted in favor of “anarchism, anarcho syndicalism, or a romantic and libertarian interpretation of Marxism,” as later would be the case of Tzara and Communism and Janco and Zionism.⁹⁰

Avram Kampf's 'Chagall to Kitaj' further discusses the topic of Jewish participation in the historical and cultural formations in *Eastern Europe: Jewish Experience in 20th Century Art*.⁹¹ Kampf uses the expression “Jewish experience” in order to define a communal context, a social matrix to which the works he discusses originally belonged, while avoiding claiming the existence of a formal Jewish style in art. He begins the analysis of art by looking at the context which led to its appearance and examining relationships in twentieth century art by considering art and artists in the context of a potent culture, which is still undergoing vital transformation. Kampf's technique further substantiates this thesis's arguments and demonstrates once again that the idea of studying artists of Jewish origins from the perspective of the socio-political context of their lives, is not only productive but also necessary since it has largely been ignored by other critics. Kampf believes that a reluctance to recognize the importance of the Jewish experience on art, and more specifically twentieth century art, lies in a traditional tendency to study artists in terms of national experience rather than the socio-political context of their reality. Kampf's work is a well-needed endorsement in terms of methodology for this thesis. Kampf sees the political geography as inseparable from the Jewish experience of the Jewish artists, the same way the present thesis studies Tzara and Janco in relation to their Jewish experience which was inseparable from the quest for political emancipation and cultural autonomy.

The topic of Diaspora Jewish intellectuals in quest of status, prestige, admiration and glory for themselves is tackled also in John Murray Cuddihy's, *The ordeal of*

⁸⁹ Löwy, p.40.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, p.38.

⁹¹ Kampf, (1990)

civility: Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss, and the Jewish struggle with modernity.⁹² Cuddihy brings light to the idea that, for Jews, status-seeking is almost a group-enhancing endeavour as well as a personal quest as a result of the failure of Jewish emancipation. This idea supports the argument of this thesis that Tzara's and Janco's identity is constructed as a result of their quest to distance themselves from other Jews and Tzara's and Janco's failed emancipation and acceptance into Romanian society. Furthermore, Cuddihy argues that with Jewish secularization-modernization, Judaism as a religion became psychologized into Jewishness and this defined the direction of Judaism's secularization, its demedievalization into modernity⁹³. This argument supports this thesis's claim that in the early twentieth century Jewishness became synonymous with Judaism, and, as a consequence, secular Jews had no other option but *to relate* to the "Jewish problem" since both them and the religious Jews were classed as one. This was the case of Tzara and Janco, who could not escape their Jewishness, in the eyes of others, even if they wanted to.

On the presence of Jewish artists in the Romanian culture were the works of Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu⁹⁴ and Constantin Ciopraga,⁹⁵ whereas for a more specific analysis on the involvement of Jewish artists in the revolutionary imports of the avant-garde into Romanian culture, Matei Călinescu⁹⁶ and Marin Mincu⁹⁷ represented main sources. The monumental work of the literary critic George Călinescu⁹⁸ served as a guide throughout this thesis on many fronts since it is the most well-documented and complete history of Romanian literature from its origins to present day, analysing roughly all Romanian writers, and having a dedicated section on the Jewish literary presence in Romania. Furthermore, the works of Paul Cernat⁹⁹ and Marin Bucur¹⁰⁰ shed a necessary light, in a very comprehensive manner, on the history of the Romanian literary avant-garde, including a solid analysis of pre-modernist and modernist journals and reviews published in Romania.

⁹² John Murray Cuddihy, *The ordeal of civility: Freud, Marx, Lévi-Strauss, and the Jewish struggle with modernity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987, 1974).

⁹³ Cuddihy, p.5, footnote.

⁹⁴ Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale* (Romanian literature in the interwar period) (București: Editura Universalia, 2003).

⁹⁵ Constantin Ciopraga, *Literatura Română între 1900 și 1918* (Bucharest: Ed. Junimea, 1970).

⁹⁶ Matei Călinescu, *Five faces of modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987).

⁹⁷ Marin Mincu, *Avangarda literară românească* (Romanian Literary Avant-garde) (Bucharest: Ed. Minerva, 1983).

⁹⁸ Călinescu.

⁹⁹ Paul Cernat, *Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei: primul val* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2007).

¹⁰⁰ Marin Bucur, 'L'Ambiance littéraire du début roumain de Tristan Tzara', in *Cahiers roumains d'études littéraires*, 4(1) (1976), pp.28-36.

The present thesis discusses Crohmălniceanu's work so frequently throughout its chapters that a short introduction to him and his work is necessary to fully comprehend his contribution as a literary critic. Crohmălniceanu initially treated more questions of aesthetics and literary theory in his *Cronici si articole* (Chronicles and articles, 1953), such as *K. Marx, Exagerarea conștientă și problemele tipicului, în legătură cu comedia satirică* (K. Marx, Conscious exaggeration and typical problems in relation to the satirical comedy). He concerned himself around the 1960s and 1970s with the study of several very important Romanian figures such as the philosopher Lucian Blaga, which, with the exception of another Romanian literary critic, G. Călinescu, was an area quite unexplored, explaining what can be taken as expressionism in Blaga's work but also in the work of Ion Vinea, and many others. This was part of his PhD thesis titled *Literatura română și Expresionismul* (Romanian literature and Expressionism, 1971) in which he based his analysis on a series of fundamental works, especially German, such as Sokel's Raabe's and Steffen. While teaching history of contemporary Roman literature at the University of Bucharest, Crohmălniceanu published *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale* (Romanian literature between the two world wars, 1967, 1974, 1975). The Romanian literary critic Al Piru¹⁰¹ considers that this study has authority through its depth and probity, because Crohmălniceanu reads and rereads everything, makes comments with patience, and confronts opinions, old and new, in great detail. It is due to his credibility as a literary critic that Crohmălniceanu is used as a reference by the current research but also due to his interest in discussing Romanian-born Jewish writers.

The socio-economic and political context of the lives of Romanian Jews that contributed to their receptivity to modernism and later to avant-garde movements has received definitive treatment by Ovidiu Morar,¹⁰² Carol Iancu,¹⁰³ Leon Volovici¹⁰⁴ and Ezra Mendelsohn.¹⁰⁵ The problematic situation in the Kingdom of Romania is followed by these studies, some focusing on the governmental instability, economic malaise, and public atmosphere that characterised the Romanian society, including its

¹⁰¹ Al. Piru, *Istoria literaturii române de la început pînă azi* (The history of Romanian literature from the beginning to today) (Bucharest: Universe Press, 1981), pp.483-484, 536-537, 541.

¹⁰² Ovidiu Morar, *Scriitori evrei din Romania* (Bucharest: Ed. Ideea Europeana, 2006).

¹⁰³ Carol Iancu, *Les juifs en Roumanie, 1919-1938: De l'émancipation à la marginalisation* (Collection de la Revue des études juives) (French edition) (Paris-Leuven: Peeters, 1996).

¹⁰⁴ Leon Volovici, *Ideologia Nationalista si Problema Evreiasca in Romania Anilor 30* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1995).

¹⁰⁵ Ezra Mendelsohn, *The Jews of East Central Europe between the World Wars* (Bloomington, IN: University Press, 1983).

antisemitic outbursts, while others, such as Mendelsohn's, focus on the precarious condition of East Central Europe's Jews.

The present thesis maintains its interdisciplinary aspect throughout and looks at accounts that at times are overlooked due to their extreme antisemitic and far-right content. This is not to say that the present research agrees with any of their views but, in order to fulfil its scope of presenting a clear image on the context Tzara and Janco's lives, the works of Nae Ionescu and Nicolae Rosu have been consulted, together with those by A.C. Cuza.¹⁰⁶ It is important to specify that although some of these works are dated 1920 onwards, they are considered relevant to this thesis for a series of reasons, as follows. Although the print date exceeds the period of Tzara's and Janco's early lives, these accounts are based on an undercurrent of lore and superstition that, although it had nothing to do with social realities, was well-steeped in the peasants' mythological universe, as testified by the countless Romanian legends and folktales described or paraphrased in the above-mentioned books. It is also imperative to remember that the late development of print in Romanian provinces before the twentieth century makes quite difficult the discovery of other sources, written in Romanian, with the exception of those already consulted and referenced such as Eminescu's *Opere*, dealing with the topic of the Jewish presence in Romania prior to 1900.¹⁰⁷

For the particular cultural catalyst provided both in Romania as in Europe by the acculturation of the Jews and their interest in the avant-garde movements, the works of Crohmălniceanu,¹⁰⁸ Titu Maiorescu,¹⁰⁹ Ioana Vlasiu¹¹⁰ and S.A. Mansbach¹¹¹ have been consulted. Each provided a different insight on the cultural atmosphere in the region through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. On the one hand Vlasiu's study argues about the uniqueness of the Romanian cultural sphere and its preoccupation with creating an autochthonous Romanian style, while others, such as Mansbach, argue for the Romanian modern artists' interest in becoming representatives of French aesthetics.

¹⁰⁶ Nae Ionescu, *Roza Vanturilor* (Bucharest: Ed. Cultura Nationala, 1926); Nicolae Rosu, *Orientari in veac* (Bucharest: Ed. Cugetarea, 1937); Cuza.

¹⁰⁷ Mihai Eminescu, *Opere* (12), *Publicistică 1 ianuarie – 31 ianuarie 1881*, by Dimitrie Vatamaniuc, (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei R.S.R., 1985), p.389.

¹⁰⁸ Crohmălniceanu, (2001).

¹⁰⁹ Titu Maiorescu, *In contra directiei de astazi in cultura romana* (Against the contemporary direction in Romanian culture), in *Critice* (Bucharest: Ed. Librăriei Socecu & Comp, 1874).

¹¹⁰ Ioana Vlasiu, 'Bucharest', in Timothy O. Benson (ed.), *Central-European Avant-Gardes. Exchange and Transformation (1910-1930)* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press; Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2002).

¹¹¹ S.A. Mansbach, *Modern art in Eastern Europe: From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

As Carmen Popescu correctly notes, ‘few books about Romanian art have been published in languages other than Romanian and those that have appeared deal mainly with ancient and medieval art, stressing the country’s Roman heritage’.¹¹² In recent years, an interest has been manifest in the subject of Tristan Tzara’s and Marcel Janco’s Jewishness, beginning with the pioneering work by Tom Sandqvist, *Dada East: The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire*,¹¹³ wherein the author links the avant-garde movement in Romania to Jewish roots, more specifically the Jewish religion at large. He connects the Hasidic culture present in Eastern European shtetls, from where Tzara and many others originated, to modern art, seeing it as one of its main sources of inspiration. Sandqvist brings to light vital information on the context in which Tzara and Janco lived and created, seeking to explain the socio-political realities of the time in relation to their artistic personas. The present research builds on Sandqvist’s point on the importance of their Jewish experience in their art but, instead of seeing it as Tzara’s and Janco’s source of inspiration for their art by transforming something traditionally Jewish into abstract art, this research looks at their Jewish experience as a catalyst for transforming their ascribed identity into a multilayered one. Tristan Tzara’s and Marcel Janco’s diametrically opposed Jewish experiences show a specific paradox of European Jews where antisemitism and nationalistic movements led to different reactions within the same community in terms of self-identification.

The present thesis also draws on the works of Matthew Baigell and Milly Heyd¹¹⁴ in the field of Jewish art history, with a particular interest in what the two scholars understand by Jewish art and Jewish artist but also how they approach and deal with Jewish identity. Heyd is a pioneering scholar of Tristan Tzara, often noting the relative lack of attention paid to his Jewish heritage and the effect it had on his persona. In her *Tristan Tzara / Shmuel Rosenstock: The Hidden/ Overt Jewish Agenda*,¹¹⁵ Heyd focuses on the relationship Tzara had with his Romanian-Jewish past in order to attempt to argue that his conflicted Jewish identity was fundamental to Dada. The present research draws on Heyd’s concept of a conflicted Jewish identity in relationship specifically to Tzara and develops the idea of a deeper connection between his Jewish upbringing and communal identity and the supposedly secular world of modernity. Another work by Heyd that contributed to the theoretical advancement

¹¹² Carmen Popescu, in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 59(3) (2000) pp.403-405.

¹¹³ Sandqvist, (2006).

¹¹⁴ See, for instance, Washton Long, Baigell and Heyd; see also Baigell and Heyd (2001).

¹¹⁵ Washton Long, Baigell and Heyd, pp.193-219.

of this thesis is *Mutual Reflections*, which, although focusing on the modern art seen from the perspective of the Black-Jewish relations in America, offers a coherent perspective on the complex cultural balance of minorities in modern art, in general.¹¹⁶ Modern art is placed by Heyd in the centre of all this with the intention to highlight both groups' quests for self-identification seen as a reaction to the relationship between type and stereotype manifested through their art. The present thesis uses Heyd's assertion that as each group examines the 'other' it also begins a process of self-discovery, in order to approach Tzara's and Janco's construction of identity. In the context of the Jews as 'others' in Romania, Tzara and Janco embark on a journey of self-discovery not only from a socio-political point of view but also from a cultural one, as radical artists who problematise issues.

Baigell and Heyd's collection of essays *Complex Identities* provides an interesting perspective on the relationship between Jewishness and Universalist social agendas, exploring questions about modern Jewish identity and Jewish consciousness. Their study gave this thesis a perspective on Jewish art by showing how the quest for a Jewish style in the works of modernist artists would be not only endless but also redundant. Instead of isolating specific Jewish characteristics in art, Baigell and Heyd's book offers straight from its introduction a much-needed clarification in terms of Jewish art: 'By Jewish art, the co-editors mean an art created by Jewish artists in which one can find some aspect of the Jewish experience, whether religious, cultural, social, or personal.'¹¹⁷ This thesis is in agreement with this statement, and therefore it focuses on finding the Jewish experience in Tzara and Janco instead of obsessively looking for explicit Jewish subjects that may or may not appear in any of the works by these artists.

In preparing this thesis, a series of scholarly sources have been consulted in order to accumulate the necessary terminology and theoretical background before approaching the proposed topic. Therefore, a first account consulted on 'one of the most loosely used terms in any discussion of contemporary art',¹¹⁸ the avant-garde, was Peter Bürger's.¹¹⁹ For a more specific understanding of the concept of avant-garde in

¹¹⁶ Milly Heyd, *Mutual reflections: Jews and blacks in American art* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

¹¹⁷ Baigell and Heyd, Introduction.

¹¹⁸ Edward Lucie-Smith, *The decline and fall of the Avant-Garde: Essays on contemporary art* (London: CV Publication/Visual Arts Research, 2012), p.80.

¹¹⁹ Peter Bürger, *Theory of the avant-garde, Volume 4*, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

the Romanian context, the work of the Romanian critic Ion Pop has brought significant clarifications in regard to its history but also interactions between Tzara, Janco and the rest of the Romanian artistic sphere.¹²⁰ On modernism in general the accounts of Christopher Butler¹²¹ and those of Charles Harrison and Paul Wood¹²² represented a fundamental source, combined with Max Weber's¹²³ principles on modernisation. There is no doubt that modernity¹²⁴ represents most likely different things to different people depending on the historical context and the circumstances of their lives. In this spirit, the present thesis focuses on the relationship Tzara and Janco had with modernism in their youth, coming from a bourgeois background, without having the intention to define modernist art and its practices in Romania since there is already a substantial body of work on the topic.

1.1. Jewish intellectuals

In order to make its way through the Jewish intellectual landscape of that time Susan A. Handelman's work¹²⁵ was consulted. Although Handelman begins by saying that "to try to prove that a Jewish background has some influence on even the most avowedly secular Jews is a difficult and complicated task,"¹²⁶ she provides a set of tools on how to approach text that might carry structural elements specific to one's ethnicity. By examining the conflict of interpretations in light of its theological background, Handelman offers a method on how to search for "hidden elements and cor-

¹²⁰ Sandqvist, (2006), p.126

¹²¹ Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, music, and painting in Europe 1900-1916* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

¹²² Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, *Art in theory 1900-2000: An anthology of changing ideas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003).

¹²³ Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons, with an introduction by Anthony Giddens (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹²⁴ *Modernity and avant-garde* may indeed pass as quasi-synonymous terms due to the similarity of their essence; the difference is that modernity is animated by a passion for the present, while the avant-garde is connected to the idea of the future, yet firmly located in the present. F.T. Marinetti connected the term 'avant-garde' to the idea of the future, cf. Giovanni Lista, *Futurism* (Paris: Terrail, 2001), p. 28. For more on Romanian modernism, see Nicole Manucu, *De Tristan Tzara à Ghérasim Luca: Impulsions des modernités roumaines au sein de l'avant-garde européenne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), cp. *Modernité Roumaine – Paradoxes et réalisations*. Also, on the contemporaneity of the modernist avant-garde, see Krzysztof Ziarek, *The historicity of experience. Modernity, the avant-garde and the event* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), and Peter Osborne, *The politics of time: Modernity and avant-garde* (London: Verso, 1995).

¹²⁵ Susan A. Handelman, *The slayers of Moses: The emergence of rabbinic interpretation in modern literary theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).

¹²⁶ Handelman, p. XV.

respondence, a tropism or “wandering of meaning,” which proceeds as much by analogy and association as by linear logic.”¹²⁷ Handelman's *The slayers of Moses: the emergence of rabbinic interpretation in modern literary theory*, is useful because, although this thesis does not imply that any of its protagonists are comparable to those in Handelman's book, the principle used in her analysis provides a new angle of approaching the cases of Tzara's and Janco's productions in *Simbolul*. Handelman discusses the works of what she considers some of the most influential modern theorists of interpretation, Freud, Derrida, Lacan and Bloom. She claims that even if they apply the concepts of language and time specific to the Jewish, Rabbinic thought to other realms than the Holy Book, they do not distance themselves from the Scripture but rather end up by creating a new and secular scripture where they place themselves in the posture of the interpreter. Likewise, Tzara's and Janco's revolt against tradition, initially manifested in *Simbolul*, does not imply automatically a total rejection of tradition for, as Handelman argues, “there is tradition at the heart of heresy, a tradition that is compelling and re-embracing.”¹²⁸

Another work consulted is *The meaning of Yiddish*¹²⁹ in which the Israeli researcher Benjamin Harshav discusses the semiotics of Jewish communication and analyses the nature of Jewish discourse, flowing from the traditional Hebrew library into the Yiddish and from there to Kafka, Bellow and others. Although neither Tzara nor Janco seemed to even know the Yiddish language, and Harshav's book seems at first sight more of a technical book in the linguistic and sociolinguistic similarities between Yiddish and other diaspora Jewish languages, it does introduce a useful concept. Harshav's work offers an idea on how to discuss one's relation to their mother tongue by bringing into discussion the idea of a *Mame-Loshn* (“mama-language”), a typical Yiddish expression if Slavic and Hebrew.¹³⁰ This compound connoted the warmth of the Jewish family, as symbolized by mama and her language, is considered when discussing Tzara's correspondence with his family (conducted in Romanian).

Harshav's work is complemented in this thesis by that of poet and critic Christopher Hampton, in order to create a consistent literary analysis by understanding the centrality of language as an instrument of ideological contention.¹³¹ Hampton's

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Handelman, p.207.

¹²⁹ Benjamin Harshav, *The meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley, Oxford: University of California Press, 1990).

¹³⁰ Harshav, p. 3.

¹³¹ Christopher Hampton, *The ideology of the text* (Milton Keynes, England; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990).

The ideology of the text, argues that language is a changing product of the interactive process of material reality in the long perspectives of the history of social struggle. It is from the perspective of the language used that Tzara's and Janco's level of abstraction arises for the language becomes an institution at the center of the cultural activity. As Hampton argues, like any other manifestation of cultural life, language "is a product of the complex forces of society in action and as such has been continually exposed to the changing pressures and conditions of historical development."¹³² Applied to Tzara's and Janco's cases, more in depth in Tzara's case due to his literary activity and his immense oeuvre, their work has no abstract existence except as a collection of historical documents because, according to Hampton's logic, their works are a historically embodied form of communication that comes to life in the present and only when it becomes an instrument of exploration; simply said, it is what its readers make of it as a cultural product reflecting and commenting upon the interests of their own time.

Christopher Butler makes a very useful and necessary distinction regarding the modernist movements in Europe, characterising the generation whose major works first appear in the decade before the First World War as early modernist.¹³³ In this sense, the symbolist period of Tzara and his collaboration together with Janco in *Simbolul* will fall under early modernism while the activities in Zurich will be associated with modernism and the avant-garde.

For a better understanding of the distinct changes in Jewish behaviour and status in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe, including their assimilation and acculturation,¹³⁴ the works of Pierre L. Van den Berghe, Todd Endelman and Norman L. Kleeblatt¹³⁵ have been consulted. To this can be added Stephen Sharot *Judaism: a sociology* where he illuminates the rich data of Jewish history by focusing on sociological questions about religious practice and their role in determining one's identity and its structure.¹³⁶

¹³² Hampton, p. 29.

¹³³ Butler.

¹³⁴ The definition of the terms assimilation, emancipation, acculturation, integration and secularization derive from a critical reading of Pierre Van den Berghe, *The ethnic phenomenon* (Westport, CN, London: Praeger, 1987), and of Todd M. Endelman, 'Assimilation', in *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* <http://yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Assimilation> [accessed 29 July 2017]. Referring to the specific case of the Romanian Jewish community, Endelman stresses that there were small numbers of assimilationists, before the First World War, who were advocating in favour of it, and even they, despite their acculturation, refrained from advocating a Romanian national identity (with the exception of a handful of intellectuals).

¹³⁵ Norman L. Kleeblatt, 'Master narratives/minority artists', in Baigell and Heyd, p.1.

¹³⁶ Stephen Sharot, *Judaism: A sociology* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976).

1.2. The Jews in Europe

The political history of the European Jews is debated in David Vital's *A people Apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939*.¹³⁷ Vital's magisterial book, chronologically and thematically organized, discusses the practices of power within the Jewish society. David Vital offers a discussion on how the Jewish society deals with the asymmetric relationship it has with the other societies amongst which it exists. Vital's section on Romania¹³⁸ discusses the unusually intense and lengthy campaign to ensure decent treatment for the Jews of Romania, in order to conclude that this struggle served to demonstrate that the identity of the Romanian Jews and the purposes of their political leaders stand no chance when presented with their "absolute vulnerability to persecution and spoliation at the hands of any government determined to punish them."¹³⁹

Not only does the present thesis explore how the status of Tzara and Janco as 'others' influenced their Jewish experience but also how it affected the relationship between the Romanian state and the Jews, where the Jews were placed on the outside of the officially prescribed Romanian culture and society by the Constitution. Due to this, some theoretical specifications on the notion of 'other' was necessary and has been provided by two studies by L.J. Silberstein and R. L. Cohn and another by J. Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin.¹⁴⁰

1.3. The Jewish people

This research sees itself situated in the field of cultural studies, in the broadest sense of these words, and it is fully interdisciplinary, engaging with such disciplines such as history, modern languages, and sociology, without attempting to position itself as an art history study. A novelty of this current research is the questioning of the identity from a double perspective: first, from the socio-political perspective as it was reflected in artistic endeavours of Tzara and Janco in *Simbolul*, *Chemarea* and later

¹³⁷ David Vital, *A people apart: The Jews in Europe, 1789-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹³⁸ Vital, pp. 487-508.

¹³⁹ p. 508.

¹⁴⁰ A significant body of work has been created around the notion of 'other'. See, for instance, L.J. Silberstein and R.L. Cohn (eds.), *The other in Jewish thought and history: Constructions of Jewish culture and identity* (New York, NY, London: New York University Press, 1994) and J. Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin (eds.), *Jews and other differences: The new Jewish cultural studies* (Minneapolis, MN, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

Contimporanul; and secondly, from the perspective of a rupture of inter-societal relations due to their inherited Jewishness, which forced them into a radical transformation.

This thesis suggests that the embrace of radical artistic projects represented a part of the multilayered identities of the Jews in general, and the vulnerability of Tzara and Janco regarding their identity is combined with moments of revelation on the idea of being a Jew. Shlomo Sand's book *The Invention of the Jewish People*¹⁴¹ brought much needed light understanding the nationalist historical myth of the Jewish people. Sand traces how against an ethno-biological concept of a Jewish people seen as a race the Zionist ideology opted in favor of that of an ethno-religious identity conceptualized by Jews' self-definition as a result of Zionists' intention to emulate the other nationalists in Europe. The secular Jewish identity appeared when "Judaism ceased to be a rich and varied religious culture and turned into something hermetic like the German *Volk*" although having its unique character of being formed by an alien and wandering people without any biological relation to the territories it inhabited.¹⁴² This thesis draws from Sand's work the idea that ethnocentric myths surround the dominant culture and its linguistic group in order to create the national ideology of an original people-race, as was the case of Romanian nationalism and identity. Sand's idea that "the hegemonic culture comes to see itself as belonging to all members of the nation, and the dominant identity aspires to encompass them all" is demonstrated by the Romanian case. Tzara and Janco, as Jews and therefore not Christians as the majority, had only the option to integrate culturally (linguistically, as well) in order to not be completely marginalized.¹⁴³

1. 4. Jewishness

The present thesis employs a list of specific terms that, although may seem self-explanatory and widely used in both academic and public life, might at times need further explanation in order to avoid any ambiguity.¹⁴⁴ Some of the terms, while con-

¹⁴¹ Shlomo Sand, *The invention of the Jewish people* (London, New York: Verso, 2009).

¹⁴² Sand, (2009), p.255.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p.49.

¹⁴⁴ For more on this, see 'Introduction' in *Art in theory. 1900-2000. An anthology of changing ideas*, ed. by Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); Michael Clarke and Deborah Clarke, *The concise Oxford dictionary of art terms* (2nd ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010);

nected, denote distinct meaning in the context of Jewish studies and their interpretation might be obscured by their more general definition. Furthermore, given the specific context evoked in this thesis, some terms need some clarification.

This research sees the terms Jew, Jewish, Jewishness and Jewish identity as a series of concepts caught in the middle of a symbolic search for a true ideology, split between the fashion in which these terms were understood by the Romanian state, the antisemitic circles, the Jews themselves and the Gentiles. For the sake of clarity, it needs to be specified from the start that for the nascent Romanian state and its intelligentsia, Jewishness was understood as a sort of national, cultural and linguistic identity of this group of people that was transmitted from generation to generation, therefore inherited. This thesis, although does not adhere to this sort of understanding of what Jewishness truly represents, reached this conclusion based also on the archival work which uncovered that the term *Israelit* (Israelite) was used in the official documents of both Tzara and Janco in order to specify their ethnic and national affiliation. The lack of an Israeli state (or nowadays State of Israel) at that time made this term a presumption of the Romanian state in regard to a sort of ‘Jewish’ national, cultural and linguistic identity, without any consideration for the individual belief or adherence to Judaism of the person, or the relation of the secular Jew to the psychologization of Judaism into Jewishness.¹⁴⁵ Based on all these elements, the present research makes its claim that the Jewishness was imposed on Tzara and Janco by the state since, as Vital stresses, in Romania “if the Jews were not alien in law, they were manifestly aliens in fact: foreign in religion, language, customs, morals, and aspirations too. They were uncivilized. They were fanatical. And, anyway, there were too many of them.”¹⁴⁶

The antagonism of the Romanian intelligentsia towards the Romanian Jews was ‘justified’ through the pejorative stereotypes of Jews and projected on to Romanian Jews on any given occasion. Although the popular universalist assumption was that all Romanian Jews belonged to the same undifferentiated minority, called generically *Evrei / Ovrei / Jidani* (Jews), embodying all the negative stereotype associated with it, such assumptions obscured the specific ways Romanian Jews constituted themselves across the distinct Romanian provinces. It should also be stressed once

Van den Berghe; Endelman; Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and nationalism: Anthropological perspectives* (London, Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1993); John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.), *Ethnicity* (Oxford, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1996); Steve Fenton, *Ethnicity* (Cambridge, Malden, MA: Polity, 2003).

¹⁴⁵ For more on this, see Cuddihy, Introduction.

¹⁴⁶ Vital, p.503.

more that most of the Jews found in Romania before the First World War were either Sephardic or *Ostjuden*— predominantly local, *pământenii*, and not immigrants.¹⁴⁷

Similar generic parameters were used in understanding Jewishness as an exclusive identity so different from the Romanian one. Such misconceptions forced categorisations, Romanian or Jew, which supposedly would have created a homogenous nation. Of course, this was not solely a characteristic of the Romanian sphere since the stigmatisation of the Jews was widespread throughout pre-war Europe, as extensively documented by numerous accounts.¹⁴⁸ Degenerate, seen as *Oriental*, and in an apparent ‘state of medieval degradation’, these were the stereotypes projected on to Jews of all strata and one of the consequences of the official antisemitism.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Jews’ interaction with such stereotypes resulted in self-hatred, ‘an acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group – that group in society which they see as defining them – as a reality’.¹⁵⁰ This is not to say that their representation and self-perception were identical and that the Romanian Jew practice the antisemitic representations, but it is an indicator of how significant these projections were in building their identity.

Jewishness, as seen by the Romanian intelligentsia, was an inherited element of Tzara’s and Janco’s personas, something that they could not escape. As Margaret Olin argues, in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racism became implicit in what appears to be merely cultural distinctions because it ascribed to “nationhood a basis in biology, while cultural phenomena such as art history were among the diverse conflicting criteria by which nineteenth-century scholars classified people into races and nations.”¹⁵¹ This means that, from the perspective of the Romanian state at that time, Tzara’s and Janco’s Jewishness was an inherited identity transmitted from generation to generation classed solely based on criteria such as birth, family history and legal status. It was not viewed as a sort of self-reflexive process associated with a kind of crisis and characteristic of the avant-garde as argued in this thesis.

¹⁴⁷ Jews from the East.

¹⁴⁸ The literature on the topic is extensive. See, for instance, Sander L. Gilman, *Jewish self-hatred: Antisemitism and the hidden language of the Jews* (Baltimore, ML: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), and Maccoby.

¹⁴⁹ Maccoby, p.53

¹⁵⁰ Gilman, p.2.

¹⁵¹ Olin, in Soussloff, p. 20.

Jewishness and Jewish experience are not seen as synonymous by this thesis. This point of view is best illustrated by the American artist R.B. Kitaj who wrote in relation to what makes one's art Jewish:

If it was Jewishness which condemned one and not the Jewish religion then Jewishness may be a complex of qualities, a force of some kind and might be a presence in art as it is in life. Could it be a force one declares in one's art? Could it not be a force one intends for one's art? Would it be a force other attribute for better or worse?"¹⁵²

Therefore, Jewishness does not necessarily have to be directly interested in Jewish theology, religion or folklore, but they can be what one ascribes to it based on the same one's Jewish self-identification, the same way Tzara and Janco have their own interpretations regarding their Jewishness based on their Jewish experiences. For instance, as Marcel Janco confessed, 'whenever I wanted to contribute to any Jewish manifestation, I was struck by an impossibility to contribute as an artist, for being a Jew is not [the same as being] a Jewish artist'.¹⁵³ Simply said, when he took part in the Romanian avant-garde he took part as an artist and as a Jew, but not as a Jewish artist.

In the Romanian reality of that time, ethnicity meant destiny, which the Romanian Jews could not escape. The American researcher Todd M. Endelman notes in his *Broadening Jewish history: towards a social history of ordinary Jews* that "unable to describe their collective ties as national because of the terms of emancipation, emancipated Jews, observant and non-observant alike, borrowed the notion of race, which was ubiquitous from at least the 1870s through to the 1940s."¹⁵⁴ Neither conversion to Christianity nor complete identification with Romanian culture could change their destiny since Jews are perceived as fundamentally different. When discussing Jewish distinctiveness in Europe, Endelman argues that political leaders, social theorists, and cultural spokesmen wishing to achieve national homogeneity left religion as the sole basis for defining Jewish difference. Without going into great depth on the topic, it may suffice to say that the Romanian Jews, like the rest of European Jews, entered the modern world with a stigma, originating in the Middle Ages, that

¹⁵² Kitaj as cited in Kampf, p. 110.

¹⁵³ 'de cate ori am vroit sa contribui la vre-o manifestare evreeasca, m'am lovit de o imposibilitate de fapt de a contribui si ca artist, caci a fi evreu nu este a fi si artist evreu.' Marcel Janco, 'Mărturiile iudaice despre artă', *Cultura*, June 1938, p.17.

¹⁵⁴ Todd M. Endelman, *Broadening Jewish history: Towards a social history of ordinary Jews* (Oxford, Portland, Or.: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2011), p.45.

rendered them hardly human in the eyes of the common people. They were seen as deniers of the divinity of Jesus and responsible for His crucifixion, a conception that made them the subject of folkloric fantasies of various kinds, chief among which was the blood-libel asserting that the Jews were child-murderers who used the blood of their victims for ritual purposes.¹⁵⁵ As LaCapra argues, there is a tendency to portray Jews as ‘scapegoats onto whom any variety of anxieties can be projected’.¹⁵⁶ For LaCapra, this attitude towards the Jews is what obliterates both specificity of the Jews as a complex historical people and the problem of their actual and formal relations to other peoples or traditions,¹⁵⁷ relations often characterised by antisemitism.

The point that this research wants to put across is that some manifestations of that religious Jewish identity became unrecognizable in the cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco due to secularization, modernization, renunciation or simply because they were altered from home. This was the case of Tzara’s family whose religious affiliation was non-existent but does not mean that the basic identity affiliation has ceased to exist in the popular culture at that time. Simply said, for the large masses of people, for the peasants in Tzara’s birth-town Moinesti, or for Janco’s neighbors in Bucharest, their individual relation to Judaism was unimportant for they were still referred to as ‘the Jews’ based on the critical factors such as birth and legal status. The American scholar Sol Gittleman summarizes best this reality in his from shtetl to suburbia: the family in Jewish literary imagination:

Religion, particularly, dominated every aspect of life. You were defined in terms of your attitude toward your faith, whether you were a pious Jew or a nonbeliever. No matter what, you were a Jew. Simply not attending synagogue services or, more aggressively, pronouncing your atheism, was not sufficient to keep others from accepting your Jewish identity any more than it kept the individual doing the denying from accepting it. A Jew was a Jew in the *shtetl*.¹⁵⁸

What Gittleman points out is the incapability of a Jew to escape their status in the community as it was definable in its own terms and traditions. Explaining this reality

¹⁵⁵ Maccoby, p.47.

¹⁵⁶ Dominick LaCapra, *Representing the Holocaust: History, theory, trauma* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, c.1994), p.61.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.98.

¹⁵⁸ Sol Gittleman, *From shtetl to suburbia: The family in Jewish literary imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), p.43. A necessary clarification is necessary here in regard to the way Gittleman uses the word shtetl. For him, a shtetl did not refer only to the Jewish village in the countryside but also to a large Jewish quarter or a ghetto in urban areas.

of the Jewish life in his book *The faith of secular Jews*, the Polish-American scholar Saul L. Goodman uses an analogy with the snail in order to define a Jew. Goodman writes that a Jew should not be defined solely in relation to the Jewish religion because this would be a superficial approach. The example Goodman offers his analysis is that of a snail, a small animal that sits in a snail-shell. In its turn, the snail-shell is one of the material products of the snail. If a snail casts off its shell would not make him less of a snail. Likewise, the Jewish religion is one of the characteristic products of the Jewish community and therefore, a Jew who gives up his faith, remains a Jew.¹⁵⁹

Goodman's perspective highlights the fact that Tzara's and Janco's personal choices did not automatically 'exonerate' them of their Jewishness. This claim is supported also by what Eva Hoffman identifies in her book, as being the perception of Jews in popular culture, which also preserved "some of the folk explanations of Jewish customs [that] were elaborately fanciful"¹⁶⁰: "the peasants were bound to the land as firmly as the Jews were tied to religion."¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, the point that Tzara's and Janco's modernist activities altered their Jewish identity to some extent is supported also by the idea that intellectual accommodation with modernity implied a rebellion against tradition or, at most, a radical reinterpretation of Jewish tradition and concepts, and as a consequence, modernity was largely catastrophic to Judaism since it implied the internal collapse of Jewish communal structures and wholesale abandonment of tradition.¹⁶² However, Tom Sandqvist in his *Ahasuerus at the Easel: Jewish Art and Jewish Artists in Central and Eastern European Modernism at the Turn of the Last Century*¹⁶³ argues that "large parts of explicitly East Jewish culture stayed more or less intact well into the 20th century and at the same time as surprisingly many Jewish artists and other intellectuals participated actively in the process of modernization, artists who - moreover - to a great extent left their mark on Western European Modernist currents as well,"¹⁶⁴ as it is the case of Tzara and Janco.

¹⁵⁹ Saul L. Goodman, *The faith of secular Jews* (New York: Ktav Pub. House, 1976), p.113.

¹⁶⁰ Hoffman, p. 107.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² For more on Jewish modernity and its relation with the European Jewish heritage, see *Makers of Jewish modernity: Thinkers, artists, leaders, and the world they made*, by Jacques Picard, Jacques Revel, Michael P. Steinberg, Idith Zertal (eds.), editorial assistant and photography curator: Ulrich Schutz (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), p.92.

¹⁶³ Tom Sandqvist, *Ahasuerus at the Easel: Jewish Art and Jewish Artists in Central and Eastern European Modernism at the Turn of the Last Century*, (New York, Peter Lang, 2014).

¹⁶⁴ Sandqvist (2014), pp.10-11.

In Romania, the earliest manifestations of modernity were faced with socio-political movements characterised by different archaic accents combined with elements of Christian Orthodoxy: “[a country] which claims to be Latin but which has an orthodox religion and an Orthodox church paradoxically paying respect to the pope in Rome.”¹⁶⁵ However, denying the existence of modernist movements promoted by the Jews meant denying the very Westernisation it craved for so long, while accepting it entirely would have caused a massive scandal, since the Jews were clearly disliked by the Romanian intelligentsia. The Romanian researcher Radu Stern notes that “linking the avant-garde to Jews was a common way to make an argument against radical modernism, often described as a Jewish endeavour.”¹⁶⁶ This idea originated from the antisemitic Romanian circles at the turn of the century which wanted to accuse the Jews of trying to conquer the Romanian culture through art. A very important point should be made in connection to the Latin and Orthodox character, which seems to be omitted by many previous researchers. The incipient stage of the Romanian high culture, codified in institutional forms that Romanians considered prestigious, made the overall process of modernisation quite difficult since Romania did not yet have a proper autochthonous high culture let alone a high culture that needed modernisations: ‘[so] we had no libraries to set on fire, nor museums to flood’.¹⁶⁷ The overall atmosphere was sometimes rather contradictory: vigorously advocating modernisation in a country that was yet to discover its own cultural tradition, modernisation was, of course, in significant opposition to the native traditions.

With few partisans of modernisation at the beginning of the twentieth century, Romania was a country where the heritage that was considered to be non-Romanian was accompanied by the negative internal stereotype of the ‘Greeks and always the Jews’,¹⁶⁸ ‘for the character of both [was] equally vile’,¹⁶⁹ and virulently rejected by a

¹⁶⁵ Sandqvist (2006), p. 25

¹⁶⁶ Radu Stern, in *Jewish aspects in Avant-Garde*, p.35. For more on the demonisation of radical modernism by linking it to Jews see also, Morar.

¹⁶⁷ Mihail Draganescu, Director of the journal *Democratia*, as cited in Morar, p.55.

¹⁶⁸ K.W. Deutsch (1966) in Leon Volovici, *Nationalist, ideology & antisemitism (the Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s)* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1991), p.4. The two communities were actively involved in the Romanian economy: the Greek minority in Romania concentrated more on trading cereals and other minorities more on trading en-detail liquor, while the Jewish merchants were buying and selling a wide range of goods.

¹⁶⁹ J.A. Montgomery, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1964), p.1. He recalls St Paul’s lack of distinction between Jews and Greeks; both are equally vile.

majority characterised by its *Mahala* mentality.¹⁷⁰ Would be possible that such attitudes would be another attempt for Romania to try and synchronize itself to Western Europe? Margaret Olin argues that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Western European Christian cultures set themselves one against another by a series of differences, not only nationalist but also epochal. By the latter, the Germans, for instance, defined themselves against the Greeks, Romans and the Jews. This was a temporally and spatial distancing from the Jews, who were therefore placed amongst the ancients in a undefined Middle East and making them a people belonging to the ancient Orientals and sharing all their negative stereotypes and insignificancy in the context of modernity.¹⁷¹ It is also from this perspective that Romania's antisemitism should be discussed by future researchers in order to understand if Romania's infatuation with the rest of Europe translated also in embracing its view on a illusory idealised European culture.

Due to the specific hostile reactions of antisemitism combined with xenophobia, in Romania, everything that was different and related to radical modernism was unconditionally linked to the Jews. Crohmălniceanu notes that the Jewish spirit was constantly accused of exercising its predilection for dissolving a culture ever since the nineteenth century. However, once the avant-garde was officially launched as a movement in Romania in 1922, following Marcel Janco's return, the antisemitic accusations became even more virulent.¹⁷² Referring to Marcel Janco and his associates, the Romanian traditionalist Horia Igirosanu noted:

It is an unprecedented impudence that in our ploughmen's and shepherds' country, with vast and fertile plains, to have such intruders [in our fine arts] that have no country of their own [...] and have nothing to do amidst ourselves.¹⁷³

The traditionalist intended to claim its origin by projecting on to the Romanian past the Utopia of its Christendom, as the central element of its culture, in this manner linking it to its unique nature, a civilised country dislocated amongst *Oriental* cultures.

¹⁷⁰ Term borrowed from Sandqvist (2006), p.25; he defines it as a kind of Oriental petit bourgeois attitude focused only on business, power and political plots.

¹⁷¹ Olin, pp.20-21.

¹⁷² The 'official' birth of the Romanian avant-garde is considered to be 1922, when Marcel Janco and Ion Vinea launched the journal *Contimporanul* (The Contemporary), named the 'Romanian Constructivism body'. Morar, p.92.

¹⁷³ Horia Igirosanu, 'Clipa' (The Instant), 18 november 1924: 'E o nemaipomenită îndrăzneală ca în țara noastră de plugari și de ciobani, cu câmpii întinse și mănoase, să apară asemenea specimen care nu au țară și care [...] nu au ce căuta în mijlocul nostru'.

Advocating ‘another’ culture, such as the avant-garde was to be removed for the so-called Romanian themes. This antisemitic attitudes culminated with those made by the Romanian Legionaries who linked the avant-garde, in the 1930s and 40s, to leftist politics and therefore to the Jews, as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.¹⁷⁴ The Legionary critic Nicolae Roșu constantly accused the Jews, and Judaism, of destroying Romanian culture by exploiting the moral and spiritual fatigue of a society troubled by the war. For him, Dadaism and French surrealism, as well as the Weimar constitution, were results of the Jewish mind. Furthermore, Roșu blames Russian Bolshevism on Jews as well: “In ideology and tactics, Russian bolshevism is the work of Jewish agitators. Jews are Tristan Tzara and Pablo Picasso (sic), promoters of Dadaism and Cubism.”¹⁷⁵ The validity of such ideas is easily dismissed by historical facts; first and foremost, Picasso was not a Jew, a fact proven by his name, which was honouring various saints and relatives, as customary in the Spanish Catholic tradition.¹⁷⁶ Secondly, the antisemitic interpretations regarding the involvement of Jews in promoting Bolshevism in Romania is contradicted by statistical data:¹⁷⁷ “The majority of Romanian Jews between the two world wars appear to have supported Zionist or non-socialist parties and only a small minority gave electoral support to left-wing groups.”¹⁷⁸

Regarding the terminology used in this thesis, it should be noted that it would be confusing to replace entirely the term “Jew” with that of “citizen” in the cases of Tzara and Janco just because they did not identify with the larger Jewish diaspora at all or only at some point in time. In other words, this research identifies as Romanian Jews those people who either subjectively identified themselves as such or so identified by ancestry according to their mother’s faith (following Jewish tradition). Following this model, both Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco are to be viewed as Jews,

¹⁷⁴ Despite the fact that socialist and later Communist Jews had no interest in the destiny of the Jewish community – with some even denying their Jewish origin and finally even rejecting and abandoning it completely – the beginnings of Romanian Communism will always remain linked to the Jews in general perception. For more on this, see Philip Mendes, *Jews and the Left: The rise and fall of a political alliance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹⁷⁵ Nicolae Roșu, *Orientări în veac* (Bucharest: Ed. Cugetarea, 1937), pp.155-156:

‘În ideologie și în tactică, bolșevismul rusesc este opera agitatorilor evrei. Evrei sunt Tristan Tzara și Pablo Picasso (sic), promotorii dadaismului și cubismului’.

¹⁷⁶ Picasso’s full Catholic name was Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Ruiz y Picasso.

¹⁷⁷ Of the 728,115 Romanian Jews registered at the 1930 Census, only 300 were members of the Communist Party of Romania, meaning 0.3%; another statistic of 1933 showed that the Communist Party of Romania had 1,665 members, of which 375 were Romanian, 440 Hungarian, 300 Jews, 140 Bulgarian, and 170 other nationalities.

¹⁷⁸ Vago (1974), cited in Mendes, pp.140-141.

mainly from an administrative perspective, as shown in official documents and popular culture. By doing so this thesis does not intend to diminish the validity of its argument claiming that their Jewishness was a sort of self-reflexive process associated with a kind of crisis and characteristic of the avant-garde, nor to dismiss in any form Tzara's and Janco's own interpretations and relations with their heritage.

So, it would be wrong to assume that any of the elements belonging to the sets called Jewishness and Jewish experience actually played a more fundamental role for the formation of Tzara's and Janco's art than any other because there is no way of proving which element played a more fundamental role than another and at what time. Furthermore, since Jewish experience and Jewishness are codependent to a certain extent, it is impossible to prove that one is more fundamental than the other in Tzara's and Janco's process of identity formation and, as a matter of logical consequence, should be accepted that Tzara's and Janco's artistic personalities, was defined by a web of interrelated social, political and personal components, all part of their multi-layered identity, of which their Jewishness was only one, all equally layered.



2. Thesis overview

The structure of this thesis consists of the present introduction, followed by four chapters and a conclusion. In the **First Chapter** the focus is placed on the relationships Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco had with their families, seen as the initial source of their Jewish heritage, before moving towards a preliminary examination of their first joint projects. Therefore, this first chapter begins with an analysis of Tzara's and Janco's familial background, concomitantly introducing the first modernist journal *Simbolul* (The Symbol), and *Chemarea* (The Call). Its aim is to explore the connection between the aspects around which Tzara and Janco's early experiences involuntarily gravitated toward Romanian modernism in the pre-avant-garde period. This chapter identifies Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco as culturally involved with Romanian culture, both aware of its modernist and traditionalist cultural tendencies, but outsiders from the socio-political perspective, given their Jewish heritage. This chapter assesses the impact of the socio-political reality of their families is assessed, given that the hardship encountered by Jewish minorities was an obvious characteristic of

the ‘Jewish experience’, regardless of economic status, and thus Tzara and Janco would have both felt its influence. Finally, this chapter does not claim that Tzara and Janco’s works were fully accepted by Romanian culture, but that, during their early years, their otherness was as a result of their socio-political status rather than their cultural tendencies.

The **Second Chapter** of this thesis analyses Tzara’s and Janco’s identity formation with the help of the concept of ‘becoming,’ as discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.¹⁷⁹ By looking at the complexity of the relationship between Jewish modernist artists and the Romanian society of the *fin de siècle* and interwar period, this chapter reiterates how similar conditions do not produce identical becomings, just as similar backgrounds did not, in fact, ensure similar Jewish experiences. Furthermore, it examines Tzara’ and Janco’s *Simbolul* from the way in which they related to the dominant culture, based on Deleuze and Guattari, concept of minor literature, an angle from which *Simbolul* has never been discussed before. It also employs Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the rhizome and argues that *Simbolul* can be seen as a rhizome. Finally, this chapter remains concerned with the relationship between arts and ethnicity but also about Tzara’s and Janco’s early lives and the way art and nationality were linked together and rethought.

Chapter 3 concerns itself with the multifaceted relationship between Tristan Tzara’s and Marcel Janco’s ‘ethnic Jewish self-consciousness’¹⁸⁰ and the art that emerged during their Dada years. It argues that it does not automatically reveal Jewishness as an explanation for Dada, or vice versa, in the same way that their involvement in Romanian avant-garde post-Zurich years does not describe an attempt for Jewish cultural and national revival through abstract art based on their Jewish heritage. The third chapter presents periods in the lives and works of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco as follows: the first part is dedicated to a discussion on the preparation of their exile and their Dada Zurich years, covering roughly the period between 1912 to 1919. The second part explores the period of their involvement in what is generally considered to be Romanian avant-garde, which begins in 1923, a year after Janco’s return to Bucharest. An important detail in this chapter is the emphasis placed on the constitutional framework in Romania. The period under scrutiny begins in 1923, the year in

¹⁷⁹ Deleuze and Guattari (2004).

¹⁸⁰ Joseph Gutmann, ‘Is there a Jewish art?’, in Claire Moore (ed.), *The visual dimension: Aspects of Jewish art* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1993), p.5.

which the Romanian Jews are granted equal rights by the adoption of a new Constitution, and ends in 1938 with the beginning of anti-Jewish legislation under the Goga-Cuza government. Therefore, this chapter covers both the place of exile and of return (in Janco's case, Bucharest; in Tzara's case, Paris) in its search to provide a clue to their different positioning about self-perception, seen through a socio-political lens.

The **Fourth Chapter** of this thesis deals with the negative image accompanying Jews' status, seen as an integral part of Tzara's and Janco's reality. It argues that it is exactly this experience that moulded their self-perception and own representation of their own identity, an analysis based on Hanna Arendt's concepts of pariah and parvenu, as discussed in her essay *The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition* (April 1944).¹⁸¹ Arendt's concepts are used in this chapter in order to establish the status of pariah and its importance in the context of Tzara's and Janco's thought. Concomitantly, it explores the possibilities of the emergence of a unique identity out of the pariah's relationship to the surrounding socio-political context. By using Arendt's concept, this chapter attempts at identifying Tzara and Janco as either one or the other. However, it looks at Arendt's concepts as temporary occurrences in Tzara's and Janco's identity-building process and self-perception. The material consulted for this chapter includes a revelatory semi-autobiographical work by Tristan Tzara, *Faites Vos Jeux* (Place your bets) (1923)¹⁸², and Marcel Janco's articles *Marturii iudaice despre arta*¹⁸³ (Jewish testimonials on art) (1938) and the one published in *Dada: monograph of a movement* (1957). These writings reveal a series of views necessary for a comprehensive analysis of their early lives and their Jewish experience, for they are written by Tzara and Janco as a result of their young lives in a retrospective manner. Finally, looks at their experience as Jews as the base of their thoughts, and as being constantly connected to the dilemmas of Jewish emancipation.

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¹⁸¹ Arendt (1978), p. .

¹⁸² Tzara, *OC*, p.243-299.

¹⁸³ Marcel Janco, 'Marturii iudaice despre arta', *Cultura* (1938), pp.17-19.

Chapter 1: Early years 1896 – 1915, a *passé-partout* intellectuel¹⁸⁴

*'je parle de qui parle qui parle je suis seul
je ne suis qu'un petit bruit j'ai plusieurs bruits en moi'*¹⁸⁵

Tristan Tzara

As its main platform, the present thesis uses the cultural milieu of the 1890s and early 1900s. It remains crucial to assess the Jewish identity of both Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco in its Romanian context, which also serves as an essential background narrative to the reception of Jewish heritage by Romanians and Romanian Jews in the Kingdom of Romania. One of the assumption of this study is that Romanian Jews were part of a living Jewish culture, rather than one that was dead or entirely assimilated. However, this research does not consider the Jewish identity of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco as unitary because, as Stephen Sharot discusses in his *Judaism: a sociology*, “Jewish society [...] was divided into small and close knit groups [...]”¹⁸⁶ but also due to the severe fragmentation of the Jewish communities in Romania over all. Furthermore, the Romanian researcher Carol Iancu argues that treating all the Jews living in Romania as a single and unitary people means discriminating against autochthonous Jews.¹⁸⁷ As previously mentioned, briefly, the Jewish population of Romania was a particular ethnic group, both in terms of its quantitative aspects, numerically, and from the point of view of the qualitative aspects. The Hebrew communities in Moldova consisted principally of Ashkenazi Jews, mainly Hasidim, originating from the Polish-Russian area, while in Wallachia the Sephardic Jews, who were Judeo-Spanish, were speakers of a dialect called Ladino and differed in their appearance, costumes and behaviour from their coreligionists. The local Jews called themselves *pământeni*, in this way emphasising their families’ existence in Romania for several generations, but also their allegiance to the Romanian state and solidarity with its

¹⁸⁴ Here with the meaning of ‘Intellectual Mirror’. Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Romanian, French and Hebrew into English are by the author.

¹⁸⁵ Tristan Tzara, *L’Homme Approximatif*, OC, 2, pp.81-82: ‘I speak of the one who speaks I am alone / I am only a little sound I have several sounds in me’.

¹⁸⁶ Sharot, p.58.

¹⁸⁷ Sharot, p.21.

struggles. This was in a sense the equivalent of a class system among Romanian Jews, as well as political factions and differences of religious convictions. This was nonetheless a common denominator amongst many Eastern European countries, for example the case of Poland described in detail by the Polish American writer and academic Eva Hoffman¹⁸⁸ in her book, *Shtetl: the life and death of a small town and the world of Polish Jews*. A specific characteristic that distinguished the local Jews from the other Jews was ‘the custom of giving their children non-Jewish names, from Greek-Latin antiquity or from the post-biblical Christian period such as: Alexandru, Liviu, Aurel, Teodor (Tudor), Nicolae, Constantin, Ștefan, Corneliu, [Marcel, Iuliu], etc.’¹⁸⁹ This recalls of the practices of German Jews who, to escape the stigma attached to their Jewish family names, tried to change the, practice unwelcomed by the German officials.¹⁹⁰

The style of naming their children provides a clue on the position Tzara’s and Janco’s families had within the Jewish communities, as local Jews, who had non-Jewish names. There is indeed one exception, the case of Tristan Tzara (named Samuel at birth). It seems there is no logical explanation behind Tzara’s given name, clearly Jewish, since his family was not observant of the Jewish religion,¹⁹¹ and since the diminutive for Samuel – Samică, Tzara’s childhood name¹⁹² – was the name used by Romanians to refer to the Jews in general, therefore making very clear their Jewish background. Despite the present thesis’ wish to find the reason behind this, the lack of any conclusive explanation allows only suppositions around this topic.

This thesis suggests that Romanian Jewish culture and Romanian culture in general had their own impacts on Tzara and Janco during their formative years, in addition to being connected to the way in which they related to their Jewishness. This chapter proceeds by assessing the impact of the socio-political reality of their families, given that the hardship encountered by Jewish minorities was an obvious characteristic of the ‘Jewish experience’, regardless of economic status, and thus Tzara and Janco would have both felt its influence. This was due to a fundamental event that marked

¹⁸⁸ Hoffman.

¹⁸⁹ Ion Coja, *Evreii nostri* (Our Jews), <http://ioncoja.ro/evreii-nostri-3-evreii-pamanteni/> [accessed 19 June 2017].

¹⁹⁰ Endelman, pp.39-40.

¹⁹¹ Hentea, p.14. Hentea claims that Tzara’s family had distanced itself from religious Jews but yet did not find acceptance among Romanians either.

¹⁹² The letter received by Tzara from his mother and father shows the usage of several diminutives for Samuel: Samica, Samicu, Samico. See letters in Fond Doucet, *TZR* 3484-3489, Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet, Paris, France. Hereafter cited as BLJD.

the difference between the Jews of Romania and the Jews of Central and Western Europe. The adoption of the first Romanian Constitution, inspired by the Belgian Constitution (1831), enacted in 1866 and in use until 1923, through its Article 7, conditioned Romanian citizenship on Christianity: ‘Only foreigners of Christian rite may acquire Romanian citizenship’. The adoption of this Constitution was on account of historical reasons, more precisely Romanian-Ottoman relations, and a guarantee of preservation of national identity.¹⁹³ The results were ambiguous and the emancipation of approximately 133,000¹⁹⁴ Romanian Jews was lost.

This chapter aims also to explore the connection between the aspects around which Tzara and Janco’s early experiences involuntarily gravitated towards Romanian modernism in the pre-avant-garde period. Starting with the first decade of the twentieth century, the modern, Francophone, Romania faced a new challenge when it came to its aspiration of being an emerging cosmopolitan society. A substantial portion of the Jewish intellectuals and artists involved in modernist movements were advocating a culture whose very cosmopolitan omen was positioned directly in an irreconcilable conflict with the entire Romanian culture. Its officially proclaimed value system was under constant scrutiny both from the inside, through its autochthonous critics, and from the outside, through the standards of the Western culture towards which it aspired. In other words, any radical means of expression, as those experimented by Janco and his companion Tzara, in Zurich, were still perceived as profoundly anti-Romanian. One of the central reasons for this was the need for achieving common national identity. In the eyes of the Romanian intelligentsia this could be achieved only through the unity of language, beliefs, and traditions. This meant that modernism and the avant-garde were antithetical to this goal, even if both followed to a certain extent a project of modernisation of Romanian culture. Romanian modernism developed more or less simultaneously with traditionalist movements such as *Samanatorism* and *Poporanism*. These movements, which had fully surfaced at the beginning of the twentieth century, oriented themselves towards a rural farming life, propounding an ideology based on the nation-state and social harmony. Having Orthodoxism as a latent ideology, these were the incipient stages undertaken by Romanian nationalist and traditionalist ideologies in achieving their socio-political radicalness, amply manifested in the 1930s. The innovative stand of any modernist manifestation was quickly debated and

¹⁹³ Eleodor Focșeneanu, *Istoria Constituțională a României 1859-1991* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), pp.29-30.

¹⁹⁴ This number is according to the Census of 1860-1861 (*Analizele Statistice*, 1861), as cited in Carol Iancu, *Emanciparea Evreilor din Romania 1913-1919* (Bucharest: Ed. Hasefer, 1998), p.20.

opposed due to its Jewishness, and therefore, following nationalists' logic, contradiction of traditional values. This phenomenon was sufficiently strong in spirit to maintain a distance between the two. Motivated on the newly gained national freedom, the traditionalist movements were presented as the spiritual need for a return to origins. The Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga, fighting modernism vividly, explained the stages that Romania was supposed to take to find its national specificity:

What we have to do, first of all, is the purifying, unifying, advancing, and especially spreading of our culture. [...] We have a national state without a national culture, but with a foreign smattering, [namely] French. [...] We need everyone's [Romanian people's] culture, from top to bottom, from border to border, a culture that is ours [...]. Enough with the foreign idiocies in [our] cosmopolitan salons.¹⁹⁵

Anything that was foreign, including the Romanians of 'foreign origin', many of whom were Jews, was susceptible of being accused of threatening the Romanian culture. Such adversaries of modernism saw the peasant as the only Romanian reality, constructed on the utopian ideology of an archetypal and rural millennial space, capable of withstanding modernity by its real presence, by perpetuating the countryside and rejecting industrialism.

This chapter is aware of an implied contradiction in arguing that the avant-garde in Romania spread beyond the generally agreed upon period. As Erwin Kessler argues, 'there was a meaningful conceptual confusion about the very notions employed in theoretical discourse'¹⁹⁶ regarding modernism and the avant-garde in Romania. Kessler explains that this confusion was based on Romanian cultural and historical factors that considered modernism as a term too broad to be employed. For this reason, he argues, 'when the avant-garde erupted in Romania, it claimed, only then, after World War I, to be, finally, modernist'.¹⁹⁷ The influential literary critics and ethnologists Nicolae Densușianu and Eugen Lovinescu were reticent, at that time, to use the term modernism and therefore replaced it with symbolism. Simply put, in Romania, what was claimed to be symbolism before the First World War was, in fact, early modernism, and what was claimed to be modernism following the First World War

¹⁹⁵ Nicolae Iorga, 'O noua epoca de cultura, Samanatorul', 18 May 1903, in *O lupta literara*. Articole din Samanatorul. Tome I (May 1903–July 1905) (Vălenii de munte: 'Neamul Romanesc,' Press, 1914), pp.10-11.

¹⁹⁶ Kessler, in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, p.44.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

was, in reality, avant-garde.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, this chapter views Tzara and Janco's *Simbolul* years as part of the modernist period, as pre-avant-gardists, but not completely detached from the historical avant-garde, since its protagonists have wished to shock the establishment ever since.

With only a few surrealist-absurd writings, the Romanian sphere seemed trapped in an ossified traditionalism, searching for its national specificity, in which Jewish artists were not allowed, given their 'otherness'.¹⁹⁹ Dominated by an anachronistic rustic theme, 'provincial and old-fashioned',²⁰⁰ dating back to the nineteenth century, the Romanian artistic creation had to openly conceive ideas inspired by the West as a necessary condition for its rejuvenation. As a consequence, the *Symbolist* movement appeared, the 'effect of an external diffusion phenomenon as in other literatures'.²⁰¹ The Romanian literary critic Constantin Ciopraga, stresses that Romanian *Symbolism* appeared as an imitation of other cultures, a mechanical transplant that was harshly criticised by the traditionalists. It is somewhat a precursor of the Romanian avant-garde movement. Starting in 1908, according to Ciopraga, several journals and magazines of the younger generation, together with poetry volumes signed by I. Minulescu and Emil Isac – both collaborators of Tzara and Janco in their first joint project the journal *Simbolul* later, in 1912 – revealed clear differences between one another as a result of the ambiguity of the concept of *modern*. Many of the future collaborators of Tzara and Janco experimented with symbolist literature; just to name a few: Al Macedonsky, Adrian Maniu, Claudia Milian, and Al I. Solacolu. The Romanian literary critic observes that, in general, the Romanian symbolist poets 'came from amidst the small bourgeoisie with their desires brutally annihilated, [and] wounded by contacts with the social power holders'.²⁰² In Romania, as elsewhere, the drive behind their art was their social frustration. Furthermore, they were recruited from urban areas – this not being at all accidental, since cities were meeting places and crossing points for modernist experiments:

¹⁹⁸ For more on this, see *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Stern stresses the constraint felt by the Jewish artists to search for another kind of art where their otherness was not insuperable. Stern, in *Jewish aspects in avant-garde*, p.49.

²⁰⁰ Ovid Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura romana intre cele doua razboaie mondiale*, Vol. II (Bucharest: ed. Minerva, 1974), p.6. It is widely agreed by Romanian literary critics that, at the turn of the century, Romanian traditionalism was dominating the artistic sphere. On the history of Romanian literature at the turn of the century, see Crohmălniceanu; see also Ciopraga.

²⁰¹ Ciopraga, p.143.

²⁰² Ciopraga, p.144: 'Proveniți din medile micii burghezii cu velleități anihilate brutal, răniți de contactele cu deținătorii puterii sociale'.

Recruited in particular from the towns, evolving in inhumane conditions refractory to intellectual impulses, the anti-bourgeois sarcasm of some is a manifestation of the revolt, while others' intimate drama is amplified up to the point of the illusory denial of the bonds with a society in which philistinism triumphs.²⁰³

In many respects, the condition of the poet was the one that gave the certain authenticity necessary in the modernist experiments. Even in the Romanian context, with its very limited urban areas,²⁰⁴ the modernist manifestations followed the international trend and developed in the cities. Coincidence or not, the Romanian Jews were the most urbanised²⁰⁵ of all ethnic minorities living in Romania. The pull and push of the city provided the best place for their development and the cosmopolitan environment served as a sort of camouflage to their 'otherness'. The urban environment was the one responsible for generating new arts since it was the focal point of the intellectual community. 'In many respects the literature of experimental Modernism [...] was an art of cities',²⁰⁶ as it was also the intellectual centre of conflict and tension. According to Malcolm Bradbury, modernism developed in the cities because 'writers and intellectuals have long adored the city [since] its very model of man has been the basis of a profound cultural dissent'.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, the city itself, and, more specifically Bucharest, represented the most important axes for literature and art since the late nineteenth century; it often became one of the central themes in modernist art, both in literature and painting, as a place of interactions between international movements, individuals and ideas,²⁰⁸ as shown, for instance, by the poems written in Romanian by Tristan Tzara. Without going into detail regarding Tzara's early works – for it will be analysed in depth in the coming chapters – it should be stressed here that between the verses of his literary debut under the pseudonym *Samyro* and those published under

²⁰³ Ciopraga, p.144: 'recrutați în special dintre cetățeni, evoluând în condiții subumane, refractare elanurilor intelectuale, la unii sarcasmul antiburghez este o manifestare a revoltei, la alții drama intimă se amplifică până la negarea iluzorie a legăturilor cu o societate în care filistinismul triumfă'.

²⁰⁴ 86% of the Romanian population lived in rural areas in the 1920s, according to the statistical data in *Arhivele Olteniei*, 4 (1922), p.325.

²⁰⁵ After the War of Independence of 1877-1878, Romania granted Jews who had served in the military the right to keep rural pubs. The number of Jews was not significant in rural areas, being mostly concentrated in cities. Teșu Solomovici, *România Judaică (de la începuturi și până la 23 august 1944)* Tome I, (Bucharest: Teșu, 2001), p.183.

²⁰⁶ Malcolm Bradbury, 'The cities of Modernism', in *Modernism. A guide to European literature 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin Books, 1991), p.96.

²⁰⁷ Bradbury, p.97.

²⁰⁸ For more on the modernist manifestations and the urban theme in the Romanian avant-garde, see Madalina Lascu, *Imaginea Orasului in Avangarda Romaneasca* (The image of the city in the Romanian avant-garde) (Bucharest: Tracus Arte, 2014).

the name Tristan Tzara there is an ‘immense distance’.²⁰⁹ Overall, as Bradbury concluded, the city became a metaphor rather than a place and modernist art has had a special relationship with the modern city.²¹⁰ It is the place where inadaptability becomes a reality and where the feeling of exclusion is intentional, accentuated by the artists instead of waiting for the society to exclude them.

The modernist intellectual elite implemented the conditions for the appearance of the avant-garde immediately preceding the First World War through the publication of journals and reviews. Such publications openly affirmed their oppositional character to the prevailing status quo with the intent to gain access to an artistic existence and to combat their specific imperceptibility. The precursor of the Romanian avant-garde remains unequivocally Urmuz, as a pseudonym of Demetru Dem. Deme-trescu-Buzău, with his sudden and radical reform of language that premiered during a time in which *Semanatorismul* and its reserve towards Westernisation prevailed, following a folkloric cultural tradition.²¹¹ His reasonable bourgeois lifestyle as a clerk at the Supreme Court in Bucharest did not betray his revolutionary anti-literary attitude. Its acme was reached in the first decade of the twentieth century when Urmuz was the first writer to possess the vision to comprehend the necessary transformations needed within the Romanian literary discourse. Critics and art historians will see him as a primary source of inspiration for Tzara, with S.A. Mansbach calling Urmuz ‘perhaps a model for Janco, Tzara and their artist comrades’.²¹² The deliriant heroes of Urmuz’s works were conceived in an innovative manner, aesthetic manifestos very familiar to the Dada productions.

One of the prominent figures of the French avant-garde, the Romanian-born playwright Eugène Ionesco, claimed that Urmuz was one of the forerunners of ‘universal literary rebellion, one of the prophets of dislocation of social, thought and language forms, which today under our own eyes, are disintegrating similarly with the heroes of our author [Urmuz]’.²¹³ In his anti-prose bizarre short stories, covering less than 50 pages, which later became known as *Pagini Bizare* (Bizarre Pages), Urmuz

²⁰⁹ Crohmălniceanu (1974), p.365.

²¹⁰ Bradbury, p.97.

²¹¹ As signaled by Mincu, p.18.

²¹² Mansbach, note 16, p.350.

²¹³ Eugène Ionesco in *Revue Les Lettres Nouvelles N° 1965: Janvier février 1965*, as cited in Mincu, p.19.

begun to alter the accepted conventions of literature in order to entertain his family and close friends.²¹⁴

Urmuz and his oeuvre became, for the entire Romanian avant-garde, ‘the very emblem of its spirit’.²¹⁵ Romanian critics almost unanimously agree that he was the very expressive norm of the denial of traditionalist literature: the destruction of the language and its recovery through other manners are only some of the themes highlighted by the Romanian critic M. Mincu in his analysis²¹⁶ of the procedures and techniques used by Urmuz, Mincu placing him amongst the Experimentalist writers. Furthermore, Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu puts his actions amongst the first pre-Dadaist texts in the world, where the humour is the result of a rolling mechanism of thought without any content.²¹⁷ In an era when writers reported themselves to a world dominated by traditionalism and where Romanian peasants’ patriotism needed to be defended at all costs, Urmuz’s style recalls the noisy avant-garde movement popularised in the Romanian sphere only after the appearance of the first manifesto of F. T. Marinetti.

In his short life, from 1883 until the night of his suicide in 1923, Urmuz refused to publish anything else except for three brief stories.²¹⁸ Under the pursuance of his friend, Romanian writer Tudor Arghezi, Urmuz published in 1922 in a magazine called *Cugetul Românesc* (the Romanian Thought). According to O. Morar, his refusal to see himself as an established published author was perceived by his cohort as a profound denial of the writer status, a sign of supreme rebelliousness.²¹⁹ ‘By introducing randomness into writing [...] [by] the hybridization of all genres and literary styles, Urmuz represented the essential link in the evolution of aesthetics of the avant-garde’.²²⁰ Urmuz represented the beginning of a new style for Romanian literature, and it remains clear that his artistic radicalness influenced the activities of many others at the turn of the century. The national artistic configuration experienced fluidity for the first time, as it is argued later on in this thesis.

²¹⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of his style and entire oeuvre, see, for example, Mincu, p.18-25; Morar, pp.58-75; Ion Pop (ed.), *Schițe și nuvele aproape ... futuriste / Urmuz* (Bucharest: Biblioteca Bucureștilor, 2012). See also a rigorous monograph by Nicolae Balotă, *Urmuz* (Timișoara: Ed. Hestia, 1970, 1997).

²¹⁵ Morar, p.60.

²¹⁶ See, Mincu, *Avangarda literară românească*.

²¹⁷ See, Crohmălniceanu.

²¹⁸ Pălnia și Stamate (în nr. 2, martie 1922), Ismail și Turnavitu (nr. 3, aprilie) și După furtună (în nr. 6-7, iunie-iulie 1923, al aceleiași reviste).

²¹⁹ Morar, p.61.

²²⁰ Manucu, p.71.

The central aim of this research is to demonstrate that, rather than acting as the voice of a hypothetically-unified Jewish people, Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco displayed multiple, fluid, and multilayered identities among which Jewishness coexisted alongside many other facets. Although it agrees that Tzara and Janco's early experiences involuntarily gravitated towards Romanian modernism in the pre-avant-garde period, this chapter insists that their Jewishness, as an integral part of their multilayered identities, is not entirely responsible for their attitude of revolt against the socio-political status quo; rather, their attitude is fuelled by a multitude of surrounding elements.

This chapter focuses on the relationships they had with their families, the initial source of their Jewish heritage, before moving towards a preliminary examination of their first joint projects. Therefore, central to this chapter is an analysis of their familial background, concomitantly introducing the first modernist journal *Simbolul* (The Symbol), published in 1912 and co-edited by Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, and *Chemarea* (The Call), published by Ion Vinea and Tristan Tzara. Instead of examining the two journals at once, the thesis will gradually introduce the sections considered relevant for the discussion carried out in each of the chapters. Therefore, in the present chapter, it is instructive to delineate some of the basic philosophy of these Romanian reviews, together with the literary stance that Tzara and Janco wished to take, leaving the in-depth content analysis of each journal for the chapters that follow. In the final subchapter, the reception of their modernist manifestation as a Jewish phenomenon is examined, in this way highlighting the antisemitic reactions against the avant-garde movement.

Although this chapter later argues that their Jewish heritage is bound to have influenced Tzara and Janco in their careers, it resists the impulse to study them as members of a minority culture, with respect to Romanian culture, since, as it is later argued, their otherness was not, prior to the avant-garde, necessarily cultural,²²¹ but rather socio-political. In other words, Tzara and Janco, as well as the majority of Romanian Jews, were assimilated in terms of language, as even one of the most antisemitic authors of the time agrees:

²²¹ Here, the term cultural refers specifically to the philological/linguistic perspective of the Romanian culture.

We could say that the Jews assimilate into a people's culture only from a philological point of view. [...] all their cultural life is reduced to this exchange of ideas, without thereby becoming assimilated. There are Jewish writers who speak and write Romanian well enough.²²²

Although the text carries a sense of antisemitic accusation and the obsession of its author regarding Jewish otherness, there is substantial information that needs to be taken into consideration regarding the cultural assimilation of Jewish intellectuals, mainly from a philological perspective. Therefore, Romanian Jews were culturally integrated, to a certain extent, having a perfect command of the Romanian language and producing Romanian language texts,²²³ and for this reason positioning them as a minority culture would be wrong. Instead, this chapter acknowledges Tzara and Janco's otherness due to their position of 'accented'²²⁴ marginality resulting from socio-political realities but not from a minority culture. Furthermore, such a position is also strengthened by scholarship, such as that of John Borneman,²²⁵ who argues that studying the Jews from the perspective of a minority culture makes them 'become the exoticized other' and 'the equivalent of the primitive outside of Europe', a fact that would not only unnecessarily aggravate Tzara and Janco's condition of otherness, but would also place them, wrongfully, in a position of inferiority in relation to Romanian culture, which would be considered as the 'majority' due to being numerically larger.

The above interpretation might lead to the crucial error of assuming that both Tzara and Janco were culturally alien in regard to the majority, since their socio-political situation excluded them from Romanian society, a conclusion strongly rejected by means of the primary archival sources consulted in the present study, which will be analysed later in this chapter. Therefore, this chapter identifies Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco as culturally involved with Romanian culture, both aware of its modernist and traditionalist cultural tendencies, but outsiders from the socio-political perspective, given their Jewish heritage. A necessary specification is that this chapter does not claim that Tzara and Janco's works were fully accepted by Romanian culture, but that,

²²² Rosu, p.157: 'Am putea spune ca evreii isi asimileaza cultura unui popor numai din punct de vedere filologic [...] toata cultural or se reduce la acest schimb de idei, fara ca prin aceasta sa devie asimilati. Sunt scriitori evrei care vorbesc si scriu romaneste destul de bine'.

²²³ For more on this, see Iancu Brauștein, *Evreii în prima universitate din România* (The Jews in the first Romanian University) (Iasi: Ed. Dan, 2001).

²²⁴ Hamid Naficy, *Discourse of the other: Postcoloniality, positionality, and subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1991).

²²⁵ John Borneman and Jeffrey M. Peck (eds.), *Sojourners: The return of German Jews and the question of identity* (Lincoln, NE, London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p.31.

during their early years, their otherness was as a result of their socio-political status rather than their cultural tendencies. Such clarifications contribute to a first analysis of the link between their self-identification, their teenage years' work while still in pre-avant-garde²²⁶ Romania, and their relation to the Romanian Jewish culture and Romanian field of fine arts and literature that was struggling to gain international recognition. The particular circumstances in which they lived during this period will contribute to understanding the way in which Tzara and Janco fashioned an identity in pre-war Romania.

The narrative identity of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco presents itself in a complicated manner before and during their Dada years, leaving their own interpretation of their Jewishness in doubt. An investigation of the socio-political and cultural climate in which Janco and Tzara evolved before their departure to Zurich means to primarily differentiate between the events and their interpretation, the individual experiences and their reception by the social groups.²²⁷ The concept of Jewish experience places its emphasis not necessarily on the events as such but rather on the way they were perceived and presented later as memories. Their Jewish experience included a series of beliefs for which they strived, acted on, 'suffered, desired and enjoyed, saw, believed, imagined'.²²⁸ Of course, the question of how to see Tzara and Janco as *Jewish* depends on the position one wishes to take and the angle of addressing the issue, with such an ambivalence, in relation to the European Jews, being theorised about in several contexts by Adorno and Horkheimer²²⁹ and David Biale.²³⁰ Furthermore, Tzara's and Janco's Jewishness is put in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming in order to discuss how Tzara's and Janco's similar Jewish experiences did not necessarily produce identical becomings, and vice versa – similar backgrounds did not ensure similar Jewish experiences.

Tzara and Janco's multifaceted performative identities were central to the way in which they put together their sense of identity in their search for individualism and their uniqueness, yet nothing that happened to them was so original, particularly since,

²²⁶ This follows the generally accepted concept of the Romanian avant-garde, which is considered to have started in 1921 (see Lascu).

²²⁷ On the anthropology of experience, see Roger D. Abrahams, 'Ordinary and extraordinary experience', in *The anthropology of experience*, ed. by Victor Turner (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981), pp.45-72.

²²⁸ See John Dewey, *Experience and nature* (1929), as cited in Abrahams, 'Ordinary and extraordinary experience', p.59.

²²⁹ Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 1997).

²³⁰ David Biale, *Power and powerlessness in Jewish history* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1986).

involuntarily or not, they recognised themselves as members of a generation, a network, and a community. Due to the context of their youth, they had to define themselves against the positioning of others, a collective identity of the Romanian Jews that also determined their perception by the majority. This chapter begins by presenting a detailed description of each of the two specific cases by examining archival sources, such as letters addressed to their families, transcripts, and other personal documents. The aim of such an examination is to observe how each experienced the struggle of emancipation – both from traditional religious Judaism and from a growing national feeling in Romania – as defined by the limits of political freedoms, where cultural purity became essential.

The intellectual climate prior to the First World War was torn between the modernising impulses of the turn of the century and a series of traditionalist debates, with this clash often resulting in an atmosphere of cultural confusion. This chapter suggests that, in this context, the pre-avant-gardist attitudes emerged, and that this particular atmosphere not only allowed Tzara and Janco to engage in artistic experiments but was also responsible for provoking their struggle for self-definition. The identity-focused debates surrounding the specificity of Romanian high culture identified the Jews with modernism and claimed that ‘their poetic anarchism went hand in hand with the political one’.²³¹ In other words, the Jews were accused of pursuing the destabilisation of the established culture before the historical avant-garde came into being in Romania. This chapter shows that Tzara and Janco, as Romanian Jews, explored the only option left by their status as outsiders – the path towards modernism.

This chapter argues the idea that the Romanian Jewish intellectuals were indeed informed about the international cultural and intellectual avant-garde, but their involvement was because of the lack of space in Romanian cultural fields. This allows a discussion on the extent to which the common conflation of avant-garde and Jewishness was in fact justified by the antisemitic circles. Tzara and Janco’s Jewishness remains fundamental since they were set under its normative umbrella by default due to their modernist activities, but the idea²³² that all Jewish artists unconsciously expressed a ‘Jewish essence’²³³ is dismissed.

²³¹ Morar, p.16.

²³² See, for instance, Crohmalniceanu.

²³³ For more on the *Jewish essence*, see Klára Móricz, *Jewish identities: Nationalism, racism, and utopianism in twentieth-century music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, c.2008), pp.7-9. She presents a detailed analysis of Max Brod’s concept of *Jewish essence*; Brod ascribes to each artist of Jewish heritage a so-called Jewish essence, regardless of their artistic productions, presenting any elements particularly linked to the Jewish culture.

1.1. Tristan Tzara, Marcel Janco, and their Jewish families

Inspired by Klara Moricz's argument²³⁴ on racial heritage and identity in art, the following subchapter argues that it was neither Tzara's and Janco's Jewish heritage, nor their connection to Jewish culture, that defined their artistic personalities, but a web of interrelated social, political and personal components, all part of their multi-layered identity, of which their Jewishness was only one. For the sake of clarity, it needs to be noted here that their Jewishness is understood as a layer as fluid as other components in Tzara's and Janco's multiple, multi-layered identities, without dismissing its importance at any point. Therefore, this thesis acknowledges, in relations to its central hypothesis, that Tzara's and Janco's Jewishness should be treated as a constant element of their identities however not as a limitative, overwhelming one that would annul any other ones, equally as important.

As a consequence, amongst these components, their families represented one. The present subchapter presents in what follows an assessment of their self-perception of their Jewish heritage through their familial context, while they explored the modernist trends in Romania. By examining their familial context, school years and early works, including those preceding *Simbolul*, it is argued that the slow process for Romanian Jews to acquire citizenship contributed to the development of the multilayered identities of Tzara and Janco. Despite the fact that the 'Jews settled in scattered clusters [...] in the eighteenth century',²³⁵ according to a significant study by the Romanian historian Nicolae Iorga on the gradual expansion of the Jews in the Romanian principalities, the Jews were regarded as complete foreigners by the authorities. This subchapter considers this specific lack of development in the socio-political realm as being essential to this analysis, especially since citizenship was to provide the core of Tzara's and Janco's socio-political identities, as well as that of their families, as Romanians, whereas the lack of a citizenship would have only perpetuated their otherness.

By presenting the specific familial context of each of the two protagonists of this thesis, with an emphasis on Tzara's case and his correspondence with his family since Janco's correspondence, from his youth, with his family is not accessible, this

²³⁴ Mórica builds her argument on the cases of Ernest Bloch and Arnold Schoenberg's Jewish identities; see Mórica, p.10.

²³⁵ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria evreilor în țările noastre* (The history of the Jews in our countries) (Bucharest: Ed. Librăriei Socecu & Comp, 1913). Some researchers believe that the Jews settled in the area around the fourteenth century but, to the knowledge of the author, there is no concrete evidence on the matter.

subchapter intends to show that the upper-middle-class status of their families contributed to their specific understanding of their Jewishness. It is argued that the specific familial context contributed to their overall Jewish experience for ‘experiences within the families are intense, heavily emotion-laden, and are apt to evoke pleasurable or painful memories for most individuals’.²³⁶ In other words, as Mindel and Habenstein argue, if traditional ethnic values can be traced anywhere, ‘they will be in the family’.²³⁷ Therefore, the evolution and persistence of their Jewish heritage is analysed through their familial context, arguing that the adoption of a totally new identity by renouncing their entire selves only to become Romanian was inhibited by a multitude of elements in the social structure of Romania, amongst which was the unavailability of a simple Romanian identity.²³⁸

In response to the developing historical context in Romania, Tzara’s and Janco’s families showed a readiness to secularise in order to assimilate. This revealed the innovative aspects of modern Jewish identity in Eastern Europe in its quest to become free and equal citizens within the nation state of Romania and equal to the Western Jews. The antisemitic attitudes, ‘more visible in intellectual and cultural environments and more accentuated in the middle class and the *intellectual proletariat*, which was eager to gain prestige and achieve social status’,²³⁹ played nonetheless a significant role in Tzara’s and Janco’s families’ willingness to assimilate. However, this was not the sole factor. Indeed, the antisemitic manifestations in Romania played a massive role in the assimilation process of many Romanian Jews but their self-representation against the Westernised Jews should not be overlooked either.²⁴⁰

As Victor Jeleniewski Seidler states, Eastern European Jews tried to overcome a significant delay in comparison to the Western ‘Enlightened’ Jews.²⁴¹ Their supposed backwardness was sanctioned by the Westernised Jews. The Eastern European

²³⁶ Charles H. Mindel and Robert W. Habenstein, *Ethnic families in America: Patterns and variations*, (New York, NY: Elsevier, c.1976), p.7.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

²³⁸ This idea is based on Glazer and Moynihan’s work on ethnicity and ethnic communities in the United States. In their book, they claim that dropping whatever one is in order to become simply American is inhibited by the ‘unavailability of a simple American identity’. See Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the melting pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians and Irish of New York City* (2nd ed.), (Cambridge, MA, London: The MIT Press, 1970), p. xxxiii.

²³⁹ Volovici (1995), p.40.

²⁴⁰ As already discussed in the Introduction, Romanian Jews, partisans of assimilation, looked for a long time towards France and towards French Judaism, perceiving the French concept of human rights and emancipation à la française as a role model and as a quasi-mimetic reference. See Caron Iancu, *Emanciparea Evreilor din Romania (1913-1919)* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1998).

²⁴¹ Victor Jeleniewski Seidler, *Shadows of the Shoah: Jewish identity and belonging* (Oxford, New York, NY: Berg, 2000), p.107.

Jews were facing not only antisemitic reactions from non-Jews but also the stigma of the shtetl life in the eyes of their coreligionists.²⁴² Peter Gay talks in his *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, about the shameless imitation of all things German by the German Jews, including anti-Jewish stereotypes “without modification and without apologies: they ridicule the Jew’s blatant passion for profit, his indecent bargaining, his parvenu’s self-importance and ignorance - all types familiar from anti-Semitic myth-making.”²⁴³ For Gay, as already mentioned briefly, this was additional evidence of the commitment of German Jews to integrate into the German society as equal citizens by taking over and idealizing “the standards of the dominant culture, including its prejudices, valuing what it valued and despising what it despised - which happened to include them.”²⁴⁴ The *fin de siècle* Romania had strong links to the German society through its new king, a German prince, Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. However, the Romanian society and culture was infatuated with the French culture, a fact which created a most confusing cultural context. The cases of Tzara and Janco are illustrative of these internal contradictions of Romanian modernity. These two Romanian born Jews manifested this cultural confusion quite evidently. Tzara was a devoted Francophile, while Janco was interested in the German cultural sphere more than in any other, as shown in what follows. From a logical perspective, one could assume that Janco’s attitude would have been somehow more justified given the ethnicity of its new king. However, the Romanian reality demonstrated the exact opposite. Based on the fear of being incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Romania became strongly connected with France:²⁴⁵

²⁴² For a discussion on the shtetl seen through the history of the Jewish-Polish relations, see Eva Hoffman, *Shtetl: The life and death of a small town and the world of Polish Jews* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1998) and Antony Polonsky (ed.), *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, vol. 17: *The shtetl: Myth and reality* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009, c2004). See the definition of shtetl given in the well-known anthropological monograph on shtetl culture by Zborowski and Herzog: ‘the shtetl was a poor place, a place of unpaved streets and decrepit wooden buildings’. Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with people: The culture of the shtetl* (New York, NY: International Universities Press, 1952, 1995), p.61. For a comprehensive analysis of the fictionality and aesthetic autonomy of the classics of modern Yiddish fiction and discussion on the literary image of the shtetl, see Dan Miron, *The image of the shtetl and other studies of modern Jewish literary imagination* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

²⁴³ Gay, p.209.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 213.

²⁴⁵ See Laura Ceia-Minjares, ‘Chapter One’, in *Opting-in, opting-out: The radical melancholy of the Modernist margin or, Tristan Tzara places a double bet in The avant-garde and the margin: New territories of Modernism*, ed. by Sanja Bahun-Radunović and Marinos Pourgouris (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2006). Ceia-Minjares argues that the perception of Romanian culture is that of a receiver of culture and not of a producer.

[Before the First World War] we lived as an annex of France, and we thought our thoughts through her brain, but [in a] diminished, anaemic, tired [way], therefore we can say that we were only left with its dejection, with the surplus, with the mediocre, [with the] exportable parts.²⁴⁶

Anything related to France was preferable and, as an example, by the time Tzara and Janco published *Simbolul* (1912), the majority of books published in Romania were by foreign authors, especially in French, while the public instantly rejected journals written in the Romanian language.²⁴⁷ Paris became idealised, a mythical place for the Romanians, where they found their artistic inspiration but also the political understanding that they felt was necessary for Romania's historical evolution. The apogee of French influence in Romania was reached by the first decade of the twentieth century, only to grow continuously throughout the following decades, becoming a veritable 'little Paris'.²⁴⁸ A close collaborator of Tristan Tzara, Benjamin Fondane, even characterised the Romanian culture at large as a province of the great cultures and more precisely 'a colony of French culture.'²⁴⁹

The trend of importing French culture almost entirely to Romania fuelled a real exodus of the Romanian intelligentsia to the newly discovered France, which became synonymous with modernity itself. These artists were promoters of French values and, according to some debates, some of them influenced to a certain degree the artistic paths of both Tzara and Janco.²⁵⁰ Starting with the poet and novelist Alexandru Macedonski, promoter of French symbolism in Romania and an alleged source of influence for Tzara, and ending with the intellectuals of the avant-garde, many Romanian intellectuals sought international recognition through imposing themselves in the Francophone world first. In such a context of deep adoration of French culture, it

²⁴⁶ Rosu, pp.19-20: 'Am trait ca o anexa a Frantei, si am gandit prin creierul ei, dar diminuat, anemic, obosit, incat putem spune ca n-am ramas decat cu dejectiunile, cu excedentul, cu partile mediocre, exportabile'.

²⁴⁷ The first periodical published in Romania was *Courrier de Moldavie*. For more on the francophone nature of Romania, see Sultana Bahun, *Francofonie, si francofilie la Români* (Bucharest: Ed. Demiurg, 1995). For more on the circulation of Romanian-language magazines and journals at the beginning of twentieth century, see Constantin Beldie, *Memorii: Caleidoscopul unei jumatati de veac în Bucuresti, 1900–1950* (Bucharest: Albatros, 2000).

²⁴⁸ Reportedly, one response in France was 'Thank G-d Paris is not a large Bucharest'. Jezernik, as cited in Jim Samson, *Music in the Balkans* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), p.213.

²⁴⁹ Benjamin Fundoianu, *Imagini și cărți din Franța* (Bucharest: Ed. Socec & Co, 1921), p.10. Benjamin Fondane (born Benjamin Wechsler) was a Romanian-born Jewish poet, philosopher, film-maker and critic. He was the main link between Tristan Tzara and the Romanian avant-garde journals after his relocation to Paris in 1922. Fondane's speciously symbolistic poetry evolved to surrealist, although the poet did not specifically label himself as belonging to Andre Breton's movement.

²⁵⁰ See, for instance, Sandqvist (2006), on the influences manifested by modernist artists on the productions of Tzara and Janco. See also Morar.

comes with perhaps little surprise that many intellectuals adopted French as their literary language. Amongst them was also Tristan Tzara. Alfred Bodenheimer explores the reason for Tzara's Francophonie, arguing that it is a sort of 'political statement':²⁵¹

[Tzara] was perhaps making a statement by using French as a kind of 'counter language' to the nationalistic chauvinism of his home country. Concerning the importance of French to him, it is striking and surely not accidental that Tzara later organised his Dada soiree on 14 July 1916, Bastille Day.²⁵²

It would be challenging to prove the exact reason behind Tzara's decision to adopt French as his main language for, as Harshav notes in his *The meaning of Yiddish*, "[t]hroughout the centuries, they [the Jews] wrote in Hebrew and spoke Italian, French, German, Dutch, Czech, Polish, [...] and other languages."²⁵³ Nonetheless, Tzara's early years in a Bucharest threatened by the image of the East European 'other' constitute a significant part of his experience.

Certainly, there were also artists of Jewish heritage who were able to resist this sort of involvement and pursue an independent course. This was also the case with the Janco brothers, who kept their distance from the particular French-obsessive cultural upheaval by orientating themselves towards the German culture. The reason why the Janco brothers chose a Germanophile direction it is unclear since the custom amongst Romanian bourgeois families was to send their children to Paris. Nonetheless, suffice to say that Janco's decision demonstrates, once again, that Romanian culture, and therefore also Jewish-Romanian culture, cannot be seen as one monolithic entity where everything and everyone behaves identically. In explaining Janco's interest in exploring the German sphere, the Romanian researcher Geo Serban 'blames' it on Janco's intention of seeing in person 'the *Sonderbund*²⁵⁴ exhibition and artworks of Cézanne, van Gogh, Picasso and Derain whose works he discovered during the 1909 art exhibition at the Romanian Athene.²⁵⁵ Sandqvist is also preoccupied with Janco's reasons for choosing Zurich as his long-term destination over Paris. In his *Dada East: The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire*, Sandqvist finds it difficult, as well, to provide a conclusive reason for Janco's selection of the German world rather than the French

²⁵¹ Bodenheimer, in *Jewish aspects in Avant-Garde*, p.25.

²⁵² *Ibid.*

²⁵³ Harshav, p.xiii.

²⁵⁴ *Sonderbund westdeutscher Kunstfreunde und Künstler* (the 'Separate League of West German Art Lovers and Artists') was a union of artists established 1909 in Düsseldorf.

²⁵⁵ Serban, pp. 46-47.

one.²⁵⁶ One possible scenario is that Iosif Iser's influence on Janco played a role in young Marcel's decision to embrace the Germanophone sphere. Iser, who was responsible for the start of Janco's 'artistic life', as he himself confesses, studied painting at the Royal Academy of Arts in Munich, around 1899.²⁵⁷ Given Iser's relation to the German culture, it was perhaps his direct influence or even recommendation to Janco to pursue a career in the German world. This claim is somewhat legitimised by Janco's early travels: he settles for a while in Zurich, followed by a short stay in Paris before returning to Romania. This resembles Iosif Iser's career path. His mentor, after studying in Munich, returns briefly to Bucharest, only to leave again to study in Paris at the Ranson Academy until 1909.²⁵⁸ Therefore, it is possible to imagine that Janco might have either chosen to mimic his mentor's path on his own, or even asked for Iser's advice on the matter. If Macedonski's direct or indirect influence on Tzara is accepted, and therefore his Francophonie is due also to Macedonski, as is demonstrated in what follows, it is only logical to accept Iser's direct or indirect influence on Janco, therefore explaining his Germanophone direction.

In the cases of the families of both Tzara and Janco, the perception of self as other within both the Romanian community and the Jewish one is the starting point for the analysis: "Secular Jews had no network in the community, having distanced themselves from religious Jews and not having found acceptance among Romanians."²⁵⁹ If one is to follow Hentea's claim, the state of limbo of the Jancos and Rosenstocks becomes an alternative factor to Tzara and Janco's otherness, doubled by their families' non-acceptance of the Hasidic Jews as their community and rejection by the Romanians. Since, in addition to cultural patterns, many attributes of an ethnic culture 'are mediated through the family,' Tzara's and Janco's Jewishness, or lack of, was, therefore, first developed at home, concomitantly with their families' otherness.²⁶⁰ The assessment of the formation and reception of Jewish heritage amongst their families represents a first step towards understanding their conscious change in identity.

The hardships encountered by the Jewish minority was an obvious characteristic of the 'Jewish experience' of any individual, regardless of their economic status.

²⁵⁶ Sandqvist (2006), p.78.

²⁵⁷ Al. Robot, as cited in Sandqvist, (2006), p.70.

²⁵⁸ The information regarding Iosif Iser's career was taken from Amelia Pavel, *Pictori evrei din România: 1848-1948* (Jewish painters in Romania) (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996).

²⁵⁹ Hentea, p.14.

²⁶⁰ Mindel and Habenstein, p.8.

Before their metamorphosis into, respectively, Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, pseudonyms under which they made their contributions to the international artists' patrimony, their young life experiences had gravitated involuntarily towards a few aspects. The realities in which Janco and Tzara were born, even if geographically different, had nonetheless similarities that later translated, paradoxically, into their somewhat antithetical personalities, despite their shared Jewish heritage.



1.1.1. Samuel Rosenstock vs Tristan Tzara

Born to a Jewish family in Moinesti, a small provincial town bearing traces of *shtetl* culture in Moldova, on 16 April 1896,²⁶¹ Samuel Rosenstock was the son of Emilia and Filip Rosenstock. Although Moinesti was attempting to integrate into a more cosmopolitan world,²⁶² its unpaved streets, wooden buildings and its large Jewish community²⁶³ placed it closer to a *shtetl* than a Romanian town.²⁶⁴ The Eastern European *shtetl* was rarely seen in flattering terms by those who were not living in it: “[t]ravelers passing through the little towns, especially in the eastern provinces, looked out of their carriages and saw dirt, puddles, poverty, backwardness, barefoot peasants amid filthy pigsties, and the Jews in black caftans emerging from unkept shops”²⁶⁵. The Jews, and specifically those Jews living in the rural areas, when mentioned in Romanian literature are described often in an unflattering manner²⁶⁶. For

²⁶¹ Tristan Tzara, *Les premiers poèmes*, translated and presented by Claude Sernet (Paris: Seghers, 1965) (copy consulted: No. 001433 out of the first 1500), p.15. The date of birth was 4 April 1896.

²⁶² In the mid-eighteenth century, it had two Orthodox churches, a Catholic church and a synagogue (see Appendix 1 – picture of religious processions).

²⁶³ Approx. 2,000 Jews lived in Moinesti of a total of 4,950 people. *Lib. of Cong.* US Govt. Web. Retrieved 16 March 2017. ‘Comuna urbană Moinești în Anuarul Socec al României-Mari.’

²⁶⁴ Moinesti is largely recognised as a Jewish *shtetl* also due to the significant number of Romanian Jews living there, who eventually emigrated to Palestine: ‘The idea of colonizing the agrarian lands in Eretz Israel spread quickly among the Romanian Jews, but the Jews from Moinesti have that particularity that inscribes them in the book of Alia, as founders of the first settlements’. Through Moinesti to Eretz Israel, http://www.romanianjewish.org/en/mosteniri_ale_culturii_iudaice_03_11_11.html [accessed 16 March 2017]

²⁶⁵ Hoffman, p.131.

²⁶⁶ For more descriptions of the *shtetl* in Romanian literature, see D. Ivanescu, *Populația evreiască din orașele și târgurile Moldovei între 1774-1832* (București, Editura Hasefer, 1997); Ion Mitican, *Evreii din Târgu Cucului de altădată* (Iași, Editura Tehnopress, 2005), Rudolf Suțu, *Iașii de odinioară* (Iași, Editura Tipografia Lumina Moldovei, 1923); Elias Schwarzfeld, *Din istoria evreilor: Împopulară, reîmpopulară și întemeierea târgurilor și a târgușoarelor în Moldova*, (București, 1914).

instance, one of Romania's most prominent novelist, Mihail Sadoveanu (1880-1961), depicts a shtetl in Moldova as follows:

There are old and low-lived cottages: from the street you have to descend two steps to get into a heavy smell of scrimmage and bump your head on the ceiling. The windows barely raise a hand above the muddy road. From the same house leave in the morning even two or three families at once. The men begin their quest for bread, while the women begin wandering around with their babies. From here journeymen start going to the richer part of the city; thin, pale lads, shivering in the cool mornings and still munching the last morsel of bread²⁶⁷.

The literary image of the shtetl seems to be that of a small, out-of-the-way place where one's aspirations have no way of materializing. Regarded from this perspective, Tristan Tzara's search for a life outside this world seems legitimate since the shtetl appeared to be insular, superstitious, and opposed to every progressive trend for "the restless and inquisitive spirits, for those who left for the big cities or still farther shores, for the intellectual rebels and outside commentators [...]."²⁶⁸ However, the shtetl was also a place of intimate cohesion, an experiment of multiculturalism. As sociologist Alina Cața informs, the Jews were by no means the only inhabitants of the shtetl since even when the Jewish population represented almost 90% of the local population, there was always a group of Christians living alongside the Jews.²⁶⁹

The aforementioned multicultural experiment of which the Polish American academic Eva Hoffman²⁷⁰ talks about in her book, came to light in Moinesti, a truly multicultural society. A picture from 1912, see below, shows a religious procession in which take part both the Jewish and the Christian Orthodox communities, led by their spiritual leaders: the rabbi and the priest, for the population of Moinești was almost equally split between the two communities. In the chariot are the mayor and the chief of the local police, while behind the chariot, in the first line, there are the Orthodox

²⁶⁷ Ion Mitican, p.18: 'Sunt acolo căsuțe vechi și joase:din uliță trebuie să cobori două trepte ca să dai într-un miros greu de îngrămădire și să te lovești cu capul de tavan. Ferestrele abia se ridică de-o palmă deasupra noroiului din drum. Dintr-o locuință ies dimineața și două familii și trei. Bărbații își încep goana după pâine, femeile ofilite încep a se purta de colo-colo cu sugacii în brațe... De acolo pornesc cotugarii ... gazării ... De acolo pornesc iute calfele spre meșterii din alte părți, mai bogate ale târgului; subțiri, palizi flăcăușii aceția deapănă mărunt din picioare, tremurând în diminețele răcoroase și molfăind încă cea din urmă îmbucătură de pâine'.

²⁶⁸ Hoffman, p. 12.

²⁶⁹ Alina Cața, 'The Shtetl: Cultural evolution in small Jewish towns', in Antony Polonsky (ed.), *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry*, Vol. 17: *The shtetl: Myth and reality* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009, c.2004), p.135.

²⁷⁰ Hoffman sees the shtetl as a long experiment in multiculturalism *avant la lettre* put in action by the story of Polish-Jewish coexistence. Hoffman, p.9.

psalm reader, the Orthodox priest and the rabbi. In an interview with Viorel Costea, from Moinești City Hall, he recalls a conversation with one of the participants at this event. “The late Mr. Raphael (Lulu) Kohlenberg, may he rest peacefully, said to me, in a tame way, that he had gone out to pray for the rain, each to their own God... after which, in a compelling tone, he asked me: - What do you think, there were two [Gods]



Religious procession in 1912, Moinești. Source: Personal Archive of Viorel Costea, Director CTAPMA, Moinești City Hall

or only one ?!”²⁷¹ Clearly, passing over the anecdotal character of the story, the main conclusion is that the two communities retained the “deeply religious and deeply traditional character”²⁷² specific to the small towns and shtetls of Easter Europe, a place where pluralism was experienced as ordinary life rather than an ideology.

It would be nonetheless wrong to assume that by any means this example from Moinești would allow a generalization on the Jewish-Romanian relationship as a whole in Romania. As demonstrated previously, there was a long history of prejudice towards the Jewish minority which made the ethnic origin of one individual very important especially from the point of view of the Romanian authorities. As a consequence, Tristan Tzara’s ethnic origin did not cease to be of great importance since, at

²⁷¹ Interview with Viorel Costea, Director CTAPMA (Birou Cultură, Tineret, Activități Publice și Mediul de Afaceri), Moinești City Hall, 12 May 2016.

²⁷² Hoffman, p.12.

the time, official documents specified the ethnic group to which he belonged. His birth certificate specified that he, Samuel Rosenstock, was ‘of parents of Mosaic religion, Israelite nationality [sic], not subject to any protection’.²⁷³ Other examples are the certificate of completion of studies obtained by Tzara in 1914, as well of those obtained between 1907-1910, where it is specified that he had ‘Israelite nationality’ and that he was of ‘Mosaic (Jewish) religion’.²⁷⁴ An interesting aspect discovered while consulting the National Archives of Romania was regarding Tzara’s classmates of Jewish origin. At the Schewitz Thierrin High School, in the school year 1909-1910, a total of eight pupils of Mosaic (Jewish) religion were enrolled, including Tzara. One interesting detail is that out of the total of eight students of Jewish origin, seven had ‘Israelite nationality’ and ‘Mosaic (Jewish) religion’, and only one had Romanian nationality and Mosaic religion. Out of the seven with Israelite nationality, three²⁷⁵ were taking Religion courses, which were Christian Orthodox, although they were Jews. Therefore, it is correct to assume that not all Jews were automatically excluded from taking religion courses. As archival work proves, Tzara’s family must have requested for him to be exempt from Christian Orthodox Religion courses since his fellow classmates of the same ‘Israelite nationality’ and ‘Mosaic (Jewish) religion’ were taking Religion courses, as the archival sources cited above demonstrate. In this way, this research suggests that, by omission, previous accounts dealing with Tzara’s and Janco’s education circulated the incorrect idea that all exemption of Jews from religion courses in school was by default, while in reality it was a personal decision of the family. This proves that the Rosenstock’s took a very firm attitude towards religion in general not only towards Judaism, and assimilation into Romanian society, if ever achieved, would not be by mimicking the Christian Orthodox Romanians but via education. This idea is further discussed in the next chapters of this thesis.

Although substantial interest was shown in the last decade on the topic,²⁷⁶ some biographical details are still needed in the case of Tzara’s birthplace²⁷⁷ and his

²⁷³ See, for instance, birth certificate and school certificates.

²⁷⁴ H. Béhar, *Chronologie de Tristan Tzara, OC*, t.1, p.15; Schewitz-Thierrin Lyceum also specified the ethnic background of the students enrolled, amongst which were Samuel Rosenstock. Cf. *Serviciul Municipal al Arhivelor Nationale București* (Liceu Schewitz Thierrin), 91/1907-1912, f.36. In the same documents, it was specified that he was exempt from Religion courses, which were Christian Orthodox.

²⁷⁵ Cobilovici Emil, Benzal Ernest, Eskenazi Mosis, Cf. *Serviciul Municipal al Arhivelor Nationale Bucharest* (Liceu Schewitz Thierrin), 91/1907-1912, ff.31, 52, 75.

²⁷⁶ See, for instance, Sandqvist’s *Dada East*, and more recently, Hentea’s *TaTa DaDa*.

²⁷⁷ Sandqvist places Moinesti ten miles from Iasi when, in reality, it is 99 (159km), a mistake also repeated by Hentea in his book. Although Hentea’s research is well documented, he claims that Tzara’s date of birth according to the modern Gregorian calendar falls on 28 April (29 April according to Julian-Gregorian conversion). He argues that Tzara’s birth date coincides with the day when the Romanian

family. Tzara's father, Filip Rosenstock, was an accountant and a prolific businessman, especially in the oil industry of the region, but involved also in forest exploitation, as a leaseholder. The Jewish origin of Tzara's family would only be enhanced by the involvement of his father in local politics as the representative of the Jewish residents of his constituency.²⁷⁸ Therefore, as discussed by Zborowshi and Herzog, Filip Rosenstock followed the stereotypical occupation of the Jews in a shtetl, who were generally tradesmen.²⁷⁹ This argument strengthened by Hoffman who claims that the shtetl was the equivalent of a class system amongst Jews because there were "Hasidim, Orthodox Jews, and secularists; wealthy industrialists and assimilated professionals [...]."²⁸⁰ Tzara's father's occupation was in line with the economic trend of the region, which had in the late 1890s "15 oil factories, one stearin candles factory [, and] one systematic plant for wood for construction".²⁸¹ Involvement in such activities allowed the Rosenstocks to have a stable life. In a sense their lifestyle resembled that of a *daytsh*, a Jew from Western Europe, emancipated, and Europeanized.²⁸² However, it would be incorrect to fit them into this category of shtetl people since a *daytsh* would only visit the shtetl for business or "to help his "benighted" eastern European brethren."²⁸³ This clearly was not the case for the Rosenstocks whose family tree was well-steeped into the Romanian provinces.

Nonetheless, Tzara's family's lifestyle reflected the status of the Eastern Europe petit bourgeois,²⁸⁴ having a relatively big house close to the town centre, on the main street, *Strada Mare*, with a centre portico with two modified Corinthian-style

Orthodox Church celebrates Saint Dada. In reality, St Dada is celebrated on 13 April along with St Maxim and St Cvintilian, and once again on 29 September alongside St Govdela and St Casdoas. By linking Tzara's date of birth to the celebration of St Dada, Hentea attempts to offer an unprovable alternative to the origin of the name DADA. Referring to the pronunciation of Tzara's hometown of Moinesti, Hentea claims the final 'i' is silent, which is incorrect. See Sandqvist (2006) and Hentea (2015).

²⁷⁸ Interview with Viorel Costea, Director CTAPMA, Moinesti City Hall, 12 May 2016.

²⁷⁹ For a complete discussion on shtetl life and family in Eastern Europe, see Mark Zborowski and Elizabeth Herzog, *Life is with people: The culture of the shtetl* (New York, NY: International Universities Press, 1952). Zborowshi and Herzog describe the shtetl as a poor place where 'there was no Jewish architecture rather the most noticeable features of the dwellings were their age and their shabbiness', p.61.

²⁸⁰ Hoffman, p.11.

²⁸¹ 'Sunt 15 fabrici de petrolu, una fabrica de luminal de stearin; una fabrica sistematica pentru lemne de constructie'; George Ioan Lahovari, Moinesti, *com. rur.*, in *Marele Dictionar Geografic al Romaniei* (Great Geographical Dictionary of Romania) (Bucharest: J.V. Socecu, 1901), pp.379-380.

²⁸² For more on the *daytsh*, see Miron, pp.26-27.

²⁸³ Miron, p.27.

²⁸⁴ For more on Tzara's childhood milieu and family's friends, see, for instance, Hentea, pp.13-16. Hentea presents a series of biographical details such as his family, friends, their hobbies and lifestyle in general.

columns, a large lawn and a backyard reaching a forest.²⁸⁵ As Tzara himself recalled, their house was ‘a rather large house built at the head of a country yard giving way to an enormous garden’.²⁸⁶ The research trips undertaken to Moinesti during the preparation of the present thesis revealed that the Rosenstocks’ house had an enormous garden bordered by a forest. Such a sumptuous building appeared even bigger by comparison to the other houses in the city centre, of which only three are left standing today.

The river flowing on their property had springs of mineral water, hence his mother’s obsession with him drinking mineral water, as a universal remedy: “You had an intoxication because your liver was sick. Go and check what it was. You should drink mineral water [...]”²⁸⁷ Although quite anecdotal, Emilia Rosenstock’s reaction in the letter addressed to Tzara reflects two interesting realities. The first one carries a more practical element given the specificity of the region – having ‘four springs of mineral waters: chloro-sodic, iron, sulphur’.²⁸⁸ Although religion was not a centre-piece of their household, this does not automatically imply that they rejected Jewish tradition.²⁸⁹ On the contrary, according to Hentea, ‘tradition played an important role’²⁹⁰ in the Rosenstock family. To what extent this reality contributed to Tzara’s relationship to his mother may be open to interpretations however it is clear that the eternal affection of his mother appears to have been one of the few things that did not bother the adult Tzara in relation to his past, maintaining a close correspondence with his mother, as will be shown below. Furthermore, the relationship between Tzara and his mother is even more interesting in the context of this research since, as the American scholar Paula E. Hyman argues, Jewish women were “responsible for maintaining the integrity of the Jewish family as the locus of the formation of Jewish identity.”²⁹¹ Hyman claims that the Jewish woman, in her role as priestess of the home, was responsible for the preservation of specific values serving as a mediator between the process of integration into Gentile society and Jewish tradition. Although Tzara’s

²⁸⁵ Interview with Viorel Costea, Director CTAPMA, Moinesti City Hall, 12 May 2016.

²⁸⁶ Tzara, *Faites veus jeux*, OC, Tome I, p.267: ‘Mez parents habitaient une assez vaste maison batie a la tete d’une cour qui donnait dans un enorme jardin’.

²⁸⁷ Letter sent by his mother, Bucuresti 7 August 1925, BLJD, TZR C 3485.

²⁸⁸ Lahovari, p.380.

²⁸⁹ A picture of Filip and Emilia Rosenstock shows the Rosenstocks not wearing Jewish religious clothing, therefore most likely not adhering closely to the Orthodox Jewish practices either. See Hentea, p.10, Figure 1.2.

²⁹⁰ Hentea, p.14.

²⁹¹ Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and assimilation in Jewish modern history: The roles and representation of women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), p.154.

mothers appeared to have no specific interest in Judaism, she was responsible for inculcating in her children the values of bourgeois society, teaching them manners and introduce them to music and literature. Tzara's biographer, Marius Hentea, informs that the Rosenstocks' family friends were worldly, the wives served on the committees of charitable institutions and read.²⁹² Such activities denoted nonetheless a bourgeois status despite their conditions of Jews and therefore, stateless. Hyman also notes that the Jewish mother was the one responsible for inspiring the children towards art, music and all other fine arts in general. As Marcel Janco confessed in his interview with Geo Șerban, 'since I was a little child I have manifested an interest towards art, under my mother's influence.'²⁹³ Janco's words denote the closeness between his career and his mother's interests but also how his receptivity towards the world, life and art were inspired to him by his family.

Tzara's mother, Emilia, was the subject of Tzara's complete affection, and so was his younger sister, Lucica or Lucie-Marie. Even if there is not a consistent archive of personal correspondence between him and his family, the ones extant at the Library of the Romanian Academy²⁹⁴ and at the *La Bibliothèque littéraire Jacques Doucet*²⁹⁵ were sufficient to reveal, at least in part, Tzara's relation to his family:

My dear parents, [...] the reproaches that Lucica has brought me caused me a lot of pain because not a day goes by without me thinking of you (no offence to *papa*) but mainly about *maman* and Lucica. Dear mother, I am sure you felt this and that you know all the love I have for you. I miss you so much, and I cannot wait to see you. – How is your health, please write to me in details about it.²⁹⁶

Although, traditionally, a mother was more likely to be demonstrative of her love towards her son than vice versa, Tzara's letters to his mother show a strong mutual bond between the two. An interesting detail of the correspondence carried out in Romanian by Tzara with his parents is the use a personal pronoun specific to the Moldavian

²⁹² Hentea, p.14.

²⁹³ Șerban, p.11.

²⁹⁴ Fifteen (autograph) letters addressed to his parents and sister beginning 1 April 1924 until 25 December 1959.

²⁹⁵ Comprising 18 letters from Tzara to his family from the mid-1920s.

²⁹⁶ Letter by Tristan Tzara, dated Collioure 27 Oct. 26, Library of the Romanian Academy, hereafter cited as LRA: 'Scumpii mei parinti [...] reprosurile ce Lucica mi le-a facut mi-au facut multa durere, caci nu trece zi fara sa ma gandesc la D-voastra (papa sa nu se supere) dar mai principal la maman si la Lucica. Draga maman, sunt sigur ca mata ai simtit asta si ca esti sigura de dragostea ce ti-o port. Imi este foarte dor de mata si as vrea sa te vad. – Cum iti merge acum cu sanatatea, te rog sa-mi scrii amanuntit'.

region. He employs the second grammatical person pronoun *mata* (as the English *you*) referring to the person being addressed in a polite yet familiar manner, a pronoun rarely used in the South of Romania and almost never in urban areas.²⁹⁷ This sort of linguistic detail denotes not only acculturation into the region but also into the oppressive Romanian society in general for, as Peter Gay point out in his *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, Jews have always been receptive “to the cultures in which they were embedded, much as they have always learned even from their persecutors [...]”²⁹⁸ There are no records of Tzara speaking Yiddish or Hebrew although it is believed that his parents’ first language was Yiddish.²⁹⁹

His relationship with his family, as shown by the archival study of their correspondence, seemed extremely affectionate, contradicting the rumour that upon Tzara’s departure to Zurich he was ‘virtually dead in the eyes of his father and had to carry a bitter life in his luggage when entering the train at *Gara de Nord*’.³⁰⁰ His father used to write to *Sămică*, the pet name for Samuel, using endearing words and demonstrating a constant care for his son:

Dear Sămică, I do not know what happened to you. [...] I have not received absolutely anything from you. We cannot explain this. Are you too sick? We are all very upset because of this. Please call us immediately. [...] Mother does not know that I wrote to you now. Kisses [,] Papa³⁰¹

The very affectionate tone, the complicity between father and son (‘mother does not know’) depicts a strong bond between the two and questions the circulated idea of their alleged estrangement.³⁰² There is, however, a detail regarding their overall relationship due to a short story, presumably autobiographical, and published by Tzara in *Faites vos jeux*, wherein he recalls a certain event involving his father that made him completely change his perception of him:

²⁹⁷ For more on the use of this personal pronoun, see Marina Rădulescu Sala, ‘Gramatică și Ortografie: despre pronumele de politețe’, in Rodica Zafiu et al. (eds.), *Limba română. Direcții actuale în cercetarea lingvistică, I, Actele Colocviului internațional al Catedrei de limba română* (Romanian language. Current directions in linguistic research, I, The Acts of the International Colloquium of the Romanian Language Chair) (Bucharest: University of Bucharest Press, 2012).

²⁹⁸ Gay, p.103.

²⁹⁹ Cernat (2007), p.35.

³⁰⁰ Sandqvist (2006), p.124, makes the claim that, apparently, Tzara and his father never fully reconciled.

³⁰¹ Letter sent by his father, 29 July 1925. BLJD, *TZR C 3484*. Hereafter cited as BLJD: ‘Draga Samica, nu stiu ce s-a intamplat cu tine [...] n-am primit absolut nici os tire de la tine. Nu ne explicam aceasta. Esti prea bolnav? Suntem cu totii foarte suparati din cauza asta. Te rog sa ne telefonezi imediat [...] Mama nu stie ca ti-am scris acuma. Te sarut [,] Papa’.

³⁰² Sandqvist (2006), p.124: ‘His son was virtually dead in the eyes of his father’.

My sick mother was abroad – I passed my vacation with my father. One day as I was walking with a mate, [...] I met my father. I asked him where he was going, he told me to accompany him, but I preferred to continue my walk. My mate at that moment disappeared. I met him an hour later. He told me that my father had gone to a woman of easy virtue. [...] Then he told me he had followed my father who had entered a grand house. [...] he had learned from the concierge that the mister who had just come in was a rich widowed landowner who came twice a month from the countryside to visit his mistress. When I saw my father that night, I asked him why he had not wanted to tell me where he was going. [...] Never have I been so angry. [...] I should have killed him, told everything to my mother, [and] provoked divorce.³⁰³

Although the authenticity of this story remains questionable, given the semi-fictional character of *Faites vos Jeux*, it still reveals some of Tzara's perception of his father. Marius Hentea presents the same story and interprets it as the reason behind Tzara's later obsession with *Hamlet*, without making conclusions regarding its veracity.³⁰⁴ Despite its contested veracity, the story is part of a semi-autobiographical work by Tzara and therefore makes a claim to truth, as recalled by its author. However, although Tzara's account in *Faites vos Jeux* is treated as a serious text, there is always a need to remember that very little is known about this semi-autobiographical work. Henri Béhar sees it as Tzara's way of detaching himself from the moribund Dada, '*se délivre de dada moribond*',³⁰⁵ it is a novel filled with collages on life, retelling stories from the youth of a teenager, his conversations in the street, memories about his teenage years, and his fascination with girls. Although its literary style and value can be debated in great detail – and researchers who follow this thesis should be encouraged to do so – what is important at this point is to stress that *Faites vos Jeux* can be seen as

³⁰³ 'Ma mere malade était partie pour l'étranger - je passais les vacances avec mon père. Un jour que je me promenais avec un camarade [...] je rencontraï mon père. Je lui demandai où il allait – il me dit de l'accompagner, mais je préférâi continuer ma promenade. Mon camarade à ce moment disparut. Je le rencontraï une heure plus tard. Il me dit que mon père était allé chez une dame de moeurs légères. [...] Alors il me raconta: il avait suivi mon père qui était entré dans une maison luxueuse. [...] il avait appris du concierge que le monsieur qui venait d'entrer était un riche propriétaire veuf qui venait deux fois par mois de la campagne pour visiter sa maitresse. Lorsque je vis mon père, le soir, je lui demandâi pour qui il n'avait pas voulu me dire ou il était allé. [...] Jamais je n'Etraï dans une telle colère. [...] J'aurais voulu le tuer, raconter tout à ma mere, provoquer le divorce.' Tristan Tzara, *OC*, pp.269-270.

³⁰⁴ Hentea, p.13.

³⁰⁵ Henri Béhar (ed.), *Mélusine: Chassé-croisé Tzara-Breton* (Lausanne: Edition L'Age d'Homme, 1997), p.91.

Tzara's *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary*³⁰⁶ or even his own *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*.³⁰⁷ In a period when diary-type writings were becoming popular amongst former Dada colleagues, *Faites vos Jeux* reveals some of the particularities of Tzara's youth seen through the lens of his post-Dada life.

Except for the above story that alludes towards a possible tense relationship between Tzara and his father, the overall correspondence with his family uncovers a warm humanity to the rebellious face of the Dada movement, and a permanent longing after those who remained in his country of origin. The love of those left behind for their son and brother was reciprocal, without entirely disregarding the difference of opinions and fundamental disagreements regarding particular situations and events.³⁰⁸

What appears to be overlooked by other researchers is his family's interest in his professional life and Tzara's continuous interest in his family's well-being. A letter dated 1 April 1924, addressed to his parents and sister, reveals both instances:

My dear parents and dear Lucica,

I haven't received any answer to my past two letters; therefore, I am a bit worried [...] Please write to me as soon as possible because I am quite worried.³⁰⁹

The text continues:

Things are going well for me, I am enjoying work, in a few days I will begin the rehearsals, and my play is almost ready.³¹⁰

There is virtually no avoidance between them since the majority of the letters consulted by this research denote a sincere love between the members of the Rosenstock family. Their correspondence is not sterile but considerate and affectionate. As for his work, although certain scholars deny any interest of his family in Tzara's work nor his intention of ever sharing his achievements with them, the letters written 1924, i.e. after Dada Zurich, show the contrary.³¹¹ The fact that he is referring to a play that was al-

³⁰⁶ Hugo Ball, *Flight out of time: A Dada diary (documents of twentieth-century art)*, new ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996).

³⁰⁷ Hans Richter, *Dada. Art and Anti-art*, Dada Centenary Edition, with a new introduction and commentary by Michael White (London & New York: Thames & Hudson, 2016).

³⁰⁸ For more on this, see Hentea.

³⁰⁹ Letter by Tristan Tzara, dated 1 April 1924, LRA: 'Scumpii mei parinti si Draga Lucica, La ultimele mele 2 scrisori n-am primit nici un raspuns, asa ca sunt cam ingrijorat. [...] Va rog sa-mi scrieti numai decat de oarece sunt cam ingrijorat'.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*: 'Mie imi merge bine, lucrez cu placere, in cateva zile incep repetitiile, pieasa mea e aproape terminata'.

³¹¹ Both Sandqvist and Kessler hint at a rapture between Tzara and his family.

most ready denotes a previous communication on the matter. Furthermore, presumably referring to the same play, in another letter dated 7 June 1924, written in French this time, Tzara explains to his sister its reception by the French public:

Dear Lucie,

I received your 2 cards from Venice and St. Margherita. If I have not yet answered you, it is because every evening I was out very late at the theatre, quite tired during the day [...and then] having to put myself every night in a dinner jacket. We have played my play 14 times so far, [and] given such success, we will resume playing it next week.³¹²

The lack of sufficient factual support disables clear conclusions behind Tzara's supposed estrangement³¹³ from his family, maintaining correspondence with his family members being often indicative of 'family cohesiveness.'³¹⁴ Of course, such assumptions are not considered solely as total proof of Tzara's Jewishness but, as Jonathan Boyarin argues in his book titled *Jewish Families*, it is clear that the "Jewish family" is not something separate from Jewish history or from Judaism as a distinct "religion." Jewishness in its many forms is, broadly speaking, inconceivable without Jewish families.³¹⁵ It is, therefore, important to consider Tzara's attempt to maintain a connection to his familial structure when discussing his Jewish identity.

In other words, Tzara's constant correspondence with his family, letters dated up until 1959, can be explained also in terms of Jewish solidarity and cohesiveness, as defined by Brav. He cites sources that argue that 'members of Jewish families seem to be able to maintain greater family solidarity than shown by many other groups',³¹⁶ the cohesiveness of the Hebrew family being one very strong element in Jewish culture that differentiates it from modern Christian culture. In this sense, Tzara's clear personal affinity with his family, especially with his mother and sister, can be because of his personal wish but also because of the moral teaching of his Jewish upbringing obeying the Mosaic command 'to honour thy father and thy mother'.³¹⁷ The influence

³¹² Letter by Tristan Tzara dated 7 June 1924, LRA: 'Cher Lucie, J'ai reçu tes 2 cartes de Venise et de Sta/ Margherita. Si je ne t'ai pas encore répondu, c'est parce que tous les soirs j'étais très tard au théâtre, assez fatigué pendant la journée [...] je devrais me mettre tous les soirs en smoking. On a joué ma pièce 14 fois jusqu'à présent, avec assez de succès, on la reprendra la semaine la prochaine'.

³¹³ See, for instance, Kessler, in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, p.27.

³¹⁴ Stanley Brav, *Jewish family solidarity, Myth or Fact?* (Vicksburg: Nogales Press, 1940), p.23.

³¹⁵ Jonathan Boyarin, *Jewish families* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 2013), p.29.

³¹⁶ Cunningham, as cited in Brav, p.20.

³¹⁷ Brav, p.20.

of his family values, although Tzara rejected its religious, Jewish element, appear in his affection and attentiveness towards his parents and sister, including her husband Carol.³¹⁸ The pattern of relationships within Tzara's family as shown in the correspondence cited contributes to them being perceived as a Jewish family according to Brav's system, and therefore their familial solidarity is not taken for granted by this research ascribing it to specific Jewish tradition.³¹⁹

The Jewish origins of the Rosenstock family was indeed important in framing Tzara's image and attracted some controversial statements at that time aiming, of course, at their Jewish heritage. Of course, Janco's family history had a similar Jewish context, as it is later discussed. This however was not an exception. Their Jewish difference, the racial stigma was carried throughout the decades as demonstrated by the Romanian critic Alexandru Hodoş's remark in his 1924 article.³²⁰ The article, of an extreme antisemitism, was published in the Romanian magazine *Țara Noastră* (Our Country), claiming that neither Tristan Tzara nor Marcel Janco are his 'fellow countrymen', and where 'upon looking over their birth certificates'³²¹ there would be sufficient proof of their foreignness. In an attempt to emphasise their alleged foreignness, Hodoş continues his fictional accusations by saying: 'Mr. Tristan Tzara must have, even now, some cousins and uncles in Krakow.'³²² All these false accusations regarding Tzara's and Janco's family trees end with a hallucinatory conclusion at the end of the article: "And, as a conclusion, [...] we think, how little would have gathered mankind from Tolstoy's mundane thought, if instead of being Russian, [...] he would have been simply – European. Like Mr. Marcel Iancu and as Mr. Tristan Tzara [...]."³²³ Hodoş, although earlier rejecting Tzara and Janco as Romanians, aims his final attack at their Europeanness, criticising them for not sticking to their origins, obviously hinting at their Jewish heritage. These sorts of attacks showed the confusion of antisemitic writers who, instead of attempting to prove their claims, blended different ideas and information, most of it false, just to support their attacks. However, the reality was different and contradicted such accusations.

³¹⁸ To whom he wrote a personal letter and attached it to the one sent to his sister Lucie on 7 June 1924.

³¹⁹ For more on Jewish families, see Mindel and Habenstein.

³²⁰ Alexandru Hodoş, 'Dadaism, Cubism, et cetera', in *Țara Noastră*, Nr. 6/1924, pp.170-173.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, p.173: 'dar, cel puțin, sunt ei compatrioții noștri? [...] Dacă am cerceta actele lor de naștere, am găsi desigur probe neîndoioase despre aceasta'.

³²² *Ibid.*, p.173: 'Dl. Tristan Tzara mai are și acum, probabil, ceva veri sau unchi la Krakau'.

³²³ *Ibid.*: 'Si, ca incheiere [...] ne gandim, cat de puțin rod ar fi cules omenirea de pe urma uriașei gândiri moarele a lui Tolstoi, dacă in loc sa fie rus [...] ar fi fost, pur si simplu – European. Ca dl. Marcel Iancu si ca dl. Tristan Tzara ...'.

The longevity of his family in Moldova was clear; his father, like his father, Ilie, before him, was from Târgu Ocna,³²⁴ and a logical presupposition would be that they were considered local Jews, *pământeni*.³²⁵ They belonged to the Jewish community in Moldova, which consisted principally of Ashkenazi Jews, mainly Hasidim, originating from the Polish-Russian area, and yet very different from the Sephardic Jews in Wallachia, and fundamentally different from the Jewish immigrants. Within the Romanian Jewish communities, as elsewhere, ‘chief among the values of the shtetl and Jewish culture was the value of learning’.³²⁶ This was regarded as the most important obligation of any Jew – to learn. As a Jewish child, Tzara attended a Jewish primary school for boys. Even if the Romanian state offered, in theory, free public education to everyone, the ‘foreigners’ were taxed a rate of 20 lei per academic year.³²⁷ In the Jewish private schools, built according to the tradition³²⁸ of the Jewish diaspora around a synagogue, children were given religious education from early years on the writings in the *Torah*, in Hebrew, and occasionally in German.³²⁹

The provincialism of Moinesti, despite its economic boom due to oil exploitation, was insufficient to establish a high school or even a *gymnasium*; consequently, Tzara was sent to boarding school, first in Focșani and later in Bucharest for high school. Although eventually got the best of this circumstantial detail of his life, the 1907 peasant uprising left a significant mark in the construction of his identity. Being initiated by a group of Moldavian peasants against the Jewish middleman (Tzara’s father was involved in commercialising wood), it degenerated quickly into a general riot by the peasantry. As previously stated, the entire Romanian society, with its aspiration of being cosmopolitan and an example of modernity in the East, was shocked both by the revolt but also by the brutality of the Romanian army’s response. Without

³²⁴ For more biographical information on Tzara’s early years and his family, see P. Cernat, M. Hentea and Irina Livezeanu, ‘From Dada to Gaga: The peripatetic Romanian avant-garde confronts Communism’, in *Littératures et pouvoir symbolique*, ed. by Mihaï Dinu Gheorghiu with Lucia Dragomir (Bucharest: Paralela 45, 2005), pp.239-253.

³²⁵ See Introduction to the present thesis, subchapter Antisemitism and Jewish Reality in the Kingdom of Romania, for more details on the Jewish communities in Romania.

³²⁶ Mindel and Habenstein, p.353. See also the Introduction of the present thesis for more on Jewish educational patterns in the Kingdom of Romania.

³²⁷ See Hentea, p.16: in Moinesti in 1900, of 186 pupils in grade four, only three were Jewish students.

³²⁸ In general, even there, where the Jewish community was slight, with only 10 Jews, it was required to build a synagogue, which implied the existence of ‘Tinokot Shel Beth Rabban’ (the children [who study] at the Rabbi’s house). It was an issue of supreme importance for the Diaspora to maintain its identity and keep its roots alive. Primary schooling is given an increased importance even in the Talmud: ‘the education of children must never be interrupted, even to rebuild the Temple’ (T.B. Shabbat, 119b).

³²⁹ The *Torah*, although originally referring only to the books of Moses, over the centuries has come to include also its commentaries and interpretations known as the *Talmud*.

going into too many details on the peasant rebellion in 1907,³³⁰ some basic clarifications are needed since this event resulted in a reorganisation of the entire social and political life in the Kingdom of Romania, and even of Jewish identity.

According to the *Romanian Encyclopaedia* of 1938,³³¹ the ‘Revolution of 1907’ had its roots in the unbearable situation of the peasantry.³³² The revolts broke out in February 1907 in Northern Moldavia, in Flămânzi,³³³ a small town in Botoşani County, and were directed primarily against Jews who controlled over 40% of all estate lands.³³⁴ More specifically, the revolts were against the estates leased to the ‘Mochi Fischer Trust’,³³⁵ the so-called ‘Fischerland’, belonging to an Austrian-Jewish family.³³⁶ According to Daniel Chirot, soon all Moldavia was in uproar and, in all this, mainly the Jews were mistreated.³³⁷ With only 150 km distance between Moinesti and Flămânzi, Tzara’s father, who was a land leaser himself, must have felt the pressure as would all other Jews in Romania.

The initially relatively modest protests spread out quickly and by March 1907, many other peasant groups became violent in Moldova and Wallachia, catching the government wholly unprepared. In the same month, the new government led by Dimitrie Sturdza appointed General Alexandru Averescu in charge of the army. Given the overwhelming and unprecedented events, the King declared a State of Siege (curfew):

Serious events unfolded upon us, shaking the institutions of the State to its foundations, and endangering our work for half a century. In these heavy routings the army was called to restore the peace. [...] In five days, the army reached 140,000 people.³³⁸

³³⁰ For more on the Peasant Revolt of 1907, see, for instance, B.P.F., ‘Documente inedite despre Marea Răscoală Țărănească din 1907’ (Unprecedented documents about the Great Peasant Revolution of 1907) in *Jurnalul de Botoşani și Dorohoi*, 26 August 2008.

³³¹ Dimitrie Gusti, *Enciclopedia României 1938* (Bucharest, Ed. ASPER, 1938), pp.890-891.

³³² For a comprehensive account of the Peasant Rebellion of 1907, see Daniel Chirot and Charles Ragin, ‘The market, tradition and peasant rebellion: The case of Romania in 1907’, *American Sociological Association*, 40(4) (1975), pp.428-444.

³³³ The translation of the name of the town, Flămânzi into English is ‘Hungry’.

³³⁴ C. Jormescu and I. Popa-Burca, *Harta Agronomică a României* (The agronomical map of Romania) (Bucharest, 1907), Table 9, Part III.

³³⁵ Gusti, p.890.

³³⁶ The Fischer family used to lease about 75% of the arable land in three Romanian counties in Moldavia.

³³⁷ See, Chirot and Ragin, pp.428-444.

³³⁸ *Albina: Revistă enciclopedică populară* (The Bee, General Encyclopedic Magazine), year 10, no. 28, 8 April 1907: ‘Evenimente grave s’au deslăntuit asupra noastră, zguduind instituțiile Statului până în temelile sale, și punând în primejdie munca a jumătate de veac. În aceste grele împrejurări armata a fost chemată să restabilească liniștea turburată. [...] În cinci zile ostirea a ajuns la numărul de 140,000 oameni’.

The revolt was crushed in a matter of days and the military measures taken by the general to crush the revolt were of an ‘unnecessary ferocity, slaughtering without 11,000 peasants’.³³⁹ This rebellion shook Romanian society not only by its outbreak but also by its violent repression, resulting in tens of thousands killed. S.A. Mansbach insists that this aspect of the 1907 revolt led at first to a regressive attitude among many [...] who had previously encouraged [...] Romania’s turn to the West.³⁴⁰ As Chirot argues, ‘repression certainly made an important difference since it crushed the rebellion and prevented the overthrow of the entire political and economic system’³⁴¹ but ‘for those who cherished the notion of an emerging modern society, the rebellion challenged not only the stability of the state but also the fundamental precepts of culture’.³⁴² Such attitudes deepened the sociocultural gap within the country, fuelling many xenophobic and antisemitic reactions amongst Romanians of all strata.³⁴³ An article published in Newspaper *Viitorul* (The Future) on 17 March 1910 had as its title ‘Samică and 1907’,³⁴⁴ by using a diminutive of a very common Jewish name, also Tzara’s nickname, the article is blaming the Jews for the revolt. What Tzara must have felt under such circumstances is not very clear since he never addressed the 1907 events directly, but the fact that ‘Samică’ was blamed for the horrific aftermath must certainly have caused him some anxiety. In other words, this revolt, initially directed against Jewish stewards, fuelled many more antisemitic reactions from the intelligentsia, placing the Jews at the centre of a deeper conflict within the Romanian society.

According to Sandqvist, this conflict was aggravated by ‘the social phenomenon where scarcely anybody was native in the small and static middle class. This gap was filled by people – mostly Germans and Jews – who had lived in the countries for generations without being integrated into their old structures.’³⁴⁵ The gruesome events of 1907 only accentuated this gap, instigating the peasants against the property owners – especially against the Jews – in this way taking the country further away from the European modernity it wished to enter. Many Romanian intellectuals were outraged

³³⁹ Gusti, *Enciclopedia*.

³⁴⁰ Mansbach, p.248.

³⁴¹ Chirot, p.441.

³⁴² Sandqvist (2006), p.50

³⁴³ See, for instance, Eduard Gherghely, *Progressul si evreii in Romania* (Botosani: Imprimeria Botosiani, 1866), p. 11. See also the reaction of A.C. Cuza, a professor at the University of Iasi (Jassy), who embodied the antisemitic feeling in an article for *Egalitatea* (Equality) magazine: ‘before my death, I want to see the blood of Jews mixed with mud’. *Egalitatea*, 14 December 1923.

³⁴⁴ Newspaper *Viitorul* (The Future), 17 March 1910, p.1.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.51.

and some, such as the playwright I.L. Caragiale, left Romania as a sign of disapproval of the brutality of the 1907 events.

Like everyone else, young Tzara became a witness of the new rupture between urban and rural life, which affected the entire atmosphere of the country. Since his family's business involved forest exploitation and land leasing, Tzara's mind-set was definitely under the influence of recent events. His identity is constructed in this social context and it is for this reason that there was a need for it to be 'situated historically'.³⁴⁶ Thus, the discussion on Tzara's formative years, as will be also in the case of Janco, felt the need to refer to a specific context since 'individual identities are contextually constructed within fields of power and meaning and cannot easily be separated from specific situations'.³⁴⁷ Otherwise said, the relationship between Tzara's Jewish origin and the events of 1907 is important in understanding the socially constructed nature of his cultural identity.

Already in Bucharest by the autumn of 1907 being enrolled at the highschool Schewitz-Thierrin Institute, Tzara found himself displaced in the capital city, far from the countryside that he enjoyed so much.³⁴⁸ All of a sudden, he was immersed in an initiation journey of self-identification, facing 'a constant reconstruction of selves and others through specific exclusions'; in other words, Tzara was facing the question of cultural belonging even more – was he one of them, the Romanians, or was he the 'other'?³⁴⁹ Tzara was a stranger in his own country, bearing in mind and defining himself against a majority, a feeling that he carried to Zurich as well: 'Despite my desire to assimilate, I remained a stranger to them.'³⁵⁰ Despite his name change in 1915, which technically did not appear to recall his Jewish roots, his assimilation seemed to have been tough, always surrounded by the stigma of being a foreigner.³⁵¹

Under the different light and the different territory, Tzara had to redefine his relationship with his native country, suddenly extremely hostile, where he was a stranger in a foreign land. The building process of the Romanian national identity, with all its concerns and confusions, shaped his entire intellectual development. Insofar as identity is contingent, there should be an understanding of it because of all the

³⁴⁶ Eli Zaretsky, 'Identity theory, identity politics: Psychoanalysis, Marxism, post-structuralism' in *Social theory and the politics of identity*, ed. by Craig Calhoun (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

³⁴⁷ Ahad Ha'am, *Collected Writings* (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1947), p.292.

³⁴⁸ As he will recall in his poem, 'Come with me to the countryside'.

³⁴⁹ James Clifford, Introduction in James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p.24.

³⁵⁰ Tristan Tzara, *OC*, Tome 1 (1912-1924) (Paris: Flammarion, 1975-1982), p.246.

³⁵¹ For more on Tzara's struggle to settle upon a pseudonym, see Hentea, p.41.

cultural and social series through which it is constructed and maintained, and therefore Tzara's experiences are the ones that determine where his identity is situated.³⁵² At the same time, he had to define the concept of 'other' as well, through the stereotypical images of the Jews as other. Under the influence of the 1907 event, Tzara confronted the stereotyping processes through which the Romanian culture defined the Jews, the impact of such processes leaving him in a struggle to formulate an alternative approach to his heritage, as will be argued later in this thesis.

Consciously fast forwarding, but without any intention of skipping any particular moments in the history of the construction of Tzara's cultural identity, one of Tzara's early poems denoting the poet's internal struggle needs to be mentioned. The poem *Cantec de razboi (Song of war)*, published in *Primele Poeme/First Poems*, can be seen as a proof of Tzara's internal struggle, which encompasses a confrontation between the explosive events of the new and the constant desire to reconnect with the past:

Mother,
I always cry like the end of a scale,
Because the road is hard, but still it calls³⁵³

It is clear that most of this internal struggle took place prior to his departure for exile in 1915, due to the socio-political context and decisions that were not his. Tzara was sent by his parents far away from his hometown to attend the classes of the *Institutul de băieți Schewitz-Thierrin* (Boys' Institute *Schewitz-Thierrin*) in the capital Bucharest. He received a Certificate of Studies after completing his secondary studies having, as Henri Béhar writes, a 'brilliant record' and an unusually high knowledge of French, German and English. During the final year of his subsequent studies, 1914, Tzara became part of the Faculty of Mathematics and the Faculty of Philosophy of Bucharest.³⁵⁴ In this new phase, Tzara dedicates himself more to literature than to university studies, leading to his family coming to Bucharest to solve his 'situation' - bad grades took him close to failing high-school. Finally, the family decided to send him

³⁵² More on this is discussed in the following subchapters of the present chapter: *Simbolul* and the Jewish essence of Tzara and Janco.

³⁵³ 'Mamă, / Plâng mereu ca un sfârșit de gamă / Că e drumul greu / Că ne tot cheamă.' Tristan Tzara, *Cantec de razboi (Song of war)*, Tristan Tzara, *Primele poeme ale lui Tristan Tzara urmate de insurecția de la Zurich* (The first poems of Tristan Tzara followed by the Zurich Insurrection), Sașa Pană (ed.) (Bucharest, Cartea Românească, 1971 [1934]), p.17. Hereafter cited as *First Poems*.

³⁵⁴ SMAN (Faculty of Letters), 139/1912-1914, f.253.

to study far away from Bucharest, in Zurich, most likely as a fresh start at a foreign institution or to avoid him being drafted³⁵⁵ for the imminent war. Other accounts, such as Sandqvist's, talk about an indiscretion that made his family send him away to avoid a scandal.³⁵⁶ It is clear that there are several theories circulating around his reason for leaving. Furthermore, some researchers believe that his original destination was not even Zurich but Paris, but due to some passport issues he had to prolong his stay in Switzerland.³⁵⁷ The present thesis refrains from making any judgment on any of these theories since, throughout the archival investigation, it did not find any concrete information regarding his reason for leaving Romania and consequently it is only correct to adhere to the information that is considered to be generally accepted, as presented by Sandqvist.

The reason for his departure is not the only detail of Tzara's life confronted with polemic. The origin of his pseudonym has been amply debated in past decades, and for this reason it will not be resumed here.³⁵⁸ Suffice to say that, in the words of Claude Sernet, '*pour tout le monde, et pour le monde entire*,³⁵⁹ Tristan Tzara was soon to be born, on 6 February 1916, at six in the evening, at *Café Terrasse* in Zurich'.³⁶⁰ It should be added that he published under a different version of the definitive pseudonym, 'Tristan Țara', replacing in this way 'S. Samyro', which he had used previously in *Simbolul*.³⁶¹ However, Hentea considers that the ulterior 'substitution of the diacritical 'ț' by 'tz' emphasised the foreignness of the bearer'³⁶² without changing the pronunciation. However, given the lack of any conclusive answer or explanation from Tzara himself on the origin of his pseudonym, every interpretation remains under the unsatisfactory answer of 'maybe', which, according to Behar, was the way Tzara replied to Sernet when the latter attempted to decode the name: Confronted with these

³⁵⁵ This idea was suggested by the title given to the journal Tzara and Vinea published right before his departure, *Chemarea*, which might be translated as 'drafted' or 'called up to the army'.

³⁵⁶ Apparently, the only ones defending Tzara were his mother and sister. During this period, Tzara wrote a poem titled 'The family's grief', where he refers to these family gatherings. The Library of the Romanian Academy – Archives, Fond 3, file 5.

³⁵⁷ Cf. Dr Adrian Sudhalter's presentation at the International Conference *Dada Techniques in East-Central Europe*, Kassák Museum, Budapest, October 14–15, 2016.

³⁵⁸ See, for instance, Sandqvist (2006), Chapter Six; Hentea; see also, Behar, 'Nul n'est prophete en son pays', in *Tzara, Dada, Etc*, pp.5-24, to name a few. The archival sources consulted by this thesis show that 'Tristan Tzara' appeared for the first time in *Chemara*, 1915.

³⁵⁹ For everyone and the whole world (from French). Tzara (1965), , p.1.

³⁶⁰ Tzara (1965), p.1.

³⁶¹ *Dumineca*, 221/II/7/10.1919/1-2. According to Ion Vinea's article *Dada*, in *Adevărul* (The truth), 33, no. 11052, 15 April 1920: 'the nickname was hosted once (1915) in the journal *Chemarea*'.

³⁶² Hentea, p.41.

hypotheses, Tzara used to smile, to nod his head and answer ‘maybe!’ as he used to do when he was asked about the name Dada, of which it is said he has invented.³⁶³

Like so many artists of with Jewish roots, this pseudonym was meant to help him distance himself from his family, not affectively as was previously believed but regarding ethnic affiliation.³⁶⁴ The previous investigation of the cultural climate in which he evolved partially elucidated how the instability of national and ethnic identities in Romania have contributed to the creation of a feeling of marginality. The fact that many Jews had been refused Romanian nationality before the First World War and, despite constitutional equality, were not fully able to enjoy equal rights in their daily life, led to the recreation of a new identity through writing and art, markedly cosmopolitan.



1.1.2. Marcel Iancu vs Marcel Janco

While Tzara was still struggling with his personal uncertainties while gravitating away from the stereotypes, Janco already had a trajectory, roughly speaking. Marcel Iancu, already using a more Westernised version of his name, ‘Janco like his brothers,’³⁶⁵ was already in Zurich by 1916. Born in Bucharest on 24 May 1895, he remains widely known as Tzara’s companion in his Dada Zurich adventures. Perhaps this is the reason why the amount of archival documentation on him, by comparison with that on Tzara, is not as vast as one would expect, and therefore this subchapter interprets details of his personal and professional life as already discussed by Sandqvist³⁶⁶ and Serban.³⁶⁷ The novelty lies in the interpretation this subchapter gives to the extant information by putting it in dialogue with Tzara’s Jewish experience.

Marcel was the oldest of four children: the others being Iuliu (Jules), George (Georges) and their sister, Lucia. Their father, Hermann Zvi Iancu, a prolific merchant in Bucharest, built in the nineteenth century ‘one of Bucharest’s largest private houses

³⁶³ Behar, in *Tzara, Dada, Etc*, p.7: ‘In fata acestor ipoteze, Tzara zambea, clatina din cap si raspundea “poate!”’, asa cum obisnuia sa faca si atunci cand era intrebat despre numele Dada, pe care se spune ca il inventase’.

³⁶⁴ Such claims may be easily contradicted by the extant correspondence, part of it cited briefly above.

³⁶⁵ Sandqvist (2006), p.26. He refers to the name change.

³⁶⁶ Sandqvist (2006), ch 4.

³⁶⁷ Serban, *Marcel Janco*.

with a garden and several thousand square meters'.³⁶⁸ In terms of socio-economic status, Janco's family and Tzara's shared a quite bourgeois lifestyle, different from the hardships of many other Romanian Jews. Tzara's biographer claims that Janco's family's wealth supported the publishing of *Simbolul*.³⁶⁹ As in Tzara's case, Janco was also accused of being a foreigner, the antisemitic intelligentsia trying to develop all sorts of theories regarding his family tree and their alleged foreignness: 'Marcel's grandfather descended in Moldova, for example, next to Mamornița, about 50 years ago, finding a good lodging at Podul Iloaiei or Darabani. Mister Tristan Tzara still has probably some cousins or uncles in Krakow.'³⁷⁰ Such nonsensical theories circulated in that era not only regarding Tzara and Janco but the large majority of artists of Jewish heritage, in an attempt to discredit them and their works as foreign and, therefore, non-Romanian. Regardless of such false accusations, 'the Janco brothers were born and grew up in Bucharest'.³⁷¹

Janco's father, Herman Iancu, was driven by a strong business spirit and was involved in several economic activities, but nonetheless was also receptive to the artistic desires and personalities of his two sons. His involvement in their education was not only by supporting Marcel's and Jules's artistic paths but also their higher-education, as it is shown in what follows. The reason for this support, as it may be argued also in the case of the Tzara's family, lay in their understanding that people with a higher education could be included in a type of intellectual aristocracy. This attitude of sending their sons to the University is explained by the German philosopher Friedrich Paulsen in his *The German universities and university study* as parents' way of understanding that not holding a university degree was a limitation that money could not compensate.³⁷² Driven by a desire to assimilate into the Romanian society, Jewish parents guided their sons towards higher education making the the number of Jews who were attending universities significantly higher than that of the Romanians. This was not a particularity of the Romanian case but of Europe in general as

³⁶⁸ Sandqvist (2006), p.69.

³⁶⁹ Hentea, p.32. Hentea makes a mistake when he claims that Janco was a Romanian citizen at birth since, as Stern indicates, in 1923, he requested Romanian naturalisation for himself and his wife. See Stern, p.43.

³⁷⁰ Alexandru Hodos, 'Dadaism, Cubism, et cetera', in *Țara Noastră* (Our Country) (1924), p.172: 'Bunicul lui Marcel s'a coborât de pildă în Moldova, pela Mamornița, acum vreo cincizeci de ani, gășind o bună găzduire la Podul Iloaiei sau prin Darabani. Dl. Tristan Tzara mai are și acum, probabil, ceva veri sau unchi la Krakau'.

³⁷¹ Seiwert, as cited in Sandqvist (2006), p.69.

³⁷² Friedrich Paulsen, *The German universities and university study*, authorised translation by Frank Thilly and William W. Elwang, preface by M.E. Sadler (New York: C. Scribner's and sons, 1906.)

demonstrated by the case of Germany, explained by Ismar Elbogen in his *A Century of Jewish Life*.³⁷³ Elbogen informs that Jews, especially Jewish businessmen, wanted their male offsprings to be more valued by the society than they were, and since the road towards a military career was closed for them the only way of climbing socially was through university. This was also the case in Romania especially since the Romanian Jews were excluded from all areas not just some, as in the German case. As a result, at the end of nineteenth century and beginning of twentieth century, only 1.5% of Romanian students enrolled in primary school enrolled for higher education, while the Jews were in proportion of 7.6%.³⁷⁴ Furthermore, in terms of graduating university, out of 80% of the Romanian students only 10-11% graduated, while out of the 12% represented by Jewish students, 100% were graduates.³⁷⁵ This demonstrates clearly that the desire of achieving a better social status and culturally assimilate made the Jewish bourgeoisie to insist on their sons' education and pay a special attention to their performance as demonstrated by both Janco's and Tzara's families. It is clear that Herman Iancu's involvement in his children's education emphasises a specific Jewish familial closeness, and, as previously discussed in Tzara's case, a specific Jewish trait of valuing education but also an ability to have some control over their education.

Regardless of the age gap of a year and a half between Marcel and Jules, they were always classmates because Marcel was kept behind one year during his primary school studies. Due to their low grades during their gymnasium years, both brothers struggled to be accepted at the Gheorghe Lazar Lyceum in Bucharest, renowned for academic excellence, selectivity in admissions, and social elitism. Initially, they were enrolled in the Modern Languages section but given the influence of his father – who wrote a petition on 23 October 1910³⁷⁶ to the Ministry of Education of that time, stressing how depressed his two sons were because of the highly competitive nature of the Latin language classes – they were transferred to the Science section. Not even this change, however, improved their grades. Janco's father was involved in all aspects of his sons' lives, from their education to even their hobbies; an example is financing *Simbolul*, as will later be discussed. This sort of highly organised, closely knit unit is

³⁷³ Ismar Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life*, translated by Moses Hadas, with an Appreciation by Professor Alexander Marx (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1944).

³⁷⁴ Harry Kuller, *Presa evreiască bucureșteană (1857-1994)* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1996), p.82.

³⁷⁵ Tereza Mozes, *Evreii din Oradea*, (Bucharest: Hasefer, 1997), p.145.

³⁷⁶ ANR, Fond Ministerul Instrucțiunii Publice, Dosar 1846/1910. fila 3. Geo Serban, *Intalniri cu Marcel Iancu* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2011), p.23.

a result of the Jewish minority's historical isolation for long periods, due to legal restrictions, which created a need for the family to protect each member and ensure their well-being. Of course, it is not possible to ascribe his fatherly love solely to be a Jewish parent but, to some extent, a history of persecution and antisemitism might lead to an extensive care for his offspring.

Without excelling in any field except for his remarkable talent in painting, Marcel remained a below-average student. Probably due to his modest performances as a student, his parents encouraged Marcel to take private classes with Iosif Iser, a very influential modernist Romanian painter. Young Marcel demonstrated not only painting skills but also musical ones, mastering the piano as we shall see later during his Dada years.

As a student, he had quite a rich artistic activity, publishing in the journal *Flacara* (the Flame) in March 1912 a painting in crayon accompanied by a description that read: 'Marcel Iancu, a young and talented disciple of Mr Iser'. Iosif Iser held a permanent segment in the journal *Flacara*, called 'Figuri Contemporane' (Contemporary figures), where he published portraits of well-known personalities of Romanian descent, and so the 'hosting' of Janco's early work it came as no surprise. The same Iser contributed with some drawings in *Simbolul*. What is important is Iser's contribution to Janco's artistic development. In a moment when, as Ioana Vlasiu indicates, Romanian architects became preoccupied with creating an autochthonous Romanian style,³⁷⁷ Iser was the only one who taught Janco the 'importance of the architectural composition of drawing'³⁷⁸ and influenced his career to such an extent that Janco 'soon decided to study architecture in the same way as Iser had once travelled to Munich to become an architect'.³⁷⁹ Sandqvist argues that Janco's entire career seems to be linked to Iser's influence, from Janco's involvement in editing several journals to his artistic technique characterised by 'transcending the borders between genres',³⁸⁰ in the same way as Iser. What this research argues is that Iser's experience can be seen as a sort of an unconscious thought throughout Janco's life making him follow a sort of educational and even career pattern similar to his teacher's.

³⁷⁷ Ioana Vlasiu, 'Bucharest', in *Central-European avant-gardes. Exchange and transformation (1910-1930)*, ed. by Timothy O. Benson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), p.248.

³⁷⁸ Sandqvist (2006), p.70.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Janco's extracurricular activities during his high-school years distracted him from his studies, which led to a quite devastating academic record, arousing everyone's concern regarding his graduation. In a petition from Herman Iancu addressed to the Ministry of Education on 14 April 1914, he spoke only about his other son Iuliu as being a high-school graduate. In this petition, he was requesting information about the admission process to the Polytechnic University of Zurich. On 6 June 1914, the Ministry informed Herman Iancu that the fee is based on an exam. In the summer of 1914, Marcel and Iuliu were on their way to Zurich, to enrol at the University of Zurich, one in chemistry and the other one in mathematics, followed by an exam in 1915 at the esteemed *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zurich*, where Marcel scored 4.7 out of a maximum of 6. He studied architecture with Karl Moser, a renowned architect, revered in Switzerland as a 'father of modernism,' but did not graduate as expected in 1919 and never attained a diploma from this prestigious institution. Despite what some bibliographic sources³⁸¹ suggest, Marcel Janco never collaborated in the journal published by Tzara and Vinea under the name *Chemarea* (The Call), possibly due to the fact that he had already moved to Zurich. The start of the European war radicalised still further Tzara's and Janco's traditional rejection of national identity as it was later attacked by the Dadaists. Yet their different relationship to identity, Judaism, selfhood, nation and language played out differently for each of them throughout their lives. Their Jewish experiences were perhaps similar, but their interpretations were unique.

The confluence of industrial productivity and antisemitism was a reality for Tzara's family, which managed several enterprises of the oil industry and forest exploitation but was not allowed to own them, a paradox of a country that did not recognise them as full citizens. However, in Janco's case, while in theory the Jewish experience was supposedly similar to that of Tzara in the Moldavian shtetl, some biographical accounts³⁸² present his family as being fully assimilated, and even owners of a business dealing with suits and fabrics, called Iancu Brothers.³⁸³

³⁸¹ Catalin Davidescu, 'Marcel Janco/Realitatea unui vis', in *Marcel Janco, un visionnaire de l'art roumain* (Bucharest: Colors Art Gallery, 2012), p.4.

³⁸² Naumann (1982), in Sandqvist (2006).

³⁸³ The name is referring to Herman Iancu and his brothers, Marcel's uncles.



Someri în Cișmigiu [1938], unsigned drawing by Marcel Iancu, Library of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, 'Cabinetul de Stampe', inv. 9646.

It was perhaps the reason why his Judaism was never a burden for him as it was for Tzara, his paintings depicting his coreligionists in a state of blissfulness in parks, *Someri în Cișmigiu* (1938), while Tzara portrayed the Jews as being dislocated outside the primary community, as outcasts:

[...]

Between two chestnuts pulled down like the people going out of the hospital

The Jewish cemetery has grown among the stones;

At the edge of the town, on the hill

Tombs crawl like worms

[...] ³⁸⁴

This verse features different symbols related in way or another to his Jewish experience: the symbol of the stone, the Jewish cemetery placed on the outskirts of the community, and the worms. The Jewish tradition perpetuated the belief that the souls dwell

³⁸⁴ 'Între doi castani împovărați ca oamenii ce ies din spital / Crescu cimitirul ovreiesc – din bolovani; / La marginea orașului, pe deal / Mormintele ca viermii se târâsc.' Tristan Tzara, 'Vino cu mine la țară' (Come with me to the countryside), in *First Poems*, pp.13-15.

around the graves and for this reason the visitors should place stones on the graves in order to help the dead be at peace.³⁸⁵ East European Jewry has a rich mythology involving ghosts that haunt the living and the placing of the stone on the graves it is believed to create a barrier that prevents this from happening.³⁸⁶ Therefore, Tzara's description of the Jewish cemetery surrounded by stones can be seen as a possible reference to the Jewish folklore. The fact that it is placed on the outskirts of the town it is a clear reference to the marginalization of the Jews, fact emphasize by the comparisons between tombs and worms. The worms are not only as a result of the natural putrefaction but also a reference to the stereotypes ascribed to the Jews who were often described as 'infections, poison, parasites, [...] leeches, bacteria, maggots.'³⁸⁷ Therefore, it is obvious that Tzara's Jewish experience was involuntarily linked to the Jewish tradition and folklore regardless of his lack of religious interest. Tzara's usage of folk elements it is not shocking since, as Kampf specifies, 'folk art, like primitive art or children's art, was an important component of modern art.'³⁸⁸ Furthermore, this was probably also as a result of the populist tendencies which surged the Jewish masses from the turn of the century when the idea of folk art became widespread.³⁸⁹ What is interesting to observe is Tzara's inner conflict which makes him apprehensive in relating to the world of the shtetl. Tzara's depiction of the countryside is far from the symbolism that has been assigned to the image of the shtetl. The literary scholar David Roskies talks in his book *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past*, about the shtetl seen as a lost paradise, 'the local Old Country homeland,'³⁹⁰ image never depicted by Tzara's poems. At this point it is clear that Tzara's pre-1916 output and the Dada period remain two very distinct periods. His pre-Dada writings bear a confusion alluding more to a particular rural lifestyle experienced as a teenager were Jewish references that evoked a vivid reality of the alienation of the community are associated with a shame and anguish. Indeed, the shtetl was reclaimed as the place of common origin, to use Roskies words, however for Tzara the shtetl is associated with shame.

³⁸⁵ For a comprehensive insight into Jewish mourning practices and traditions, see Jack Riemer and Shwerwin B. Nuland, *Wrestling with the Angel: Jewish insights on death and mourning* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002).

³⁸⁶ For more on this, see, for instance, Isaac Bashevis Singer, *Collected stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, (New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1982). Singer presents a series of stories based on the rich East European Jewry and its traditions.

³⁸⁷ Paul Martin Lester and Susan Dente Ross (eds.), *Images that injure: Pictorial stereotypes in the media*, 3rd edition (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011), p.49.

³⁸⁸ Kampf, p.17.

³⁸⁹ See Kampf, Ch. 1, The quest for a Jewish style.

³⁹⁰ David Roskies, *The Jewish search for a usable past* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p.43.

Roskies sees the shtetl as the ‘source of a collective folk identity rooted in a particular historical past’³⁹¹ idealizing it as a place of origin of the universal Jewish experience. This timeless Jewish experience evoked by Roskies is quite visible in Tzara’s depiction of the shtetl and of his youth spent there but far from the positive ‘myth of origins’³⁹² envisioned by Roskies. As a consequence, later, out of shame, Tzara tried to conceal his self-image as a Jew as he associated with the ‘Jewish jewellers’ of his hometown.

It was in a context of national identity uprising that their Jewish experiences became conscious and it was the self-determination within its borders that allowed these two Jews to arbitrarily self-explain their otherness. Their regional and ethnic identities, unfixed and highly volatile in Romania, constituted their distinct cultural memory, which made them sharply aware of their otherness, anticipating the international personas that they later became. The fact that no other side of their destiny could have been more rooted in history or memory than the date of birth constitutes a questionable assumption on the way in which the memory of Janco and Tzara was constructed. This also does not imply the fact that Jewishness was necessarily their main generator of positions and metamorphosis, but a particular oscillation appeared due to the overall issues of Jewish identity in connection with the Romanian avant-garde, located at the intersection of individual and collective.

As strangers, ‘as the adult individual[s] [...] who [tried] to be permanently accepted or at least tolerated by the group’,³⁹³ which they approached, their ability to think as the other despite their Jewish experience was one of the principal characteristics that emerged in their artistic manifestations. For instance, Tzara’s literary output in French overshadowed the anxieties of the time, where people still saw him as a foreign refugee amongst the modernist elite.

The complex and quite unpredictable social structures and familial backgrounds affected the formation of both their Jewish identities and their Jewish experiences directly. The cultural traits exhibited by the family and the close community with deep roots in shtetl life, followed by the migration to a bigger city in Tzara’s case, and a generation of secularisation within the family in Janco’s case, created a mutually influential relationship of subordination between conflicting self-perceptions, foundational principles and fictions of an international existence.

³⁹¹ Roskies, p.57.

³⁹² Roskies, p.44.

³⁹³ Alfred Schultz, ‘The stranger. An essay in social psychology’ in *Collected Papers II* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), p.98.

Other Romanian figures too numerous to specify here were, as well, primarily schooled in the distinctively Romanian context of traditional Orthodoxy and heroic national accomplishments, and later travelled to Paris, Vienna, Munich or Zurich where they were exposed to a variety of newly originated art movements and styles, then fashionable despite Romania's apprehension towards the German cultural identity. Impressionism, post-impressionism, symbolism and art nouveau, with all their techniques inspired mainly by French interactions, eclipsed the artistic conventions of the native tradition. Although gradually distancing themselves from their original society, some artists, such as Marcel Janco, chose to return to Bucharest after their sojourns around Europe.

The first part of this research has shown, up until this point, that the impact of the socio-political reality of Tzara's and Janco's families, and the hardship encountered by the Romanian-Jewish minority, was an obvious characteristic of their 'Jewish experience'. The focus was placed on the relationships Tzara and Janco had with their families, the initial source of their Jewish heritage, in order to build the argument that similar conditions do not necessarily ensure similar experiences. However, although it agrees that Tzara and Janco's early experiences involuntarily gravitated towards Romanian modernism in the pre-avant-garde period, it insists that Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco display multiple, fluid, and multilayered identities among which Jewishness coexists alongside many other facets and it is not solely responsible for their attitude of revolt against the socio-political status quo. This analysis was carried out with the help of archival work, with special attention directed towards correspondence with the family.

The next section will discuss the relationship between Tzara's and Janco's Jewishness, modernism and later with the avant-garde as a movement. This subchapter introduces the first modernist journal *Simbolul* (The Symbol), published in 1912 and co-edited by Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, and *Chemarea* (The Call), published by Ion Vinea and Tristan Tzara. In this section, it is argued that, due to the existence of stereotypes surrounding the Jews in Romania, their artistic manifestations in *Simbolul* and later in *Chemarea* are marked by their concerns regarding their own marginalisation. The anti-classical stance of these two magazines and their uncritical enthusiasm for modernist philosophies appears as a result of Tzara and Janco seen as the 'other' by the Romanian state and, therefore, their need to escape their Jewishness.

1.2. *Simbolul*, *Chemarea* and the Jewish existence of Tzara and Janco

Simbolul (The Symbol) was a youthful Romanian literary and art magazine, the first Romanian modernist journal, published by Marcel Janco, Ion Vinea and S. Samyro (later, Tristan Tzara) in Bucharest between October and December 1912. In a period characterised by an obsession with defining Romania's cultural specificity steeped into folkloric tradition, 'entitling one's journal *Simbolul* was, unmistakably, a taking of sides'.³⁹⁴ The three teenagers editing it nonetheless lacked the experience of publishing a journal since this was their first ever, but their ambitions to create a platform for their rebellious Romanian literary modernism seems to have filled the gap. The existing literature³⁹⁵ on *Simbolul* seems to agree that the funds for publishing the journal fell under the responsibility of Marcel Janco. An interesting detail regarding *Simbolul*'s 'headquarters' is the address, 30 Silvestru St., Bucharest, printed right on the cover page. The street is part of the historic Jewish neighbourhood and the two-storey building, one of the largest in the area, could arguably be considered as belonging to a Jewish owner since at that time rarely would a Gentile buy property in a Jewish area. Therefore, this would have been most likely a family friend or business associate of Janco's father. Due to the regulations of Romanian property law it was impossible to obtain information on the property and its owners and, therefore, all the above discussion is based on supposition and public knowledge.

The journal *Chemarea* (The Call) was a literary publication, deeply political but 'not taking sides',³⁹⁶ created by Ion Vinea in the autumn of 1915 and lasting for only two issues. It is the first journal where Tristan Tzara published under this pseudonym (two poems); however, Erwin Kessler³⁹⁷ claims that he published under this pseudonym in the summer of 1915 in *Noua Revistă Română* (The New Romanian Review). The first issue of *Chemarea* was published on 4 October 1915 followed by another on 11 October.

Instead of immediately examining the journals themselves, the present research introduces gradually those sections considered relevant for the discussion carried out in each of the chapters. Therefore, this subchapter believes it is instructive to

³⁹⁴ Hentea, p.45.

³⁹⁵ Sandqvist (2006); Hentea; Kessler in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*; all seem to agree that Janco's family was the source of funding for this journal.

³⁹⁶ Ion Vinea, 'Avertisement' (Warning) in *Chemarea*, 1st issue, 11 October 1915, p.1.

³⁹⁷ Kessler in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, p.52.

enunciate some basic philosophy of these Romanian reviews together with the literary stance that Tzara and Janco wished to take, leaving the in-depth content analysis of each journal for the following chapters.

The boundaries of Tzara's and Janco's artistic existence were defined by national categories, even before the official beginning of the historical avant-garde, by Romanian society, which was in the midst of bourgeois consolidation, and where, in cultural terms, 'the past was not yet sufficiently heavy to allow for radical ruptures'.³⁹⁸ In other words, it examines the reception of their modernist manifestations as a Jewish phenomenon, announcing in this way the antisemitic reactions against the avant-garde movement. Their activities appeared to the Romanian intellectuals as a 'insurrectional modernity';³⁹⁹ as Ion Pop argues, this sort of modernity had not been developed in time in Romania and had to find a truly fertile ground elsewhere, as in the case of Tzara's and Janco's Dadaism, which manifests itself with major consequences in the framework of Europe and not in Romania. In a less complicated formulation, there was a lack of preparedness by the Romanian artistic field to accept the so-called 'degeneration'⁴⁰⁰ of the avant-garde.

The cultural implications and intellectual moorings of this reality were manifest in different ways, at times antisemitic, as already discussed in the Introduction, and Tzara's and Janco's artistic experiments were clustered within a larger movement accused of aiming the destabilisation of the traditional culture. It is examined how at the time of the formation of the European avant-gardes, *Simbolul*⁴⁰¹ represented a first attempt towards literary modernism in Romania, seeking to understand whether Tzara's and Janco's Jewish heritage impacted their activities in this journal.

The problem with the relationship between their Jewishness, modernism and later with the avant-garde as a movement had suffered due to the existence of the central stereotypes surrounding it: firstly, 'the stereotype of the Jew as a rootless, subversive and destructive outsider';⁴⁰² and secondly, 'the definitions of the avant-garde [which] are based on the terms of opposition and rupture',⁴⁰³ and revolution against the established order. In such context, the dynamics of Jewish self-definition lacking

³⁹⁸ Ion Pop, 'L'avant-garde roumaine et la politique', *Arcadia*, 41(2) (2006), pp.313-330.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.314.

⁴⁰⁰ Stern in *Jewish aspects in avant-garde*, p.35.

⁴⁰¹ Cernat sees *Simbolul* as a main stage in Romanian's modernism and credits it with having brought about the first changes from symbolism to the radical avant-garde. See, for instance, Cernat (2007), pp.50-54.

⁴⁰² Aschheim, p.271.

⁴⁰³ Pop, p.314.

a positive version served as a continuous remainder of their otherness and the status of destructive outsider. The socially constructed nature of their cultural identity remained defined around the concept of 'other' and therefore it remains imperative to explore against whom their self was constructed.

The concept of other combined with their concern about their marginalisation are 'imbricated in the process of identity formation'⁴⁰⁴ since neither Tzara nor Janco could escape their Jewishness, for it 'could not be unmade'.⁴⁰⁵ Although their identity was the product of the social and cultural processes through which it was produced,⁴⁰⁶ their 'Jewishness is unaffected by what the subject does'.⁴⁰⁷ In other words, the actions of Tzara and Janco made them who they were while their Jewishness remains part of their multilayered identity regardless of their actions. A similar argument is brought forwards by B. Honig in her analysis of Hannah Arendt's authentic Jewish identity and although her case is not related in the slightest with those of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, the point Honig makes regarding Jewishness and Jewish identity is nonetheless universally valid. She concludes that Arendt's authentic identity as a Jew remains unaffected by her actions and she could not subvert it regardless of what she did.⁴⁰⁸ Therefore, it is not too simplistic to argue that Tzara's and Janco's Jewishness should be treated as a sociocultural constant, their Jewish heritage, although not homogenous, constituting an important element of their identities.

Although Ion Vinea claimed that the 'embryo of the relentless [Dada] which fill[ed] the saloons in neutral Switzerland'⁴⁰⁹ first came to light in *Chemarea*, a 'radical socialist newspaper' criticising the politics and aesthetics that, in the authors' vision, were interconnected and the antisemitic reactions of the society, the beginning of the radical avant-gardist careers of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco was in *Simbolul*. Published by three teenagers, two of Jewish descent and one of Greek descent,⁴¹⁰ the

⁴⁰⁴ Laurence J. Silberstein, 'Other Within and Other Without', in *The Other in Jewish thought and history, constructions of Jewish culture and identity*, ed. by Laurence J. Silberstein and Robert L. Cohn (New York, NY, London: New York University Press, 1994), pp.6-7.

⁴⁰⁵ Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (eds.), *Feminists theorize the political* (New York, NY, London: Routledge, 1992), p.230.

⁴⁰⁶ For more on the concept of identity and otherness, see Silberstein and Cohn (eds.).

⁴⁰⁷ B. Honig, 'Towards an agnostic feminism: Hannah Arendt and the politics of identity', in *Feminists theorize the political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York, NY, London: Routledge, 1992), pp.215-231. Honig analyses Hannah Arendt's conflict with Gershom Scholem, arguing that identity is constructed through our actions.

⁴⁰⁸ Honig, in *Ibid.*, pp.215-231.

⁴⁰⁹ Ion Vinea, 'Dada', in *Adevărul* (The truth), 33, no. 11052, 15 April 1920.

⁴¹⁰ Although Vinea later denied his Greek heritage, both his parents were of documented Hellenic origins. See Cernat, p.207.

title of the magazine hardly left any doubt about the influence of symbolism it received. The contributions of modernist poets such as Emil Isac, starting from the first issue, Adrian Maniu and Claudia Millian, both simultaneously submitting writings and drawings to be published alongside Marcel Iancu sketches, and even poetry by the well-established poet Alexandru Macedonski, due to whom Romania interacted for the first time with symbolism, revealed from the first issue that the journal was closely related to international symbolism.⁴¹¹ The muted desperation and sadness announced by Macedonski's early poems, two of which had their world premiere in the Belgian revue *La Wallonie*⁴¹² in 1886, was a style appreciated and quickly embraced by Tzara in his early poems:

[...]
 they row on the river of life
 a river so sad
 and dirty
 [...] from time to time,
 they unravel
 on the sad river of life,
 and dirty,
 a dead body,
 a coffin,
 and perched boats.⁴¹³

Such new poetic images were characteristic to the symbolists as part of 'a philosophical idealism in revolt against positivist, the scientific attitude that affected not only the painting but literature as well',⁴¹⁴ as shown by *Simbolul*'s drawings, vignettes, and texts.

⁴¹¹ Sandqvist (2006), and Hentea, both discuss in more detail the symbolist influences of *Simbolul*. Additionally, Sandqvist (2006), pp.74-77, offers a short analysis of the works published in the journal by Adrian Maniu, Claudia Millian and Alfred Solacolu.

⁴¹² Alex Macedonski published two poems in the third issue of *La Wallonie*, 15 August 1886: 'Chimere' and 'Haine'. Melancholy, desperation, and sadness marked the symbolist trend.

⁴¹³ 'Ei merg, ei merg vâslind alene / Pe râul Vieții-atât de trist, / Și de murdar / (...) Din când în când, / Se deslușesc / Pe râul Vieții-atât de trist, / Și de murdar / Vre-un cadavru, / Un sicriu / Și bărci stinghere (...)'. S. Samyro, 'Pe raul vietii' (On the river of life), *Simbolul*, 1, 25 October 1912, pp.10-12.

⁴¹⁴ Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1979), Introduction.

Another progressive journal, *Chemarea* (The Call) appeared under the editorship of Vinea and Tzara in 1915 and was directed against intolerance, antisemitism in Romania, and also on the country's war situation. The ramifications of their inexperience in publishing translated in the short life of both these magazines: *Simbolul* from 25 October to 25 December 1912, and *Chemarea* being published only for the first two weeks of October 1915. It is necessary to mention that the context in which these two magazines appeared was not the most optimal. The autumn of 1912 represented the beginning of the First Balkan War, the event that changed public interests abruptly regarding the press, which led to changes in the editorial content of many magazines to cover the war. For instance, even the well-established literary and art revues dedicated many issues to the coverage of the Balkan War: *Universul literar*⁴¹⁵ (The Literary Universe) had on the cover of its 44th issue a drawing of the Serbian cavalry's terrible attack at Kumanovo, while *Luceafărul*⁴¹⁶ (The Evening Star) published stories and images portraying the soldiers and the casualties. The fact that the three young editors of *Simbolul* refused to include anything related to the war in the south attracted many harsh criticisms from the traditionalist groups and their nationalist propaganda.

The anti-classical stance of these two magazines and their uncritical enthusiasm for modernist philosophies, reiterated by the poems published and signed by Tzara, and accompanied by drawings by Iancu, implied taking a side for modernism. Following Urmuz's style, they were concerned not only with revolutionising the aesthetics by challenging the norms imposed by the traditionalist movements *Semanatorism* and *Poporanism*, but also with criticising the political realities' divisive politics. The modernist attitude of *Simbolul* was ridiculed by *Poporanists'* press review, *Viata Romaneasca* calling the journal 'quite truly odious',⁴¹⁷ concerning itself with frivolous themes instead of paying attention to the world around it mired in war. Such journalistic experiments were always in danger of being assimilated with the idea of the alienation of Romanian culture, blamed on their cosmopolitanism, marked by a migration between cultures and languages, and looking into the future rather than fixating nostalgically on the era of imaginary nationalist achievements of the past. Since one of the clichés applied to Jewish artists was 'cosmopolitanism', used pejoratively by nationalistic rhetoric, any exposure to modernist theories was implicitly considered an indication of their ethnicity. Isolated by the traditionalist elite, this alleged feature

⁴¹⁵ *Universul literar*, 44, 29 October 1912.

⁴¹⁶ *Luceafărul*, 33, tome 2, 16 December 1912.

⁴¹⁷ Ciopraga, (1970), as cited in Marius Hentea, p.37.

of the Jews became one of the grounds of exclusion. Rejection embraced not only all racist concepts but also the denial of the values promoted by the avant-garde.

As a consequence, the whole avant-garde criticism issue was rendered somewhat confusing. Not adhering to the 'national spirit' was the main criticism, combined with antisemitic connotations. Even if in the early stages it appeared only in some contexts, such rhetoric would soon be picked up by more or less parallel radical political movements that transformed all criticism directed towards the avant-garde into the equivalent of antisemitic attacks. In such a polemical environment, ending the seismic-destructive intellectual attitudes of the modernists, questioning the dominant order became a goal of its opponents. Criticised for its lack of originality, the movement was perceived as being simply just another alien element, lacking any artistic discernment, and forced upon the Romanian culture to distance it from its native traditions. It was perceived as an intrusion meant to crush on all sides traditions and local behaviours. The constant return to origins and traditions made the young Romanian nation assign an imperfect and aleatory place to modernity.

The acute feeling of confrontation between the artistic technology of an epoch and the right of the 'New' to condemn the 'Old' practices⁴¹⁸ intended to enhance an atmosphere favouring the penetration of modernist movements: Partisans of a more substantial expression of our artists who carry forward new trends [...rise], like a capricious fairy, the infinite image of modern art, more significant, nobler and richer in artistic emotions.⁴¹⁹ Incorporating elements belonging to different currents and demonstrating the lack of a concrete and equable line in the fine arts was actively encouraged by the avant-garde promoters and their circles. For instance, the lack of reverence for national tradition, racial heritage and the purity of the language, a style experimented with by Tzara, Vinea and Janco in *Simbolul*, was believed to be a pre-Dadaist sign, '*DADA peut-être secrètement préparé*'.⁴²⁰ Disregarding the polemic⁴²¹ around the pre-Dadaist nature of *Simbolul* and *Chemarea*, these two modernist journals constituted the beginning of what would later become a rupture in Romanian art, seen as a direct opponent of the existing system. Ion Pop noted that, by principle, the

⁴¹⁸ Adrian Marino, *Dictionar de idei literare: Avangarda* (A Dictionary of Literary ideas) (Bucharest: Ed. Eminescu, 1973), chapter on the avant-garde.

⁴¹⁹ Article by Theodor Cornel, 'Viata Sociala' (Social life), *Socialist Review* (1910).

⁴²⁰ 'Maybe secretly prepared', commentary by Claude Sernet in Tzara (1965), p.29.

⁴²¹ Some critics and researchers refer to a pre-Dada encoding traceable in Tzara's early poems, arguments dismissed by Henri Behar, who argues that Tzara's early daring announced only disorder and anxiety. See Henri Béhar, *Tristan Tzara Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Flammarion, 1975), p.632.

avant-garde refused structure as being a form of petrification and its representatives were continuously seeking for a surprise, for everything that is novel.⁴²² Such attitudes gave full rein to breaking old patterns by employing violent language, the aggressiveness against any rigid convention translating into an attack directed towards tradition, and implicitly towards politics in that era. Later, in 1925,⁴²³ Ion Vinea would address the self-taught techniques of avant-garde artists who, in their thorn, achieved a lexicon revolution instead of a revolution of sensitivity.

Unitarily through its nihilism, the avant-garde degenerated into an ‘extreme modernism’⁴²⁴ in its attempt to detach itself completely from any tradition. Ironically, two of the most vocal Romanian avant-gardist poets, Ilarie Voronca⁴²⁵ and Benjamin Fondane,⁴²⁶ are discussed by the literary critic G. Călinescu in his *Istoria*⁴²⁷ as *traditionalist* simply based on the appearance of their early writings (organised orthography, meaning of words) even if their poetry bore signs of Dadaism and Surrealism from its early beginnings. About Benjamin Fondane, the literary critic notes that he ‘is invaded by a bucolic nostalgia, characteristic of his biblical race and representative to the Jewish life in northern Moldova’.⁴²⁸ The folkloric ancestral *miserablism* of the Jews did matter for the Romanian nationalists, constituting a serious reason to suspect and accuse the entire avant-garde of destabilising the established order by cultivating cultural, and even political, anarchism.

Although the emerging modernist movements through the voices of the short-lived *Simbolul* did not succeed in sweeping away all conventionalities, this experiment brought out by the three teenage friends managed to make room for diversion, through which the Romanian ‘French modernisation’ received a badly needed novelty.

The cultural atmosphere in the years preceding the First World War points to an attitude that included elements heralding the avant-garde, but it was only in 1922

⁴²² Ion Pop, *Avangardismul poetic romanesc* (Romanian Avant-Garde Poetry) (Bucharest: Ed. ‘Pentru Literatura’, 1969), pp.10-20.

⁴²³ ‘Vorbe goale’ (Empty words), *Punct*, 1925.

⁴²⁴ Term coined by Adrian Marino, p.195.

⁴²⁵ I. Voronca (born Eduard Marcus) was one of the founders of Romanian avant-garde, the editor-in-chief of the journal *75 HP*, contributor to most of the Romanian reviews and journals, and creator of ‘picto-poetry’ together with Victor Brauner.

⁴²⁶ Benjamin Fondane (born Benjamin Wechsler) was a Romanian-born Jewish poet, philosopher, filmmaker and critic. He was the main link between Tristan Tzara and the Romanian avant-garde journals after his relocation to Paris in 1922. Fondane’s speciously symbolistic poetry evolved to surrealist although the poet did not specifically label himself as belonging to Andre Breton’s movement.

⁴²⁷ Călinescu, p.349.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.348

that the movement acquired clearer shape with the appearance of the ‘Romanian constructivism body’, the magazine *Contimporanul*. Upon his return to Bucharest in late 1921, Marcel Janco found ‘both the country and its capital had changed fundamentally’.⁴²⁹

However, despite the substantial territorial gain, doubling its national resources and the achievement of the longstanding ambition of creating the Greater Romania, the country had yet to better define its national characteristics. The newly multi-ethnic state, with over 30% of the population being aliens, did still lack a constitution granting equal rights to all its citizens, and the nationalistic ethnically homogenous obsessions were still prevailing. *Contimporanul*, the magazine Janco established together with Ion Vinea in 1922, adopted initially a more critical attitude towards the political sphere, which did not go unnoticed by the nationalists, as Vinea later recalled:

When, a long time ago, the first abstract illustrations appeared for the first time in our pages, the public was as outraged as [if it were] an obscene appearance. The indignation of not understanding was taken out, with anger, on us: spirits, taunts, insults and sometimes threats of beating us up.⁴³⁰

Despite the changes undertaken by the nation, Romania remained mostly a country of paradoxes, where modernisation and synchronisation with the rest of Europe should have been acquired, paradoxically, by maintaining a conservative attitude. Leading intellectuals, N. Iorga being probably the most notorious of them all, openly attacked any modernist, and later avant-gardist, manifestations pointing to their Jewish element. The virulent antisemitic attitudes combined with the reinforcement of general traditionalist views were Tzara’s and Janco’s place of departure towards their Dada adventures. Their view of the world was shaped by their Jewish experiences created in the confusing process of Romanian national identity creation.



⁴²⁹ Sandqvist (2006), p.102.

⁴³⁰ *Contimporanul*, No. 50-51, November/December 1924, ‘Promisiuni’ (Promises) by I. Vinea.

1.3. Conclusions

As all over Europe, identifying as a Jew meant either to proclaim a special status or to ascribe to one. At the time Samuel Rosenstock and Marcel Iancu left Romania, the anti-Semitic and nationalist attitude of the Romanian intellectuals was as vehement as it was in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, such an attitude was not a singular one in Europe and not very different from that experienced in their childhoods. In Romania, as elsewhere, this alien group was cast as a scapegoat for all the imperfections of the transition, as also shown by the Peasants' Revolt of 1907. Despite their lack of civil rights, the Jews were associated with the new bourgeoisie despite the reality.⁴³¹ Blaming the materialism of the new age on the Jews, the tag attached to them as the *enemies of tradition*, off to offend Romania's interests, fuelled many nationalist critiques. Embracing antisemitic sentiments, the Romanian government delayed their emancipation.

As with any other children born to Romanian-Jewish parents, Tzara and Janco were surrounded by the Romanian lifestyle, culture, and tradition as they were growing up. Undoubtedly, they had no need to formally acquire the Jewish and Romanian characteristics of life and art, as they inherited them naturally from their families, as Tzara recalled in his semi-autobiographical work, *Faites vos jeux*.⁴³² Their cultural upbringing was of fundamental importance in the process of the formation of their socio-intellectual identities, which led eventually to a double existence. The geopolitical milieu contributed to the creation of their identities as foreigners without history, as outsiders, trapped in a society mesmerised by the prospection of a cultural Franco-Romanian *entente* while still battling its internalised provincialism. Rejecting Jewish participation in Romanian society, and denying its possible beneficial contribution, created a sort of transnational identity amongst the Jews, which translated into two reactions: a complete assimilation into the Jewish community and its values (Janco); and an attempt to disaffiliate themselves from their families for a modernist thinking (Tzara).

* * *

⁴³¹ The Romanian Jewish population was impoverished by the lack of rights, being one of the poorest minorities: 'Jews are the most deprived in Iasi – nowhere else you can see so much poverty as here, where they made their first settlements' in H. Gherner and B. Wachtel, *Evreii ieşeni în documente și fapte*, (Iasi: Opinion Press, 1939).

⁴³² Such a reflexive attitude is believed to have been in relation to the fall-out Tzara had with André Breton and the Paris Dadaists.

Chapter 2: Tzara and Janco, 1900 and 1915: between becoming and minor literature

*'Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us'*⁴³³

Deleuze and Guattari

This chapter explores the multilayered identities of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco with a view to determining the importance of their becoming, a process of change not through imitation but as a modification of an element's value in order to produce a new unity,⁴³⁴ as a result of everyday life. It approaches their process of identity formation, seen as a web of interrelated social, political and personal components, all part of their multilayered identity (of which their Jewishness was only one facet), based on the concept of 'becoming' as discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.⁴³⁵ Consequently, it discusses also the concept of *minor literature* in relation to Tzara's and Janco's productions in *Simbolul*, as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*.⁴³⁶

The period under scrutiny finds Tzara and Janco still in Bucharest, enrolled in their high-school studies and also actively involved in the creation of the first modernist journal in Romania, *Simbolul*. The period stretches until 1915 in order to cover also Tzara's activity in *Chemarea* which this chapter considers relevant especially in the context of the Balkan War, discussed in the previous chapters. Given the significant literary body of works created by Tzara during this period, this chapter focuses more on his case while discussing Janco's case through the lens of his relation to his Jewish heritage as revealed by biographic data rather than artistic productions. This decision has been taken due to the complexity of the Deleuzoguattarian concepts, their applicability in the philosophical and philological spheres but also due to Janco's less visible activity in the editorial part of *Simbolul*.

⁴³³ Deleuze and Guattari, p.500.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.256-261.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka. Toward a Minor Literature*. Translation by Dana Polan. Foreword by Réda Bensmaï'a. Theory and History of Literature, Volume 30 (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) – referred to in this chapter as *Kafka*.

The argument this chapter makes is that becomings are not a unitary process, they are not identical, and they are flexible, permutable and fluid, fueled by experiences, more specifically in Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's cases by Jewish experiences. This task is completed by critically examining the complexity of the relationship between Jewish modernist artists and the Romanian society of the *fin de siècle* and interwar period and placing it in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari's ideas.

This chapter remains concerned with the relationship between arts and ethnicity but also about Tzara's and Janco's early lives and the way art and nationality were linked together and rethought. It continues arguing that their identity was a result of the condition of the Jewish artist in Romania as it was related to the marginality of this ethnic group and nevertheless metaphysically inseparable from them. Furthermore, it examines Tzara' and Janco's joint project, the journal *Simbolul*, seen through the lens of its relationship to the dominant culture, based on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature, an angle from which *Simbolul* has never been discussed before. It also employs Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the *rhizome* and argues that *Simbolul* can be seen as a rhizome. The reason this chapter focuses mainly on *Simbolul* is because in these years there were no other joint artistic productions from Janco and Tzara.

Deleuze and Guattari's ideas lead to a fruitful analysis of these artists and indeed of Dada for several reasons, as follows: previously, researchers have worked on emphasising how the vast enterprise of abstract concepts of the avant-garde, and more specifically that of the Dada artworks, impacted Deleuze and Guattari's way of thinking.⁴³⁷ For instance, Helen Palmer⁴³⁸ argues even that Deleuze's philosophy relies on a Dada philosophy, while Fredric Jameson⁴³⁹ considers the Deleuzoguattarian 'Rhizome' as having something of the dogmatic force of an avant-gardist's manifesto. However, no previous research has attempted to analyse Tzara's and Janco's identity formation with the help of the concept of 'becoming' by looking at the complexity of the relationship between Jewish modernist artists and Romanian society of the *fin de*

⁴³⁷ See, for instance, Sjoerd van Tuinen and Stephen Zepke (eds.) *Art history after Deleuze and Guattari* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017). Here, it is stressed how the works of Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp were introducing parts of mechanical objects into their works, and Deleuze and Guattari stress their non-representational character as inherent, non-casual image-apparatuses that nevertheless still partially rely on representational mechanisms.

⁴³⁸ Helen Palmer, *Deleuze and Futurism: A manifesto for nonsense* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), p.52: 'Dada in general can be defined as a refusal of method, which always presupposes the counter-argument that the refusal of method is a method within itself. Deleuze's philosophy relies on the possibility that such a method exists and does work'.

⁴³⁹ Fredric Jameson, 'Marxism and dualism in Deleuze', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 96 (1997), pp.393-416.

siècle and interwar period, nor has *Simbolul* ever been discussed in terms of *minor literature*.

This chapter does not aspire to reduce Deleuze and Guattari's concepts into a set of practices to be applied normatively to the field of Jewish studies but attempts to think through the Deleuzoguattarian insights on the relationship between identity and Tzara's and Janco's relationship with literature and art, arguing for a complex relationship between origin and artistic production that goes beyond simple identity. Throughout this entire chapter it is important to remember that all Deleuze and Guattari's term are complex and therefore they rarely have the same meaning as in general use. *A Thousand Plateaus* is rich with metaphors expressed in literary and visual arts and this chapter will occasionally highlight some of these metaphors (e.g. the body; the nomad; the rhizome). This book of concepts is open to different fields of thought, as Deleuze himself characterised it, which allows the present research to redefine a few of the Deleuzoguattarian concepts in the fields of cultural history or Jewish studies and apply them to the specific cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco.⁴⁴⁰ This endeavour is fortified also by somewhat of a similarity in the philosophical courage shown by Deleuze and Guattari in 'inventing concepts as within a system that must be accessible and useful to anyone interested'.⁴⁴¹ The tragicomic exceptionalism crucial to Dada, where Tzara's and Janco's identities characterised by self-negation swept the work of negation directed at all socio-political and cultural institutions, is an equally persistent feature of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy.⁴⁴² The sophistication of the Deleuzoguattarian writing, and the lack of a linear style aiming at developing an overarching argument, makes their writing as hard to grasp as many Dada philosophies and manifestos.

However, *A Thousand Plateaus* offers the reader an option to 'plug-in at any point and still be able to experiment with its concepts'.⁴⁴³ Therefore, the focus of this chapter is placed primarily on those chapters that deal with the concept of *becoming* such as Chapter 4, *November 20, 1923 – Postulates of Linguistics* and Chapter 10,

⁴⁴⁰ Deleuze, in his interview with the French newspaper *Libération*, 23 October 1980, pp.16-17.

⁴⁴¹ André Pierre Colombat, 'A Thousand Trails to Work with Deleuze', in *SubStance*, 20(3), Issue 66: Special Issue: Deleuze & Guattari (1991), pp.10-23, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3685176> [accessed 24 August 2017].

⁴⁴² For more on this see, Elizabeth Legge, 'Blinds and blackness: Looking again at Tristan Tzara' in *Virgin Microbe: Essays on Dada (Avant-Garde & Modernism Studies)*, ed. by David Hopkins and Michael White (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2013), pp.181-204.

⁴⁴³ Richard Pringle and Dillon Landi, 'Re-reading Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*', *Annals of Leisure Research*, 20(1) (2017), pp.117-122, DOI: 10.1080/11745398.2016.1204138.

1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible... It is here that Deleuze and Guattari engage with the question of Jewish identity and *becoming-Jewish* as *becoming-intense, becoming-imperceptible* of life and language. Furthermore, it is important to specify that the interpretations of the difficult terminology employed by Deleuze and Guattari and used in this chapter were possible only based on the readings of several authors⁴⁴⁴ who have dealt with *A Thousand Plateaus*, whose readings contributed to a better understanding of the Deleuzoguattarian philosophy. These interpreters were chosen based mainly on their research interests and engagement with Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, as shown by their body of work.

Since a general discussion of a broad range of perspectives on Jewish identity has already been carried out in previous chapters, this chapter will not reopen the debate about the multiplicity of views on the topic, and it will not concern itself either with supposing that there is a right answer to what constitutes Jewish identity. Practically, this chapter sees Tzara's and Janco's Jewishness as a mixture of different elements: consciousness of a shared community history, an acute sense of their difference, and an awareness of their minority status in a broader, non-Jewish society, with distinct boundaries between Christian Orthodoxy and Judaism. Throughout this exploration, it inevitably indicates some of the problems that artists coming from a minority background (for instance, Jewish or Greek⁴⁴⁵) faced in their attempt to enter the mainstream of Romanian culture, although a more detailed discussion has already been carried out in the previous chapters and therefore an in-depth analysis of it at this point would be redundant.

This chapter's reading of *Simbolul* suggests the possibility of explaining Tzara's and Janco's ideas with the help of Deleuze and Guattari's logic, without constantly resorting to the special sense in which they use particular technical terms, but in ordinary language, easier to comprehend. Furthermore, this chapter analyses *Simbolul*'s style as developed under the directions of Tzara and Janco and, therefore, in

⁴⁴⁴ To name a few: Brian Massumi, *A user's guide to capitalism and schizophrenia: Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari* (Cambridge, MA, London: MIT Press, 1996); Sonja Longolius, *Performing authorship: Strategies of 'becoming an author' in the works of Paul Auster, Candice Breitz, Sophie Calle, and Jonathan Safran Foer (Culture & Theory)* (London: Transcript Verlag, 2016); Brent Adkins, *Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus: A critical introduction and guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (London and New York, NY: Routledge Critical Thinkers, 2002); E.W. Holland, *Deleuze and Guattari's 'A Thousand Plateaus': A reader's guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Marianne Kielian-Gilbert, 'Music and the difference in becoming', in *Sounding the virtual: Gilles Deleuze and the theory and philosophy of music*, ed. by Brian Hulse and Nick Nesbitt (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010); Gregg Lambert, *Who's afraid of Deleuze and Guattari?* (London: Continuum, 2006).

⁴⁴⁵ Ion Vinea (born Ioan Eugen Iovanaki) was of Greek origin.

order to paint a complete picture, it does not limit itself only to their productions. For a better understanding of *Simbolul*'s style, a series of works published in this journal by Tzara's and Janco's collaborators were consulted. The focus is placed on the entire journal and mainly on Tzara's writings and his perspective since, and without wanting to undermine the role played by other contributors to *Simbolul*: 'The *only* one in charge of *all* the editorial part of our magazine is Mr S. Samyro',⁴⁴⁶ implying his critical role in the final format and content.

Directly or indirectly, it was in *Simbolul* that Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco first addressed their Jewishness as a significant sociocultural element, as will be explored further throughout this chapter. Their approach to socio-political reality is argued as a sort of alternative to the Jewish desperation caused by social marginality, which had a profound impact, inevitably, on all Romanian Jews. Willingly or not, Tzara and Janco found themselves constrained to react, each in his way, to the Romanian context, showing strong traces of antisemitic prejudice. The vulnerability of their identity combined with moments of revelation on the 'idea of the Jew' as an *individual affair* is what this chapter scrutinises, based on the exploration of the archival collections comprised of the journals *Simbolul* (1912) and *Chemarea* (1915). It emphasises how central their Jewish self-perception was, directing attention to their very different manner of addressing their Jewish identity while still in Romania, where the Jew was seen from a populist stereotype point of view based on religious tradition. It is argued that Tzara and Janco, together with their friends and collaborators at *Simbolul* and *Chemarea*, reproduced the ethnic and social hierarchies of that time by elaborating on the stereotype of the degraded Jewish minority and other elements, enhancing their marginalisation and stringing *Simbolul* towards becoming *minor literature*.

Since this chapter carries on the discussion on Tzara's and Janco's identity formation through the lens of Deleuzoguattarian concepts, each of the following sub-chapters is dedicated to one of the terms, sporadically interacting with the others. It carries also a discussion on the ways of approaching language from a Deleuzoguattarian perspective, by analysing the linguistic breaks in Tzara's early writings in *Simbolul* and *Chemarea*. The close analysis of the original Romanian text regards *Simbolul*'s symbolist literary practice as a way of becoming-minoritarian for writers who belonged to the Romanian majority. Furthermore, it also sees this journal as a rhizome in order to account for the intertwined, global qualities of *Simbolul* and the network

⁴⁴⁶ 'Cu *toată* partea redacțională a revistei noastre e însărcinat *numai* d-l', S. Samyro, *Simbolul*, 3, Note, p.48 (original emphasis).

built by Tzara and Janco around it. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature is presented in connection to Tzara's and Janco's artistic endeavours, and the values their marginalised identities create.

The next part of this chapter discusses a series of Deleuzoguattarian terms and their conceptual positioning in relation to Tzara and Janco. The following subchapters put Tzara's and Janco's early lives in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari's reflections on the transformative potential of *becoming* in order to bring into view the immanent identity of the two avant-gardists. It will stress how the Deleuzeguattarian *becoming* allows Tzara's and Janco's multilayered identity to be seen as a series of existential stages in their lives, continuously evolving, created by the context in which they were living, and therefore always being open to new trajectories. The concept of minor literature in relation to *Simbolul* is also discussed in the following section, as well as the Deleuzoguattarian-inspired concept of the rhizome, where Tzara's and Janco's Jewish and Romanian heritages are seen as the roots of the rhizome, as will be explained.



2.1. *Simbolul*, a sign of Tzara's and Janco's otherness

As mentioned in the Introduction, the solitary style of Urmuz set the basis for a revolution in the forms of expression in Romanian literature, discrediting the clichés of Romanian poetry and representing a sufficient source of inspiration in the pre-avant-gardist Romanian context where his manuscript copies circulated freely, starting in 1907. This chapter builds on the argument put forward by Ovidiu Morar who states that 'both *Primele poeme* by Tristan Tzara and the *Paginile bizare* by Urmuz are in fact an anti-literature, polemically directed against poetry and, as the case may be, against traditional prose'.⁴⁴⁷ Following this argument, the present chapter looks at *Simbolul* as Tzara's and Janco's main output during their adolescence and as a first criterion to analyse the reception of their work in Romania. Finally, this chapter continues the point of view of the previous chapters according to which the juncture in history when *Simbolul* appears, although filled with elements that later populated the avant-garde, places it outside the historical avant-garde in Romania.

⁴⁴⁷ Morar, p.24.

It was in an environment of deep symbolist discontent and apparent hostility that young Tzara and Janco began their search for self-defining. Living in Bucharest, the two founders of *Simbolul* undoubtedly interacted with the earliest symbolist journals *Revista Celor l'Alti* (*The Journal of the Others*, 1908) and *Insula* published by Ion Minulescu, an established symbolist writer. The state of national art remained a preoccupation of several influential literary journals such as *Rampa* (The Springboard), the topic being amply debated at the time by many intellectuals.⁴⁴⁸ The list of contributors of both these magazines was later on used in *Simbolul*, which constituted a new platform for many poets aspiring to notoriety and modernity.

The urban setting was populated, timidly, by modernist manifestos in a moderate tone, which allows it to be argued, with some justice, that Tzara and Janco, who were living in Bucharest, were under the influence of a process of symbolist revision, fine-tuning and refinement:

Light up the torches to shine the light on the literary present! The literary present? ... here it is. A few young men who speak and read Romanian just like the others, but who wish to write in a different way than the others, [and] have the courage to plant a flag in the middle of the road at high noon, and, addressing the others, to say: 'Up to this point this has been your road; from now on it is ours'.⁴⁴⁹

The appearance of *Simbolul* embodied similar attitudes and Tzara, Vinea and Janco employed a virtually identical strategy as their precursors did in the above-mentioned *manifesto*. Janco later claimed that they were 'the pioneers of a revolutionary era in Romanian art'.⁴⁵⁰ In 1912, for only 20 *Bani*,⁴⁵¹ the fancy aristocracy of Bucharest would have had an unusual encounter with *Simbolul*'s writings and drawings in a strange language and style, with themes slipping from the uncertainty of life⁴⁵² to the

⁴⁴⁸ Mihai Cruceanu, 'Ancheta printre oamenii nostri al caror cuvânt atarna in materie literara' (Inquiry amid the people whose words count in our literary matters), *Rampa*, Bucharest, 13 December, 1911, pp.1-4.

⁴⁴⁹ *Revista celor l'alti* (20 March 1908), 1. As cited by Irina Livezeanu, 'Romania: "Windows toward the West": New forms and the "Poetry of True Life"', in Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker, and Christian Weikop (eds.), *Modernist magazines: A critical and cultural history, vol. 3: Europe 1880-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.1157-1183.

⁴⁵⁰ Interview with Marcel Janco, as cited in Hentea, p.33.

⁴⁵¹ *Ban* (plural *Bani*) is a subdivision of the Romanian currency, the Romanian **leu**, Romanian Lion. The word 'bani' is also used for 'money' in the Romanian language.

⁴⁵² 'Pe raul vietii' (On the river of life) by S. Samyro, in *Simbolul*, 1, p.10.

illegality of sexual desire,⁴⁵³ and from the idyllic image of a mourning countryside⁴⁵⁴ to the disgracefulness of being a Jew.⁴⁵⁵ The pale yellow-covered journal and its unmistakably awkwardly drawn cover depicting a semi-nude woman in front of a curtain show a certain connection between the editors and the international symbolist sphere, but it also betrays their not yet found artistic identities. The band of high-school students utilise the idea of split identity in a relatively thin symbolic frame, intensifying the feeling of marginalisation felt in the remote Romanian provinces or even in the cosmopolitan Bucharest.

The violence and shock shown by *Simbolul*'s semantic multiplicities betray the fragility of its contributors' identity, leaving almost no doubt of the authors' social marginality. The emerging antisemitic propaganda of the vilest type promoted by Nicolae Iorga and Octavian Goga was referenced in a discrete manner throughout the journal, satirising their misunderstanding and disregard of Jewish culture. As a sort of recurring theme, the authors' existential dilemma was embodied in their sense of alien⁴⁵⁶ identity masked under symbolist themes of death, despair, evil, melancholy and an illusory world. Each of these references, some more subtle than others, stress the connection between the Jewish heritage, with its marginalising effect, and artists' personal experiences in the context of national reality. The fraternity created more or less artificially in their Dada years, with its sum of identities as part of a larger togetherness of all identities, was predicted in *Simbolul*:

Three princesses have left
 To find three lovers,
 Three princesses
 Three princesses – carrying in their souls
 Three Misunderstood Loves
 They left at dawn
 Towards the sea,
 Towards the blue, agitated, eternally agitated sea,
 They have left.

⁴⁵³ 'Fecioarele cuminti' (The obedient virgins) by Alfred I. Solacolu, in *Simbolul*, 1, p. 6. See also drawings of a nude person by Iancu. *Ibid.*, p.15.

⁴⁵⁴ 'Soarele' (The Sun) by AI. Vitianu, in *Simbolul*, p.9.

⁴⁵⁵ 'Protopopii familiei mele' (My family's archpriests) by Emil Isac, in , p.2 (25 October 1912).

⁴⁵⁶ The term 'alien' is used here as 'foreign', implying Jewish and Greek minorities.

For each of the three princesses
 To find the one who was foretold
 And whom, each
 Of the three princesses
 Saw him in her dream.
 [...]

And they saw on the horizon
 At sunset
 When the golden lights flow like the waves,
 On a background,
 Of azure
 Of gold,
 And of the green of hope,
 Standing gloriously in the way of the sea
 The upright Tower of Life.⁴⁵⁷

The cynical tone of this poem, although possibly frivolous and playful, nonetheless embraces Tzara's self-consciousness that would be so clear in his later Dada productions. His attempt to insert elements of vague eroticism to the story is without any doubt a recurring theme in his mature writings, characterised by 'excoriations of morality, sense, and logic'.⁴⁵⁸ However, this poem can be interpreted as a subtle criticism of the socio-political context in which he is forced to live, unable to define himself by traditional, Romanian and Jewish, means and values. All this made him even more aware of his status, his self-consciousness appearing in the form of fractured verses, just like the normal course of his life is interrupted by antisemitism.

In its original publication in *Simbolul*, the above poem by Tzara is accompanied by an unsigned drawing. Although unsigned, the drawing can be presumed to

⁴⁵⁷ 'Trei prințese au plecat / Să-și găsească trei iubiți, / Trei prințese / Trei prințese având în suflet / Trei iubiri neînțelese / Au plecat în zorii zilei / În spre mare, / În spre albastră, agitata, vecinic agitata mare, / Au plecat. / Ca fiecare dintre cele trei prințese / Să-și găsească pe acela care le a fost prezis / Și pe care, fiecare / Dintre cele trei prințese / L-a văzut în vis. [...] / Și-au zărit la orizont / În amurg/ Când luminile de aur ca și valurile curg, / Pe un fond / De azur, / De aur, / Și de verdele sperantei, / Falnic stând în drumul mării / Turnul Vietii ridicat ...'. S. Samyro, 'Poveste' (Fairytale), *Simbolul*, 3, 1 December 1912, pp.42-43.

⁴⁵⁸ Legge, p.191.

belong to either Marcel Janco or Adrian Maniu since they were in charge of the artistic content of the journal, as announced on its cover. The Romanian researcher Geo Șerban notes that, during that period of time, Janco's drawings were characterized by 'iserism,' a term derived from the name of Janco's drawing professor, Iosif Iser. According to Șerban's account, the term 'iserism' is definable as a 'mixture of brutal force, gushing out of broad, metallic, unmoved lines, and striking color, a sort of pagan symphony that produces powerful art effects.'⁴⁵⁹ Clearly, Iser was indeed the one who influenced Janco's direction in art but also, as Șerban informs, there was a line of influence of the French model as well.

As any young artist, Janco was in search of his personal and collective roots in his art so it would be premature to characterize his style as definitely one or the other. The drawing presents three princesses, this way following the line of the journal where, in general, the drawings accompanying the poems and stories depicted the subject of the latter. However, the three princesses can be seen also as a powerful folkloric component of the below drawing which can be interpreted as a depiction of the *Sânziene* (gentle fairies). This theme, as it discussed in the next subchapter, was used also by Tzara in his poems. These mythical creatures hold a special power over humans in Romanian folk stories. In popular belief there are many superstitions regarding what may happen to a person wandering alone on *Sânziene* night. To what degree Janco was influenced by the Jewish folklore is hard to quantify since there no iconographical symbol throughout *Simbolul* which can be considered even remotely related to Jewish historical memory. None of his drawings and sketches in *Simbolul* refer to the Jewish



Unsigned drawing, *Simbolul*, 3, 1 December 1912, pp.42-43, Library of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest

⁴⁵⁹ Șerban, p.25.

tradition or events of his early life, a fact which is certainly striking given his strong relation with his own Jewishness.

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, the society of Tzara's and Janco's youth circulated the ideas that the Jews were outsiders, and that they were the embodiment of the hated modernity. In its turn, modernity was seen as the birthplace of artistic trends trying to destabilise the national tradition.⁴⁶⁰ The resonance of such concepts had only helped make antisemitism respectable. Jewish artists were perceived as being obsessed with all the most noxious elements of internationalism or aspiring to confine the Jew in a spiritual ghetto filled with their intransigent nationalism, alien to the Romanians. The eruption of a modern antisemitism directed toward the Jewish artists attempted to explain that nationality was strictly related to artistic production: 'The facts prove [to] us abundantly that the artists are linked to the citizenship of which they belong, and [they] confirm the results I have already reached deductively: The artist's alienation is his destruction.'⁴⁶¹ Such ideas were propelled by the Romanian far-right politician A.C. Cuza and his intellectual circle, whose members saw the root of all social evil in Jews and militated for their rejection from public life. Cuza's ideas became popular in the wake of modernist emancipation as a sort of backlash against modernity with its universalism and viewing the Jewish artist as being illegal and ignominious. In other words, the audacity of such beliefs stressed that the Jewish artistic production, even if it might have had a Romanian *shape*, would have always remained a hybrid and without content, lacking a Romanian *feel*:

[...] it is not enough to convert to the Jewish faith to be[come] a Jew. Moreover, you can declare, feel and think that you are not a Jew at all and yet be a Jew. Belonging to a certain community is not an act of willpower.⁴⁶²

The Jews, in this manner being directly or indirectly blamed for the internal sociocultural inadequacies, had to find refuge in the universal rather than the national since, apparently, artists were supposed to stick to their national origin – which Jews were virtually lacking, or they were excluded from having by the state itself. Since modernism was not yet localised in Romania, it became explorable by the Jewish artist,

⁴⁶⁰ For more on how modernity was perceived in Romania, see previous chapters of this thesis.

⁴⁶¹ Faptele ni dovedesc astfel, cu prisosință, ca artiștii sunt legați de naționalitatea căreia aparțin, și confirmă rezultatele la care ajunsesem pe cale deductivă: Înstrăinarea artistului e nimicirea lui. Cuza, pp.21-22.

⁴⁶² '[...] nu este suficient să treci la credința iudaică pentru a fi evreu. Mai mult decât atât, poți să declari, să simți și să crezi că nu ești evreu deloc și cu totea astea să fii evreu. Apartenența la o comunitate oarecare nu este un act de voință individuală.' Nae Ionescu, *Chestiunea evreiască și răspunsul unui ortodox în anii '30* (The Jewish Question and the answer of an orthodox in the 1930s), ed. by Radu Theodoru (Filipeștii de Târg: Samizdat, 2001), p.19.

amounting to a revolt against the misconstrued notion of Jewishness and simultaneously criticising traditionalist forms of expression. Not being nationalised through the exploration of Romanian identity, it remained the platform for the most vociferous supporters of cosmopolitanism and universalism, and technically the only sphere where Jewish presence was accepted since it was not yet appropriated by the national culture. It is thus unsurprising that modernist discontent had a rather short life in Romania. The new direction promoted by *Simbolul* – demystifying literature with its urban, playful and even erotic themes that sought to offend the reader, although presented in a rather ‘distanced manner’⁴⁶³ – and its list of contributors, many of them Jews or other ‘foreigners’, offered the antisemitic propaganda a new reason to demonise modernism.

The journal *Simbolul*⁴⁶⁴ had only four issues and although it was the production of three high-school mates, it benefited from a series of prolific contributors, some of them well established Symbolist writers such as Ion Minulescu and Alexandru Macedonski, already mentioned in the Introduction of this thesis. Many of them came from another short-lived journal of 1912, *Insula* (the Island), which, few months before *Simbolul*, tried to introduce new aesthetic motifs to the literary scene of Romania however without much success. To return to the journal *Simbolul*, this was an ‘international’ affair, with contributions ranging from well-known artists and writers such as Iosif Iser and Alexandru Macedonski to brand new names, all having in common a certain degree of foreignness – Jewish, Serb, Greek – and being more or less assimilated in the Romanian culture. The content tried to allude to an extreme internationalism by announcing the release of foreign modernist pieces such as Metzinger and Gleizes’ book on Cubism,⁴⁶⁵ or by publishing writings inspired by foreign writers such as Vinea’s ‘Cetatea moarta’ (The dead fortress), inspired by Albert Samain, which appeared in *Simbolul*’s first edition. The rebellious attempt to shake the Romanian literary world of *Simbolul* was characterized by occasionally provocative themes both in drawing as in writing. To the texts and drawings one element was added, element that recalls of the established modernist journals in the rest of Europe: editorial notes promoting and mentioning other artistic events and publications which rendered quite

⁴⁶³ Ion Pop, *Avangarda in literatura romana* (The avant-garde in the Romanian literature) (Bucharest: Minerva, 1990), p.23.

⁴⁶⁴ For more on *Simbolul* see, Irina Livezeanu in Peter Brooker et al. (eds), *Modernist Magazines*. See also, Kessler, in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, pp.37-53.

⁴⁶⁵ *Simbolul*, 3, Note, p.48.

visible the ‘antipathies and sympathies of the editorial board.’⁴⁶⁶ Finally, it is important to note that *Simbolul*’s collaborators were the same ones that will collaborate with Janco after his return to Bucharest in 1922, as it is discussed in the next chapter.



2.2. Becoming – a conceptual positioning in relation to Tzara and Janco

This chapter puts Tzara’s and Janco’s early lives in dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari’s reflections on the transformative potential of ‘becoming’⁴⁶⁷ and the Deleuzoguattarian approach to ‘multiplicity’⁴⁶⁸ since ‘becoming and multiplicity are the same thing’⁴⁶⁹ and ‘the notion of becoming introduces the logic of multiplicity’.⁴⁷⁰ By reading the cases of Tzara and Janco in light of Deleuzoguattarian ideas, this chapter upholds the rights of microanalysis, bringing into view the immanent identity that Tzara and Janco, in all the socio-political ambiguity, created and lived by, continually adjusting themselves to the reality of the societies amongst which they were living. The idea of becoming is seen by this chapter as Tzara’s and Janco’s individual and collective struggles, from their position as Jews, to come to terms with the antisemitic manifestations and intolerable conditions in Romania in the pre-war years and to break free from determinants, stereotypes and definitions.

The Deleuzoguattarian reflections on identity constitute a helpful framework in addressing Tzara’s and Janco’s identity during the early years of their lives in the context of their cultural and socio-political crisis, for in the Deleuze and Guattari understating, fixed identities are replaced by assemblages, and becomings between beings and things, without leaving the realm of reality. In other words, for Deleuze and Guattari, becomings are real; they take place in material world and, although they are a product of one’s mind, they are not associated with imagination. Furthermore, becoming is not related to the production of a new identity by mimesis: ‘becoming is not

⁴⁶⁶ Kessler, in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, p.48.

⁴⁶⁷ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.239: Becoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, ‘appearing’, ‘being’, ‘equaling’, or ‘producing’.

⁴⁶⁸ For a detailed analysis on Deleuze’s understanding of multiplicity, see DeLanda (2002).

⁴⁶⁹ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.249.

⁴⁷⁰ S.E. Wilmer and Audronė Žukauskaitė (eds.), *Resisting biopolitics: Philosophical, political and performative strategies* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.86.

to imitate or identify with something or someone',⁴⁷¹ but aims at discovering that *zone of proximity* between entities. Therefore, since becoming has nothing to do with imitation (which implies shifting identity X to identity Y), the concept of becoming is even more relevant for the cases of Tzara and Janco, who did not manifest an interest in replacing their Jewish identity with a Romanian one by mimicking the latter; rather, they aimed at creating a new, individual identity detached from prejudices and possible marginalisation.

Deleuze and Guattari see becoming as a metaphysical experience, a metamorphosis, born due to the proximity between things, without resulting in a change of identity for that would imply altering the entire process to such an extent that would render it impossible to recognise exactly because of the metamorphosis experienced. This chapter therefore argues that Tzara and Janco's metamorphosis into universalist entities did not eradicate their Jewish identity but rather developed in its proximity, a process where impersonal forces were expressed through writing and painting – *Simbolul* represented a first step for Tzara and Janco, since 'philosophy, literature and science are powers of becoming'.⁴⁷²

The definition that Deleuze and Guattari offer for 'becoming', although quite generic, states clearly that any becoming implies a series of assemblages amongst de-territorialising forces existent at the margins of what wishes to become, in order to make them imperceptible:

Starting from the forms one has, the subject one is, the organs one has, or the functions one fulfils, becoming is to extract particles between which one establishes the relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness that are *closest* to what one is becoming, and through which one becomes. This is the sense in which becoming is the process of desire.⁴⁷³

Becoming is not about becoming anything specific but it is about happenings of the in-between during the process of becoming-something, finding a zone of indiscernibility between things: 'Becoming produces nothing other than itself [...] What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes.'⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷¹ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.272.

⁴⁷² Colebrook, p.126.

⁴⁷³ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.272.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.238.

Identities dissolve in favour of this process of becoming. Becoming appears as a metamorphosis that, as Gregg Lambert⁴⁷⁵ argues, takes place only in the present that is defined only in terms of an indefinite duration, and which has no clearly definable relationship to a past or a future. Becomings are events that do not follow predefined rules and one ‘can be thrown into a becoming by anything at all, by the most unexpected, most insignificant of things.’⁴⁷⁶

Although Tzara’s and Janco’s becomings are in no way identical they are both molecular and imperceptible, ‘for it is through [art] that you become imperceptible’,⁴⁷⁷ where ‘imperceptible is the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula’.⁴⁷⁸ For disambiguation, there is a need to explain Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of becoming backwards, as follows. Since the final result of any becoming is combined with a loss of identity, there is no recipe to ensure the success of the experimentation of a becoming, although all becomings tend to gravitate towards imperceptibility as their immanent goal.

As already mentioned, becoming is defined by the filiation between something with something else, implying a series of assemblages, where the parameters of each thing merge with the ones of the other, creating a blurred line between the two; here, non-molar alliances (in Deleuzoguattarian understanding molar can describe a being composed of a compact mass as well as a trait of personality) replace other previous zones of being. In other words, the result of a becoming does not resemble a centaur, half human, half horse, which is an alliance between singular molar (entire, whole) entities where each of the two singularities keeps its parameters intact; rather, becoming creates a new and unique entity. This unique composition is a result of molecular (fragmented) entities shifting and interacting with one and other continuously, the reason why becoming is molecular and not molar. For Deleuze and Guattari, molecular multiplicities are preferred to the molar identities because they ‘constantly construct and dismantle themselves in the course of their communications, as they cross over into each other at, beyond, or before a certain threshold’;⁴⁷⁹ they are ‘libidinal, unconscious, [...] intensive multiplicities composed of particles that do not divide without

⁴⁷⁵ Lambert, p.9.

⁴⁷⁶ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.292.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.187.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.279.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.33.

changing in nature'.⁴⁸⁰ On the other hand, Deleuze and Guattari reject the molar identities because these multiplicities 'are extensive, divisible, unifiable, totalizable, organizable'.

A very important remark is necessary regarding Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy on becoming, which, although it is resumed in the subsequent subchapter, needs mentioning here due to its crucial position in *A Thousand Plateaus* in relation to the concept of becoming.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, 'becoming is always [in a] minoritarian [position]',⁴⁸¹ the two authors dividing the world into majoritarian and minoritarian beings, where there is no becoming-man since man represents the majoritarian standard, as will be discussed later. Although majoritarian/minoritarian immediately suggests a sort of identity policy, Brian Massumi reassures the reader that, as with molecular and molar, such distinctions are 'not of scale but of mode of composition: it is qualitative not quantitative'.⁴⁸² In other words, majority and minority are not used by Deleuze and Guattari in their numerical sense but they describe positions towards power: 'minor works or discourses are the ones that seek not to perpetuate binary power relations by de-territorialising the codes that determine their position as minorities'.⁴⁸³

In the specific case of Tzara and Janco, their experimentation of becomings carried various types of becomings: they were Jews, artists, men, non-Romanians. This field of co-existing, interpenetrating multiplicities allows Tzara and Janco to experiment with a de-territorialisation out of the molar regime (in this case, the Romanian State) and express a becoming-minoritarian, as will later be discussed. In order to achieve a becoming they do not merge their Jewishness with their Romanianness, but work in the proximity of the two, unconsciously or not, creating a unique composition of universalist/modernist/avant-gardist.

Tzara's and Janco's identity formation, as it appears manifested through their creation of *Simbolul*, is a special case of becoming. As Sonja Longolius⁴⁸⁴ points out, Deleuze and Guattari describe the writing or creating of a text as a process of desire that, in itself, is a special form of becoming. This process, described as a specific and

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.106.

⁴⁸² Massumi, p.54.

⁴⁸³ Alain Beaulieu, 'The status of animality in Deleuze's thought', in *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* 9(1/2) (2011), pp.69-88, 76.

⁴⁸⁴ Longolius, p.29.

unique case of becoming, discloses the process of individuation and amplifies the desire. Knowing this, it can be argued that Tzara and Janco, through their artistic productions, had no other aim than to begin their becomings, alongside the development of the cultural text of *Simbolul*, in order to reinvent themselves in their works and beyond, since ‘creating is becoming and vice versa’.⁴⁸⁵



2.3. Tzara and Janco – majoritarian/minoritarian

As previously mentioned, throughout *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari formulate the concepts of majoritarian and minoritarian. This seemingly easy distinction is in reality more complex from the Deleuzoguattarian perspective. Therefore, it is important to recall here that, in order to avoid any possible confusions throughout this chapter, the legal/social status of Tzara and Janco as a minority is referred to as ‘belonging to a minority’ while ‘minoritarian’ is used only in the Deleuzoguattarian sense of ‘becoming minoritarian’. Becoming-minoritarian occupies a central place in Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy.

The Lithuanian researcher Audronė Žukauskaitė⁴⁸⁶ stresses that becoming-minoritarian is not about celebrating minorities as certain identities but actually enables opening up the medium of becoming. In other words, it means that even minorities have to detach themselves from a certain given identity and enter the process of becoming: ‘even Jews must become-Jewish’.⁴⁸⁷ Thus, Žukauskaitė argues, becoming is an ‘active medium in which the oppressed groups can express themselves’.⁴⁸⁸ It is therefore possible to see a connection between the anti-identitarian nonsensical assemblage philosophy of Dada and Deleuze and Guattari’s rejection of standard identities. Although it is not the aim of this chapter, identifying what Tzara and Deleuze have in common is not difficult at all: *the paradox*. A look forward at the Dada Manifesto can help to shed fresh light on *Simbolul*’ by clarifying what this chapter means

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁴⁸⁶ Wilmer and Žukauskaitė (eds.), pp.85-86.

⁴⁸⁷ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.291.

⁴⁸⁸ Wilmer and Žukauskaitė (eds.), p.86.

by Tzara's and Deleuze's commonalities. Exactly as in the case of Deleuze's writing,⁴⁸⁹ Tzara's self-negating and self-reflexive aphorisms in the *Dada Manifesto 1918* force the reader into an acceptance of processes and movements that are inherently paradoxical. Furthermore, the opaqueness of Deleuze's exposition resembles Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* where he calls for old, oppressing ways of thinking and acting to be abolished and replaced with universalistic ideologies and institutions:

I destroy the drawers of the brain, and those of social organisation: to sow demoralisation everywhere, and throw heaven's hand into hell, hell's eyes into heaven, to reinstate the fertile wheel of a universal circus in the Powers of reality, and the fantasy of every individual.⁴⁹⁰

Tzara calls on society to stop imagining the future as a continuation of the past and present and abolish its stagnation while looking towards the future and the past. However, the problem of elucidating the significance of Dada's rejection of spirituality with the help of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy goes beyond the scope of this study

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, Deleuze and Guattari understand as majoritarian the concept of *man*. For them, man is a majoritarian term that has different variations – cultural, racial, and so on – but is also a criterion that excludes those who do not fulfil the set of characteristics specific to *man* – strength, dominance, morality, rationality and so on. The number of men is irrelevant because, from the Deleuzoguattarian perspective, as long as everyone knows what 'man' is, adding members to the group of 'humans' will not alter what the group is. There is no becoming-man because man is majoritarian *par excellence*.

The Australian cultural theorist Claire Colebrook⁴⁹¹ explains that the opposition between man and woman is majoritarian, because woman is perceived as other than man: 'a minoritarian mode of difference does not ground the distinction on a privileged term'.⁴⁹² As a consequence, the exact same logic can be applied to the Jew. Applied to the cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, the Deleuzoguattarian perspective shows that since Tzara and Janco are men, they are included in humanity but because they are also Jews, humankind, as a whole, needs to recognise them as equals, just as it has to include women, blacks, and so on. This happens not by changing the

⁴⁸⁹ For more on the paradox and nonsense of Deleuze's writings in comparison with Tzara's *Dada lmanac*, see Helen Palmer, pp.51-65.

⁴⁹⁰ *Dada Manifesto 1918*.

⁴⁹¹ For a better understanding of the encrypted meanings of the Deleuzoguattarian concepts of majoritarian/minoritarian, see Colebrook, Ch. 6.

⁴⁹² Colebrook, p.104.

concept of humans and its aforementioned characteristics, but by arguing that Tzara and Janco as Jews are also strong, moral and rational like the rest of humans/men.

From the Deleuzoguattarian perspective, as the American philosopher and literary theorist Gregg Lambert⁴⁹³ argues, although the social identity of the ideal actor as well as the image of the action itself remain too abstract, the medium of becoming is always a minority that survives on the margins: ‘all becomings are minoritarian’.⁴⁹⁴ The volatility of Tzara’s and Janco’s status, due to a lack of constitutional rights, ensured that their lives were filled with unexpected moments. As a consequence, at an individual level, Tzara and Janco manifested efforts to escape and exceed different forms of power and knowledge,⁴⁹⁵ and finally, to express desires that altered their world. Since becoming takes place between molecular multiplicities fuelled by desire, Deleuze and Guattari see this desire as longing for proximity. For example, in saying that Tzara, as a Jew, desires the same rights as a Romanian it is not a matter of him wanting to become like a Romanian but is the desire to enter into a molecular engagement with the other – ‘to enter a particular zone of proximity’.⁴⁹⁶ As a very abstract example, dressing up as a Romanian and behaving as a Romanian (although there is no way of qualifying what is Romanian in comparison to Tzara) will not bring him closer to being a Romanian; on the contrary, it will take him further. His Jewish specificity becomes uprooted in order to transform in the proximity of the Romanian, this proximity producing a shared transformation. Furthermore, since becoming is not the result of free will but happens as an event, Tzara nor Janco are in charge of their becomings, becomings not happening voluntarily.

Nonetheless, the condition of the Jews in Romania, who were not equal in citizenship to the Romanians, affected Tzara’s and Janco’s mind-set and stimulated their identity-building process because becoming is a ‘political affair’,⁴⁹⁷ and for Deleuze and Guattari no one deviates ‘from the majority unless there is a little detail that starts to swell and carries [one] off. [...] Anything at all can do the job, but it always turns out to be a political affair.’⁴⁹⁸ Thus, Tzara and Janco as the ones who express becomings play a role by announcing what Deleuze calls ‘people to come’.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹³ Lambert, p.9.

⁴⁹⁴ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.106.

⁴⁹⁵ Seen as rhizomatic and arborescent, as discussed later in the chapter.

⁴⁹⁶ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.273.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.292

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.292.

⁴⁹⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.109.

Furthermore, the process of becoming transgresses the division, as Žukauskaitė⁵⁰⁰ informs, between citizens and non-citizens, which is in its turn a becoming-minoritarian. Although the concept of becoming-citizen is a becoming of its own, similar to a series of other becomings (human and non-human) such as becoming-animal, -child, -woman, -Jew, -Black, etc. – which are themselves made of a becoming-imperceptible – becoming-citizen ‘is an unpredictable, transformative, never-ending process’.⁵⁰¹ Mentioning the becoming-citizen at this point is not at all random but since it accounts for rhizomatic links within and beyond societies and is also linked to the concept of nomad, which Deleuze and Guattari use in discussing minor literature, a brief mention is required at this time. However, the prime interest of this chapter is not to elaborate these two concepts attached to the becomings but rather to look at the question of the becomings of Tzara and Janco through *Simbolul* as *minor literature*.



2.4. *Simbolul* – a minor literature?

Deleuze and Guattari discuss the theory of a *minor literature* based on Kafka’s writings. In their *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*,⁵⁰² Deleuze and Guattari derive their notion from Kafka’s description of Czech Jews writing in German, creating in this manner a literature dramatically different from the Germans, culturally and linguistically speaking: ‘A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.’⁵⁰³

The main characteristic of minor literature is for Deleuze and Guattari the language in which is being written. The term minor is in this case a characteristic of a language affected with a high coefficient of de-territorialisation. For example, a Jew writing in Prague writes in relation to Czech, a territorialised language, but also in relation to the Yiddish language, which is already de-territorialised.

The impossibility of writing other than in German is for the Prague Jews the feeling of an irreducible distance from their primitive Czech territoriality.

⁵⁰⁰ Wilmer and Žukauskaitė (eds.), pp.86-87.

⁵⁰¹ Ellyn Lyle, *At the intersection of selves and subject: Exploring the curricular landscape of identity*, (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2017), pp.116-117.

⁵⁰² Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, trans. by Dana Polan. Foreword by Réda Bensmaï’a. *Theory and History of Literature*, 30 (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.16.

And the impossibility of writing in German is the de-territorialisation of the German population itself, an oppressive minority that speaks a language cut off from the masses, like a ‘paper language’ or an artificial language; this is all the more true for the Jews who are simultaneously a part of this minority and excluded from it, like ‘gypsies who have stolen a German child from its crib’.⁵⁰⁴

This exemplifies the impossible situation of the de-territorialised minority Jewish writer Kafka, manifesting clearly his Jewish minority’s needs to produce a literature capable of national consciousness but, at the same time, he is required to write in the territorialised major language in order to not force his Jewish minority to experience the detachment and distancing of the Czech territoriality.

The cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco in Romania carry some sort of strange resemblance to what Deleuze and Guattari attempt to demonstrate in the case of Kafka. Due to the particular political and cultural situation that defines Romania at the turn of the century, with French acting more as major language than Romanian, Tzara and Janco, as artists on their minority culture, also need to write in French or German, the major languages, otherwise they would experience a distance from Romanian territoriality. It is also from this angle that their cases are similar to Kafka’s. The prestige language for him was German but Czech was spoken more widely and was experiencing a revival, in the same way that French was, for Tzara, a prestige language while Romanian was a language in a state of reorganisation. On the other hand, Tzara must resist writing in French since doing so amounts to the Jewish minority’s virtual identity, impossible nonetheless, with the de-territorialisation of the Romanian population itself, the oppressive minority (in Bucharest) speaking a language separated from the Romanian masses – French. Apparently, they both have to invent another way to escape the lack of choices given to them by their Jewish heritage.

There is, however, a specificity in Kafka’s writings that Hannah Arendt⁵⁰⁵ points out and that resembles, to some extent, Tzara’s engagement with the French language. Arendt informs us that Kafka was ‘the only one to know *Mauscheln* (speaking Yiddishised German) [... a dialect] despised by all German-speaking people’.⁵⁰⁶ Jews or non-Jews speaking this did have a legitimate place in the German language, and therefore it was naturally no less legitimate to change from *Mauscheln* to High German. In Tzara’s case, although the level of emancipation of Romanian Jews was

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁵ Hannah Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (Fort Washington, PA: Harvest Books: 1970).

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

considerably inferior to that of the Jews in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the dialect spoken by his family was one of several dialects of the Romanian language, the Moldavian dialect, as shown in the letters his parents wrote to Tzara but, as far as the letters consulted show, without any traces of ‘Yiddishisation’. In French, Tzara had an ‘alien accent’⁵⁰⁷ even in 1920 and so it is safe to assume his French, as a teenager, was at least as ‘alien’. The point this section is trying to make is that the existence of a dialect in both Tzara’s and Kafka’s cases invited criticism and even antisemitic remarks. However, in Tzara’s case, the dialect existed both in his native tongue, Romanian, as well as in French. His refuge into French is nonetheless explicable given the fact that, in Romania, Romanian was spoken more widely than French and therefore those who spoke French would have a sort of ‘alien accent’. As a consequence, Tzara’s own dialect would therefore become lost in the common cultural model as a result of a ‘servile openness of [Romanian] culture to foreign influences’.⁵⁰⁸

With regard to the concept of minor literature and *Simbolul*, there are some elements that remain necessary interrelated. *Simbolul*’s pre-avant-gardist stance makes it radically resistant to classification, accentuated by the lack of a clear framework of what is considered avant-garde and pre-avant-garde in Romania, as already discussed in previous chapters. Although it based itself on the general guidelines of symbolism, each new text transforms what it means to be symbolist, and what a symbolist text should look like. *Simbolul*’s disruptiveness is caused by the formal and linguistic innovation of its texts placed in their political context, its refusal to be productive in a canonical sense through its use of language and narrative, all these being characteristics of minor according to Deleuze and Guattari’s classification. Since every text adds new identities, the harder it is to recognise who is the author or what norms follows. Tzara and Janco include all sorts of elements and images in their productions, making it difficult to identify origins. Furthermore, *Simbolul* has no identity to reproduce; its identity is renegotiated during the process of creation.

But what exactly makes *Simbolul* a minor literature? Minor literature is characterised by being radical, anti-ideal and disruptive. The context of Romanian nationalism and pre-modernism is relevant for *Simbolul*’s existence not only due to its cultural dimension but mainly due to the journal’s modernist aesthetic, which positioned it, in relation to modern Romanian writings, as an anomaly. Although there are not specific Jewish elements linking *Simbolul* to the Jewish heritage of Tzara and Janco,

⁵⁰⁷ Germaine Everling, *L’Anneau de Saturne* (Paris: Fayard, 1970), p.98.

⁵⁰⁸ Kessler in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, p.43.

the journal, with its radical approach, betrays the marginalised position of its creators. Tzara's and Janco's cases must be seen in conjunction with the chronic antisemitism of that time and the condition of the Jewish artist in Romania. The correlation between art and religion faced a vicious demonisation at the turn of the century, which exacerbated the conflict between Jews' self-expression and Romanian nationalism. Being accused of articulating their foreignness out of a *racial instinct*, the focus of their critics moved to setting the racial pattern in their works by forced comparisons with international figures:

The German Jew [Jacques] Offenbach, in music, gives the same note [...] like the French Jew Ludovic Halévy, in theatre, as the Jew Heinrich Heine in poetry. [...] Their productions, though in different genres, have the same appearance [...] There is the same frivolous ease, same noticeable exuberance, same ideals destroying sarcasm, same revolting cynicism – and the same sterility.⁵⁰⁹

The Jews were perceived as builders of a world outside the Romanian national specific in direct opposition to their own and disregarding the Romanian one. The problem was similar to the pole of contemporary Jewish identity, in Romania as elsewhere: a community trying to affirm its specificity in a society whose tradition has seemed to demand complete assimilation. The intersection of nationalist views with the modernist was mainly rejected in Romania because of a presupposed Jewishness of the latter, in conflict with the Romanian mainstream, which, constituting itself as nationalist, alienated Tzara, Janco and their *Simbolul* due to their modernism. Their virulent reaction to criticism coming from predominantly nationalistic journals such as *Viața Românească* (Romanian Life) about their refusal to adhere to the practices of nationalist propaganda highlights further such alienation: 'We take note of the advice of the magazine *Viața Românească* through which we are advised – it seems – to write patriotic tirades, [since] the external circumstances are not allowing any other kinds (!) Meanwhile, we await [an] example.'⁵¹⁰

Throughout *Simbolul* there is a feel of rejection by the mainstream Romanian position towards culture, which only took them further from being Romanian and

⁵⁰⁹ 'Evreul German Offenbach, în muzică, dă exact aceeași notă [...] ca evreul francez Ludovic Halévy, în teatru, ca evreul Heinrich Heine, în poezii. [...]. Producțiile lor, deși în genuri diferite, au aceeași înfățișare [...] E aceeași ușurință frivolă, aceeași exuberanță aparentă, același sarcasm nimicitor de idealuri, același cinism revoltător - și aceeași sterilitate.' Cuza, p.32.

⁵¹⁰ 'Luăm act de sfatul revistei 'Viața Românească', prin care ni se recomandă – pare-se – să scriim tirade patriotice, împrejurările externe nepermițând alt gen. (!) Așteptăm până una alta, exemplul', *Simbolul*, 3, Notes.

fuelled their taking of sides in favour of the new or the other, their outrage being genuine. Tzara's early literature appears, from the Deleuzoguattarian perspective, more of a minor literature rather than major, simply because in a major literature the individual affairs of the writers take a more universal approach, with the social milieu serving as a background. On the other hand, for minor literature, the environment is radically circumscribed, and the authority of the writer is shadowed by the microscopic point of view used by the writer in their artistic productions.

There is one specific characteristic out of the three characteristics of a minor literature theorised by Deleuze and Guattari that can be applied to Tzara's and Janco's cases more than the others: 'the connection of the individual to political realities, experienced as independent'.⁵¹¹ What *l'affaire individuelle* is for Deleuze and Guattari might as well have a counterpart to what this research calls the Jewish experience of Tzara and Janco. The minor writer's de-territorialised relationship to the major language in which he writes acts as a sort of inhibitory element towards his authority, to represent the situation in such a manner in which, equally, all readers will have a similar understanding of the ideological proposition as those of similar heritage with the writer, coming from the same minority. Deleuze and Guattari provide by way of explanation of this concept the totalising national limitation of the minor:

We might as well say that minor no longer designates specific literatures but the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature. Even he who has the misfortune of being born in the country of a great literature must write in its language, just as a Czech Jew writes in German, or an Ouzbekian writes in Russian.⁵¹²

This can be applied to Tzara's and Janco's artistic production. For instance, in *Simbolul*, given their minority situation as Jews and Jewish writers, they can write only in Romanian in the antisemitic Romanian culture determined to reterritorialise cultural difference between Romanian and non-Romanian, and a cultural and literary milieu that prevents them from showing anything other than their Jewish experiences. These experiences expressed in minority literature appear exaggerated, isolated and are filled with specific flavours. Although the Swiss art historian Radu Stern claims that 'Tzara spoke in Yiddish at home',⁵¹³ it seems peculiar that Tzara and his family did not use it at all in their correspondence, not even employing one single Yiddish word; as for

⁵¹¹ *Kafka*, p.18.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, p.18.

⁵¹³ Stern, in *Jewish aspects in avant-garde*, p.36.

Hebrew, Tzara never learned it. Marcel Janco's case is clearer in this sense since he actually immigrated to Eretz Israel in 1941, becoming one of the leading artists in Israel.

Finally, returning to the minoritarian concept in order to put it in dialogue with literature, as Colebrook stresses, literature is always minoritarian because writers do not offer a unified image of the man in all their writings. As already mentioned, Deleuze and Guattari offer the example of Kafka's writings, which Colebrook interprets as minor literature because, she argues, he wrote without a standard notion of the people and without being with an identity. From this perspective, the same can be stressed about Tristan Tzara. Therefore, following this logic, from the Deleuzoguattarian perspective, as understood by Colebrook, Tzara's writings can be considered as minor since he does not offer a unified image of the man in his writings; furthermore, a unified position cannot be traced from one writing to another, his writing style varying. He did not write from his position as a Jew nor as a Romanian but as a citizen of the world. Starting with *First Poems* and ending with his *Negro Poems*,⁵¹⁴ his writings are constantly questioning concepts. Now, following Deleuzoguattarian logic, the only true moment when Tzara may be seen as majoritarian is when a reader seeks to find the origin of his ideas and the true sense of his writings. Therefore, in the context of this research, Tzara and Janco are both considered major artists since the point of this research is to find the real Tzara and Janco, their artistic productions not being analysed as if their producers were not known. Of course, this is just a logical axiom derived from the abstract philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari.

It needs to be stressed here that those who joined the group formed around *Simbolul* came from a background of otherness, be they foreigners due to their ethnicity or due to their artistic/philosophical views. Ion Minulescu, Emil Isac, and Alfred Hefter-Hidalgo are only some of the contributors whose backgrounds fare best in the 'belonging to a minority' scheme. For instance, Tzara, Janco, and Hefter-Hidalgo were Jews; Claudia Millian, and Ion Vinea were of Greek origin; and the brothers Theodor and Alfred Solacolu and Al Macedonski were of Bulgarian heritage, as mentioned already. Though a large number of contributors belonged to a minority by their ethnicity, Ion Minulescu, Emil Isac and Al T. Stamatiad were Romanians, not falling under any social or political stereotypes. The Deleuzoguattarian philosophy informs

⁵¹⁴ For a note on Tzara's 'poèmes nègres', see Jerome Rothenberg and Diane Rothenberg, *Symposium of the whole. A range of discourse toward an ethnopoetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), pp.29-31. See also Cosana Eram, "'Lost in Translation"?: Tristan Tzara's Non-European Side', *Dada/Surrealism*, 20 (2015).

that there cannot be a become-man because man is majoritarian/dominant and all becoming are becoming-minor. Therefore, any symbolist literary practice, including that in *Simbolul*, was a way of becoming-minoritarian for writers who belonged to the Romanian majority.

Ion Minulescu⁵¹⁵ and Emil Isac, although Romanian-born, were each pioneers of symbolism and modernist literature in their native regions of Romania, making them fundamentally different from the majoritarian group, while Al T. Stamatiad was the illegitimate son of Maria Stamatiad and Lieutenant-Colonel Theodor Pallady, sharing a heritage with some of the most prominent noble families in Romania but never acknowledged and accepted: '[he] was always overly preoccupied with his origins and his illegitimacy'.⁵¹⁶ Such interesting 'anomalies' potentially produced what Deleuze and Guattari call '*proximity, an indiscernibility* that extracts a shared element from the animal far more efficiently than any domestication, utilisation or imitation could'.⁵¹⁷ Their otherness is their reality, although the status to which they correspond is majoritarian and so the only reality that matters is the one within themselves, which makes them become-minoritarian. This transgression from dominant to non-dominant reaffirms the condition of the minoritarian, which seems to be destined-to-fail; yet, at the same time, it potentially defines the constant negotiations within the sociocultural web of relationships that creates a fragmented self. However, since it is clear that becoming is not in itself a narrative chain but more a non-linear process, their becomings remain processual and indefinite and require a separate analysis, which is, alas, impossible at this moment in time since this chapter focuses mainly on Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco. Suffice to say that the group created around *Simbolul*, despite its 'well-to-do appearance resembling more a literary society'⁵¹⁸ than a teenage one, had different perceptions on their own otherness and were manifested individually in each case.

As previously asserted, Tzara's and Janco's entire intellectual evolution took place within the debates of national identity that contributed to their feeling of alienation from society as a whole and from their Jewishness in particular, since they were virtually rejecting it.⁵¹⁹ Since Deleuze and Guattari's becoming-Jewish is regarded as a becoming-minoritarian of all people, the self-identity exploration of Tzara and Janco

⁵¹⁵ Minulescu was the first poet in Romania to be primordially inspired by cityscapes and to revolutionise the poetic vocabulary.

⁵¹⁶ Calinescu, p.702.

⁵¹⁷ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.279.

⁵¹⁸ Kessler in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, p.45.

⁵¹⁹ See, for instance, the poem 'Soră de caritate' by Tristan Tzara.

can be understood not necessarily as a primary goal but as a search for a universal fraternity through their (as modernist artists) communal suffering. Placing themselves amongst the sum of identities, part of the togetherness of all identities in modernism, helps their escape from the Jewish condition and provincialism accompanying it; thus, it accomplishes a merger with the seemingly global and limitless art that the later Dada soirees would have emphasised without fail.⁵²⁰

In conclusion, Tzara and Janco had to overcome the marginality inherited from their otherness, and the effective marginalisation by the Romanian literary and artistic establishment. *Simbolul*'s radicalism may be invoked as a main point in its positioning as minor literature (and modernist in the same time), in the Deleuzoguattarian understanding of the term, having as a testimony Tzara's and Janco's marginal relationship to Romanian literature, constantly stressed in the journal. Although revolutionary in style, *Simbolul* offers built-in hints of their intent to escape the world in which they were identified with the image of provincial Jews.



2.5. Tzara, Janco and the Deleuzoguattarian concept of language

Although brief, an examination of the concept of *language* is necessary since this entire research focuses, amongst other things, on the language used by Tzara and Janco. The Deleuzoguattarian perspective fits better in the interdisciplinary framework of this thesis due to its philosophical approach, which is more flexible than and not as technical as that of linguistics, which would require a more formal understanding of language and linguistic dimensions/innovations. A discussion on the ways of approaching language⁵²¹ from a Deleuzoguattarian perspective is nonetheless a consistent work on its own and the limited space of this thesis precludes an in-depth distinction between the several concepts and sub-concepts discussed by Deleuze and

⁵²⁰ See, for instance, Hentea, p.99.

⁵²¹ For a comprehensive analysis of language in Deleuze and Guattari's understanding, see Ola Stahl, 'Kafka and Deleuze/Guattari: Towards a critical writing practice', in *Theory, Culture & Society* special section, 'Deterritorialising Deleuze 2', ed. by Simon O'Sullivan, 33(7-8), (2016), pp.445-448. In his article, Stahl stakes out the ground for a creative critical writing practice beyond the confines of literature drawing upon the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.

Guattari on the matter. Suffice to say that language is regarded as an event that produces the effect of underlying subjects, and these subjects do not precede the event of their becoming.

The Deleuzoguattarian concept of language is simple: '[it] is in vain that we say what we see; what we see never resides in what we say'.⁵²² Deleuze and Guattari consider that although to capture ideas fully in words is difficult, it would be even more difficult to grasp self, the world, and whatever lies beyond our lived realities in particular ways without the words in which to think and with which to speak.⁵²³ It is Deleuze's philosophical extraction and affirmation of difference that Helen Palmer sees as being in a 'certain sense analogous to the linguistic experiments of the early European avant-garde'.⁵²⁴

By analysing the linguistic breaks in Tzara's early writings and the nonsensical designs by Janco in *Simbolul*, this thesis, throughout its chapters, attempts also to investigate if their work of sublimation,⁵²⁵ their artistic endeavours, and the values it creates is due to their marginalised identities – since explicit Jewishness does not stand at the centre of their work. Specifically, what this chapter does is to probe the theoretical framework based on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, in order to understand whether, by extracting some specific elements, it can later apply it to the analysis of some writings in *Simbolul*. Deleuze argues that:

writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the matter of any liveable or lived experience. It is a process, that is, a passage of Life that traverses both the liveable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetables, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible. [...] The shame of being a man – is there a better reason to write?⁵²⁶

Therefore, language is a system that can be disturbed for Deleuze, who like Tzara, believes that the limits of language can be crossed and reconstructed. To become is

⁵²² Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.67.

⁵²³ For more on this, see Estelle R. Jorgensen and Iris M. Yob, 'Deconstructing Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* for music education', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 47(3) (2013), pp.36-55. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> [accessed 25 June 2017].

⁵²⁴ Palmer, Introduction.

⁵²⁵ A mature type of defence mechanism where socially unacceptable impulses or idealisations are unconsciously transformed into socially acceptable actions or behaviour.

⁵²⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Essays critical and clinical* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p.1.

not to achieve a new form through mimesis but, rather, is a search for a zone of proximity where the lines between a man, a woman, or an animal are no longer distinguishable – ‘neither imprecise, nor general, but unforeseen and non-pre-existent, singularised out of a population rather than determined in a form.’⁵²⁷ Following Deleuzoguattarian concepts that one can institute such a zone of in-differentiation ‘on the condition that one creates the literary means for doing so,’ this chapter aims at concluding that *Simbolul* is exactly such a zone for Tzara and Janco.⁵²⁸

For Deleuze and Guattari, a subject group forms as an act of speech, as an event of becoming. From this perspective, *Simbolul*’s group of artists, led by Tzara and Janco, speaks differently by not recognising the norms of traditional art. From its very beginning, the group around *Simbolul* was a literary one and the language they use is created through the different usage of words, giving them a whole new meaning, therefore forming its identity this way. Since there is no underlining Romanian national tradition waiting for literary inscription, the group is not subjugated to an image of its own identity and, as a consequence, its becoming is open instead of the becoming of some specific essence. Writing in *Simbolul* becomes minoritarian since it is not based on a predetermined identity, but rather its identity is constituted anew. This is where a certain peculiar alteration occurs: instead of reorganising the alignment of their minoritarian entities with majoritarian practices (the Romanian culture), *Simbolul* takes, in fact, a turn towards becoming minoritarian. Through this reorganisation, the alignment of their minoritarian entities (ethnicity) with minoritarian practices (symbolist style, figures and design), these artists become minoritarian:

It’s raining ...

Time it’s raining in cadences on my darling’s window ...

It’s raining ...

And our love passes ...

Like the Time that knocks on my darling’s window ...;

It’s raining ...

And Time lays out his heavy, grizzle mantle

On our white love ...

Rain cries ...

⁵²⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2.

And the Black Forgetfulness sneaks into our house ...

Rain cries ...

It's raining ...

And it's night outside ...

And our love is dying ...

The rain is crying at the window ...

The wind is chanting a psalmody ...

Time it's raining in cadences on my darling's window ...

It's raining...⁵²⁹

It has been repeatedly stressed that the authors at *Simbolul* sought to surprise the readers and provoke their imagination. It is quite clear that in the above cited poem Tzara's intention is to inflict upon the reader the pain he is experiencing, taking place in a mysterious or supposedly unknowable moment in time. This is a poetic method specific to symbolism,⁵³⁰ next to 'the evocation of moods and relationship'⁵³¹ and allusiveness of meaning. Tzara's usage of the word 'Time' spelt with a capital 'T' alludes to a different meaning ascribed to it, a sort of 'hieroglyph [of a] mysterious and profound sensation'.⁵³² In this poem, Tzara establishes that crucial link between language and symbol by 'exercising the symbolic function and observing the production of meaning'⁵³³ where the rain itself is more a symbol of introspection and challenges psyche's creative potential. The symbolist-modernist attitude combines abstract elements with religious ones, the wind singing sacred canticles, reminding us in this way more of public worshipping than the isolation of estranged lovers. The aim of young Tzara seems to be to translate ideas into generally readable forms where the rain is drowning the hope of the young lovers in a sort of parallel reality, imagined to be

⁵²⁹ 'Plouă ... / Plouă Timpul în cadențe la fereastra dragii mele ... / Plouă ... / Și iubirea noastră trece / Ca și timpul care bate în fereastra dragii mele; / Plouă ... / Iară Timpul își așterne manta-i grea și cenușie / Pe iubirea noastră alba ... / Ploaia plânge ... / Și Uitarea neagră intră pe furiș în casa noastră ... / Ploaia plânge ... / Plouă ... / Și e noapte / Iar iubirea noastră moare / Ploaia plânge la fereastră ... / Vântul cânt'o psalmodie ... / Plouă Timpul în cadențe la fereastra dragii mele ... / Plouă ...' S. Samyro, 'Cântec' (Song), *Simbolul*, 2, 15 November 1912, p.23.

⁵³⁰ For more on symbolism ethics, see, for instance, Bernard C. Swift, 'The hypothesis of the French Symbolist novel'. *The Modern Language Review*, 68(4), 1973, pp.776-787 www.jstor.org/stable/3726044 [accessed 20 January 2018].

⁵³¹ Swift, p.777.

⁵³² Pamela N. Koob, 'States of being: Edward Hopper and Symbolist aesthetics', *American Art*, 18(3) (2004), p.8 www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/427532 [accessed 20 January 2018].

⁵³³ Anna Balakian (ed.), *The Symbolist movement in the literature of European languages* (Budapest, Akademiai Kiado, 1982), p.99.

spatially or temporally transcendent under 'Time's [...] heavy, grizzle mantle'. Although the poem itself remains open to interpretations, there is one element that seems to be quite clear: the alienation. The meaningless array of aesthetically charged elements seem to follow the rule of concentric circles, gravitating around the feeling of estrangement and otherness.

The above discussed poem is accompanied by an unsigned drawing that resembles the style of Marcel Janco. As in the previous case, on the editorial board of the journal Marcel Janco is listed as the one responsible with the illustrations. Knowing this, the assumption that the drawing belongs to him it is not too exaggerated. Furthermore, as Geo Şerban informs, it was not at all uncommon for Janco to not sign his drawings in *Simbolul*: 'his own artistic debut takes place in the pages of *Simbolul* in 1912, where shadowy signed drawings, almost imperceptible, with the initials M.I., stand next to verses signed with provisional names belonging to the later poets, Tristan Tzara and Ion Vinea.'⁵³⁴



Unsigned drawing, *Simbolul*, 2, 15 November 1912, p.23, Library of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest

The style of this drawing resembles another sketch in the second issue of *Simbolul*, signed with the initials M.I. accompanying the poem *Sonte* by Ion Vinea, following

⁵³⁴ Şerban, p.10.

similar lines and awkwardness of drawing the lines. The two drawings discussed here evoke all kinds of sensations, not necessarily those visible to the naked eye, recalling in a sense the art of the Futurists and even the Cubists. This claim is based on Janco's own words who, according to Şerban's account, consider futurism as the origin of all their art starting with their experiments in *Simbolul*. Referring to the group around Simbolul Janco said that 'futurism was our school. It animated us with its symbolic power, we grew up next to its spring of ideas where we fortified our impetus.'⁵³⁵



Drawing by M.I. [Marcel Iancu], *Simbolul*, 2, 15 November 1912, p.25, Library of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest

In developing their concepts of language, Deleuze and Guattari use the notion of territory, seen as 'an action that affects the environments and rhythms that *territorialize* them'.⁵³⁶ It is important to recall that Deleuze and Guattari do not see any concept as fixed but quite flexible, designed to serve their theoretical propositions. As Dana Polan writes, they themselves admit that 'there is a fine line between territorialising and de-territorialising processes, and it is easy for their work to be appropriated to the most divergent and even contradictory of ends'.⁵³⁷ In other words, they use

⁵³⁵ Şerban, p.46.

⁵³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.386.

⁵³⁷ Dana Polan, 'Introduction', in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka*, p. xxvi.

terms without accounting strictly for their valences and at times they establish categories and distinguish amongst themselves.

In relation to the idea of the de-territorialisation of language, for Deleuze and Guattari, this is based on the principle of a minor usage of language, previously discussed, which emerges from the state of being like a foreigner in your own language, estranged to your own mother tongue. Resembling the artistic technique of *defamiliarisation*, language becomes a reflection of the condition of the writer. Referring to Tzara, Michael Impey wrote in the introduction of *Primele Poeme/First Poems*:

Tzara is a relatively rare phenomenon in an age still devoted in the main to national concerns – a writer whose principal works were written in a major Western language (French) but who left a remarkable series of poems written in Romanian, a language which was not even his mother tongue, since he was of Jewish extraction.⁵³⁸

Impey makes a serious mistake regarding Tzara's mother tongue, which he considers to be anything else but Romanian due to his ethnic background, but from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, Impey's assertion captures a possible de-territorialisation of language in Tzara's case, where his language becomes reflective of his condition as a Jewish writer.

Furthermore, since it is in the specific territories of language and literature that 'sensations and effects are freed from subjects of speech and judgement',⁵³⁹ in the same way, *Simbolul* is not limited to a way of language that produces a certain style. On the contrary, it discloses the virtual potential of language, its power to create rather than its preconceived forms.

In *Simbolul*, sensations and images overflow Tzara's texts while sentences and verses in general tend to not be clearly attributable to an external narrator, nor to a specific character. This lack of a harmonious ordering of the world transposed in a language that signifies this experience represents, from the Deleuzoguattarian perspective, 'blocks of becoming'⁵⁴⁰ since, as Colebrook explains, 'there is no being who becomes, but tendencies to become which produce differences that are not differences between distinct beings'.⁵⁴¹ What *Simbolul* and Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy

⁵³⁸ Tristan Tzara, *Primele Poeme. First Poems*, trans. by Michael Impey and Brian Swann (Berkeley: New Rivers Press, 1976), p.10.

⁵³⁹ Colebrook, p.114.

⁵⁴⁰ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.237.

⁵⁴¹ For an interpretation on Deleuze and Guattari's blocks of becoming, see, for instance, Colebrook, pp.114-115.

appear to have in common is the understanding of what language stands for, both seeing language as a system of inscription well before meaning and signification and, therefore, there is not an underlining specific identity that language represents other than itself, a general identity.



2.6. Tzara and Janco and the Deleuzoguattarian Rhizome

Deleuze and Guattari's text is, as previously stated, full of metaphors and abstract concepts, amongst which is the rhizome:

unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even non-sign states.⁵⁴²

The rhizome has no beginning or end, it is always in between things. Inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, this concept, when applied to *Simbolul* as a movement, allows us to describe *Simbolul* as something that does not originate in Romania, but rather something that extended horizontally on a global scale to and from other pre-avant-gardist movements that are both relatively homogeneous within the rhizome and concomitantly heterogeneous in relation to the societies that limit them, as Romanian society contained Tzara's and Janco's innovatory projects. Simultaneously, the notion of the rhizome allows this research to account for the intertwined, global qualities of *Simbolul* and the network built by Tzara and Janco around it.

Jorgensen and Yob⁵⁴³ understand the rhizome as a metaphor that Deleuze and Guattari use to explain the system of thought that has characterised the Western European tradition, which they see as 'the tree with its tap root reaching beneath the surface as a foundation for all that is above it'.⁵⁴⁴ For Jorgensen and Yob, all the multiplicities of elements and interconnections of the rhizome, although none of them necessarily foundational, without beginning or ending but in a constant and dynamic

⁵⁴² Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.21.

⁵⁴³ E.R. Jorgensen and I.M. Yob, 'Deconstructing Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* for music education', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 47(3) (2013), pp.36-55. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/515336.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.38.

state of flow and becoming, are the epitomes of Deleuze and Guattari's proposal in *A Thousand Plateaus* – that of replacing one system of thought with its inversion. Jorgensen and Yob propose a useful analogy between the rhizome and the tap root. It is built on Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy likened to a model of the tree 'within which ideas are believed to have a distinct beginning (e.g. a seed and root systems) and develop in chronological order via a central trunk and with vertical and linear connections (e.g. branches)'.⁵⁴⁵ Jorgensen and Yob argue that although both are roots, in the botanical sense of the word, and therefore share many similarities, the rhizome carries within itself more potential. Jorgensen and Yob argue that the tap root is likely to die separated from the tree while the rhizome sits 'waiting simply for the right soil and moisture conditions';⁵⁴⁶ therefore, it is very difficult to destroy a rhizome 'for it can wait several seasons on the gardener's shelf, full of potential'.⁵⁴⁷ This rhizome has the freedom of growing in any directions it wants if the conditions it finds itself are fruitful since there are no rules and regulations to restrain it. In conclusion, Jorgensen and Yob argue that 'rhizomic bodies of knowledge that might have been excluded by tap-rooted knowledge have an opportunity to flourish'⁵⁴⁸ while tap roots might be unnecessary and unproductive.

Simbolul can be seen as a rhizome. The productions are not presented in a unifying form but rather they express different ideas and attitudes born out of a common place of struggle. If one imagined *Simbolul* as a main root, the texts and designs appear as a multiplicity of roots and stems crossing each other and multiplying into a variety of possible connections. Furthermore, it invites its readers to participate actively to the formation of these connections by making their own individual connections derived from what they read. *Simbolul* does not offer straightforward answers; rather, it creates a map for the reader to individually discover and interpret where the text goes. For example, Tzara's writings in *Simbolul* allow the reader to undergo a process of repositioning against an undefined centre. This discernment in a world of isolation was mandatory for the individual imagined by Tzara; this was the only way to understand what his place is in a universe that resembled an open-ended whole, a

⁵⁴⁵ Pringle and Landi, p.119. They argue that Deleuze and Guattari critique this form of thinking and associated research, as they believe it privileges a search for origins and has a tendency to produce dualisms or binary style thinking (e.g. straight/gay or masculinities/femininities).

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

situation of striking resemblance with the condition of the Romanian Jew in the period between the Balkan Wars and the First World War:

Moreover, then they ask themselves,
 Why are they going forward
 Knowing that everything is empty on the horizon ... ?
 Why are they going forever onwards
 When they do not know what is their target,
 When they do not know what lies ahead on the horizon,
 When I do not know where they want to go [what they want to reach] ... ⁵⁴⁹

This sort of uncertainty regarding his own future hints at the necessity of a re-evaluation, a process that implies isolation from the norm as the manner to achieve a new, more personal understanding of individual needs. In Tzara's writings in *Simbolul* the result is an experimental reading rather than a straightforward one, the reader being placed in a zone of continuum reflection.

On the other hand, Alexandru Macedonski, the main Romanian symbolist poet and Tzara's main influence, publishes in *Simbolul* poems that are the opposite of Tzara's. His poem is not at all reflexive but represents an artistic outburst directed at altering the very structure of established power. The revolt is born out of hate and enhanced by the social norms, the reader being almost encouraged to desire a similar feeling:

If I would be thunder, I had struck you
 I'd drown you if I were water
 I would dig you a dig-deep grave
 If I'd be a hoe.
 [...]
 However, I, although I stay what I am,
 A deep voice murmurs to me
 That is more than anything

⁵⁴⁹ 'Și-atunci se 'ntreabă singuri, / De ce merg oare înainte / Știind că 'n zare totu-i gol ...? / Dece merg vecinic înainte / Când nu știu care-i ținta lor, / Când nu știu 'n zare ce-i așteaptă, / Când nu știu unde vor s'ajungă ...' S. Samyro, *Pe râul vieții* ... (On the river of life), *Simbolul*, 1, 1912, p.10.

For I am hatred⁵⁵⁰

The text itself is assimilated to a long-standing ideal. The process of dramatisation and universalisation places the text into a constant state of political action, which haunts the relationship between Macedonski and Romanian society itself, action that the reader needs to take in order to answer the writer's call. By changing the formation of the outside, of territories, be they people or society, his generation's refusal to begin a process of modernisation can be overcome.

Finally, another contributor in *Simbolul*, offers a third element to the rhizome analogy:

My beautiful, now I'm weary
 Of you as I am of me,
 So, if you want, go ahead and leave
 And forget that you ever came.
 In your eyes is too much infinite
 And in my soul, the ruins are too deep,
 That when I look at me through you
 Feel even smaller and older⁵⁵¹

Here, the entire identity corresponding to the *majoritarian* schema is the material for building artificial territorialities, without geopolitical and historical specifications, and the otherness, even if it sometimes omits to distance itself from it properly, needs to evade into a revolutionary manner. Not to mention that the demystifying or even parodic presentation of the heroic element of sacrificing for the loved one allows one to argue that it is a metaphor for all the pressing issues of cultural integrity that are sacrificed to the aesthetic.

These three examples are meant to identify at least one of the conditions of minor literature and demonstrate the characteristic of the rhizome. All poems are acting as a response to the exclusion and possibly territorial unsettlement. By creating oneself in a way in which the readers can construct themselves as oppositional to the

⁵⁵⁰ 'Dacă-aş fi trăznet v'aş trăzni, / V'aş îneca dacă-aş fi apă, / Şi v'aş săpa mormîntu-adânc / Dacă aş fi sapă. / [...] Dar eu, deşi rămân ce sunt, / O voce-adâncă îmi murmură / Că sunt mai mult decât orice / Căci eu sunt ură.' Ură (Hate) by Alexandru Macedonski, *Simbolul*, 2.

⁵⁵¹ 'Frumoasa mea de-acum sunt ostenit / De tine după cum sunt şi de mine, / Aşa că, dacă vrei, te du cu bine / Şi caută de uită că-ai venit. / În ochii tăi e prea mult infinit / Şi'n sufletu-mi prea sînt adânci ruine, / In cât atunci când mă privesc în tine / Mă simt mai mic şi mai îmbătrânit.' N. Davidescu, 'Dedicaţie' (Dedication), *Simbolul*, 3.

reality of writer's reality, or by inviting a constant state of reflection upon one's self demonstrate a sort of connection to the audience's own political position.

Applying the analogy of the rhizome to Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's cases, the discussion on their identity and its relationship to their Jewish heritage become even more complicated. What this chapter proposes is to look at their Jewish heritage as well as their Romanian one as the tap root and at their universalist mind-set as the rhizome. Technically, the tap root is indeed likely to die separated from the tree but some shoots are likely to keep growing without the tree; similarly, Jewish heritage and their Romanian upbringing remain essential parts even if Tzara and Janco have removed themselves from Jewish and Romanian settings. On the other hand, the rhizome, represented by their universalist mind-set, 'germinates' while awaiting a proper soil to blossom. The fact that the Romanian socio-political reality did not provide a proper ground for the development of their revolutionising ideas did not stop Tzara and Janco from developing their concepts while in Zurich, during their Dada years.

In their philosophy, Deleuze and Guattari propose the rhizome instead of the tap root of Western thoughts, not necessarily, as probably expected, because one has superior qualities to the other (one position is just as dominating as the one it would replace) but because only one view can exist at a time. In Tzara's and Janco's cases, the differentiation is not made between Jewishness and Romanianness but between an older thought and a modern one, making the discussion on their marginality quite ironic since, in an attempt to avoid otherness, something that is familiar and central has to be condemned and replaced with their view of things, therefore placing them on the margins again. According to Erwin Kessler, Tzara did not even attempt to fight his foreignness but rather he sought to forge further the strangeness of his name by the practice of different pseudonyms: S. Samyro, Tristan Ruia, and finally, Tristan Tzara.⁵⁵²

Although Tzara's writings and Janco's drawings in *Simbolul* are not yet sufficiently revolutionary in the transformative sense of aspiring to change the world through a different way of seeing it, since they have some symbolist inspiration, Tzara and Janco still seem to be representatives of those excluded and marginalised who live on the outskirts of society in the minority and are repressed by the powerful apparatus of the Romanian state. As a consequence, they are those who seek to dismantle the

⁵⁵² For more on this, see Kessler in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*

status quo, the state itself, but they still do not provide a practical plan for achieving this. As demonstrated also by the list of contributors, the writings in *Simbolul* betray the authors' roots in the European culture as well as their commitments to it.



2.7. *Chemarea* – a different becoming

A perhaps important element in Tzara's and Janco's process of becoming, as well as that of the other artists around *Simbolul*, was the immediate context of the Balkan War, as discussed in the previous chapters. Romania's involvement created a constant anxiety amongst its population, and nationalistic agitations contributed to the creation of a chimaera of social renewal. Even if *Simbolul* did not publish even one poem related to the war, for which it was criticized by the traditionalist magazine *Viata Romaneasca* (Romanian Life) which claimed that originality is no excuse for abandoning morality,⁵⁵³ Tristan Tzara published a poem in *Chemarea* obviously inspired by the war, as discussed in what follows. Edited by the same Ion Vinea, *Chemarea* entwines aesthetics and politics in an anti-classicist manner and considered itself a radical socialist newspaper, even featuring a laudatory article about Lenin signed by Nicolae Cocea. Tom Sandqvist finds strange Tzara's contribution to a journal that allowed 'the pseudonymous N. Porsenna to develop his idea of the necessity of history and explain that suffering is a creative force,'⁵⁵⁴ to which it can be argued that Tzara could not have had his contribution had he not shared *Chemarea's* left-wing sympathies.

The horrors of the war and the constant hysteria related to the possibility of being enrolled are depicted in 'Furtuna si cantecul dezertorului' (The storm and the song of the deserter) of which only one half was published in the second number of *Chemarea*, the second part appearing in *Primele Poeme*. The unusual title and the extreme images specific to symbolists remind one of the Baudelairean stencil, while also providing a map on Tzara's initiation journey, torn between the desire to leave the country, and the guilt of deserting:

⁵⁵³ See Ciopraga, pp.122-123.

⁵⁵⁴ Sandqvist (2006), p.131.

The lights burst from the shells
 Striking lightning in our hand
 As God's hand split into five fingers
 We're catching up the troops from behind and we put them down
 We trample corpses left in the snow
 We open a window to the drowned darkness
 Through the valleys that sucked the enemies dry like suction cups
 They have killed them as far as the distant blue,
 The cold makes bones crumble; it eats into flesh
 We let the heart cry [...] ⁵⁵⁵

This poem portrays the torment of Tzara's decision, which consumes him more than initially imagined. This poem is somewhat political and is seen by the Romanian art historian Erwin Kessler⁵⁵⁶ as Tzara's final statement since it would be his last text published while still living in Romania. It appears as a confession of his ongoing war with his persona throughout his journey. Tzara's poem has received substantial attention from recent critics such as Sandqvist⁵⁵⁷ and Hentea,⁵⁵⁸ both referring to Tzara's self-identification with those who refused to enrol in the Romanian army in the light of the Balkan War. Both identify Tzara's interest in the human cost of victory in the war and Romania's direct experience with the war, reflecting most probably contemporary reports about the battlefield. Entering the Freudian psychoanalytical field, Tom Sandqvist relates his initiation journey philosophy to the family scandal that allegedly determined him to leave Romania, blaming it on him unconsciously provoking the outrage to force his parents into a decision that the 19-year-old Tzara desired but was unable to make. Although not dismissing Sandqvist's interpretation, the present chapter argues that his initiation journey was more linked to his 'otherness', amplified by constantly facing the harsh stereotyping of the Jews in Romania, which contributed to

⁵⁵⁵ 'A plesnit lumina din obuze, / Și a crăpat fulger în mânia noastră / Ca mâna Dumnezeului în cinci degete s'a despiciat / Ajungem din urmă cetele și le culcăm / Stălcim stârvurile lepădate în zăpadă/ Deschidem întunericului înecat fereastră / Prin văile ce-au supt dușmanii ca ventuze / I-au ucis până în depărtarea lor cea mai albastră / Gerul: oasele fărâmă, carnea mănâncă / Noi lăsăm inima să plângă. [...]' Tristan Tzara, '*Furtuna și cântecul dezertorului*' (The storm and the song of the deserter) *Chemarea*, no. 2, 11 October 1915, p.26: 'Gerul: oasele farama, carnea mananca / Noi lasam inima sa planga'.

⁵⁵⁶ Kessler in *Tzara, Dada, Etc.*, p.59.

⁵⁵⁷ Sandqvist (2006), pp.131-133.

⁵⁵⁸ Hentea, pp.47-50.

him building a conflicting self-image of himself. He was a foreigner in the only country he ever knew, a country that rejected him, the country of his family, who he was leaving behind to be confronted by a culturally unsophisticated and antisemitic population.

Translated in Deleuzoguattarian terms, an alternative understanding of the metaphor of the deserter can be that of Tzara's shameful self-identification as a man undergoing a process of transformation – a becoming as an event happening to him, out of his control. The deserter can be viewed as a man exposed and alone in the midst of a becoming, experiencing a real suffering both physical and psychological: “The frost: makes bones splinter, it crumbles the flesh / We let our hearts cry.” The cruelty of the surroundings reads as the struggle that Tzara is possessed by, a history that he had never lived, highlighted by the usage of the personal pronoun plural, and the neutral ‘we’. The becomingness of the poet seems enhanced in the second part of the poem, which was not originally published in *Chemarea*:

The light turned yellow as the inside of a tulip,
 From sheets torn away, the clouds have the blue gloom
 Through which I run, bitten by rain's snakes
 So that my light can reach the bright horizon.
 Under immensities of sadness,
 As the thunder asphyxiated by the skies,
 I am a voyager whose soul is darkened,
 Darken.⁵⁵⁹

The extreme symbolism does not entirely suppress the struggles of the deserter in search of self-awareness, piercing the darkness as a metaphor for the hardships encountered during the identity confrontations. Since the Deleuzoguattarian becoming is spreading erratically, the deserter, as a metaphor for Tzara's initiation journey into his becomingness, is able to differentiate between his suffocating past and his desired future but constantly remains in a state of limbo. The suffocating past is a burden that does not allow him to move forward, and so he has to leave it behind completely to

⁵⁵⁹ ‘A îngălbenit lumina ca-ntr-o lălea, / În aşternuturi smuls, au norii întunericul albastru / Prin care fug, muşcat de şerpii ploii, Să ajungă-n depărtare luminată lumina mea. / Sub adîncimi de întristare, / Ca tunetul sub bolţi asfixiat, / Sînt călător cu sufletul întunecat, Întunecat.’ Tristan Tzara, *Primele Poeme*, p.11.

advance, but at a massive cost: he is never to return to it, like a deserter to his country of origin.

A surprise for *Chemarea* is represented by Tzara's 'Vacanță în provincie' (Vacation in the countryside), the only non-political text in the entire issue, considered almost a 'pastel' due to its almost positive character – radically opposed to those published in 1912 in *Simbolul*. The pastel is a descriptive literary creation that conveys the state of mind of the lyrical ego through a landscape and is specific to the Romanian high culture being introduced by the writer Vasile Alecsandri, whom, as this thesis argues in the next chapter, might have played an indirect role in Tzara's artistic development:

In the sky unmoving birds
 Like flies' tracks
 Servants talk at stable doors
 The remains of the beasts bloomed on the path
 [...]

 My soul's a bricklayer coming home from work
 Memory with clean drugstore smell
 Tell me, old servant, about once upon a time
 And you (girl-)cousin let me know when the cuckoo sings⁵⁶⁰

One of the important things to note about this poem is that it was dedicated to Ion Vinea and it invokes a holiday they took together to Gârceni, at Tzara's grandparents' estate. However, despite the fact that this poem appears quite warm, the construction of the verses is odd. The very first verse alludes to a rather enchanting picture with the calm stillness of birds in the sky, while the second verse where the birds are compared with flies takes the reader into a macabre picture where the stench of death is in the air. The following verses reveal the same contrasting technique, shocking the reader: from the image of the servants talking it jumps into one where the decomposing corpses of animals, 'dobitoace', are associated with the blooming of flowers. There

⁵⁶⁰ 'Pe cer păsările nemișcate / Ca urmele ce lasă muștele / Stau de vorbă servitori în pragul grajdului / Și-au înflorit pe cărare rămășițele dobitoacelor [...] / Sufletul meu e un zidar ce se întoarce de la lucru / Amintire cu miros de farmacie curată / Spune-mi, servitoare bătrână, ce era odată ca niciodată, / Și tu verișoară cheamă-mi atenția când o să cânte cucul' Tristan Tzara, 'Vacanță în provincie' (Vacation in the countryside) in *Chemarea*, 2, 11 October 1915, p.12.

are two necessary elements to be highlighted at this point. First is the translation offered by Tom Sandqvist⁵⁶¹ of the same poem, which belongs to Michael Impey and Brian Swann, where the Romanian word ‘rămășițe’ is translated into ‘dung’, which changes the topic and the shocking factor of the image painted by Tzara. Secondly, Tzara’s use of the word ‘dobitoace’, which is an archaic form often used to describe the animals. This legitimises even more the analysis of the next chapter of this thesis where it is argued that Tzara uses, in fact, the translation of such Romanian words in his later, French-language writings.

The following verses are built on a similar structure: one describes an idyllic life, the other one shocks by its crudeness. The last two verses of the third strophe introduce a fairy-tale structure, ‘a fost odată ca nicodată’ (once upon a time) followed by the insertion of Romanian saying: ‘când o să cânte cucul’ (when the cuckoo sings). The latter is part of the Romanian mythology and ascribes to the cuckoo a series of supernatural powers. According to the folkloric calendar, the cuckoo sings only on the Feast of the Annunciation and signals the beginning of spring. The cuckoo sings until the Feast of *Sânziene* (gentle fairies) day when the maidens in the village go flower-picking to braid floral crowns, which they wear all day. At the end of the day, the crowns are thrown over the houses, and the belief says that where the crown falls someone will die in that house. Therefore, although a seemingly empty verse, Tzara asking his cousin, a girl, to let him know when the cuckoo sings carries a deeper symbol rather than ‘expressing nothing’,⁵⁶² as the Romanian researcher O. Morar argues, for it would be highly unlikely for Tzara to write something without a meaning. These verses show once more the manner in which Tzara uses the Romanian language and Romanian Christian Orthodox folkloric elements, in the most hidden ways possible, reiterating his engagement with the universe of his childhood.

As previously stated, *Simbolul* and *Chemarea* took over symbolist elements such as negation, which later Tzara and Janco shared with the Dada movement. Under such circumstances, the next eruption of otherness had to constantly seek a new, non-shameful identity that allowed both Tzara and Janco to experience the experiences of modernism while being in a permanent position of a becoming-anything.



⁵⁶¹ Sandqvist (2006), p.135.

⁵⁶² According to Morar, whose general analysis of this poem is very well argued, these structures ‘are empty of their usual signification, expressing nothing’. Morar, p.76.

2.8. Conclusions

The concern Tzara and Janco had about their marginalised background and its significance presented itself as a natural consequence of the enhancement of an absolute otherness. In its turn, the otherness appeared through their exclusion from the majoritarian group due to their initial otherness, a vicious cycle from which they could have escaped only by conveying universalistic messages and thus experience, in this manner, a becoming.

The universalism of an international art presented itself as more appealing since itself was hostile to the dominant national culture. Its vision of a world free from discrimination and persecution was preferred to the particularism associated with the national supremacy of culture. This chapter examined Tzara's and Janco's *Simbolul* from the way in which they related to the dominant culture, based on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of minor literature. Since, for Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature appears at the limit of the social codes that govern major literature, carrying them in all directions, without following necessarily a predetermined direction but just a wish to release literary intensities, it is safe to conclude that *Simbolul* classifies as minor literature. Of course, this is not to say that the potential of usage of modernist techniques alongside traditional ones was prohibited for any of the artists around *Simbolul* but none of them seem to detach from their background and individual affairs.

The rebellious attitude of Tzara, Janco and their fellow contributors to *Simbolul* was partially a result of the protest against tradition following the symbolist model, and partially due to their identification with their otherness, which led them to also provocatively address the issues underlining the difficult relationship between the centre and marginal. The so-called intrusive presence of the foreigners jeopardising fundamental Romanian ideas and values led to the desire of the artists coming from a minority background to construct a community around journals such as *Simbolul*, focusing on their impulse of a negation of the old ways. The abnormally awkward drawings signed by Janco, the poems filled with unusual metaphors by Tzara, and a myriad of symbolic short stories and poems published in *Simbolul* by various contributors became for them a necessary condition for survival in a reality where their identities were ridiculed, necessitating reconstruction and self-identification.

Once on the margin of cultural politics, they attempted perhaps an unusual hierarchical inversion between the ethics of revolution and those of creation, but the

reminiscences of the past made it shameful, a memory that could not be accessed without triggering an immediate reaction. Their position of aliens, not only ethnically but also psychologically, was the common denominator that all the artists around *Simbolul* shared. Feeling constantly under attack, be it political, cultural or social, and always threatened by traditionalist forces in a country that was supposedly their homeland, they initiated – some more successfully than others – a process of becoming, discovering in this way an alternative to the contemporary chaos. And, as a logical consequence to the generalised national chaos, what emerged from the margins, although vigorously rejected by the centre, left an ineffaceable mark on the centre, as the following chapters will reveal.

* * *

Chapter 3:
Jewishness and Modernity in
Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's lives
from 1912 to 1919 and from 1923 to 1938

*'Dada was anything but a hoax;
it was a turning on the road opening
up wide horizons to the modern mind.'*

Marcel Janco

The present chapter continues the line of this thesis by looking at the emergence of Tzara's and Janco's Jewish identity as one of the most potent values of their young lives, as a result of their childhood Jewish experience. However, it argues that the multifaceted relationship between their 'ethnic Jewish self-consciousness'⁵⁶³ and the art that emerged during their Dada years does not automatically reveal Jewishness as an explanation for Dada, or vice versa. In the same way their involvement in the Romanian avant-garde in the post-Zurich years does not describe an attempt at a Jewish cultural and national revival through abstract art⁵⁶⁴ based on their Jewish heritage. Furthermore, by exploring Romanian avant-gardist journals such as *Contimporanul*, it argues that the treatment of Jews in Romania fuelled, chiefly, an attitude of revolt directed against the socio-political status quo in general, as exhibited by Tzara and Janco at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. Meanwhile, the partial normalisation of Jewish-Romanian relations results in an aesthetic activism rather than a political one, as demonstrated by the case of Marcel Janco as creative director of *Contimporanul*. Finally, since there is an increasingly rich literature on Dada seen as Tzara's and Janco's supreme manifestation of Jewishness,⁵⁶⁵ this chapter regards it as a zone that enables Tzara and Janco to do certain things, such as adopting a radical stance towards art, at certain moments rather than it being a lifelong, all-consuming identity.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³ Gutmann, p.5.

⁵⁶⁴ Morar (2006).

⁵⁶⁵ Idea explored chiefly by Sandqvist (2006), p. and also by Heyd.

⁵⁶⁶ This idea appeared after reading Huber van den Berg's article on Holland's reaction to Dada in *Virgin Microbe*, pp.71-90; van den Berg questions the extent to which Dada principles were really at issue in the related events, and argues that Dada's place in Holland was always marginal.

This chapter focuses on two periods in the lives and works of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco. The first part of this chapter is dedicated to a discussion on the preparation of their exile and their Dada Zurich years, covering roughly the period between 1912 to 1919, while the second part explores the period of their involvement in what is generally considered as the Romanian avant-garde, which begins in 1923, a year after Janco's return to Bucharest, when the Romanian Jews are granted equal rights by the adoption of a new Constitution. The period under scrutiny in this chapter ends in 1938 with the beginning of anti-Jewish legislation under the Goga-Cuza government. Therefore, this chapter covers both the place of exile and of return (in Janco's case, Bucharest; in Tzara's case, Paris) in its search to provide a clue to their different positioning about their Jewish self-perception.

The reason for this very specific time frame lies in a series of particular details of Tzara's and Janco's lives, as will later be discussed, amongst which are their personal relations and artistic directions after Zurich, consciously leaving a time gap from 1919 – the year in which Marcel Janco and Tristan Tzara parted ways forever – until 1923, the year in which the Romanian Constitution finally grants equal rights to all citizens, including the Jews. This is based on the direction of this overall research, which is interested more in their Jewish experience in connection to the Romanian nation-building process and their relationship to Jewish identity, while keeping at bay the idea that Jewishness explains Dada. In other words, this thesis on Janco and Tzara is written with Dada only mentioned from time to time but not placed at its heart. Thus, a discussion based on the years preceding 1918 when the need to enhance the Dada prophetic spirit tried to expand and new collaborators waited for Tzara as for their Messiah, as André Breton wrote in a letter addressed to Tzara: 'I am waiting for you, I wait for nothing but you,'⁵⁶⁷ would only complicate the discussion on their Jewish identity by expanding it into the broad European sphere of Dada versus surrealism.

The material consulted for this chapter includes a revelatory semi-autobiographical work by Tristan Tzara, *Faites Vos Jeux* (1923), and Marcel Janco's articles *Marturii iudaice despre arta*⁵⁶⁸ (1938) and 'Creative Dada' published in *Dada: Monograph of a movement* (1957). Furthermore, based on the references in the specialised bibliography referring to the Romanian avant-garde journals considered

⁵⁶⁷ Breton to Tzara, 26 December 1919, as cited in Hentea, p.129.

⁵⁶⁸ *Marturii iudaice despre arta*, journal *Cultura*, 1938, pp.17-19.

the most significant, and also following Tzara's and Janco's contributions, the following journals were studied: *Contimporanul*,⁵⁶⁹ selected issues (3 July 1922 to 1 January 1932); *75 H.P.*, single issue (October 1924); *Punct*, 16 issues (1 March 1924 to 1 April 1925); *Integral*, 15 issues (1 March 1925 to 1 April 1928). It is important to specify here that *Contimporanul*, *75 H.P.* and *Punct* had a strong artistic and plastic component, the protagonists of the avant-garde orientations in the plastic arts being closely allied to the avant-garde literature magazines. While creating this specific evidence base, this chapter took into consideration its relevance to the overall argument based on a series of factors such as: the founders and artistic directors of these magazines, (e.g. Marcel Janco for *Contimporanul*), and also contributions by Tzara, whose overwhelming artistic personality and activity in Paris influenced these magazines' agenda, directly or indirectly.

Tzara's *Faites Vos Jeux* was written in Paris around 1923, after his fallout with André Breton and the Paris Dadaists, but also following accusations of stealing the content of the *Dada Manifesto 1918* from his former Dada colleague, Christian Schad (1894-1982): 'Tzara has usurped the title of Dada's founder. He did not even invent the word. It is Serner who is the author of the Dada Manifesto 1918' that appeared in *Dada 3* under Tzara's signature, [...].⁵⁷⁰ This quarrel in the turbulent Dada history nonetheless affected Tzara for it became more than just an isolated incident: "[his] reputation as a usurper spread by certain people, particularly on the occasion of the 1922 Congress of Paris." It is under this light that Tzara produced *Faites Vos Jeux* and clearly, having his reputation questioned, affected him to some extent.

Faites Vos Jeux is important especially due to a series of insights Tzara offers on his self-reflection and self-positioning in relation to the context of his new life, while occasionally plugging into his past to uncover stories of his childhood, as already shown in Chapter 1 of the present text. Under accusations of being a foreigner, mocked by his peers – such as novelist Louis Aragon (1897-1982) – for his awkward gestures and alien accent,⁵⁷¹ but also with his reputation harmed by external actions

⁵⁶⁹ Between 3 July 1922 and 7 July 1923, it was published weekly; starting with April 1924 until its last issue in January 1932, it was a monthly publication. In total, there were 102 issues. For more on this, see Hangiu Ion: *Dicționarul presei literare românești (1790-2000)* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Cultural Român, 2004).

⁵⁷⁰ For more on Schad's accusation that Tzara had stolen the name Dada and the content of the 1918 *Manifesto*, see Michel Sanouillet, *Dada a Paris*, revised and expanded by Anne Sanouillet, translated by Sharmila Ganguly (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), pp.198-199.

⁵⁷¹ Tzara's accent has been previously discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For more on this, see Germaine Everling, *L'Anneau de Saturne* (Paris: Fayard, 1970), p.98. See also Sanouillet, pp.101-102.

trying to discredit him, Tzara's writings in *Faites Vos Jeux* can be seen as a veritable diary and reflection of his state of mind. Most importantly, Tzara writes that 'the most distant relationships open the drawers of my memory',⁵⁷² in this way perhaps attempting to explain why his interactions with his Romanian friends and family were so rare. Thus, *Faites Vos Jeux* is seen as Tzara's way of giving an account on himself in terms of both his present and his past.

On the other hand, Marcel Janco's written accounts are not as numerous as Tzara's, perhaps because his career was as a painter and architect rather than as writer or poet. His article, 'Creative Dada', constitutes a detailed exposé of his Dada years, written in the 1950s when he was already in Israel. His retrospective assessment of Dada history, including its effects on art, alongside his comments on Tzara and other colleagues, both artistically and personally, offers the reader access to Janco's reflection on the history of Dadaism as seen by a more mature participant. All three texts analysed here are considered by the author to hold an autobiographical value given the fact that they make specific references to certain moments from Janco's and Tzara's past concomitant with discussing particularly the periods in which they were written. Thus, although written years apart and despite some distortions that appeared in Tzara's and Janco's personal relationship, which could explain some inequalities in presenting some events, the nature of the texts plays a determining role in showing their self-perception and positioning against their peers.

This chapter begins with an analysis of their period in exile, focusing on Tzara's impression of Zurich as presented in his semi-autobiographical work *Faites Vos Jeux*, focusing on a detail in his writing that raises the subject of thematic continuities across his activities due to his Jewish experience in Romania. It then moves on with a discussion on the experience of being a Romanian Jew in exile, as experienced by Tzara and Janco. Special emphasis is placed on the idea that Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco were in fact closer in their Cabaret Voltaire period than any later personal reminiscences indicate, due to their shared background. This allows an understanding of the purpose of their artistic activity as seen at the time by these two artists, through the lens of their Jewish identity. Tzara's *Faites Vos Jeux* and Janco's article in *Dada: Monograph of a movement* shed some light, although not in the most

Sanouillet describes the first meeting between Tzara and the directors of the French journal *Litterature*, Breton, Aragon, Soupault and Eluard.

⁵⁷² 'Des rapports lointains ouvrent les tiroirs de ma mémoire'; Tristan Tzara, *OC*, p.251.

accessible manner, on the way the two avant-gardists grasp both the new values in the visual arts, literature, philosophy, and their position as stateless Jews in exile.

The second part of this chapter examines Janco's and Tzara's involvement in any artistic movement in Romania following the adoption of Article 8 of the Romanian Constitution of 1923, which granted equal rights to Jews, in order to see whether the constitutional change in their status provoked a distinctive change in their own perception of Jewish identity or even achieved a distinctive local tone in the way they approached art. Although Tzara was not physically present in Romania, his status as a stateless Jew did change and therefore any literary or political movement he joined afterwards shows the fact that he stayed attentive to that. This approach is applied while reading the aforementioned Romanian journals associated with the Romanian historical avant-garde.



Part I

(1912 to 1919)

3.1. Confronting the experience of being a Romanian Jew in exile

Understanding the period under consideration cannot be done by simply studying the two artists as a collective, nor can Tzara's and Janco's activity within the broader contexts of European modernism be seen as identical for it creates unrealistic equivalences between particular, incomparable biographies. There is a large body of literature on the topic of artists of Jewish heritage involved in modernist movements across Europe, in general exploring how their atypicality transformed them into the *exoticised other* for the majority, collectively.⁵⁷³ What this chapter does is to discuss Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's cases seen as a dialogue between their Romanian and Jewish identities seen as distinct from other European Jewish identities.

Although their works lack, in general, an intimate association of spirituality and Jewishness, Janco's and Tzara's exile period did not translate into an immediate disassociation from their Jewishness. Antisemitic reactions remained part of their Zurich experience, at times coming from within the avant-garde sphere and even from their own fellow-Dadaists, such as Hugo Ball. In his diary, Ball recalls in great detail Tzara and Janco's arrival to Zurich describing them as 'an Oriental-looking deputation of four little men'. The racial overtone is signalled both by Tom Sandqvist⁵⁷⁴ and by Tzara's biographer, Marius Hentea,⁵⁷⁵ both agreeing that Ball's comment is alluding to some sort of stereotypes projected on to Jews. Although it is possible for Ball's comment not to be regarded necessarily as antisemitic,⁵⁷⁶ his history of antisemitic

⁵⁷³ For an overview on the subject see, for instance, Spector Scott, *Modernism without Jews? German-Jewish subjects and histories* (Indiana University Press, 2017). See also, Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish culture in Weimar Germany* (Yale University Press; new edition 4 Sept. 2009).

⁵⁷⁴ Sandqvist (2006), p.31.

⁵⁷⁵ Hentea, p.25.

⁵⁷⁶ Gerd-Klaus Kaltenbrunner denies Ball's antisemitism, saying that 'Ball was no anti-Semite [...] fact demonstrated by his repeated polemic against Treitschke, H. St. Chamberlain, and other anti-Jewish ideologues'. Gerd-Klaus Kaltenbrunner, as cited in Anson Rabinbach, *In the shadow of catastrophe: German intellectuals between Apocalypse and Enlightenment (Weimar & Now: German Cultural Criticism)* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), p.228.

reactions, such as the fact that he detects a ‘Jewish-Junker conspiracy’ everywhere in German history⁵⁷⁷ point to an explicit attitude directed towards Jews.

With some justification, the idea that Jewishness explains Dada, previously explored by Tom Sandqvist, is brought into light by the linkage between European antisemitism and Jewish identity in Tzara’s and Janco’s cases, but, once in exile, it is already clear that their assumed non-Jewishness contributed to their advance of the name and reputation. In other words, Tzara and Janco, while in exile in Zurich during the First World War, did not lose their radicalness in the context in which they no longer had, virtually speaking, a minority status; however, being Jewish was still not good for one’s reputation as shown even by the antisemitic comments of some of their peers, as discussed later in this subchapter.

In wartime Zurich, the most cosmopolitan and intellectually diverse city in Europe at that time, with its multilingual crowds, being an artistic foreigner was all too common, and virtually no one was considered a minority. Despite becoming institutionalised more or less as part of the larger artistic enclave in Zurich, both Tzara and Janco continue to imagine identities still deeply rooted in the Romanian realities of their Jewish homes, either due to the constant reminder from their fellow avant-gardists of their ethnic origins or simply out of personal choices. Marcel Janco was already in Zurich in the autumn of 1915 and he began his studies at the *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich* (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich) together with more than forty other students, of whom about ten were foreigners. The highly cosmopolitan setting, mainly as a result of the war and many coming to be sheltered by Switzerland’s neutrality, ensured that virtually no one was a minority anymore, as Janco himself recalls:

All around Zurich, the war was raging. In 1916 Zurich was a haven of refuge amid the sea of fire, of iron and blood. It was not only a refuge but the trysting place for revolutionaries, an oasis for the thinker, a spy-exchange, a nursery of ideologies, and a home for poets and liberty-loving vagabonds.⁵⁷⁸

The multiculturalism of Zurich succeeded in improving the marginal status of foreigners by camouflaging them between the multilingual crowds. Zurich offered the perfect ground for artistic and intellectual experiments to develop and soon the young

⁵⁷⁷ For more on this, see Albert Boime, ‘Dada’s Dark Secret’, in *Jewish dimensions in modern visual culture*, pp.90-111.

⁵⁷⁸ Marcel Janco, ‘Creative Dada’ in *Dada – Monograph of a Movement – Monographie einer Bewegung – Monographie d’un mouvement.*, ed. by Willy Verkauf, Marcel Janco and Hans Bolliger (Teufen: Arthur Niggli, 1957), p.28.

Tzara followed his friend. In the winter of 1915, Tzara left Bucharest and soon arrived in Zurich. He describes his arrival in a chapter of *Faites Vos Jeux* titled ‘La ville nombril de luxe’ (The city that is the navel of luxury):

I arrived there on a winter evening – an old friend was waiting for me at the station, and to convince me to stay there [with him], for my journey was not supposed to have come to its end yet, first he took me to the old quarter, which tickled my romantic curiosity and at the same time gave me a false idea of its size. I could not notice that we passed several times by the same street which showed itself under different lights, because of the angle we were approaching it from. It was dark and twisted, embellished by the elements of hierarchical and superimposed architecture.⁵⁷⁹

The most surprising information in this quote is perhaps that regarding Zurich not being Tzara’s initial destination. The art historian Adrian Sudhalter claims in her essay “How to Make a Dada Anthology,”⁵⁸⁰ that “despite his four-year stay in Zurich, getting to Paris seems to have been his objective from the start” but due to a series of issues regarding his statelessness, he was delayed in Zurich. Sudhalter’s claim is indeed legitimated by the socio-political realities of Tzara’s life since, as a stateless person, his movement around Europe was conditioned by a visa, almost impossible to receive without a passport. Such inquiries are also legitimized by the subtitle given by Tzara to a fragment in *Faites vos jeux: Où je m’établis par hasard et restai par faiblesse*⁵⁸¹ (Where I ended up by chance and remained because of weakness).

It is a bit problematic to interpret what Tzara actually means when he writes ‘for my journey was not supposed to have come to its end yet’. The impression is that his escape to Zurich was not, initially, his final destination which means that Sandqvist’s assumption that the escape to Switzerland was strictly connected to ‘the fact that both Marcel and Jules Janco were already living in the city’⁵⁸² is not necessarily the only acceptable truth. Marius Hentea⁵⁸³ inquires if his status of

⁵⁷⁹ ‘J’y arrivai un soir d’hiver – un ancien ami m’attendait à la gare et pour me décider d’y rester, car mon voyage ne devait pas encore s’arrêter, me conduisit d’abord dans le vieux quartier, ce qui chatouilla ma curiosité romantique et me donna en même temps une fausse idée de sa dimension. Fatigue et a moiiti surpris, je ne pus m’apercevoir que nous passâmes plusieurs fois par la même rue qui se montrait sous de divers aspects, suivant l’angle de perspective par lequel nous l’abordions. Elle était obscure et tordue, embellie par les piments d’une architecture hiérarchique et superposée.’ Tzara, *OC*, pp.275-276.

⁵⁸⁰ Adrian Sudhalter, ‘How to Make a Dada Anthology’ in Adrian Sudhalter, ed. *Dadaglobe Reconstructed* (Zurich: Kunsthaus Zurich and Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016), p.26.

⁵⁸¹ Tzara, *OC*, p. 275. This section, previously cited, refers to his arrival in Zurich.

⁵⁸² Sandqvist (2006), p.125.

⁵⁸³ Hentea, *Tata Dada*.

stateless Jew in the context of the war limited his plans, which were initially to reach a different destination on the continent. However, even if Tzara addresses the topic quite ambiguously, the prominent status of Zurich as a centre in its own right cannot be denied, especially in a Europe devastated by war. Furthermore, for a stateless Jew such as Tzara, Switzerland represented a safe option since it was a neutral country, and the presence of his long-time friend Janco⁵⁸⁴ in Zurich was without a doubt an advantage. Janco left Romania in the summer of 1914 with the aim of enrolling at the University of Zurich followed by an exam in 1915 at the esteemed *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich*, as already discussed in Chapter 1.

The manner, not at all flattering, in which Tzara describes the city is interesting. He paints a picture that leads the reader to imagine a rather uncomfortable place to be in, far from displaying the joy of escaping Bucharest, the source of his boredom, and reuniting with his long-time friends:

The trees and the social alignment imposed themselves on [the city] their principle of construction. The graceful and spiritual ornaments are the diminutives of the language of the cities and their coquetry. These acrobatic walls in a state of delicate balance seemed to me at first as having a certain vivacity. I saw afterward that these streets with bad traffic were uninhabitable, dirty, populated by dumb animals capable of communicating through language or just mute.⁵⁸⁵

Tzara refers to a certain hierarchical and superimposed architecture; this may be seen either as a hint to the rigorous and systematised style of the German world, or perhaps a veiled criticism of Bucharest and its lack of organisations and modernisation. If this is meant as a sort of critique towards the German culture, this is mainly as a result of Tzara's upbringing. He grew up in an environment where it was atypical for Romanian families to send their children to study in a Germanophone environment, preferring Paris perhaps as a continuation of the Romanian obsession with the French culture, as discussed in the previous chapters.⁵⁸⁶ On the other hand, Janco's interest was more

⁵⁸⁴ '[...] confirmed by the autobiographical statement that Tristan Tzara was met by Marcel Janco at the Hauptbahnhof', in Sandqvist (2006), p.124.

⁵⁸⁵ 'L'arbre et l'alignement social y on impose leur principe de construction. Les ornements gracieux et spirituels sont les diminutifs du langage des villes et leur coquetterie. Ces murs acrobates en équilibre délicat, me semblèrent d'abord d'une certaine vivacité. Je vis par la suite que ces rues à mauvaise circulation étaient inhabitables, sales, peuplées d'animaux inférieurs parlants ou muets.' Tzara, *OC*, pp.275-276.

⁵⁸⁶ For more on Tzara's Francophonie and Francophilia in relation to his Romanian identity, see also Laura Ceia-Minjares, 'Between a melancholic history, and an urgent revolution: Performance, identity, Francophonie in the early works of Tristan Tzara' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, 2005).

directed towards the German intellectual following, and also Iser's influence, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

However, if this is seen as a hidden criticism of the urban landscape of Bucharest, Tzara's subjectivity is understandable to some extent. Without going into much detail on the relationship between modernist tendencies and the urban themes unique to the modernists' sphere – for it obviously needs a fuller explanation than a subchapter such as this can provide – suffice to say that Tristan Tzara had announced from his early writings an unbreakable connection between the avant-garde and urban themes. The Romanian researcher Madalina Lascu,⁵⁸⁷ in her well-documented analysis on urban themes unique to the modernists' sphere, argues that, even if Bucharest itself is portrayed as a medieval provincial fair, and despite all its backwardness compared to Paris, the Romanian capital was seen as 'an instrument for progress, as a laboratory for experimenting the social Utopia of world change'.⁵⁸⁸ Perhaps the intentional area of ambiguity that Tzara entered contributed to the formulation of the above-cited fragment in *Faites Vos Jeux*, and was related to his Romanian past as much as it was to his future.

At his first encounter with the new city, Tzara seems more confused than prepared. The process of acculturation that he is later confronted with was not anticipated, and the harsh remark Tzara makes in the above-cited fragment serves as a concrete example of this fact: [the city is] 'populated by dumb animals capable of communicating through language or just mute'. This statement carries a symbolic valence to it as it betrays a connection with quite a rural terminology in describing the entities living in the area, part of Romanian folklore. An archaic form of the Romanian language uses *cuvântător* (capable of speaking) and *necuvântător* (incapable of speaking) attached to the word beast or animal, referring both to humans and animals, very similar to Tzara's formulation *animaux inférieurs parlants ou mute*. The manner used by Tzara hints at the pejorative form of the meaning where, for instance, the folkloric usage '*toate necuvântătoarele*' (all those incapable of speaking) refers to all the beasts in the forest/household who are seen as dumb, stupid, and irrelevant in any settings since they are incapable of an intellectual contribution. Additionally, the word *animaux* (animal) leaves the impression of a quite hostile, difficult and even dangerous setting where it can be very complicated to get comfortable. Finally, the word animal might have been a translation variation from the Romanian word '*dobitoace*' (dumb,

⁵⁸⁷ Lascu, p.167.

⁵⁸⁸ Vlasiu, as cited in Lascu, p.167.

stupid), which was very often used to describe the animals; given the lack of a correspondent word in French, it is possible that Tzara used the more common word *animaux*.

It is from the perspective of a complex symbolistic meaning attached to the half-sentence ‘populated by dumb animals capable of communicating through language or just mute’ that it is interesting to attempt a new interpretation of Tzara’s attitude towards Jewishness and Romanian identity as a consequence of his cultural experience in Romania, which influenced him more than has previously been considered. By attributing the human characteristic of talking to something non-human, Tzara uses the common literary tool of personification. However, the interest is not in his usage of metaphors in general, but in the construction of this specific one, where animals incapable of speaking (*dobitoace*) become capable of speaking. Its roots may not be in his Zurich experience but perhaps in a folkloric mind-set, as it is argued below.

As previously discussed, Tzara grew up in the Moldavian town of Moinești during a period of continuous literary and artistic reorganisation of Romanian culture, and therefore it would be wrong to claim that his literary development remained indifferent to it. One of the most prominent figures, and principal animator of the process for Romanian cultural identity in the nineteenth century, was the Moldavian poet Vasile Alecsandri (1821-1890).⁵⁸⁹ Most significantly, Alecsandri introduced Romanticism⁵⁹⁰ as a literary style to the Romanian sphere, the main characteristics of which include also the frequent use of personification. Alecsandri is responsible for numerous lyrical poems and other writings employing personification combined with Romanian folkloric elements such as ‘Concertul în luncă’ (Concert in the fields). Furthermore, although it would be wrong to class him entirely as a Romantic, even Tzara’s main Romanian symbolist influence, Alexandru Macedonski, finds inspiration in Alecsandri’s style and eventually recognises the value of Romanian folkloric productions.⁵⁹¹ However, Alecsandri is responsible also for the appearance of the literary stereotype of the *Ostjude* in Romanian literature, and in his work the Jew is

⁵⁸⁹ For a substantial discussion on his life and work, see Calinescu, pp.281-319.

⁵⁹⁰ For more on Romanticism and its characteristics, see M.H. Abrams, *The mirror and the lamp: Romantic theory and the critical tradition*, new ed. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1971).

⁵⁹¹ For a complete analysis of the relation between romanticism and symbolism in the oeuvre of Alexandru Macedonski, see Iulian Boldea, *Romantism și simbolism în poezia lui Alexandru Macedonski*, *Revista de Știință și Cultură ‘Limba Română’*, No.7-9, year XVII, 2007 <http://www.limbaromana.md/index.php?go=articole&n=698> [accessed 3 December 2017].

depicted as ‘an unscrupulous cheat, a profit-hungry usurer, an exploiter and ‘poisoner’ of the peasant’.⁵⁹² The most popular writer of the time, Alecsandri’s works circulated widely in Romania and young Tzara without a doubt interacted with some of his works such as the ‘pastel’, mentioned in the previous chapter in relation to Tzara’s poem ‘Vacanță în provincie’. This is, however, a topic that needs further investigation and this chapter wishes to serve as a starting point of future researches on the connection between Tzara’s early writings and his literary upbringing in Romania.

The argument that this chapter is trying to make at this point is that Tzara’s usage of personification in describing his surroundings in Zurich states a deeper connection not only with his Romanian origins but also with a larger literary influence as a Jewish child, and later teenager, in Romania. In other words, the thematic continuities across his activities are a result of his Jewish experience in Romania, in the same way that his encodings show traces of a Romanian folkloric mind-set inherited from his readings of popular Romanian writers of the nineteenth century such as Alecsandri, including the symbolist works of Macedonski. The relationship between a seemingly banal remark in a semi-fictional account such as *Faites Vos Jeux* not only reveals the reproduction of a folkloric element but a quite clear Romanian mind incapable, at that point, of renouncing a problematic identity.

In Zurich, thanks to Marcel Janco, who had some friends, many of them artists, Tzara plunged directly in the middle of a group that, as shown previously, he most probably disliked. It is this knowledge of Tzara’s personal and social reality that allows the assumption that *animaux inférieurs parlants ou muets* was a description of some of his companions in Zurich. To what extent this remark included Marcel Janco as well it is hard even to speculate but suffice to say that both their later ‘memoirs’ reveal a sort of sarcasm towards one and other when recalling their Zurich years. In his ‘Creative Dada’ (1957), Janco portrays Trista Tzara as ‘the grand inquisitor’ carrying around ‘some loose-leaf file of which everybody talks about, but which no human eye has ever seen’,⁵⁹³ insinuating that not all that Tzara does or says is necessarily the truth; the estrangement between the two will be discussed below.

A necessary parenthesis at this point is needed in order to recall that the cultural climate was different for the two friends once Janco moved to Zurich, especially compared to the one during their collaboration on *Simbolul*. Janco is already

⁵⁹² Leon Volovici, *Nationalist ideology and Antisemitism: The case of Romanian intellectuals in the 1930s* (Bucharest: Pergamon Press, 1991), p.8.

⁵⁹³ Janco, p.26.

in Zurich even before the war broke out in August 1914, and already studying introductory chemistry at the University of Zurich and enrolling at the ETH, as previously mentioned. Tzara, on the other hand, is still in Romania in 1914, collaborating with their mutual friend Ion Vinea in *Chemarea* and *Noua Revista Romana*, even though the socio-political setting was not the most welcoming. The newly established paranoia of a ‘Jewish invasion’ promoted by the Romanian elites in view of the historical changes brought by the Balkan Wars and enhanced by the imminence of the First World War, linked the cultural debates exclusively to the urban areas, especially Bucharest, where Tzara resided. This perpetuated the fear of complete ghettoisation of Romanian national identity, constantly fuelled by ludicrous claims – repeatedly made by Octavian Goga, the Romanticist writer and Romanian Prime-minister⁵⁹⁴ – that the ‘literary and artistic patrimony’ was a supreme asset that ought to be preserved and ‘any inopportune infiltration, deplored’.⁵⁹⁵ As a consequence, it comes as no surprise that Tzara’s Romanian poetry is in perfect accordance with his feelings of alienation, melancholia and boredom of living in a repetitive context.⁵⁹⁶

On the other hand, still in 1914 but in Zurich, the Janco brothers live in the same building where Tzara, upon his arrival in 1915, will rent a room. It is of course possible to imagine the different context in which Janco lived in comparison with his friend, still in Bucharest at the outbreak of the First World War. However, in the autumn of 1915, Tzara arrives in Zurich, the moment that marks the beginning of their *celestial adventure*⁵⁹⁷ towards the universality of Dada.

It was on a Saturday, 5 February, that Tristan Tzara accompanied the Janco brothers to a restaurant on Spiegelgasse 1 at Marcel’s initiative, called Cabaret Voltaire. Marcel Janco came to know the place and the owner by mistake, as he claims:

Looking for work, one evening I found myself in one of the medieval alleys of Zurich. In an old night-club, there was music. To my amazement I discovered, seated at the piano, a gothic personality. Ball, the poet, was

⁵⁹⁴ Prime Minister of Romania between 1937 and 1938.

⁵⁹⁵ Octavian Goga, ‘National idea: At a conference held before the students of the University of Cluj Napoca’ and published in *Țara noastră*, 50, 16 December 1923, and then in volume *Mustul care fierbe*, (Bucharest: Scripta Press, 1992).

⁵⁹⁶ For more on this, see the previous chapters of this thesis where Tzara’s early poems are analysed.

⁵⁹⁷ ‘Celestial adventure’ points to Tzara’s text titled *La première aventure céleste de Monsieur Antipyrine*, originally published in 1920.

playing Tchaikovsky, that old bladder rinsers, for the entertainment of the few beer drinkers in this smoke-haze of gossiping.⁵⁹⁸

And the fragment continues:

The idea of setting up the ‘Cabaret Voltaire’ was his [Ball’s]. [...] When he learnt that I was a painter, he at once suggested that I should take part in his project and invited my friends too. So, I brought along Arp, a great friend of mine, and Tzara, my little pal. The first pact of friendship was concluded that same evening, and that is how our work began.⁵⁹⁹

The way the events are recalled by Janco in comparison to the manner in which Ball presents the same encounter is quite different. As previously stressed, the racial overtones in Ball’s diary do not seem to have been openly expressed by him during their interactions in Zurich, something clearly apparent in Janco’s account, with Janco seeing the first night as being the pact of their friendship. An interesting note is the way in which Tzara is introduced by Janco to the readers in his article – as his ‘little pal’. This way of addressing him can be interpreted from two perspectives: one perspective ignores their later rift, in which case Janco presenting Tzara as his little pal denotes a sort of brotherly care for his friend, whom he was helping in getting acquainted to the new reality of living abroad; in the other perspective, bearing in mind that Janco wrote this article in 1957, way after their friendship and collaboration was over, this formulation carries a sort of condescending overtone to it. Either way, it remains undeniable that the two were very close in their Zurich years.

The fact that Tzara and Janco were, in fact, closer in their Cabaret Voltaire period than any later personal reminiscences might indicate is also due to the challenging context in which they lived. They were two stateless Romanian-born Jews in a place where artists coming to populate the soirées had the most diverse backgrounds. Marcel Janco himself describes the Cabaret as the meeting point of ‘painters, students, revolutionaries, tourists, the demimonde, sculptors, and polite spies [...]’.⁶⁰⁰ Previous researches⁶⁰¹ have described in great detail the artistic entertainment at the Cabaret, which ‘must have been a welcome relief given the dire

⁵⁹⁸ Janco, p.28.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰¹ For a rigorous presentation of Janco’s and Tzara’s activity at the Cabaret Voltaire, as well as their activities before and during their sojourn in Zurich, see, for instance, Sandqvist (2006), Ch. 4 and Ch. 6. Another well-supported biographical discussion, on the same topic, is offered in Hentea (2015).

international and domestic news'.⁶⁰² This was the beginning of the Dadaist endeavours, the group working 'out of innermost necessity and profoundly-felt experience'.⁶⁰³

Nonetheless, Dada Zurich⁶⁰⁴ was constructed around the circles of the Cabaret Voltaire, with imported cultural pieces, as a true international enterprise. However, more so than anyone else in the new group at the Cabaret Voltaire, Tzara and Janco shared similarities:

Tzara and Marcel Janco came to Dada from a very different cultural background. They were Romanians and lacked the total immersion of the others in Expressionism. They no doubt were acquainted with Expressionism and related tendencies (Cubism and Futurism) before coming to Zurich; but this acquaintance would have been superficial and largely second-hand since Expressionism did not establish roots in Romania until after the First World War. Their artistic and ideological disposition were therefore not inclined strongly in the same direction as those of the others when they joined Dada. Moreover, in the cultural and intellectual isolation of neutral Switzerland during the war, with its strong interregnum mentality, they would have found it more difficult than the others to discover an alternative affirmative vision in the contemporary chaos.⁶⁰⁵

This different background was perceived as a sort of backwardness, a fact underlined by 'the lack of exposure to Expressionism' of the two. To what extent this assumption is true is debatable since Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu⁶⁰⁶ argues that expressionism, alongside with all major European movements, was discussed and practiced by the Romanian artists concomitantly with the rest of Western Europe. Furthermore, there is sufficient room for speculation on the reason why Tzara and Janco were closer than ever while in Zurich; however, the most plausible reason is that the stigma of Jewishness and foreignness inhibited their own self-perception and made them closer, since their option of companionship was limited: 'But in spite of my desire of assimilation, I remained a foreigner for them.'⁶⁰⁷ Simply said, the external threat that

⁶⁰² Hentea, p.60.

⁶⁰³ Verkauf, p.14.

⁶⁰⁴ For a discussion on Dada introduced as a topic to non-specialist readers. see Timothy O. Benson, 'Dada Geographies', in *Virgin Microbe*, pp.15-39.

⁶⁰⁵ Stephen C. Foster (ed.), *Dada/Dimensions* (Ann Arbor: UNI Research Press, 1985), pp.3-4.

⁶⁰⁶ Ovid S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura romana si Expresionismul* (Bucharest: Minerva, 2002).

⁶⁰⁷ 'Mais malgré mon désir d'assimilation, je restai un étranger pour eux.' Tzara, *OC*, p.277.

‘had always been a key contributor to Jewish group cohesiveness’⁶⁰⁸ made Tzara and Janco huddle together for mutual survival.

The Romanian researcher Geo Şerban makes the claim that during their Dada years, Tzara and Janco kept very alert in regard to human interactions: ‘The principle of ‘communicating vessels’ will be vividly illustrated by the human relationships, in spite of troublesome times.’⁶⁰⁹ Although Şerban does not necessarily explain what he means by this, it is safe to assume that Tzara’s and Janco’s survival in the new environment was by maintaining a close relationship with as many fellow artists as possible for only in this way they could achieve their internationalist dreams. It is already known that both Tzara and Janco imagined their artistic contribution from a radically different cultural background, Tzara often reciting Romanian-language verses understandable only by Marcel and his brother.⁶¹⁰ This reinforced the perception of them as foreigners and, as a consequence, the idea of keeping a strong connection with other European artists would improve their status and remove their ‘palpable aura of self-conscious embarrassment’.⁶¹¹

A peculiarity characterises Janco’s and Tzara’s stay in Zurich. The Italian art historian Giovanni Lista talks about a series of letters that Janco exchanges with the Italian esoteric poet Nicola Moscardelli between 1914 and 1916 where, amongst drawings and theoretical writings, Janco shared his concern for his home country: ‘we are worried about the fate of our country’.⁶¹² The most striking information here is that Janco and supposedly his brother and Tzara are concerned for their country, a country that rejected them repeatedly based on their Jewish heritage. The reluctance of art historians to consider aspects of nationalism in the analysis of Janco’s work is mainly due to the interpretation of nationalism as conservative or even as an attitude completely alien to Jews, since it is associated mainly with a force hostile to Jews. The argument that follows from this is that although nationalism has its conservative, radical and reactionary form, it can also have a moderate side manifested out of a concern for the well-being of those left behind in Romania, be they Jews or not (i.e. their long-time friend Ion Vinea, who remained in Bucharest). Therefore, Janco’s decision to return to Bucharest can be seen also as his moderate self-expression of

⁶⁰⁸ Jerry Victor Diller, *Freud’s Jewish identity, A case study on the impact of ethnicity* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991), p.30.

⁶⁰⁹ ‘Principiul “vaselor comunicante” își va avea o vie ilustrare în relațiile interumane, în pofida vremurilor vitrege.’ Geo Şerban, *Întâlniri cu Marcel Iancu* (Meeting with Marcel Iancu) (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2012), p.32.

⁶¹⁰ Hentea, p.60.

⁶¹¹ Legge, p.190.

⁶¹² Giovanni Lista, *De Chirico et l’avant-garde* (Lausanne: Ed. L’Age d’Homme, 1990), p.166.

national attachment to his country of birth, an idea further explored in the following subchapter.

This chapter, wishing to remain faithful to its initial intention, refrains from retelling at this time stories already known about Tzara and Janco, for many other researchers have concerned themselves with this already; however, it is useful to develop a broader picture of their Dada Zurich years. This will facilitate the understanding of the powerful forces that were at work in their lives, transforming even more all aspects of their world, including the meaning of their Jewish identity. It is exactly with this in mind that the following section of this subchapter is written, an account selective in its emphasis.

The last months of 1919 ended the Zurich experience for Tzara and Janco. The ‘unforgettable experience’ of which Marcel Janco speaks in his article published in *Dada: Monograph of a movement* (1957) comes to an end with his departure for Paris in December 1919, with Huelsenbeck already in Berlin, and Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings trading the Dada scene in Zurich for a life devoted to Catholicism somewhere in the Alps. With Tzara and Arp being the only original members of the Cabaret Voltaire left in Zurich, it appeared that ‘the Dada revolution’ was approaching its dissolution, as Richter recalls: ‘Meanwhile, Dada in Zurich was moving towards its greatest success – and its end. The climax of Dada activity in Zurich, and of Dada as such, was the grand soirée in the Saal zur Kaufleuten on 9th April 1919’.⁶¹³ The possible reason behind this lies within the various publications that paved the way for more intensive collaboration and encouraged each of them to go their different ways, especially following the launching of the Dada journal and the opening of the Dada Gallery in 1917. In the following years, 1918-1919, Tzara kept up a lively correspondence with poets and writers in France, Germany and Italy – including, among others, Paul Éluard, Francis Picabia, André Breton, Louis Aragon, Raoul Hausmann, Karl Einstein, and Filippo Marinetti. On the other hand, Janco, for his part, joined ‘The New Life’ art group and the Association of Radical Artists. As a visual artist, he was more interested in figurative work, painting and architecture. Janco’s contribution to the first organised show of ‘The New Life’ group in Zurich bears witness to this engagement, as does his activity as a lecturer, which accompanied the exhibition. During this period, he was also giving lectures at the ETH, where he was studying under Karl Moser, among others.

⁶¹³ Richter, p.77.

With the First World War coming to an end, Europe was attempting to return to a sense of normality, although visibly devastated by the conflict. The neutrality of Switzerland, which in 1915 appeared to be a haven for all the intellectual refugees, at the end of the war became quite monotonous, as Tzara confesses in his *Faites vos jeux*. The revolutionary projects ‘carried into poetry, visual art, architecture, the film, music, typography and articles of everyday use’⁶¹⁴ as part of what was a ‘*manifestation internationale d’art et de littérature*’⁶¹⁵ were flourishing all around the continent, and as a logical next step, Tzara and Janco too were expected to move on. Marcel Janco explains best why this would matter to such an extent that it led to the dissolution of the very first Dada group born in Zurich, as a consequence making Tzara search for a new scene:

Ball was the manager of the Cabaret, but Tzara became its strategist and later its publicity manager. [...] The war was nearing its end. For lack of fighters Tzara, as commander-in-chief sounded the retreat. All over the world newly recruited Dadaists were looking for a leader.

Tzara had succeeded in making art out of a game of effrontery and mystification. He had become famous, as a master of puns and bad jokes. At the same time, his instance on his particular path to fame had estranged some artists from Dadaism.⁶¹⁶

In other words, Tzara found himself obliged to leave Zurich in search of new destinations fit for his artistic grandeur. It is imperative to carefully consider the particular context that Janco refers to above for it is crucial for the understanding of Tzara’s decision to relocate to Paris. Yet Janco’s and Tzara’s departures from Zurich after the end of the war, meant more than just a physical change of address.

The opening decades of the twentieth century were marked by the idea of war, which represented a profound turning point not only in history but also in European psychology. After a long period of cultural and religious stability, Europe withstood the dislocations and atrocities committed during the First World War, a process that impacted all peoples across the continent. In a sense, the revolution anticipated by Tzara and Janco was underway: an ancient lifestyle, medieval in many ways, was changing, and people across Europe, including the Jews, were torn by the roots from their traditional existence and dropped into the strange world of modernity. Ironically,

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.45.

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*, probably a reference to the periodical Dada published in June 1917.

⁶¹⁶ Marcel Janco, ‘Creative Dada’, in Willy Verkauf, *Dada: Monograph of a movement* (1957), pp.30-43.

the First World War and the international reorganisation that followed created, in a rough sense, exactly what the Dadaists had wished for since their beginnings: a clean slate, philosophically speaking, which allowed them to lead ‘the way to a new world order’.⁶¹⁷

Tzara and Janco, driven away by their diverging growing ideological points of view, are left to share only a common Jewish heritage, more than anything else. With room to speculate here, it is safe to say that their sojourn abroad made them become indistinguishable from the non-Jew; however, following Tom Sandqvist,⁶¹⁸ who considers that the treatment of Jews in Romania would inevitably have fuelled an attitude of insurgency against the established status quo, the condescending attitudes of their fellow avant-gardists, such as Hugo Ball – attitudes experienced in Zurich as a result of their *otherness* – made Tzara and Janco fully consistent with their anarchist impulses as a sort of Jewish self-expression borne out of indignation. Tzara himself makes a strong remark on the attitude of his circle in Zurich: ‘In the little respect which they had for me I could not disentangle how much of it was mockery’;⁶¹⁹ however, he does not resume, this idea often. Mockery is nonetheless a central element of Dada and perhaps to some extent can be interpreted as a natural reaction of the Dada group who mocked everything and everyone, as seen even in Janco’s case when talking about Tzara and the oft-mentioned loose-leaf file that no one has actually seen. On the other hand, mockery can be motivated by different factors, amongst which are antisemitic ones, as well as personal ones, as happened in Paris where his flamboyant ‘R’s were used by his critics to link Tzara to an Eastern European Jewish identity: “his French was less than approximate and strongly marked by Romanian accent, which made his pronunciation of the word “Dada,” [...] sound ridiculous to Parisian ears.”⁶²⁰ The French art historian Michel Sanouillet continues with a note in his book where he cites an unidentified typewritten text found in Tzara’s former collection assumed to be related to the moment when Tzara met Breton and Aragon for the first time:

It was Tzara, whom I had come to see, but I had not imagined him in this format, a young Japanese with rimless glasses [...]. Elbows pressed to his

⁶¹⁷ Menachem Wecker, ‘Eight Dada Jewish Artists’, *The Jewish Press* (30 August 2006) <http://www.jewishpress.com/sections/eight-jewish-dada-artists/2006/08/30/> [accessed 4 December 2017].

⁶¹⁸ Sandqvist (2006).

⁶¹⁹ ‘Dans le peu de respect qu’ils me portaient je ne pouvais demeler la quantite de moquerie.’ Tzara, *OC*, p.277.

⁶²⁰ Sanouillet, p.102.

body, very fine hands, half-opened at the end of horizontal forearms, he looked a bit like a night bird frightened by the daylight, with his lock of black hair falling over his eyes. [...] How ugly he is! A certain stupor follows the laughter and brings back the oriental delicacy to his face, pale as a dying man, [...].⁶²¹

It is clear that this description carries a sort of antisemitic subtext for it slightly plays on some satirizing physical traits ascribed to the Jews as early as the thirteenth century: the “effeminacy” of the Jews (“very fine hands”), the short arm length, dark hair and overall demonic ugliness.⁶²²

One of the possibly most interesting details is the fact that Marcel Janco did not seem affected by such reactions during his Zurich years, although, for instance, Ball’s description of Tzara and Janco as ‘Oriental’ was obviously meant towards the two of them. Of course, the lack of many written accounts by Janco in general leaves such statements in the realm of supposition but it needs to be acknowledged that, in the greater picture of Tzara’s and Janco’s lives together, the latter seems significantly more at peace with his status. Simply said, what Tzara does through his *Faites Vos Jeux* is to ‘dramatize his own unreliable character of black combustibility, depressive morbidity, and ‘melancholy thirst,’ aggravated by the sense that he was not only an outsider but an object of mockery’.⁶²³ By contrast, Marcel Janco appears as the more cerebral of the two, a person eager to share events from his travel with his good friend in Bucharest, Ion Vinea,⁶²⁴ without any intention to distance himself from his origin.

It is well-known that the radical changes brought by modernity made many Jews vary markedly in their response to their Jewish heritage and dramatic extremes manifested in the form of a ‘frantic urge to escape the burden of one’s Jewishness not merely by renouncing but by denouncing Judaism’.⁶²⁵ Since neither Tzara nor Janco openly discussed their Jewishness before or during their Dada Zurich years it is quite difficult to identify to what extent they actively denied their Jewish identity. Nonetheless there are claims such as the one made by Milly Heyd, who believes that

⁶²¹ Sanouillet, footnote 46, p.544.

⁶²² For a comprehensive study on Jews’ purported physical characteristics, see Klaus Hödl, ‘Physical characteristics of Jews’, in *Jewish studies at the Central European University: Public lectures, 1996-1999* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2000), pp.59-70. For more on the imagined physical association between the devil and the Jew, see Joel Carmichael, *The satanizing of the Jews: Origin and development of mystical Anti-Semitism* (New York: Fromm, 1992).

⁶²³ Legge, p.185.

⁶²⁴ See Serban, p.27. In addition, Sandqvist presents a fragment of the correspondence between Janco and Vinea; see Sandqvist (2006), pp.84-87.

⁶²⁵ Gay, p.94.

'Tzara uses terminology that is part and parcel of Judaic thinking and yet subjects these very concepts to his nihilistic attack'.⁶²⁶ Nevertheless, in the words of Peter Gay, 'the feeling of shame and rejection that would overcome [the Jews] as they witnessed what they identified as a 'Jewish' display in public spaces'⁶²⁷ took the form of an unconscious reaction. Interestingly enough, this tendency to deny and reject his own Jewishness was not only not manifest in Janco's case but it took a completely new turn for Marcel Janco embraced Judaism after his return to Bucharest and even became Zionist.⁶²⁸ For Tzara, however, the fact that his only relationship to his Jewish heritage was its limitations makes him sensitive to rejection, unconsciously mimicking those who secretly admire him but who had criticised him for his background, as was the case with Hugo Ball, shown by Tzara's transformation into quite the dandy after he becomes his successor at the Cabaret.

Marcel Janco was the opposite. He appears to have had an interest in highlighting the relationship between past and present for 'Janco was never indifferent to the social and political context that surrounded him, a fact his works translated and transposed, but it is only [later,] in Israel [,] that Janco began to fully identify with the surrounding social situation'⁶²⁹, as the second part of this chapter further discusses. Janco's Jewish identification did not manifest itself by lashing out at the oppressor, and not even by standing in between experiencing simultaneous tendencies of affirming and denying Jewishness, but by defending the Jews, as is argued in the next chapter. While Tzara transformed everything into a parody, for 'it is of course possible to imagine Tzara as a parodic *zaddik*,⁶³⁰ a mystic whose selfhood is esthetically dissolved into the impersonality of the divine',⁶³¹ Janco was more a 'constructor'⁶³² as well as 'one of the driving forces of the Dada group'.⁶³³

The dynamics of Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's Jewish identity remain in strict connection to the different experiences they had that can be interpreted as ambivalent and identity-confused. The most interesting fact, however, is that Tzara and Janco creatively put into use this ambivalence as part of their own identity

⁶²⁶ Heyd, p.213.

⁶²⁷ Gay, p.190.

⁶²⁸ For a comprehensible account on this, see Geo Serban, *Marcel Iancu*.

⁶²⁹ 'Janco n'a jamais été indifférent à l'état social et politique qui l'entourait, et s'œuvres le traduisent et le transposent, mais, c'est seulement en Israël que Janco a commencé à s'identifier complètement avec la situation sociale environnante.' Marcel L. Mendelson, *Marcel Janco* (Tel-Aviv: Massadah Publishing Company Ltd.), p.13.

⁶³⁰ A righteous and saintly person by Jewish religious standards.

⁶³¹ Legge, p.191.

⁶³² Mendelson, p.7.

⁶³³ '[...] une des force motrice du groupe Dada', *Ibid.*

development, as part of their multilayered, performative identity, and it is precisely due to their different manner of addressing it that each chose a different place to continue their avant-gardist experiments.

Part II

(1923 to 1938)

3.2. From Zurich back to Bucharest: Jewish experience as a ‘Romanian’

Throughout this thesis it is mentioned that both Tzara and Janco are Romanian-born Jews of ‘Israelite’ nationality, as their birth certificates indicate. As previously stated, in reality they were Jews ‘under no foreign protection’⁶³⁴ and the term ‘Israelite’ was in no way used to describe their legal belonging to a sovereign state or as part of an ‘Israelite’ nation; rather, it was a term used to highlight their religious heritage. This was due to the Romanian legislation that contributed to the creation of a symptom of social and political marginality among Romanian Jews by excluding them from acquiring Romanian citizenship, leaving them virtually stateless. This issue was corrected only in 1923 when Article 7 of the Romanian Constitution of 1866, which conditioned Romanian citizenship on Christianity, was replaced by Article 8 of the Constitution of 1923, which granted equal rights to Jews. Although the above information is not new at this point in this thesis, the discussion that follows builds upon it since in this subchapter it is argued that, although not all-explanatory, this constitutional change is important. However, given the fact that neither Tzara nor Janco directly document this event, it appears to be often overlooked and therefore not sufficiently analysed.

The art historian Janet Wolff⁶³⁵ claims that artists have never worked in isolation from social and political constraints. Furthermore, the present thesis regards Tzara’s and Janco’s Jewish identity not as a separate entity but rather in the wider

⁶³⁴ Hentea, p.7.

⁶³⁵ Janet Wolff, *The social production of art* (London: Macmillan, 1993).

context of their lives, and sees their artistic productions strictly connected to the socio-political context within they lived. Given the fact that up until this point it has been shown that in Zurich Tzara and Janco encountered antisemitism, despite the fact that the laws were less antisemitic than in Romania, from here onwards this subchapter regards the constitutional changes of 1923 as a conceptual framework necessary for the analysis of Tzara's and Janco's perception of their Jewish experiences thereafter. The initial tensions between them as Jews and the state in which they lived until their departure for Zurich, were, at least in theory, about to disappear after 1923. Not surprisingly, this was not necessarily the case and the Romanian avant-garde became the focal point of many antisemitic reactions, the Jews being accused of seeking the destruction of Romanian art, as discussed in the previous chapters. However, as will later be argued, the appearance of a legal framework allowed some of the Jews involved in the Romanian avant-garde to perceive such threats not as seriously as before. This was the case with Janco who, in the first years of *Contimporanul*, de-radicalised himself to some extent as a result of the lack of socio-political freedom, his art tending towards 'the harmony of nature and landscape, strongly drawn and built, sometimes amusing, [and] always humanistic'⁶³⁶ in detriment to Dada and the abstract.

While 1923 finds Tzara in Paris, Marcel Janco is already back in Bucharest and in that same year submits a request for naturalisation⁶³⁷ to the Romanian authorities, prepared to assimilate into the Romanian society as a Jew. Although after his return to Romania he never joined any international artistic movement, and nor did he ever subscribe to any ideological movement other than constructivism, he nevertheless became one of the most prominent figures of the Romanian avant-garde and remained attentive to what he considered as innovative: 'On their return home, they maintained their connections with the larger European movement even as they pursued their own individual directions.'⁶³⁸

Tom Sandqvist presents Janco as a 'sort of spider in the web of that city's [Bucharest] exceptionally animated avant-garde',⁶³⁹ extremely active and keeping an international profile in the 20s and 30s, partly due to his reputation of being one of the Dadaists in Zurich. Simply said, Janco became the promoter of the avant-garde itself

⁶³⁶ '[...] l'harmonie de la nature et du paysage, fermement dessiné et construit, parfois amusant, toujours humaniste'; Mendelson, p.11.

⁶³⁷ Marcel Janco's request for naturalisation is dated 1923. See Stern, p.44.

⁶³⁸ Luminita Machedon and Ernie Scoffham, *The Architecture of Bucharest, 1920-1940* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), p.2.

⁶³⁹ Sandqvist (2006), p.121.

in Romania, standing at the centre of the new artistic modes of expression directed against the cultural establishment there as shown by his numerous contributions in Romanian avant-garde magazines such as *Contimporanul*, *Punct* and many others.

On the other hand, Tzara was in Paris⁶⁴⁰ since January 1920, which apparently was his initial destination even before Zurich, according to some recent scholarship as previously discussed. Less surprising perhaps, but of no less significance, is the fact that Tzara himself reflects in the same semi-autobiographical text upon his decision to relocate to Paris after Zurich:

What advantage is there to live alone in a small town? After ten years of slow contemplation, which has crippled me like the obscure effect of the germs, I may answer: None. [...]

I spent whole, sluggish years, in the town which absorbed my vitality.⁶⁴¹

The atmosphere experienced in Paris, which he calls the ‘navel of luxury’, offered Tzara, as it did many other artists, the perfect environment for artistic production:

The traffic and noise of big cities became an essential complement to my nervous defects. My eyes need this impersonal entertainment, my legs, my arms and my brain work only if there is around them a similar movement. Out of this stimulant, seemingly cerebral, the most daring initiatives were born.⁶⁴²

For Tristan Tzara, Paris represented the perfect destination for fulfilling his ambitions and also the chance to network with another artist, while Marcel Janco appears to have been more interested to return to his family and brothers in Bucharest. Although Tzara’s activity is rich after his relocation to Paris,⁶⁴³ it does not represent the object of this analysis since, as previously stated, the interest of this chapter lies in discussion of Tzara’s and Janco’s relationship to Jewish identity as seen through the lenses of their Jewish experience in connection with the Romanian nation-building process. Therefore, since Tzara never returned to live in Romania following his initial

⁶⁴⁰ For a comprehensive study on Tzara’s first years in Paris after 1919, including remarks on his perception by the others according to Louis Aragon’s writings, see Sanouillet (2009). See also the more recent essay by Legge, pp.181-204.

⁶⁴¹ ‘Quel avantage y a-t-il à vivre seul dans une petite ville? Après dix ans de réflexion lente qui ma submine comme un travail sombre de microbes, je puis répondre: Aucun. [...] J’ai passé des années entières, inertes, dans la petite ville qui absorba ma vitalité.’ *Faites Vos Jeux*, 31, Oeuvres complètes, Tome I, p.275.

⁶⁴² ‘La circulation et le bruit des grandes villes sont devenus un complément indispensable a mes défauts nerveux. Mes yeux ont besoin de cette distraction impersonnelle, mes jambes, mes bras et mon cerveau ne fonctionnent que s’il y a autour d’eux un mouvement similaire. De ce stimulant, en apparence cérébral, sont chez moi les plus hardies initiatives.’ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴³ For more on this, see also Sandqvist (2006), p.96.

departure to Zurich, the discussion in this subchapter focuses more on his artistic contributions in Romanian avant-garde journals rather than analysing his post-Dada Zurich career as part of the European sphere. Simply said, Tzara did not physically return to Romania but brought Dadaist ideas to the Romanian avant-garde via some journals, as will later be discussed. On the other hand, after his return to Bucharest, Marcel Janco once again begins to collaborate with his friend from earlier times, Ion Vinea, and publishes the journal *Contimporanul*, in which he produces illustrations, sketches and advises on graphics, while adopting a strong political attitude.

Contimporanul is undoubtedly the most important of all the Romanian avant-garde magazines – although at least initially it is not necessarily an ‘avant-garde’ journal – both in terms of its duration (about 10 years and over 100 numbers) as well as the consequences it had on raising awareness of the paradigm shift, judging only by the ‘satellite’ magazines that evolved around it (the journals *Punct* and *Integral* were simply associated to *Contimporanul*’s orbit). In addition, its own name signals an ideological-innovative approach, even if in entirely different conditions than the (almost) homonymous journal published between 1881-1891.

In the first phase⁶⁴⁴ of its existence, between 1922 and 1924, *Contimporanul* is a journal for the critique of socio-political realities in Romania, ‘a voice for social criticism of the political establishment’,⁶⁴⁵ in other words, an ‘activist’ journal.⁶⁴⁶ Radically different from those in the second phase (1924-1928) – which has Janco as an integral part of the editorial board and therefore has a more aesthetic preoccupation – the first issues of *Contimporanul* under Ion Vinea are characterised by a violent anti-liberal stance, possibly also due to his affiliation to the left-wing faction of the Peasants’ Party, but yet not lacking humour, thanks to the ideological perspective of N. Lupu (Kostaki), a Romanian politician with strong ties to the socialist movement.⁶⁴⁷ Most of the first year’s editions begin with anti-liberal illustrations on the first cover, the discussion then focusing mainly on the adoption of the 1923 Liberal Constitution, which is ridiculed through a delicious parody of leftist stance, articles showing a concern for the fate of the Romanian Jews:

In 1866, when the Jewish question had been debated, there were beatings,
there were windows smashed, even synagogues had been destroyed; in 1879,

⁶⁴⁴ Cernat identified three distinct phases of *Contimporanul*. Cernat, pp.12-13, 20-22, 28-29.

⁶⁴⁵ Sandqvist (2006), p.345.

⁶⁴⁶ For more on this, see Paul Cernat, *Contimporanul: Istoria unei reviste de avangardă* (Contimporanul: The history of an avant-garde journal) (Bucharest: Ed. Fundației Culturale Române, 2007).

⁶⁴⁷ For an analysis on themes used by several artists in *Contimporanul*, see Lascu, p.188-193. For a comprehensive study on *Contimporanul* and Janco’s involvement in it, see Sandqvist (2006), Ch. 13.

when the issue has been again discussed by the Constitutional Assembly, there were the same antisemitic excesses. Nowadays, when a new Constitution is being debated, [...] the streets are talking once more. [...] The truth is that for over 50 years, this country was governed only by the elderly, and it was governed badly. What would be, after all, if for once we tried a Cabinet of underaged [ministers]? Anyways, it cannot be worse than it has been so far [...] That's why we can try and find out what would be, in a possible government, the attitude of the minors towards minorities.⁶⁴⁸

Without any doubt the Romanian Constitution of 1923 represented a turning point not only historically but also socially, especially for the Romanian Jews, and the socially aware *Contimporanul* expressed its points of views without any hesitation. The parodical attitude towards the ministers and calling for them to be replaced with minors who, as the citation above claims, would most likely have better judgement than the elders, is just one of the countless examples of criticism brought by the journal to the autochthonous politics, and especially its antisemitism.

However, despite the arduous road towards their emancipation, in 1923 the Romanian Jews were fully emancipated. This offered Jews a chance, at least in theory, to escape ghettoisation, both culturally and socio-politically speaking. Jewish self-expression, however, was still facing compartmentalisation based on one's personal interpretation of Jewish identity, some remaining religious Jews, others becoming cultural Jews, and there were also those who were just ethnically Jews, such as Tzara and Janco. The Jewish identity formation of Romanian Jews was correlated with these variations with specific inner and outer events, and in the same way Janco, in the light of the new constitutional changes, changed *Contimporanul's* direction, starting in 1923. With him as the creative mind in charge of this publication, any elements that could associate it with militant Judaism – such as socialism – were removed. This attitude is explained by Todd Endelman in his *Broadening Jewish history: towards a social history of ordinary Jews* where he argues that the Jewish component in Jews' identity had to shrink in order to become compartmentalized as their civil status

⁶⁴⁸ 'La 1866, când s'a discutat chestia evreiască, s'au spart capete și geamuri, ba s'a dărâmat și o sinagogă; la 1879, când problema a revenit în debaterile Constituantei de atunci, aceleași excese antisemite s'au repetat; acum, când se discută o nouă Constituție [...] din nou vorbește strada [...] Adevărul e că vreme de peste 50 de ani, țara aceasta a fost guvernată numai de vârstnici, și a fost guvernată prost. Cei ar fi, în definitiv, dacă am încerca odată și un cabinet de minori? În orice caz mai rău decât a fost nu poate fi. [...] De aceia câtă să vedem care ar fi, într'o eventuală guvernare, atitudinea minorilor față de minorități.' St. Antim, 'Minorii și minoritățile' (Minors and the Minorities), *Contimporanul*, 32, 24 February 1923, copy number 21.

improved.⁶⁴⁹ Without the oppressive attitude of the state Jewish peoplehood was to be abandoned since there was no need for resistance nor for the Jews to consider themselves a different nation. In this context Janco's identity of emancipated, modern Jew prevailed and his Jewish particularism was muted.

In Romanian intellectual circles, the idea was already circulating that Tzara and Lenin played chess in a coffeehouse at some point between 1916 and 1917,⁶⁵⁰ Bolshevism and socialism being quite often associated with the avant-garde and Dada, in the same way French nationalist militants saw Dada: 'Dada! Dadaism!! It is about Bolshevizing man's feelings and intelligence, of stupefying him radically.'⁶⁵¹ This was also due to Tzara's decision to publish, in October 1919, a journal called *Der Zeltweg*, which connected Dada with a series of socialist events across Europe, including the Bolshevik Revolution. It is perhaps this radicalisation of Tzara's view that contributed to Janco's distancing from him since 'these events had stirred men's minds, divided men's interests and diverted energies in the direction of political change'.⁶⁵² On the other hand, *Contimporanul* already hosted in its eighth issue an article dedicated to Karl Marx, who was considered nothing less than a 'Red Messiah' by its author, Ion Vinea. This, therefore, was the new mentality that Vinea advocated, and the anti-liberal caricatures were replaced by Janco's less politically charged engravings in wood, called xylograms. In a minor note under N. Lupu's issue 28 / January 1923 it is even specified that: 'the engravings in this number are reproduced only once, after which the templates are destroyed. Each xylograph copy of this *Contimporanul* issue is therefore original.'⁶⁵³

In this phase dominated by social-political activism, *Contimporanul*, through Ion Vinea, hosted in its 27th issue a poem by Tristan Tzara, 'Cântec de război' (Song of war), written in 1915 before his departure to Zurich, in which can be noticed a similar style used in *Chemarea*. The reason for Tzara's decision to contribute with texts in this publication is left to suppositions;⁶⁵⁴ however, it is possible that *Contimporanul*'s initial anti-liberal attitude combined with several texts attacking the government's antisemitism by other avant-gardists attracted Tzara, especially since he

⁶⁴⁹ For more on this, see Endelman, Ch. 1.

⁶⁵⁰ For more on this, see Codrescu, p.11.

⁶⁵¹ S.H. in *La Gazette de Locle*, as cited in Sanouillet, p.289.

⁶⁵² Richter, p.80.

⁶⁵³ *Contimporanul*, no. 28, 27 Januray 1923, p. 1. Dr. N. Lupu: 'Atragem atentia cetitorilor că gravurile din acest număr se reproduc o sigură dată, după care clișeele [șablon] se distrug. Fiecare exemplar xilografiat din acest număr al "Contimporanului" are deci valoare de orifinal'.

⁶⁵⁴ For instance, Lascu argues that the texts were left by Tzara with Vinea before his departure. See Lascu, p.189.

was, as previously discussed, involved in a personal repositioning towards politics. It is important to note here that this was not Tzara's only revision of an older poem published in *Contimporanul*; this was also the case, for instance, with 'Vino cu mine la țară' (Come with me to the countryside), which was first published in *Contimporanul*, 15, 29 October 1922 and again in 1934 in the journal *Unu* (One).

Janco takes *Contimporanul* in a more artistic direction, where a predominance of constructivism can be noticed, probably for two main reasons: the first one had to do with the fact that, after Dada, he joined the ranks of 'The New Life' and 'The Radical Artists', in direct contrast to Tzara, developing his interest in construction and composition; the second reason is more pragmatic – the lack of a strong need for social resistance in Romania. Since the greater feelings of impotence and helplessness as stateless Jews had disappeared as a result of the new Constitution, the need for reaction had also disappeared. Jewish rights seemed secure from 1923, but the political horizon darkened for Jews thereafter with the appointment of the Goga-Cuza government in 1938, which issued a series of antisemitic decrees. As a consequence, even Janco's attitude returned to a sort of militancy – albeit never as radical as it was during his Dada years.

The above argument is reinforced by the fact that Janco joined the ranks of the Zionists and artistic militancy only when faced with antisemitic reactions. As an example, starting in 1938, his abstract and fantasist works characterised by the 'spiritual function of colour',⁶⁵⁵ is replaced by socio-political themes, as exemplified, for instance, by his paintings *Prigoană* (Persecution, 1940), *Izgonirea din templu* (Expulsion from the Temple, 1940), and many others, focusing on the 'degrading inquisitorial spectacle'⁶⁵⁶ caused by the antisemitic laws of 1938. Undoubtedly, the most important instruments for Janco remained his artistic productions, and the lack of struggle for freedom and social reforms allowed him to pursue a less radical attitude promoted by the modernist avant-garde, active more within the framework of art and cultural life rather than having socio-political events as sole catalyst for the artistic innovations. The mutation from 'social-political' militancy to 'avant-garde' militancy (from 'political' activism to aesthetic activism) comes simply from Marcel Janco's change of perspective in the light of the new reality, his ideas regarding aesthetics being materialised by graphical insertions into the linear structure of *Contimporanul*,

⁶⁵⁵ Eliade, as cited in Serban, p.55.

⁶⁵⁶ Serban, p.59. Serban offers an account of Janco's artistic reaction to the antisemitic laws in Romania following Goga-Cuza's government decrees of 1938; see pp.57-63.

only to finally end with a confused doctrine as a result of the restart of antisemitic legislation promoted by the Romanian government.

The first article in which the constructivist theory is exposed appears in *Contimporanul* on 10 March 1923. This article is called ‘Contra artiștilor imitatori’ (Against the Imitating Artists), bearing the signature of Theo van Doesburg. It states the following: ‘The artwork becomes a real independent object. The art of the future generation will be a collective expression by organising and disciplining the plastic to a real unity.’⁶⁵⁷ This text can be seen as an introduction to Hans Richter’s explanations, which would appear only after a month in the pages of *Contimporanul*, arguing in favour of the creation of an objective, lucid art that should tend towards achieving some level of impersonalism whose purpose is the geometric abstractionism of the constructivist type.

What we call constructivism characterises a decisive set-up of the notion and problem of creation (not only in art), namely: All actions of life are linked; [are] parts of a whole. [...] The sense of responsibility for the problems of pure creation was born in different countries, in different, simultaneous independent individualities. The will for spiritual guidance is the basis of the new creation.⁶⁵⁸

It is clear that *Contimporanul* benefits from a series of international contacts that undoubtedly come from Janco whose involvement appears to be quite clear. Furthermore, his connection with Richter as well as his productions show that constructivist concepts, which he had picked up in Switzerland in the circle of ‘The Radical Artists’, represent a central point of the journal under Janco’s coordination. However, its aesthetic contributions show once again Janco’s determination to transform *Contimporanul* from a ‘stage dominated by social-political militancy’⁶⁵⁹ into a stage of artistic militancy. The joint issue of *Contimporanul* no. 50-51 offers a panoramic view of the European avant-garde orientations, both poetic and plastic. For example, since 1923, *Contimporanul* had established a series of contacts with

⁶⁵⁷ ‘Opera de artă devine obiect independent real. [...] Arta generației viitoare va fi expresia colectivă, prin organizare și disciplină, a mijloacelor plastice spre o unitate reală.’ Theo. V. Doesburg, ‘Contra artiștilor imitatori’ (Against the imitating artists), *Contimporanul*, year 2, no. 34, 10 March 1923.

⁶⁵⁸ ‘Ceeace numim constructivism caracterizează o punere la punct decisivă pentru noțiunea și problema creațiunii (nu numai în artă) și anume: Toate acțiunile vieții sunt legate; părți ale unei unități. ... Simțul responsabilității pentru problemele creațiunii pure s’a născut în diferite țări, în diferite individualități independente simultane. Voința pentru oridnea spirituală este baza noiei creațiunii.’ Hans Richter, ‘Constructivismul’ (Constructivism), *Contimporanul*, 37-38, 7 April 1923.

⁶⁵⁹ Cernat, p.12.

expressionism. The direction of the journal seems to be related to the artistic belief and theoretical convictions of Marcel Janco and by his connection with Europe, nonetheless.

Artists remained in contact across borders and language differences, as shown by many avant-gardists magazines: *Contimporanul*, *Integral*, *75 H.P.*, *Punct* – all dedicated the last pages of each number to permanent columns in which accounts were given of similar publications from all over Europe that promoted the same innovative approach. Thus, a vast network of tendencies and names was created that left the impression of a global movement of ideas. However, it seems that in Janco's view, the expressionist influence was only a step on the road to constructivism,⁶⁶⁰ and later abstractionism, the main aesthetic purpose of his art, as he reveals: 'the new [style of] painting is a work long consumed by the fire of wild days and nights, revolution mastered [passing] through expressionism to abstraction.'⁶⁶¹ The influence of expressionism can also be seen in the portrait drawings that Marcel Janco realises for different personalities of the cultural world of the period: the sculptor Oscar Han, the poet Lucian Blaga, the pianist Clara Haskil, the writer Vasile Demetrius, the poet Ion Minulescu. It is important to note here is that, for instance, Minulescu was an old collaborator of Janco's ever since *Simbolul*, being at the time one of the leading symbolist poets in Romania – demonstrating once again Janco's ability to preserve long-term relationships with fellow artists, Jewish or non-Jewish.

The above section is meant to support the argument that Janco preferred to direct his energy towards artistic endeavours concerned directly with art itself in contrast to Tzara who, in Paris, was tirelessly seeking to revolutionise the world, still preoccupied with making a critical re-examination of the status quo, his writings becoming more and more politically charged. As Philip Beitchman⁶⁶² argues, Tzara's poems carry a clear Communist orientation and even depict a new type of revolutionary violence justifiable, by him, as a form of human expression.

⁶⁶⁰ Constructivism is an art movement that originated in Soviet Russia in 1913, characterised by abstract geometric constructions put together in order to express the experience of modern life. For a theoretical discussion on constructivism, see, for instance, C. T. Fosnot (ed.), *Constructivism: Theory, perspectives, and practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005); see also George Rickey, *Constructivism: Origins and evolution* (New York: George Braziller 1995). According to Roger Horrocks, 'this movement rejected traditional art in favour of a more technological approach allied with engineering, architecture and industrial design'. Roger Horrocks, *Art the moves: The work of Len Lye* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009), p.71.

⁶⁶¹ Marcel Janco, *Contimporanul*, no. 50-51, 30 November–30 December 1924.

⁶⁶² Philip Beitchman, *I am a process with no subject* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1988), pp.37-42.

The fact should not be ignored that Tristan Tzara's personality had a sort of moral ascendancy over his fellow artists left in Romania and, although he was less involved in the Romanian avant-garde, the 1920s and onwards found him preoccupied with the nascent Paris Dada. The concrete example lies in two journals, *75 H.P.* and *Integral*.

The most radical Romanian avant-garde magazine, the unique issue of *75 H.P.* is practically a natural and necessary consequence of the mutations that the artistic sphere in Romania underwent after 1920 under the influence of Dada Zurich. The shattering of words, the destruction of language as a medium of communication and representation is thus a necessary prerequisite for Tzara to be able to vanquish the old ways of life, and *75 H.P.* is the first journal without his direct editorial involvement that follows his ideology. The soirées of Cabaret Voltaire appear to have been recreated in this journal, at the same time constituting the maximum manifestation of the Romanian avant-garde in the direction of the redefinition of the artistic productions and the restoration of its communicative function, by including and self-interrogating different types of discourse and situations towards specific realities, similar to what Tzara and his fellow artists created in Zurich. Simply put, although Tzara did not physically return to Romania, this journal brings to the Romanian avant-garde the Dadaist ideas.

As already demonstrated, Janco's and Tzara's paths met sporadically in some Romanian journals as collaborators, journals that seem to continue one another in terms of duration and ideology. The case of the journal *Integral*, however, represents a place where Janco meets, ideologically speaking, his old friend Tristan Tzara. If the other Romanian journals discussed previously were under the direct influence of Marcel Janco, *Integral* benefited from the invisible presence of Tristan Tzara who, from Paris, either through Benjamin Fondane and Hans Mattis-Teutsch, or directly, provides the editorial staff with numerous literary works and reproductions of some artworks, leaving his mark on the configuration and style of the journal. If *Contimporanul* follows a more relaxed and aesthetically oriented direction, *Integral* explicitly refers to an assumed aesthetic radicalism specific to Tzara. In the first issue of *Integral*, Ion Călugăru dedicates an ode to Dada and Tzara, whom he calls 'the witch-doctor who had discovered [...] the elixir to seduce the sedentary immortality'.⁶⁶³ In the same article can be noticed the same radicalism of Dada that

⁶⁶³ 'Vraciul care descoperise [...] elixirul pentru flagelat nemurirea sedentară'; Ion Călugăru, 'Sept Manifestes Dada', *Integral*, 1, 1 March 1925, pp.6-7.

infiltrated very well the Romanian avant-garde sphere and Călugăru, in an attempt to mimic Tzara, writes referring to the journal discussed before that: ‘75 H.P. died intoxicated with milk’,⁶⁶⁴ without explaining in any way what he actually means by this. It is clear that the influence of the Dada was already being felt in the Romanian sphere, trying this way to integrate into the European avant-garde in a manner that would resemble Tzara’s ideology.

Of course, it is imperative not to forget the social picture of 1925, when *Integral* appears. The journal has many elements resembling both Dada practices and Tzara’s style. The first issue begins with a double manifest. The page that opens the magazine itself contains an unsigned text with specific futurist-constructivist features of writing, and page layout (oversized letters, cursive and bold characters, upper-case and lower-case rhythms, plus the excessive presence of infinitives, and imperatives – which gives the text an alert rhythm, in the Dada tradition).

In April 1927 (year 3, number 12) the issue publishes a relatively long interview with Tzara. Pages 6-7 are occupied by an article titled *Marchez au pas; Tristan Tzara parle à Integral*. Referring to the end of the Dada movement Tzara replies:

You want me to talk to you about Dada. Listen to me, please. Contrary to the false news which we spread according to which Dada had died by the resignation of some individuals, it is I who killed Dada, voluntarily, because, I have considered that a state of individual freedom had finally become a collective state and that the various ‘presidents’ had begun to feel and think the same way. Yet, nothing is more unpleasant to me than the intellectual laziness which annihilates the individual movements, be they close to madness, and opposing the general interest.⁶⁶⁵

There are two important things to be noted right from the beginning: the title of the interview and the language in which the interview is done. It has already been discussed throughout this thesis that Tzara employs French even in his correspondence with his family; however, it is even more interesting how he, the spiritual leader of the

⁶⁶⁴ ‘75 H.P. a murit intoxicat cu lapte’, Călugăru, p.7.

⁶⁶⁵ ‘Vous-voulez que je vous parle de Dada. Ecoutez-moi bien, Contrairement aux fausses nouvelles qu’on a repandues d’après les quelles Dada serait mort par la demission de quelques individus, c’est moi-meme qui ai tue Dada, volontairement, parce que, j’ai considere qu’un etat de liberte individuelle etait devenu a la fin un etat collectif et que les different ‘presidents’ commençaient a sentir et a penser de la meme facon. Or, rien ne m’est plus antipathique que la paresse cérébrale qui annihile les mouvements individuels, fussent-ils proches de la folie, et contraires à l’intérêt général.’ Ilarie Voronca, ‘Marchez au pas; Tristan Tzara parle à Integral’, *Integral*, April 1927, 3(12), pp.6-7.

Romanian avant-garde and fluent in Romanian, offers an interview for a Romanian magazine in French. Perhaps this was out of his desire to be associated solely with the French intellectual life, perhaps due to vanity or even possibly out of the interviewer's wish to maintain *Integral*'s international character – a journal well known for publishing texts in other languages (i.e. 'Introduction au Dadaclisme'⁶⁶⁶ by G Ribemont Dessaignes in French and Alfred Sperber's poem in German, 'Frau in Blauem'⁶⁶⁷). Secondly, the title of the article, 'Marchez au pas; Tristan Tzara parle à *Integral*', which might carry a sort of encoding. Although the French formulation *Marche[r] au pas* translated into English means 'walking at a slow pace' and therefore refers to a way of walking characterised by the regularity and pace of the steps, there is an ulterior interpretation that can be ascribed to these words. During the Kingdom of France, the aristocracy used to enhance its superior status by looking down on commoners and therefore keeping them in line; in other words, making them 'marcher au pas' would be one of the ways to achieve this. Keeping in mind that Tzara rarely did anything without a hidden meaning, the second option of him positioning himself above the others seems fairly plausible, especially since the title continues with 'Tristan Tzara parle à *Integral*' (Tristan Tzara talks to *Integral*), as a teacher talking to his pupils.

It is clear that Tzara was still insisting on his crucial role in the appearance of the Dada. He places himself at the centre, similar to God, and as the only one capable of creating or destroying according to his own will. Perhaps as a demonstration of his creative power and influence over the journal, on the eleventh page a fragment of his poem 'L'indicateur des chemins de Coeur' is published together with two sketches with erotic connotations belonging to Halicka and Irène Codreanu. Overall, as an indirect influence, one can also observe the contacts that the members of the editorial office have with Ion Vinea, also a poet, but also the experienced leader of *Contimporanul*. The hostile attitude that the journal *Integral* has towards surrealism may, for example, be in direct relation to the fallout between André Breton and Tristan Tzara in 1923. The blurring or lack of surrealist techniques perhaps explains the inadequacy of some texts on the pages of the magazine.

The point that this quite descriptive presentation of some of the content of these journals is making is that, in contrast with Janco's attitude, Tzara's lack of self-reconciliation with his Jewish heritage forces him into continuous anarchist impulses,

⁶⁶⁶ *Integral*, 8 September 1925, pp.4-5.

⁶⁶⁷ *Integral*, 10 August 1925, pp.6-7.

which are quite visible even in the Romanian journals to which he contributes. But Tzara's inner conflict was part of his persona. He had a strange relationship even with the Romanian language, as discussed in previous chapters. After his departure from Romania, Tzara never wrote in Romanian ever again, and he never returned except for two occasions: a conference in 1920, which Adrian Sudhalter⁶⁶⁸ believes had more to do with him renewing his passport than with an artistic event, and a second time in 1946.

What the second part of this chapter attempted to achieve was an analysis of the way the anarchist impulses, fuelled by a feeling of revolt as a result of the treatment of Jews in Romania, affect the artistic manifestations in the cases of Tzara and Janco post-Dada Zurich or, on the contrary, how the lack of tension can affect their engagement with radical art. Finally, it is important to note that from the ironic-activist forms (the anti-liberal caricatures) of *Contimporanul* to the radical deconstructions of language unique to Tzara (in *75 H.P.*) to the reintegration of syncretism that is specific to *Integral*, the theoretical reflections of Tzara and Janco became the main ideology behind the Romanian journals and a sort of critique to the reality in which they were living.



3.3 Conclusions

In the two parts of this chapter it is argued that there is a fine line between Tzara's and Janco's attitudes in regard to their art and the way they relate to their Jewish heritage once the Dada Zurich period ends. In addition, this chapter focused on Jewishness as one of the elements involved in Tzara's and Janco's lives – although not always necessarily visible – and how the aggressive forms of ideological discourse are affected by the context of their lives. The argument made in this chapter is that the treatment of Jews in Romania fuelled an attitude of revolt directed against the socio-political status quo as exhibited by Tzara and Janco at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, whilst the somewhat normalisation of Jewish-Romanian relations results in an aesthetic activism rather than a political one, as demonstrated by the case of Marcel Janco as creative director of *Contimporanul*. It is not merely in the abstract language of Janco's painting but also in the idiosyncratic special design of his architecture that

⁶⁶⁸ Adrian Sudhalter, in *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*.

Janco experimented with forms and designs that imply a new conception of, rather than a break with, the past. Tzara, on the other hand, is witness to both the crisis of language and the criticism of language that was so virulent at the end of the nineteenth century while living in a rural, ethnically stratified society. The scepticism about language, which was anything but new after the war, reveals itself even in its linguistic formulation as inadequate. The shattering of words, the destruction of language as a medium of communication and representation is thus a necessary prerequisite for Tzara to be able to vanquish the old ways of life and distance himself from his past.

* * *

Chapter 4:
Tzara and Janco between
Hannah Arendt's pariah and parvenu

*'Jews who heard the strange compliment that they were exceptions [...] that they were Jews and yet presumably not like Jews.'*⁶⁶⁹

Hannah Arendt

*'[...] belonging to Judaism had become my own problem, and my own problem was political.'*⁶⁷⁰

Hannah Arendt

The last chapter of this thesis represents this study's final attempt to approach Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's multilayered identities from a different angle: the significance of their Jewishness in their self-identification with an emphasis on the context in which they were living. It draws on Hannah Arendt's concepts of *pariah*, and *parvenu* as discussed in her essay 'The Jew as Pariah: A Hidden Tradition' (April 1944).⁶⁷¹ Her attempt to interrogate Jewish modernity 'without really knowing anything about Judaism'⁶⁷² through the experience of certain Jewish intellectuals led Arendt to discover a "hidden tradition," the Jew as pariah. She reaches the conclusion that such a tradition appeared due to same impasse that generations after generations of Jewish people were confronted with. For Arendt the tradition of the Jew as a pariah was more of a tradition of individualities which links the individuals with one another, not by them sharing experiences with each other, but by their shared mode of response, artistically and politically. It thanks to this philosophy that Arendt's works offer a substantial background for discussing Tzara's and Janco's cases, as both, as men of culture, embodied some 'new specimens of humanity' predicted by the Enlightenment.⁶⁷³ For Arendt, such men did not wish to return to Judaism or amongst

⁶⁶⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1951), p.56.

⁶⁷⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed. By P. Baehr (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2000), p.12.

⁶⁷¹ Arendt, (1978).

⁶⁷² Hans Jonas, *Memoirs*, Ed. by Christian Wiese, trans. by Krishna Walton, (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2008), p. 61.

⁶⁷³ Arendt (1951), p.64.

their fellow Jews, not because they believed in some sort of progress and disappearance of antisemitism or because they were too assimilated into the Gentile society, but because ‘all traditions and cultures as well as all ‘belongings’ had become equally questionable to them.’⁶⁷⁴ This last chapter draws heavily on Janco’s later writings, showing his reflections on Jewish identity while living in a different context, as was the case of post First World War Romania.

As Michael Lowy argues in his book *Redemption and Utopia*, the specific situation of the Jewish communities, and especially its intellectuals, in Central and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century cannot be understood without an examination of the historical changes that took place.⁶⁷⁵ Lowy stresses that the starting point for analyzing the Jewish intellectuals is the basic social fact. Since this chapter refers to a different social situation (after the First World War and until the outbreak of the Second one) other than the one analyzed up until this point in this thesis, a small amount of background about the deteriorating situation of Jews in Romania and indeed France in the 1930s is required. Furthermore, given that this chapter discusses works by Tzara and Janco written by the two while living in two very different contexts, Tzara in France, Janco back in Romania, some historical background is vital to the understanding of the situation Janco describes. This was not in any way identical to the one that Tzara is responding to in the early to mid 1900s. If before the First World War the Romanian reality meant a transformation from a semi-feudal and backward country into a more Westernized one, the Great War changed even more drastically the Romanian society and its hierarchy of values. The ‘French-speaking’ bourgeoisie living in Bucharest, often ridiculed by Romanian critics for their poor knowledge of both the Romanian and French languages, maintained direct connections to their rural properties in the countryside.⁶⁷⁶ The disparity between the large estates, often managed by Jewish stewards, and the tiny peasant parcels of land created, in the first decades of the twentieth century, a strong antisemitic feeling amongst many. After the war, the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 pushed for ratifying the legal status of

⁶⁷⁴ Arendt, ‘Walter Benjamin: 1892-1940’, in Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), p.190.

⁶⁷⁵ Lowy, Ch. 3.

⁶⁷⁶ The playwright I.L. Caragiale is notorious for mocking the Romanian bourgeoisie of that era, and its members’ claims of belonging to a highly educated class, the fact contradicted by reality. In his literary sketch ‘D-I Goe’ (Mr. Goe), its protagonists, travelling from the countryside to the capital, Bucharest, employ faulty French words combining them with Romanian prepositions: ‘La Bulivar, bir-jar!’ (To the Boulevard); the Romanian preposition ‘La’ (To) and the missing word *Bulivar* (the phonetic transcription of the French word *Boulevard*). I.L. Caragiale, ‘D-I Goe’ (Mr. Goe), *Universul* magazine (12 May 1900).

Romanian-Jewry following the general idea of equality between all citizens of a state, regardless of language, religion and ethnicity. This was the equivalent of an arm twist applied to Romania by Europe's principal powers forcing it to change its anti-Jewish legislation. As a consequence, and despite of all its efforts to seal apparent loopholes in existing laws and regulations, Romania moved towards changing its constitution. The Constitution of 28 March 1923 offered the Jews the option to become Romanian citizens based on a *statement of choice* requesting to be naturalized. In this process, the Romanian government claimed its sovereignty, naturalization being made individually, not collectively as requested in those treaties. Such a *statement of choice* requesting to be naturalized was submitted in 1923 to the Romanian authorities by Marcel Janco.⁶⁷⁷ Sadly, beginning with early nineteen-thirties the antisemitic agenda was brought to light due to the belligerent and preposterous statements of the intellectual elites such as the professor A.C. Cuza, already mentioned in the Introduction. Cuza, calling for a total annihilation of all Jews and a retraction of the citizenship granted to the Jews in 1923, became part of 1938's Goga-Cuza government. Together with the Romanian writer and politician Octavian Goga, they introduced a series of antisemitic laws aimed to 'Romanianize' the economy universities, and liberal professions which resulted in the loss of citizenship of over 220.000 Romanian-Jews. This was the beginning of the end for the Romanian Jews, Goga's government not only dismissing all Jews from the public sphere, including theaters, but definitively marking Romania's shift towards the Fascist Powers.'⁶⁷⁸ Since neither Janco, nor Tzara were Romanian citizens at the time of their departure, it was only logical that upon return to Romania they requested naturalisation this way preparing to assimilate into the Romanian society as a Jew.⁶⁷⁹

Considering that Tzara never returned to live in Romania, it is unclear if he ever exercised his new right in Romania however, he became naturalised in 1947 in France to the surprise of his fellow Surrealist artist Philippe Soupault who wrote at the time: 'He, [Tzara] a stateless person who became a French citizen [...].'⁶⁸⁰ What the reaction of the French writer denotes is the reality of the France in which Tzara lived

⁶⁷⁷ For more on this, see Teșu Solomovici, *România Judaică (de la începuturi și până la 23 august 1944)* Tome I, (Bucharest: Teșu, 2001), p. 183: 'After the War of Independence of 1877-1878, Romania has granted Jews that had served in the military the right to keep rural pubs. The number of Jews was not significant in rural areas, mostly concentrated in cities'.

⁶⁷⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken, 2007), p.73.

⁶⁷⁹ Lowy, p.38.

⁶⁸⁰ Philippe Soupault, 'Souvenir de Tristan Tzara', *Europe*, numero special 555-556, 1977, p.3.

ever since he left Zurich. Even after the end of the First World War the ‘Spy mania’⁶⁸¹ was still present and its targets were especially the Jews coming from Eastern Europe. As already discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, Tzara faced ridicule for his foreignness even from his fellow artists as it was the case of his former Dada colleague, Christian Schad and of the novelist Louis Aragon. It was this the context in which Tzara wrote his *Faites Vos Jeux*. He lived in a place where he was constantly reminded of his alien status while witnessing the French government’s efforts to create in the mind of every citizen the image of a homogenous French homeland.⁶⁸² Despite of its endeavors, the Jews across Europe were seen, as Hannah Arendt put it, ‘as a nation of pariahs, as a caste all that, with the exception of a few.’⁶⁸³ This social condition of pariah, as Lowy argues, clearly made Jewish intellectuals more ‘receptive to ideologies that radically contested the established order.’⁶⁸⁴ Tzara’s and Janco’s pariah status never seemed to become blurred or forgotten even if they had disdained ethnic representations. With the fate sealed by their ethnicity, they were never fully at home anywhere, not even around those among whom they were active as artists. They appeared to be outsiders of a profoundly cast of mind without necessarily stressing their Jewish identity, aware probably of the reality of persecution. What the reading of Tzara’s and Janco’s cases with the help of Arendt’s theorization does is to demonstrate that discrimination and pressure to assimilate of the Jews reduced Jewishness to an exclusive interior, personal problem.

The topic of Tzara’s identity discussed in terms of Arendt’s concepts of pariah and parvenu has been previously sketched out, in 1998, in an article by Corina Jordache-Martin⁶⁸⁵ more based on his cultural allegiance in relation to his location and the way it affected his literary career. Although the aforementioned article probes Arendt’s concepts in relation to Tzara, an in-depth analysis of his Jewish experience and the ambiguous nature of his relationship to his Jewish background, is still necessary.

⁶⁸¹ Sanouillet, p. 42.

⁶⁸² For the situation of the Jews in Europe before the Second World War with an emphasis on the treatment of the Jews as pariah within their countries of residence around the 1930s, see Bernard Wasserstein, *On the Eve: The Jews of Europe before the Second World War*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

⁶⁸³ Hannah Arendt, *The Jewish Writings*, ed. by Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman. (New York: Schocken, 2007), p. 73.

⁶⁸⁴ Lowy, p. 38.

⁶⁸⁵ Corina Jordache-Martin, “‘Le venu de Zurich’ or Tristan Tzara and the insolence of the margin’; *The Centennial Review*, 42(3) (1998), pp.569–588. *JSTOR* www.jstor.org/stable/23740006. [accessed 11 August 2017].

Throughout the previous chapters of this thesis the process of identity formation has been discussed in detail, more or less from a chronological perspective. However, this chapter replaces this technique in favour of presenting a fuller picture of the entire period analysed in this thesis, beginning from the late 1800s and until 1938 where the previous chapter ends. This is because this chapter intends to establish the pariah's importance in the context of Tzara's and Janco's thought and explores the possibilities of the emergence of a unique identity out of the pariah's relationship to the surrounding socio-political context. In order to succeed it draws on all the biographical information presented throughout the present thesis. Finally, it is of crucial importance to the understanding of this chapter to note that references to events scrutinised in what follows are not determined by a chronological order but rather by their relevance to the arguments.

This chapter raises the question about the relationship between Tzara's and Janco's identity and their identification with the Jewish community and the Gentiles.⁶⁸⁶ Arendt's concepts are then used to determine whether Tzara and Janco manifest themselves as part of a collective identity that has no access to the public space or whether they simply act as individuals without social status concerned with individual identity and without any intention of belonging to some community. The negative image accompanying Jews' status was part of Tzara's and Janco's reality and it is exactly this experience that shaped their thinking and moulded their self-perception and own representation of their own identity. The conclusion reached is that Tzara and Janco, as marginal people who do not fully belong anywhere, can overcome estrangement and become actively involved in society while also maintaining a sort of distinctive collective identity. Their model of cultural innovation, steeped to some extent in their Jewish experience, contradicts any future suppositions stating that their identities developed independently from their heritage while in Zurich.

The sources used in this chapter, alongside the multitude of information gathered from the previous chapter, which resulted from consulting primary and secondary sources, comprise two main works: *Faites Vos Jeux* (1923) by Tristan Tzara, a semi-autobiographical work already introduced in Chapter 3, and Marcel

⁶⁸⁶ The word 'Gentiles' refers to a Biblical term used to differentiate the Israelites from all the other nations; a gentile is a person who is not of Abrahamic descent through the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For a comprehensive analysis of the relation between Jews and Gentiles, see David C. Sim and James S. McLaren (eds), *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (London; New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013).

Janco's article 'Marturii iudaice despre arta'⁶⁸⁷ (1938). The importance of the usage of *Faites Vos Jeux* has been already demonstrated in the previous chapter; however, Janco's article represents a novelty, in a sense. As already mentioned, Marcel Janco's written accounts are not as numerous as Tzara's, perhaps because his career was as a painter and architect rather than writer or poet. Furthermore, the written accounts by Janco are combined with those written by others following his public lectures. This is also the case of 'Marturii iudaice despre arta' where, in a note on the first page, it is specified that it is a '[c]ommunication made by Mr. MARCEL IANCU at the Institute of Culture, at a public meeting on 30 May CY. [1938]'.⁶⁸⁸ As a consequence, although this article might have been transcribed by a third, unknown person, it is written in the singular form of the first person and it is signed by Janco; therefore, can be considered his own. The importance of this article lies in the fact that it appears in a period when Janco was already in Bucharest with a well-established career as an architect and also extremely involved in the Romanian avant-garde movement. Therefore his opinions on art and on the socio-political context are influenced by his Romanian surroundings.

In terms of its theoretical framework, as previously stated, this chapter uses Hanna Arendt's concepts of pariah, parvenu and conscious pariah. Since Arendt has given wider circulation to these concepts in several of her works by offering her interpretation on of society and thought in light of the distinction between *pariah* and *parvenu*, this chapter relies also on reading Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman* (1974), *Portable Hannah Arendt* (2000), and *The Jewish Writings* (2007) in order to better grasp her concepts of political action and Jewish identity, and only after that put them in dialogue with the cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco. The primary sources used by Arendt are complemented by interpretations of her work by other scholars, such as Arnaldo Momigliano,⁶⁸⁹ Ron Feldman,⁶⁹⁰ and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl,⁶⁹¹ to name just a few.

Choosing Arendt's theory amongst the multitude of Jewish identity theories was carefully considered. Her differentiation between the 'parvenus, those Jews who

⁶⁸⁷ Iancu, 'Marturii iudaice despre arta', *Cultura*, 1938, pp.17-19.

⁶⁸⁸ 'Comunicare facuta de d. MARCEL IANCU la Institutul de Cultură, în ședința publică din 30 Mai cr.' 'Marturii iudaice despre arta', *Cultura*, 1938, p.17.

⁶⁸⁹ Arnaldo Momigliano, 'A note on Max Weber's definition of Judaism as a pariah religion', in *On Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987).

⁶⁹⁰ Arendt (2007).

⁶⁹¹ Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt – for love of the world* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1982).

successfully negotiate the demands of assimilation through luck, ability, or wealth',⁶⁹² and pariahs, 'those Jews excluded from the formal society'⁶⁹³ whose ostracism was due to the majority culture's image of them as an alien mass of inferiors, is entirely based on her personal experience as a Jew in Berlin and Paris. This experience shaped her thinking about the status of the Jews and made her reflect on it, just as Tzara and Janco both reflected on their conditions later in life, although none of them discussed in great detail their Jewishness. What Arendt's concepts bring to the discussion on Tzara's and Janco's identity is a different view on the role that Tzara and Janco claimed for themselves in regard to their status of Jews in Romania and later in the international artistic sphere. Drawing from the extensive analysis carried out in the previous chapters on their youth, on the *Simbolul* period, as well as on the post-Dada period, the present chapter uses Arendt's concepts in order to ask what the stakes were in being identified as a Jew for Tzara and Janco while in Romania, and how did this impact their self-perception. However, this chapter does not intend to see Tzara as the parvenu and Janco as the pariah, but it uses these concepts as interchangeable throughout their lives. In other words, instead of strictly labeling the two artists as either one or the other, it looks at these concepts as temporary occurrences in their identity-building process and self-perception, rather than as a strict, rigid delimitation.



4.1. Tzara and Janco, as Jews, between pariah and parvenu

This subchapter uses Arendt's system to explain Tzara's and Janco's complex and varied relations with exclusion and possible self-perception issues derived from it. What is argued is that Tzara's and Janco's self-perception as people remaining fundamentally exterior to Romanian society and to some extent even of the European one due to antisemitism contributes to their self-reflection in regard to their positioning against the rest. Therefore, Arendt's concepts of pariah, parvenu and conscious pariah encapsulate Tzara's and Janco's attitudes towards their Jewishness, closely connected to strands in their work, and also their choice to create mystical, parallel Utopias instead of engaging with political action during their early years.

⁶⁹² Haun Saussy, 'The refugee speaks of Parvenus and their beautiful illusions: A rediscovered 1934 text by Hannah Arendt', *Critical Inquiry*, 40(1) (2013), p.3.

⁶⁹³ Arendt, (1944), p.102.

Before beginning the discussion, some conceptual specifications in regard to Arendt's concepts of pariah, and parvenu are required. Although Hannah Arendt uses the concept of pariah in her own sense, she admits to having borrowed it from Max Weber, who employed it in the form of 'a pariah people'⁶⁹⁴ and who was the first to introduce the term into the scientific study of Judaism. For Arendt, the Jewish pariah type is the one to be preferred to the other kind, the parvenu, because the former allows 'an admission of Jews as Jews to the ranks of humanity, rather than a permit to ape the Gentiles or an opportunity to play the parvenu'.⁶⁹⁵ According to Arendt, there is a crucial difference between the two Jewish types: the first one, the pariah, brings all their Jewish experience self-consciously into the Gentile world that surrounds him without denying his Jewish heritage but also without unnecessarily adulating it; on the other hand, the second type, the parvenu, denies his Jewish heritage entirely in his quest to be fully assimilated into the Gentile world, which will inevitably lead to his own marginalisation.⁶⁹⁶ The third type, the conscious pariah, is represented by those Jews who are conscious about their outside status both in relation to European society as well as in relation to the Jewish one, radically opposed to those accepted solely as exceptions by society – the parvenus.⁶⁹⁷

The starting point of Arendt's approach is based on the exemplary Jewish 'pariah' figures in history that allow her to develop a series of guiding principles of political judgment, rethinking the conditions of commitment of the pariah as an outcast. Arendt constructs a framework of what she calls a 'hidden tradition' of cultural exclusion, using as examples the readings of Heine, Lazare, Chaplin and Franz Kafka. In her essay, Arendt introduces typical representatives of the concepts, each contributing to the above-mentioned 'hidden tradition'. She picks Heinrich Heine as the *schlemihl* or 'lord of dreams', Bernard Lazare as a conscious pariah, Kafka's 'poetic vision of the fate of the man of goodwill' as another example, and Charlie Chaplin due to his grotesque portrayal of the subject who, 'even if not a Jew himself, he has epitomized in an artistic form a character born of the Jewish pariah mentality',⁶⁹⁸ all four becoming the protagonists of her analysis.

⁶⁹⁴ See Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. and ed. by H.H. Gerth and Don Martindale (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1967): '[...] sociologically speaking the Jews were a pariah people, which means, as we know from India, that they were a guest people who were ritually separated, formally or de facto, from their surrounding'. For a concise discussion on Weber's notion of the Jews as a 'pariah people', see Momogiano, pp.231-237.

⁶⁹⁵ Hannah Arendt (1944), p.68.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.76.

⁶⁹⁷ For more on this distinction, see for instance, Arendt (2007).

⁶⁹⁸ Arendt, p.69, footnote 1.

Translated into Tzara's and Janco's cases, Arendt's reading of Kafka remains the most consistent point of reference also due to the fact that Kafka's case has been already introduced in Chapter 2 of this thesis. For Arendt, Kafka's work characterises thinking as the new weapon available to the pariah. For Kafka, '*thought*' is an instrument of self-preservation, their only weapon in their vital struggle against the world. Arendt sees it as a contrast to the traditional pariah's responses, which entails a retreat from the world into the company of other pariahs. Applied to Tzara's and Janco's cases, their attitude towards intellectualism is similar to that described by Kafka, for they and their families see it as the only way to protect themselves from marginalisation. The importance their families pay to their education, as previously discussed in Chapter 1, demonstrates a specific attitude towards their marginalisation, eradicable only via intellectualism. Simply said, what the Romanian Jews wished to achieve via intellectualism was to be seen as exceptionally well-cultured rather than being exceptions to society because of their religious heritage. Arendt agrees that although Kafka was never explicitly qualified as Jewish, he was not spared of the embarrassment and realities of the Jewish life. Likewise, Tzara and Janco were excluded from the society which triggered a desire to claim their rights as humans. Tzara's breaking the ties with other Jews was not as a result of his wish to assimilate but his wish to claim his rights as a human being. Janco's interest in Jewish life once in Bucharest was not his attempt to return to Jewish traditions but more his interest in the messianic themes: 'he did not feel the need to repudiate glorious traditions, to look for sufficiency in the despicable contempt of such a venerable prosperity of the past. He did not give up and crossed all the conquests of art.'⁶⁹⁹ Arendt finds that the Jewish identity as pariah contrasts with the assimilationist response to marginalisation of the parvenu, but also that by consciously adopting the status of pariah some Jews discover 'a formula for non-conformist rebellion directed as much against the immediate Jewish as against the wider Gentile communities'.⁷⁰⁰ From this perspective, Tzara and Janco represent two very distinct cases of more or less the same type described by Arendt, as is argued in what follows.

⁶⁹⁹ Şerban, p.48, quoting journal *Aurora* from 7 January 1923: 'nu a simtit nevoia sa repudieze traditii glorioase, spre a-si cauta o suficienta in dispretuirea comoda a atator venerabile izbande ale trecutului. Nu a renuntat la nimic si a strabatut toate cuceririle artei'.

⁷⁰⁰ Howard Caygill, 'The fate of the pariah: Arendt and Kafka's "Nature Theatre of Oklahoma"', *College Literature*, 38(1) (2011), p.3. *JSTOR* www.jstor.org/stable/27917781 [accessed: 8 November 2017].

In 1920, Tristan Tzara writes a letter to his friend Francis Picabia from Bucharest. It was the first time Tzara had returned to the Romanian capital after his departure in 1915:

My dear friend,

I arrived in Bucharest yesterday, I'm leaving this evening for the country and all I want is to return, either to Paris or elsewhere. The Balkans and the mentality here disgust me profoundly. [...] I'll only be staying here three-four weeks, I'm returning to Zurich first by the Simplon Express, travelling in Germany is too complicated. [...] I don't think I'll be able to work at all here. [...] It would perhaps have been better to have not left in the first place. I am *terribly* bored here and I've only been in Bucharest for twenty-four hours. [...]

Yours, Tzara⁷⁰¹

The reason behind this trip is opened to interpretation since there is no concrete explanation for his travel except for what, presumably, could be a visit to his parents in Moinesti: 'I'm leaving this evening for the country[side].' The American researcher Adrian Sudhalter argues that it was due to his need to renew his passport that this trip took place.⁷⁰² However, at this point in this thesis it is not important to establish the reason for his travel—only his reaction upon his arrival. The Balkans and the mentality there disgust him profoundly; this is clearly positioning himself outside the group of people in this region. He is bored, eager to be anywhere else but here and completely uninspired to create. This attitude suggests not only an attempt to integrate into the intellectual life of Western Europe, seen as the only place capable of inspiring him creatively speaking, but also, he perpetuates the image of the Balkans being seen as backwards. A useful parallel can be found in Arendt's reading of Kafka's *The Castle* where K. searches for a way to live a 'plain normal life' without any special status from the other villagers.⁷⁰³ Tzara had a similar wish: to become indistinguishable from the other Romanians, and to live life simply because he happens to find himself there and not because of what he represents. Similarly to Kafka's K., the abstract

⁷⁰¹ Sanouillet, p.420.

⁷⁰² Adrian Sudhalter in her speech at the International Conference organised by the Kassák Museum and the Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 13-15 October 2016. See also Adrian Sudhalter, 'How to make a Dada anthology', in *Dadaglobe Reconstructed*, ed. by Adrian Sudhalter (Zurich: Kunsthaus Zurich and Scheidegger & Spiess, 2016). Here, Sudhalter addresses the topic of Tzara's passport.

⁷⁰³ Hannah Arendt, *Jewish Social Studies*, p.118. *JSTOR* www.jstor.org/stable/4464588 [accessed 9 January 2018].

individual, Tzara refused to bond with ‘the villagers’ who, as in K.’s case, could have joined him in his struggle for identity. Arendt writes that ‘K. appears strange to them not because, being a stranger, he is deprived of human rights, but because he comes and asks for them.’⁷⁰⁴ Like Kafka, Tzara too constructed an experience by using elements taken both from reality and his imagination as he does for instance in the semi-autobiographical *Faites Vos Jeux*. However, Kafka and Tzara have a main disparity: publicly, as demonstrated by the letter to Picabia, Tzara avoided at any cost his Jewish past although in reality he remained bound to his origins through his intimate relationship with his mother as the correspondence shown. There is much anguish in Tzara’s works. He appeared to despise the culture and the aesthetic notions which had failed mankind while his letters to his family uncover the empathy towards those left behind to live in an antisemitic Romania.

By contrast, Janco, in spite of emancipation, never flinched from the Jewish past assigned to him by his birth into a Jewish family. He resembles Bernard Lazare who, according to Arendt, tried to forge ‘the peculiar situation of his people into a vital and significant political factor.’⁷⁰⁵ Janco was elected in 1935 as member of the Cultural Institute associated with the Jewish Temple in Bucharest, Templul Coral. As Geo Șerban informs, this institution was designed to support personalities among the Jewish community, capable of enriching the spiritual patrimony of Romania as a reaction to the antisemitic manifestations.⁷⁰⁶ The right to be Jewish against antisemitism is what Janco asserted through his participation in this Institute. Arendt’s pariah sees oppression as an indignity, and likewise, Janco’s presence in such an Institute was a sort of denunciation of the status of victim of Romanian Jews. Janco appears to see political hope in the conscious adoption of his status of pariah. For Janco, his Jewish identity remains the object of painful internalised negotiation between a desire for acceptance as a result of his complete assimilation via language and appearance, and a radical reinvention of identity as a Jew. Clearly puzzled by the status of the Jews in art as a result of assimilation, Janco asks himself:

Has our assimilation taken us further away from the Jewish art? Is there a Jewish art? [If there isn’t] Why wasn’t it built by so many Jewish artists?

⁷⁰⁴ Hannah Arendt, ‘Franz Kafka: Appreciated anew’, in Susannah Young-Ah Gottlieb, *Hannah Arendt: Reflections on literature and culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), p.100.

⁷⁰⁵ Arendt (1944), p.286.

⁷⁰⁶ Șerban, pp.57-58.

Why has this people, mocked for so long because of its specificity, not created a more valuable, more admirable art!⁷⁰⁷

Clearly a more experienced artist in 1938, Janco writes this article in the wake of the antisemitic laws of the Goga-Cuza government and therefore his views, as argued in previous chapters, are influenced by the context in which he is living. Given the perspective of hindsight and what it signified to be Jewish in Romania at the time, Janco's attitude towards his Judaism appears more as a criticism of those who assimilated to dominant trends. Technically, Janco's condition makes him both a pariah and also a conscious one, who accepts his status automatically and unconsciously but at the same time awakens to an 'awareness of his position and, aware of it, becomes a rebel against it – the champion of an oppressed people'.⁷⁰⁸ Janco is a self-conscious pariah who 'transforms difference from being a source of weakness and marginality into one of strength and defiance'.⁷⁰⁹ The case of Marcel Janco does not only covertly sneak Jewish things and themes into the universal; he embraces his Jewishness at all costs, although he would explicitly paint a 'Jewish subject only after his emigration to Palestine in 1941'.⁷¹⁰ Marcel Janco takes part in the Romanian avant-garde as an artist and as a Jew, but not as a Jewish artist, as he explains: 'whenever I wanted to contribute to any Jewish manifestation, I was struck by an impossibility to contribute as an artist, for being a Jew is not [the same as being] a Jewish artist'.⁷¹¹ As already discussed in previous chapters, Janco returned to Bucharest and was integrated in the Romanian avant-garde movement, more as a Jew than as a Romanian. For him Jewishness was a given while his artistic manifestations were a personal choice.

We did not conceal our Jewish origin, it would have been useless, but like all European artists – we did not introduce our art as JEWS. And today, faced with such outrage, it is hard for us to pretend such claim is honest.⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁷ 'Asimilismul nostru ne-a îndepărtat de arta evreească? Există o artă evreească? Dece atâți și atâți artiști evrei n'au făurit-o? Dece acest neam, atât timp batjocorit pentru specificul său, nu și-a creat unul mai valoros, mai admirabil în artă!'. Janco (1938), p.17.

⁷⁰⁸ Arendt (1944), p.76.

⁷⁰⁹ Seyla Benhabib, 'The pariah and her shadow: Hannah Arendt's biography of Rahel Varnhagen', *Political Theory*, 23(1) (1995), p.11. *JSTOR* www.jstor.org/stable/192171.

⁷¹⁰ Stern, in *Jewish aspects in avant-garde*, pp.37-38.

⁷¹¹ '[...] de câte ori am vroiu să contribuim la vre-o manifestare evreească, m'am lovit de o imposibilitate de fapt de a contribui și ca artist, căci a fi evreu nu este a fi și artist evreu.' Marcel Janco, 'Mărturia iudaică despre artă', *Cultura*, June 1938, p.17.

⁷¹² 'Noi nu ne-am ascuns originea evreească, ar fi fost și inutil, dar ca toți artiștii europeni - nu ne-am afirmat EVREI în artă. Și astăzi ne e greu dintr'o dată să facem figură cinstită în fața acestei minunății.' Janco, 1938, p.17.

Janco appears to be an exemplary conscious pariah contributing to a repertoire of resilience that includes rebellion, visionary art and a sort of rights-claim, albeit more from an artistic perspective than a social one. He completely defied the religious establishment given the fact that he married in 1920 Amélie Micheline Ackermann, a Gentile. Nonetheless politically speaking, Janco appears to be refusing to rebel against his Judaism, a fact that makes him, according to Arendt's model, 'responsible for his position and in addition to that for the blot of mankind which it represented'.⁷¹³ Arendt's model provides an insightful explanation for this' since, as she states in her *The Origins of Totalitarianism* that even a Jew who converted 'only rarely left his family and even more rarely left his Jewish surroundings altogether.'⁷¹⁴ Clearly, Janco preferred to remain immersed in Romanian kinship and friendship networks, as demonstrated by his friendship with Tzara. Because of the common language and common background, the gatherings at the Cabaret Voltaire, for instance, were in fact gatherings of a relatively large number of Jewish artists.⁷¹⁵ As Hans Arp recalled, the Romanian language was at home during the soirees at the Cabaret Voltaire.⁷¹⁶ The extent to which it is possible to distinguish the secular Janco from the religious Janco it is hard to measure but it is clear that his Jewishness resembled, to use Zvi Gitelman's idea, an ethnicity based on ancestry and feelings and defined more by boundaries than by content.⁷¹⁷

As repeatedly discussed throughout this thesis, Tzara had many attempts to distance himself from his heritage. He writes originally in Romanian, until his departure in 1915, the language of the country that marginalises him, sharing this way the fate of many Romanian Jews. Tzara finds himself in a state of constant rejection, which impacts his poetry – poetry that reveals a desire to escape the world of his rural life. Even if the Romanian language does not deny or imply his Jewish background, he eventually breaks away from it by starting to write only in French. Tzara never learned Hebrew and seems never to have considered settling in Palestine. His work in French, rather, appears to indicate a willingness to take up residence in Paris as well as to use the French language. He tries to break ties with his past, changes his name in his desperation to erase his Jewish heritage and yet remains often perceived as

⁷¹³ *Ibid.*, p.77.

⁷¹⁴ Arendt (1951), pt. I, *Antisemitism*, p.64, note 23.

⁷¹⁵ Zvi Gitelman, *Jewish identity and secularism in post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine* (Rutgers University Press, 2009).

⁷¹⁶ Marc Dachy, *Journal du Mouvement Dada*, (Genève, Editions d'Art Albert Skira, 1989), p. 45.

⁷¹⁷ Gitelman, Zvi *Jewish Identity and Secularism in Post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine*, (Rutgers University Press, 2009).

‘oriental’, a ‘foreigner’ and ‘a Jew’, his origin being often alluded to through euphemisms. As a Jew, Tzara found himself under a wide range of representations that were projections of antisemitic beliefs without any real proof. Looking at his poem ‘Sora de caritate’ (Sister of Charity) reveals a surprising emphasis placed on religion, atypical for Tzara:

Sister of Charity you are good and pray to the icon

Say a prayer for me

It’s hard to be sick and it is autumn

[...]

Oh, I am weak and I am Jesus

The heart rises up above and reads a wise book

[...]

(Isn’t it that you listen to me.) I am an Orthodox Christian

I stay in bed and wonder if it’s fine outside

My suffering is arranged in rows⁷¹⁸

Although this poem is not dated by Tzara himself, it is clear that, judging by its overall tone, it resembles the ones published in *Simbolul*. Tzara’s biographer, Hentea, sees this poem as the poet’s attempt to disguise his identity and even his impossibility to undergo this transformation.⁷¹⁹ There is obviously no question that Tzara understood life largely from the standpoint of secular rather than religious Jews, as is demonstrated throughout this thesis. However, the importance placed on religion both by the Jewish community and by Romanian society translated into the idea of a personal reclassification in terms understandable by the majority. Tzara’s clear reference to the Christian Orthodox religion with ‘I am an Orthodox Christian’ denotes a possible interest to appeal to a wider public by becoming one of them, as Arendt’s parvenu. He amplifies his self-perception of his confusing status in the verse ‘I am weak, and I am Jesus’ for in Eastern Christian Orthodox faith Christ, the Son of God, is eternally divine and perfect and therefore never weak. In Heine’s case as discussed

⁷¹⁸ Soră de caritate ești bună și te rogi la icoană / Spune pentru mine o rugăciune / E rău să fii bolnav și e toamnă [...] / O, sînt slab și sînt Isus / Inima se ridică sus, și citesc o carte înțeleaptă [...] / (Nu-i așa că mă ascuți.) / Sînt creștinul ortodox / Stau în pat și mă întreb dacă afară e timp frumos / Durerea mea e așezată în rînduri. Tzara, *First Poems*, pp.63-64.

⁷¹⁹ Hentea, p.41.

by Arendt, Heine returns to Jewish legends in order constructs a new configuration through poetic language which allows him to bring together contradictory elements. Tzara creates a similar process although, unlike Heine, he gave up his allegiance to a people of pariahs and schlemiels.⁷²⁰ Tzara regards the world ironically, ridiculing the Romanian cultural world and its obsessive Orthodoxy by comparing himself with Jesus. Of course, it can be seen also as a reference to the persecution of Jesus of Nazareth, a Jew misunderstood by the masses. Furthermore, it can be interpreted as Tzara's megalomaniac tendencies of associating himself with the Messiah, the Saviour of the world, for Tzara's self-claimed position of God has been previously shown, for instance, in his interview in *Integral*. Seen as Tzara's ironical way of drawing together Christian legends and his Jewish identity, this poem places him next to Heine both to highlight the dread of existence.

As is the case with Arendt's Rahel Varnhagen, Tristan Tzara searches for a place in the world where his Jewishness is not the only thing that defines him but also his work, attempting to gain a place for himself where stereotypical elements are non-existent. Tzara's story epitomises the absence of collective political struggle for rights, the same way Rahel Varnhagen's case does when analysed by Arendt: 'Jews did not [...] want to be emancipated as a whole; all they wanted was to escape from Jewishness, as individuals if possible.'⁷²¹ Tzara's entire activity, although actively publicised by Tzara himself, is characterised by an attitude of intellectual isolation of a misunderstood genius and by the melancholia of self-discovery specific to the *pariah*. As Hentea claims, he had 'a reservoir of private nostalgia'.⁷²²

Regardless of Tzara's hidden agenda it is clear that his self-perception as a person outside the bounds of national citizenship, 'under no foreign protection',⁷²³ influenced his relationship with the exterior world. As Arendt's pariah, Tzara, a Romanian Jew, developed some sort of tactics of resilience as a response to such situations. This contributed to the formation of a 'hidden tradition' of action by responding individually to discrimination and oppression. In Arendt's understanding, a hidden tradition is the pariah's own Judaism because the only wish a pariah has is to live their life unexceptionally.-However, this state of pariah is not sufficient because achieving basic human rights – 'the right to work, the right to be useful, the right to

⁷²⁰ Arendt (1944), p.281.

⁷²¹ Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The life of a Jewess*, ed. by Liliane Weissberg; translated by Richard and Clara Winston (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p.6.

⁷²² *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁷²³ Hentea, p. 7.

find a home and become a member of society’ – are in no way dependent on complete assimilation to one’s milieu, on being ‘indistinguishable.’ Instead, they can be achieved only through a process of assimilation, and the simple plain experience desired becomes in itself a form of exceptionality.⁷²⁴ Clearly, Tzara and Janco also adopt a specific attitude towards their pariahdom by placing the very idea of free-thinking at the centre of the formulation of their early years’ philosophy. As consequence, knowing Arendt’s position towards Kafka’s vision reveals her understanding of modernity. Therefore, her concepts help highlight Tzara’s and Janco’s specific relationships to their marginalisation via intellectualism.

If Tzara’s case reveals an ideological struggle with his own heritage, Janco’s one is in sharp contrast. He not only returned to Bucharest in 1922 but he also, as previously shown, applies for naturalisation in 1923, prepared to assimilate into Romanian society as a Jew, without altering his identity. Furthermore, he embraced Zionist views and finally made *Aliyah*⁷²⁵ to Palestine. His is a completely different kind of reclassification from the one Tzara seeks. In order to make Arendt’s examples relevant to Tzara and Janco’s cases, it is important to discuss them in parallel with those given by the philosopher in her essay. Bernard Lazare was a very public figure, politically involved, in contrast with the other case study offered by Arendt – that of the poet Heinrich Heine, who did not at all seek public involvement. As a consequence, Arendt appears to create different layers of the pariah identity in order to accommodate both cases. One of these layers regards the Jewish people as being specifically the pariah people, and as a consequence pariah is seen here from a collective point of view. The other layer sees the Jewish community in a public sense, which is manifested in overt political acts, such as Rosa Luxemburg’s socialism. In this sense, looking at Tzara’s and Janco’s later political engagements, they show how Tzara’s socialism and Janco’s Zionism become elements manifested in a public realm while still accessing their collective identities as pariahs, comprised of intellectual and cultural elements. Lazare’s Jewish nationalism is not any kind of freedom but the freedom the Jews to live as a people. The return to Jewish origins, as Janco did, is done by elaboration of a new Jewishness whose meaning was universal. Although

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.118-119.

⁷²⁵ The literal translation of the word ‘*aliyah*’ from Hebrew to English means to ascent; however, it has been used for centuries with the meaning of ‘moving to Israel’: ‘it means the going up, the ascent. When you read in the Scriptures of Messiah going to Jerusalem, you’ll find the word up used over and over again. [...] So the journey to Jerusalem is called Aliyah ... the ascending. So, to go to Jerusalem is to make Aliyah [...] Going to the Promised Land was known as “making Aliyah,” “the upward journey.” The children of Israel were commanded to make Aliyah’. Jonathan Cahn, *The Book of Mysteries* (New York: Frontline 2016), p.19.

their political involvement was visible only later in life, Tzara joining the Communist Party in 1947 and Janco embracing the Zionist ideology in the 1930s when Jews in Romania began to experience a wave of antisemitism, the position that Tzara and Janco, as Jews, held was in a central place in their identities even before that. Therefore, in a society shaped by what personal histories looked like and how they were understood, it needs to be stated right from the beginning, as the Romanian researcher Morar specifies, ‘that most of the Romanian avant-gardists were Jews, supporters of the cause of the proletarian revolution, under the circumstances in which the Communist Party was illegally active.’⁷²⁶ In other words, they were Communists before any of them came to terms with any socialist ideology. This connection, as Avram Kampf argues, appeared due to the fact that ‘the socialist tendencies carried a strong secularist, cosmopolitan and anti-religious feelings.’⁷²⁷ In an attempt to understand the reason behind Jews’ interest in Socialism, the American historian Walter Laqueur wrote in his *Weimar: A cultural history, 1918-1933*:

They [the Jews] gravitated towards the left because it was the party of reason, progress and freedom which had helped them to attain equal rights. The right on the other hand, was to varying degrees anti-semitic because it regarded the Jew as an alien element in the body politic. This attitude had been a basic fact of political life throughout the nineteenth century and it did not change the first third of the twentieth.⁷²⁸

Laqueur helps clarify why many Jewish intellectuals in Europe joined socialism and social democracy. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that the high degree of oppression of Jews in Eastern Europe explains to some extent their large presence in revolutionary movements. Although it is true that the impoverished Jewish population, as a consequence of lack of citizenship, and the Jewish intellectuals found the East European anarchist, Marxist, socialist more appealing, it is important to remember that they all shared one element: rejection of the Jewish religion.⁷²⁹

Fundamental to understanding Tzara’s and Janco’s Jewish identity is observing how they explain it both to Jews and to non-Jews and also how their Jewish experiences contribute to the evolution of their identity over the years, into distinct

⁷²⁶ Morar, p.4.

⁷²⁷ Kampf, p.46.

⁷²⁸ Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A cultural history, 1918-1933* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1974), p.73.

⁷²⁹ For a discussion on the passion of revolutionary Jewish intellectuals for atheism, see Ezra Mendelsohn, ‘Worker opposition in the Russian Jewish Socialist movement, from the 1890s to 1903’ in *International Review of Social History*, 10(2) (1965), pp.268-282.

periods. Without any doubt, in order for any Jew to play a role in Romanian society they had to assimilate into society despite the antisemitic manifestations, as Janco specifies in 1938:

Suddenly, today, we read that an author, whose name until now used to honour a nation with his work, is simply evicted from its culture on the grounds that he is in full, 1/2 or 1/4 Jewish.⁷³⁰

In the case of the Romanian Jews, as in any other pariah groups, their otherness is what determined their relations with society. For Arendt, there is a need for the Jewish community not only to demand rights but to defend them without compromising their Jewishness. While Janco upon his return to Bucharest contributed as much as possible to improving the social perception of the Jews in Romania, Tzara on the other hand refused any connection to anything Jewish, although during his early life his attitude was completely different towards Jews. Radu Stern cites a letter from Tzara's son, Christophe Tzara, from 1992 where the latter recalls how his father 'never showed the slightest religious concern in front of myself or in front of his friends.'⁷³¹ This only fortifies the aforementioned rejection of anything related to the Jewish religion, just as, during his first years in Paris, Tristan Tzara avoided contact with any of his family's friends based in Paris, despite his parents' insistence:

My darling Samica, [...] If you have the time, meet Mr Nae Natesescu (name uncertain), 28 Avenue Roche, who is a very respectable man. When we did not hear from you, he was going to Paris, [and] I asked him to visit you, which he did. But you were to Stockholm and in the meantime, we received news from you. [...]⁷³²

Tzara never showed any interest in entering exile circles, or of being involved in anything that could recall of his non-French nature, including his parents' friends from Romania who relocated to Paris. What is curious is how the older Tristan Tzara refuses any connection with anything Jewish while during his childhood he takes a very different approach. Irina Atanasiu, Tzara's cousin, remembers him running all over

⁷³⁰ 'Dintr'odată cetim astăzi că cutare nume de autor care până mai eri onora o națiune cu opera lui, este pur și simplu evacuat din cultura ei pe motiv că e în plin 1/2 sau 1/4 evreu.' Janco (1938), p.17.

⁷³¹ Stern, in *Jewish aspects in avant-garde*, p.36.

⁷³² BLJD *TZR C 3487*, (Karlsbad, 20 August 1925): '[...]Dacă ai ocaziune întâlnește pe Dl. Nae Natesescu (?), 28 Avenue Roche, care e un om foarte respectuos. Noi când n-am primit vești de la tine, el plecând la Paris, l-am rugat să te viziteze, ceea ce a făcut. Tu însă erai plecat la Stockholm și în interval am primit știri de la tine.'

the place around the house, shouting out: ‘Dreyfus innocent! Esterhazy guilty!’⁷³³ It is peculiar to see how someone who was anti-religious his entire life and had a reservation in addressing his own Jewishness had such a strong opinion about the Dreyfus affair, a case⁷³⁴ that had more antisemitic connotations than any other kind. Perhaps it was the exact reluctance of accepting Dreyfus’ innocence, his marginalisation that made Tzara react so vehemently, a sort of fraternisation between two *pariahs*.

Tzara’s and Janco’s status as ‘others’ followed them in their exiles. While in Zurich, their Jewishness was more subtly attacked. Briefly mentioned in Chapter 3 but not in depth discussed until this point, the example found in the diary of their fellow Dadaist Hugo Ball – who was also the owner of Cabaret Voltaire and often the one sharing the credit for the creation of the name Dada with Tzara⁷³⁵ – constitutes a valid example of various subtexts hinting towards their identity, which, ultimately, they could not escape, not even in exile:

About six o’clock, while we were still hammering and putting up futuristic posters, an Oriental-looking deputation of four little men arrived, with portfolios and pictures under their arms. Repeatedly they bowed politely. They introduced themselves: Marcel Janco the painter, Tristan Tzara, Georges Janco and a fourth gentleman whose name I did not quite catch. Arp happened to be there also, and we were able to communicate without too many words.⁷³⁶

The frivolousness with which the term *Oriental* was employed by Ball in 1915, to describe backwardness and its default association with a rudimental culture originated somewhere in a mythical Barbaric East, is striking. Heyd considers even that ‘the term *Oriental* was used here as a euphemism for Jewish.’⁷³⁷ Furthermore, bowing was not at all a Romanian salutation, rather it was seen as a custom of some Asian peoples, and the special emphasis given by Ball to this action makes him susceptible of hinting

⁷³³ Irina Atanasiu, *Vacances a Garceni*, in *Les cahiers Tristan Tzara = Caietele Tristan Tzara, Vol. 1*, (1998), p.16. There are many accounts on the same event. Heyd writes that Tzara was running on the *streets* shouting ‘Dreyfus innocent!’ See Heyd in *Jewish dimensions in modern visual culture*, p.196. Hentea states that Tzara ran around the *house*; see Hentea, p.9; Stern notes that Tzara was running all over the *place*, see Stern, p.36.

⁷³⁴ For a history of the Dreyfus affair, see Piers Paul Read, *The Dreyfus affair: The story of the most infamous miscarriage of justice in French history* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012).

⁷³⁵ For more on this, see Ball (1974). See also Philip Mann, *Hugo Ball: An intellectual biography* (unpublished thesis, Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1987) for a series of biographical specifications on Hugo Ball.

⁷³⁶ Ball, *Flight out of time*, p.50.

⁷³⁷ Heyd, p.204.

at some stereotyped opinions regarding Asian peoples. Eitherway, Hugo Ball's racist insinuation was very similar to the xenophobic views being rapidly embraced elsewhere in Europe. Their different approach of the artists of Jewish heritage placed them under constant insinuatory attacks in Romania, as elsewhere, coming mainly from circles claiming that Jewish artists were illegitimate maneuverers of contraband identities, impossible to resonate with the mainstream culture, but it is a bit perplexing when such attacks came from within avant-garde circles.

It is from this exact perspective that Hannah Arendt's concepts of political action are challenging Tzara's and Janco's Jewish experiences. In a conversation with Günter Gaus on why it was important to go out of the intellectual circles and start to do work of a practical nature, she explains:

If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew. Not as a German, not as a world-citizen, not as an upholder of the Rights of Man, or whatever. But: What can I specifically do as a Jew?⁷³⁸

The equality as a human was always accompanied by the exigency of assimilation and therefore, not being as a Jew anymore. For Arendt this meant that a Jew possessed a series of elements linked to Jewishness that were resistant to assimilation and therefore, discrimination need to be fought back from the position of a Jew and not of a citizen.⁷³⁹

The persistence of marginalisation even in a place where political equality was a reality, as was the case in Zurich, made Tzara and Janco's Jewishness be reduced to an exclusively interior, personal problem. Tristan Tzara, perhaps given his more literary formation in contrast to Marcel Janco, discusses his experience as a foreigner, a Jew, undoubtedly more than his companion. Tzara referred to his stay in Zurich explaining in detail the circumstances surrounding his existence there. He summarised in a sentence in his *Faites Vos Jeux* his entire experience in exile: 'Despite my desire to assimilate, I remained a stranger to them.'⁷⁴⁰ Tzara wrote these pseudo-memoirs while in Paris, fuelling in this manner the ambiguity surrounding his assimilation: intentionally, he does not specify which city he refers to, a fact that only deepens the confusion. It is unclear if he is referring to his state of mind generated by the sojourn in Zurich or by his relocation in Paris. In the French capital he was perceived, as many

⁷³⁸ Arendt (2000), p.12.

⁷³⁹ For more on this, see Arendt (1951).

⁷⁴⁰ 'Mais malgré mon désir d'assimilation, je restai un étranger pour eux', Tristan Tzara, *OC, Faites vos Jeux, La villes nombril de luxe*, p.277.

artists coming to the French capital after the war, as a foreign refugee. Indeed, from the second decade of the twentieth century, Paris became home for a great number of Jewish artists coming especially from Eastern Europe. Avram Kampf talks even of ‘the shock of Paris.’⁷⁴¹ In Tzara’s very abstract way of describing the surroundings, he managed to emphasise his otherness in regard even to his peers:

I spent years, inert, in the small town that absorbed my vitality ... Boredom invaded me with its painful melange of melancholy. With scarcely any feelings of well-being, and all pleasures coming from similar situations: excursions, coffees, friends. We shall see what follows in this story, what gets caught in this pool of languid animality. Corrosive events attacked the clean metal of my days. [...] Frequently I have made concessions to my modesty and [I have] given proofs of indulgence by accepting ornamental rejoicing and relationships with these happy and satisfied young people. [...] Forced to avoid living in isolation, I surrounded myself with their empty, but fresh, noise; trying to take part in all their friendly farces and ceremonies, gradually I became a stranger to myself. [...] I was tough in my judgments, and I stood loyal to my unjust detachment because I hardly knew myself anymore since I had so few *rendezvous* with myself.⁷⁴²

Tzara found it hard to integrate into this abstract *here*, portraying an image of an outsider and self-uncomfortable exiled man. The new space brought with it a sort of acculturation that proved to be more difficult than anticipated, which Tzara attempts to resist in fear of not losing his self-image.

Forged out of Tzara’s experience with modernity, he is Arendt’s parvenu, the one who attempts to assimilate just to realise, at the end, that there is no detaching from dealing with the fate of his Jewishness. The fragility and illusory world that Tzara describes above stands aligned with what Arendt’s Rahel Varnhagen feels in the salons frequented by her as a Jew.⁷⁴³ The phenomenon described by Tzara is similar

⁷⁴¹ Kampf, p.75.

⁷⁴² ‘J’ai passé des années entières, inerte, dans la petite ville qui absorba ma vitalité. [...] L’ennui m’envahit avec des melanges douloureux de melancolie. Les sensations de bien-être devinrent rares et tous les plaisirs étaient catalogues: les excursions, les cafés, les amis. On verra plus loin, au cours de ce récit, ce qui retint dans cette mare de languissante animalité. Des événements corrosifs attaquaient le métal propre de mes jours. [...] J’ai fait de fréquentes concessions à ma pudeur, et donne des preuves empressées d’indulgence en acceptant des réjouissances ornementales et des rapports avec ces jeunes gens heureux et satisfaits. [...] À force de vivre isole, quoique entoure du bruit vide mais frais, essayant de prendre part à toutes leurs farces et cérémonies de camaraderie, je devins peu à peu un étranger pour moi-même. [...] J’étais dur dans mes juggements et je tenais à mon injustice détachement, car je ne me connaissais presque plus depuis que j’avais de si rares rendez-vous avec moi-même.’ Tristan Tzara, *OC*, pp.276-278.

⁷⁴³ See Benhabib, pp.13-14.

to the parvenu's urge of becoming a blank canvas on which the gentile society can make its marks and this way helping him achieve another status. However, such a lie that eventually alters his existence, proves to be a price too high to pay to still be an outcast outside of society.

Tzara constantly had to defend himself against accusations of being a foreigner even after his exile, when negative attitudes to his Jewishness were mixed with opinions on his artistic productions as shown in a poem by the French author, André Gide (1869-1951), initially a Dada supporter:

The great misfortune for the inventor of the Dada is that the movement he caused made him shake and that he was crushed by his machine.

It is a pity.

I am told that he is a very young man.

They portrayed him as charming. (Marinetti as well was irresistible.)

I am told he is a foreigner. – I find that easy to believe

Jewish. – I was just about to say that.

I am told that he does not sign with his real name, and I can well believe that Dada is nothing more than a pseudonym.

Dada – it is the deluge, after which everything begins again (1).

It is up to foreigners to disregard our French culture.

It is up to the legitimate heirs to protest against this; the former have everything to gain at the expense of the latter who have everything to lose.⁷⁴⁴

It was this condescending paradoxical tone that perpetuated Tzara's feeling of marginalisation: as a Jew he was blamed for attempting to be inscribed into

⁷⁴⁴ 'Le grand Malheur pour l'inventeur du Dada, c'est que le mouvement qu'il a provoqué le bouscule et qu'il est lui-même écrasé par sa machine.

C'est dommage.

On me dit que c'est un tout jeune homme.

On me le peint charmant. (Marinetti de même était irresistible.)

On me dit qu'il est étranger. – Je m'en persuade aisément.

Juif. – J'allais le dire.

On me dit qu'il ne signe pas de son vrai nom; et volontiers je croirai que Dada n'est de même qu'un pseudonyme.

Dada – c'est le deluge, après quoi tout recommence (1).

Il appartient aux étrangers de faire peu de cas de notre culture Française. Contre ceux-ci protesteront les héritiers légitimes, peu soucieux d'examiner ce que les autres ont à gagner aux dépens de ce qu'eux ont à perdre.'

André Gide, 'DADA', in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, Tome XIV, (Paris: Gallimard, 1920), p.477.

universality due to his ground-breaking views, and if he would not attempt to be inscribed into universality he would have then been accused of backwardness and primitivism. Also striking is the manner in which the stereotypical cowardliness of the Jews is used against Tzara who, being a Jew, a foreigner himself, without any doubt, as Gide claims, he must be hiding under a pseudonym and seeking to corrupt French culture – an accusation based on the antisemitic stereotype that Jews would destroy national authenticity and spirit. However, although such stereotypes circulated widely among modernist circles as well as traditionalist ones, it is important to note that André Gide,⁷⁴⁵ a self-aware symbolist poet, was quite close to the Dadaists in Paris. Breton writes to Tzara on 18 February 1919: ‘You can’t imagine how much André Gide is on our side.’⁷⁴⁶ In this context, Gide’s antisemitic reaction is even more puzzling, albeit not completely inexplicable. Although the Dadaists considered Gide their ally, it was a short-lived friendship for in 1920 Breton informs Tzara of Gide’s ‘involuntary senility’,⁷⁴⁷ explaining somehow his change of attitude towards them and also his antisemitic reactions.

Marcel Janco shared a similar fate in regard to antisemitic reactions coming from his inner circle. His Jewish identity does not cease to be part of his persona making him, as many other Jews, aware of his ‘insecure pariah existence and unable to distinguish friend from foe.’⁷⁴⁸ As the Swiss researcher Radu Stern informs, Janco recalled in an Israeli newspaper the reaction of one of his closest friends, the poet Ion Barbu, who, in 1936, told Janco: ‘You paint so nicely, Marcel, such a pity you are a Jew.’⁷⁴⁹ The word Barbu used was ‘jidán’ and not ‘evreu’, the former being an insulting term to the Jews. Knowing that Janco and Barbu were very close friends it is clear that the term ‘jidán’ was meant as a term of endearment and in no way as an insult however, Barbu’s joke reflected the crude reality and fate of the Jews. Back in Romania, Janco was faced with a new challenge. Jews’ lives as a whole and the vicissitudes of identity in Romania made their political identity more important than religious and ethnic aspects of their Jewishness. This made Janco increasingly

⁷⁴⁵ For a detailed presentation of Gide’s life and work, see, for instance, Alan Sheridan, *André Gide: A life in the present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁷⁴⁶ Sheridan, p.329.

⁷⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁸ Sharon Muller, ‘The origins of Eichmann in Jerusalem: Hannah Arendt’s interpretation of Jewish history’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 43 (1981), pp.249-50.

⁷⁴⁹ ‘Ce frumos pictezi, Marcel, păcat că ești jidán.’ Stern in his interview titled ‘Avangardiști evrei, ‘venetici’, sau români?’ by Vlad Solomon published on 20-11-2011, in acum.tv <https://acum.tv/articol/41919/> [accessed 24 November 2017].

concerned with his relationship to the socio-political environment calling for a differentiation between the artist as a human and his work. In a lecture at the Romanian Institute of Culture, a public lecture on 30 May 1938, Janco said: ‘The human-artist has often taken a political attitude but his work, if it was a work of art, rises over electoral preoccupations, trying to conquer something [above it, that belongs to] eternity, absolute.’⁷⁵⁰ The ritual denigration of the importance of their work in Romania based on their heritage, and the cultural and societal barriers separating them from Romanian society, was enough to unleash hostility, as Marcel Janco observes:

For a number of years, we have found ourselves here, as in foreign countries, with unknown and inadmissible criteria used for the evaluation of our artworks. The ranking or critics’ choice was based all of a sudden on new elements such as ethnicity, religion and nationality of an artwork.⁷⁵¹

Janco’s peripheral and marginalised status mixed with a contradictory conviction promoted both by the state and by the communities led to uneven expressions of alternative identities, at times self-contradictory, that would, later on, be rejected as inconsistent or irrelevant. The traits of the pariah, as discussed by Arendt, are visible in Janco’s case. As a pariah, Janco considers any oppression as indignity to him as a human. Similar to Lazare’s case, Janco sees the right to be Jewish as his right of a free human being. Janco breaks social conventions by going against established traditions but not as a pariah, since that would involve total marginalisation, but as a conscious pariah, aware of his otherness and therefore embracing it. For him, as for Lazare as discussed by Arendt, true freedom consisted only in the freedom to be Jewish.

Tristan Tzara’s and Marcel Janco’s identity development, like that of many others, was not at all solely a matter of free will. Concerns with their Jewish heritage and national origin went way beyond the Romanian sphere into the modernist circles of which they later came to be part. Growing up in Romania, where racial overtones were part of daily life, contributed to Tzara and Janco being prepared for any off-putting reaction and therefore their self-representation was constantly redefined either as a constant shame, as is Tzara’s case, or as a ‘Jewish super-identity’ generated by the resistance to socio-political constraints, as in Janco’s case.⁷⁵² The anomalous

⁷⁵⁰ ‘Artistul-om, a luat deseori fățiș o atitudine politică. dar opera lui, dacă era operă de artă, se ridica peste preocupări electorale încercând să cucerească ceva din etern, din absolut.’ Janco (1938), p.17.

⁷⁵¹ ‘De câțiva ani, ne-am pomenit aci ca și în țări străine, cu criteriile necunoscute și inadmisibile în aprecierea operelor noastre de artă. Clasarea sau alegerea criticilor se folosea dintr’o dată de elemente noi, ca, etnicitate, religia și naționalitatea unei opere de artă.’ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵² Shlomo Sand, *How I stopped being a Jew*, trans. by David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2014), p.80.

status of the Jews, neither inside nor outside, challenged the Jewish experience of many as it did for Tzara and Janco who, by default, were both parts of a multicultural setting and a monocultural one. The former was provided by the Jewish community from which they emerged, which in no sense was homogenous. The starting point for Tzara was the Moldavian shtetl while the cosmopolitan setting in the centre of Bucharest where Janco was born and raised, remained obsessed with Romanian national specificity. In this spirit, the inherited, pariah-type identity generated by being a foreigner, marginalised and presented as monstrous, contributed to their self-definition, especially since they never lived in isolation from interaction with Romanian culture.⁷⁵³ This chapter was written with Arendt's fundamental distinction between two types of Jews in mind, the *pariah* and *parvenu*, and the cases of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco offer, with expected limitations, a figure for each the two.



4.2. Conclusions

Born in a country whose aspiration of becoming a mono-ethnic nation-state that dated back to the nineteenth century, Tzara and Janco, two Jews, belonged, at least in theory, to a people non-assimilable to Romanian nationality. This fact placed them on the border between native and foreign. This chapter explored Tzara's and Janco's representation of their identity with the help of Hanna Arendt's view on the status of the Jew seen as a pariah – a social outcast. It confronted Arendt's theories on the Jew as an outsider and how this status gave rise to a series of particular types – the conscious pariahs who were aware of it and the parvenus, who tried to succeed in the world of the Gentiles but could never escape their Jewish roots.

Tzara's and Janco's status as marginalised people, subjected to economic and social discrimination, contributed to their Jewish self-consciousness, even after their departure from Bucharest. Their reality, combined with their experience within modernity, led to Tzara's and Janco's different engagements with Jewishness. Their Jewish identities most certainly differed and, with the help of Hannah Arendt's concepts of Jew as a pariah and as parvenu, the present chapter analysed the

⁷⁵³ Most of the Jews, like Tzara and Janco, were under no foreign protection. See Hentea, p.7. It is unclear when Tzara acquired Romanian citizenship but his application for a residence card in France is dated 1941. See Hentea, citing the Archive Departamentales du Lot (46), Dossier TT, 209 W 695, f.4. On the other hand, Marcel Janco's request for naturalisation is dated 1923. See Stern, p.44.

problematics of Tzara's and Janco's experiences as Jews in an often-hostile environment. Their particularity lies not in a possible return to their Jewish heritage but in the radical dislocation of what has become their universal persona, involuntarily steeped in their Jewish heritage.

What the concepts championed by Hannah Arendt add to the conversation on Tzara's and Janco's multilayered identity formation is the option of looking at their Jewish experience as an awakened consciousness. This consciousness forges into a pariah/parvenu identity rather than into a simply altered identity due to world's lack of preparedness to assimilate them as Jews. Finally, it has touched upon the fact that not even the exile protected them entirely from antisemitic reactions and, therefore, their self-re-evaluation never stopped. Their Jewish experience continued to be impacted by a perpetuation of their otherness when in Zurich and Paris for Tzara, while Janco's return to Bucharest shaped a new self-perception, as a citizen living in a Romanian culture that he remembered from afar.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

If ever there were two avant-garde artists and companions of Romanian-Jewish heritage, Tzara and Janco stand out as exemplary and for this reason they represented the case studies of this research. They were the co-founders of the Dada avant-garde movement and represent a crucial aspect of the Romanian-Jewish contribution to European modernism. Previous studies have focused on their significance for European modernism, their involvement in Dada and even Tzara's hidden Jewish complex and the connection between his pseudonym and the Romanian Yiddish world. However, none have examined how the instability of national and ethnic identities in this part of Europe was manifested in their 'Jewish experiences', which resulted in Tzara's and Janco's incessant questioning of borders, and their inherent internationalism and multilingualism. It is for this reason that this research observed the identity formation of both Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco, and their experiments with their own identity, before and after their displacement to Zurich, focusing on the way they related to their own Jewish heritage.

The aim of this thesis has been to illuminate the implications of Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's otherness for the development of their multilayered identity. The argument followed throughout this research is that Tzara's and Janco's self-identification is not defined exclusively by their Jewish heritage or their connection to Jewish culture, for these alone cannot account for their entire persona and career. It has, therefore, shown that their work should not be regarded as only a continuous encoding of Jewish/Hasidic elements into artistic practices but also, indeed more, as a result of their Jewish experience created under the influence of Romanian folkloric elements. What this thesis has primarily shown is that an analysis of Tzara's and Janco's early productions requires a thorough knowledge of their native language, Romanian, a complex knowledge of the socio-political context of their lives, especially for the period during which they were still in Romania, and also a competent comprehension of the relationship between Romanian culture and the Jewish one, which is explanatory also for the relationship between antisemitism and modernism. This study addressed the topic of their Jewishness seen as a part of their multilayered identity as it played out in their relationship with the Romanian state – in this way investigating Tzara's and Janco's own understanding of Jewishness in the light of their

Jewish experience and Jewish context. Furthermore, what this thesis revealed is the importance of national citizenship for the Jewish experience of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco and, consequently, how the sociocultural and political context in which they lived conditioned a process of becoming and self-re-evaluation. In this, it showed that Tzara's and Janco's identities are institutionally conditioned. It has been shown that it is fruitful to investigate the implications of their lives as Jews in Romania and later abroad by taking a special interest in the lack of national citizenship, an aspect of their life that impacted their mind-set at least the same way that their own Jewishness did, for it only accentuated their marginalisation.

The secondary purpose of this study of Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's Jewishness, and of the role that their Jewish experience played throughout their early lives, has been to examine and to add to existing research. By drawing on archival sources and sociological knowledge, a series of new interpretations and possible explanations on more or less known facts in order to create a fuller picture of the lives and works of Tzara and Janco is possible. In order to achieve its aims, the present thesis assessed the social, political, cultural and even economic circumstances of the period under scrutiny by looking at the way in which the Peasants' Revolt of 1907, the Balkan Wars and the political instability in Romania influenced their childhoods and identities. While taking a special interest in Tzara's and Janco's commitment to Jewish family relations it has shown how their Jewish experience – and therefore their status as 'others' – influenced their identity formation from an early stage. From this discovery, a discussion follows – using Hannah Arendt's concepts of 'pariah' and 'parvenu' – on Tzara's and Janco's self-perception as a product of the interaction between Jewish identity and sociocultural background. The result is that they not only do not fit entirely into any of the categories created by Arendt but, even more notably, the sifting contexts in which they lived over distinct periods of time makes them encapsulate some of the characteristics of the 'pariah' and of the 'parvenu', at times concomitantly, but never entirely adhering to all their features. Arendt's approach is based on the exemplary Jewish 'pariah' figures in history; this study discovered that neither Tzara nor Janco can represent an exemplar for their condition. Although similar in terms of otherness with those offered by Arendt, Tzara and Janco's positions do not rely on universalising a certain feeling of Judaic alienation based on antisemitic reactions but more on their own individual activity, which denies exactly the social reality of their alien status.

This thesis starts from the assumption that anyone immersed, even remotely, in public life in the early decades of the 1900s had to be aware of the socio-political and even symbolic significance of Romanian legislation, which created a general sense of chaos and anxiety amongst the Jewish population. In a new country such as Romania, militantly Christian and dominated by antisemitic laws, whose people were struggling to define what it meant to be Romanian, Jewishness as a difference served as a reason for exclusion. Due to this historical fact, this research places more emphasis on Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's Jewish experience in connection to the Romanian nation-building process and the relationship to Jewish identity as a result of this, while keeping at bay the idea that Jewishness explains Dada.

The main explanatory concepts used in this research are nonetheless those proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. The reason behind this direction lies in the fact that this thesis does not adhere to the idea that identities are fixed but, on the contrary, that identities are flexible, fluid and permutable, defined and redefined throughout time. The Deleuzoguattarian philosophy is by far one of the most revelatory from this point of view. Even more, Deleuze and Guattari offered this study a platform to discuss Tzara's and Janco's identities in terms of becoming, a metaphysical experience borne of the proximity between things, which allowed an exploration of their new identity as a result of the interactions between their Jewish and Romanian ones. What has been shown is that the concept of becoming is even more relevant for the cases of Tzara and Janco, who did not manifest an interest in replacing their Jewish identity with a Romanian one by mimicking the latter; rather, they aimed at creating a new identity only for themselves, out of the social norms that would have only restrained them via determinants, stereotypes and definitions. This new identity, a result of becoming, is borne initially out of the antisemitic manifestations and intolerable conditions in Romania in the pre-war years but it continues to develop throughout their lives, adding layers to the core identity as a result of their other Jewish or non-Jewish experiences. With the help of the Deleuzoguattarian concepts this thesis has shown that Tzara's and Janco's metamorphosis into universalist entities did not eradicate their Jewish identity, but it developed in its proximity a process where impersonal forces are expressed through writing and painting. *Simbolul* represented a first step for Tzara and Janco, since 'philosophy, literature and science are powers of becoming'.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵⁴ Colebrook, p.126.

The conclusion of this research is that Tzara's and Janco's status of the other, although identical in both their cases from the socio-political perspective, played a completely different role in their self-perception and quite a pivotal one, especially in their artistic activities. The lack of engagement with Jewishness in his artistic endeavours is what signals Tzara's preoccupation with his Jewish heritage and the anxiety that accompanied it at the historical moment it was produced. This conclusion is rooted in existing scholarship on Jewish identity where other scholars, like Darcy Buerkle⁷⁵⁵ and Lisa Silverman,⁷⁵⁶ suggest that the absence of explicit manifestations of Jewish elements is something that signals a preoccupation with the differences between Jewish and non-Jewish, and that this 'elaborated circumscribed absence' signals the centrality of the Jew as outsider in their own self-definition. The present study wishes to pave the way for future researches and their scrutiny of the entirely different processes of identity formation that occurred in Tzara's and Janco's cases, despite their similarities in terms of economic background. This research has demonstrated that identity, discussed in terms of Jewishness or not, has to be understood as a complex, permutable and fluid notion and not as a given and fixed relationship that each thing bears to itself.

Finally, this thesis does not claim to be providing at any point a biography of Tristan Tzara nor of Marcel Janco; however, it makes some biographical specifications such as that Tzara and Janco were in fact Jews born in Romania and not Romanian Jews. The archival material and primary sources explored by this research varied, with a focus mainly on original issues of the Romanian avant-garde journals *Simbolul*, *Chemarea* and *Contimporanul* (in Romanian). Furthermore, in order to discuss the parameters of their Jewish experiences, it explored the correspondence between Tzara and his family (in Romanian and French), original certificates and personal documents of both artists and their families (in Romanian), semi-autobiographic writings by Tzara (in French) and Janco (in Romanian, English and Hebrew), and original journals and articles by them or about them written in the epoch, alongside secondary sources represented by reviews, articles, books, biographies, and anthologies on the artists and their lives.

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⁷⁵⁵ See D. Buerkle, in *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, pp.83-102.

⁷⁵⁶ Silverman (2012) continues Buerkle's and Michael Steinberg's ideas by arguing that the sense of an ideal Austrian culture was often most apparent in the culture created by those who felt it most lacking in their own self-definitions, and whose cultural products reflect an engagement with that absence.

5.1. Chapter summary:

In the **First Chapter** of this thesis it is shown that the impact of the socio-political reality of Tzara's and Janco's families, and the hardship encountered by the Romanian-Jewish minority, was an obvious characteristic of their 'Jewish experience'. The focus was placed on the relationships Tzara and Janco had with their families, the initial source of their Jewish heritage, in order to build the argument that similar conditions do not necessarily ensure similar experiences. However, although it agrees that Tzara and Janco's early experiences involuntarily gravitated towards Romanian modernism in the pre-avant-garde period, it also insists that Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco display multiple, fluid, and multilayered identities among which Jewishness coexists alongside many other facets, and that it is not solely responsible for their attitude of revolt against the socio-political status quo. This chapter has shown that due to the existence of stereotypes surrounding the Jews in Romania, Tzara's and Janco's artistic manifestations in the first modernist journal *Simbolul* (The Symbol) and later in *Chemarea* (The Call) marked their concern about their marginalisation. What has been argued is that the anti-classical stance of these two magazines and their uncritical enthusiasm for modernist philosophies appears as a result of them being seen as the 'other' and their need to escape their Jewishness. This analysis was carried out with the help of archival work with a special attention directed towards correspondence with family.

The **Second Chapter** of this thesis examined to what extent Tzara and Janco diverged in their behaviour from Romanian society and even from European society, thus allowing the construction of their identity seen as a perpetual process of becoming throughout a dialogue with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming. The study shows that Tzara's and Janco's identity is not a result of a merger between their Jewishness with their Romanianness; rather, it is a continuous becoming working in the proximity of the two and, therefore, creating a unique composition of universalist/modernist/avant-gardist elements. Furthermore, this thesis shows that Tzara's and Janco's becomings are in no way identical as they are both molecular and imperceptible, in this way being in complete agreement with the Deleuzoguattarian

philosophy arguing that ‘it is through [art] that you become imperceptible’.⁷⁵⁷ The second chapter demonstrated that the first joint project of Tzara and Janco, *Simbolul*, related to the dominant culture in an ingenious usage of modernist techniques alongside traditional ones, the latter being hidden in the subtext. For this analysis Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of minor literature was used, concluding that *Simbolul* classifies as minor literature since appears at the limit of the social codes that govern the major literature, carrying it in all directions, without following necessarily a predetermined direction but just a wish to release literary intensities. The result was that Tzara’s and Janco’s identity formation, as it appears manifest through their creation of *Simbolul*, is a special case of becoming. The study has shown that their artistic productions had no other aim than to unleash their becomings publicly, alongside the development of the cultural text of *Simbolul*. What Chapter 2 demonstrated is that Tzara’s and Janco’s model of cultural innovation is deeply steeped in their origin and contradicts the idea that their identities developed independently from their heritage. Their otherness is what makes them interesting more than anything else, and it is the main catalyst for the way they imagine their universal identities. Therefore, the destructive, polemical and nihilistic views are seen as the representation of their non-belonging anywhere, which provokes their experimentation of becomings initially as Jews in Romania and later as Romanians in Zurich.

The **Third Chapter** has looked at Tzara’s and Janco’s artistic activity seen through the lens of their Jewish identity, based on their own reflections on the period later in life. It reveals that Jewishness remains a highly individualistic characteristic despite their shared values and aspirations. The chapter suggests that the multifaceted relationship between their ‘ethnic Jewish self-consciousness’⁷⁵⁸ and the art that emerged during their Dada years does not automatically reveal Jewishness as an explanation for Dada, or vice versa, just as their involvement in the Romanian avant-garde in the post-Zurich years does not describe an attempt for Jewish cultural and national revival through abstract art⁷⁵⁹ based on their Jewish heritage.

Furthermore, by analysing Tzara’s and Janco’s texts wherein they discuss their Zurich years – Tzara’s *Faites Vos Jeux* and Marcel Janco’s articles ‘Marturii iudaice despre arta’ (1938) and the one published in *Dada: Monograph of a movement* (1957)

⁷⁵⁷ Deleuze and Guattari (2004), p.187.

⁷⁵⁸ J. Gutmann, in *The Visual Dimension*, p.5.

⁷⁵⁹ Morar.

– this chapter has shown that, in fact, Tzara and Janco were closer in their Cabaret Voltaire period than any later personal reminiscences might indicate. It has been argued that this has occurred also due to the challenging context in which they lived since the external threat ‘had always been a key contributor to Jewish group cohesiveness’⁷⁶⁰ and had therefore made Tzara and Janco huddle together for mutual survival. It has been shown that the antisemitism encountered by Tzara and Janco in Zurich, where the laws were always less antisemitic than, for instance, Romania, contributed actively to their cohesion.

The second part of this chapter focused on how the constitutional changes in Romania affected to a certain extent Jewish experience, impacting in this way their approach to art. It has been shown that this constitutional change allowed Janco, who returned to Bucharest, to have a new perspective on art, disengaging from Dada’s radicalism. This chapter focused more on Tzara’s artistic contributions in Romanian avant-garde journals rather than analysing his post-Dada Zurich career and argued that although Tzara did not physically return to Romania he brought Dadaist ideas to the Romanian avant-garde via some journals, post-1923. Concomitantly, it shows how Marcel Janco, after his return to Bucharest, once again begins to collaborate with his friend from earlier times, Ion Vinea, and publishes the journal *Contimporanul*. This is done with the scope to demonstrate how the mutation from ‘social-political’ militancy to ‘avant-garde’ militancy (from ‘political’ activism to aesthetic activism) comes simply from Marcel Janco’s change of perspective in the light of the new reality. Finally, this chapter has shown how some of the thematic continuities across their activities are a result of their Jewish experience in Romania, in the same way that Tzara’s encodings show traces of a Romanian folkloric influence inherited from his readings of popular Romanian writers. This idea it is not fully developed in this study; however, it wishes to inspire future researchers to address this interesting discovery.

The **Fourth Chapter** has discussed the significance of Tristan Tzara’s and Marcel Janco’s Jewishness for their self-identification with the help of Arendt’s concepts of *pariah*, and *parvenu*, with a special emphasis placed on the context in which they were living. What this chapter has shown is that, as marginal people who do not fully belong anywhere, Tzara and Janco can overcome estrangement and become actively involved in society while also maintaining a sort of distinctive collective identity. This chapter looked at Tzara and Janco through Arendt’s concepts,

⁷⁶⁰ Diller, p.30.

concluding that in their identity-building process their self-perception changes in time rather than being confined by rigid delimitations, the status of *pariah* and *parvenu* acting as temporary occurrences.



5.2. Reason for research and implications for further study

The reason for this study was to show that although recent scholarship is often too ready to identify Jewishness in Tzara's and Janco's works, Jewish identity does not necessarily represent the answer to all the questions regarding their lives and works. That being said, this thesis acknowledges that Jewishness is a part of their multilayered identity – an idea suggested in various places throughout this text. As a consequence, this research shows that Tzara's and Janco's identities can be analysed also in regard to their inclusion into the Jewish community where their Jewish identity is not central anymore. Therefore, the identities of Tristan Tzara and Marcel Janco require an approach that involves an analysis of the ideological division in which they lived their lives both in regard to the Jewish community and also with the society around them.

This research has implications for the study, in general, of the Jewish identity of those Jews who were involved in the avant-garde because it shows that the interpretations of the works of the artists of Jewish heritage has to be carried out in terms of contact between them and their own community, between moving forward to analysing their involvement in society as a whole. This study constitutes a reference point for a discussion on Tristan Tzara's and Marcel Janco's concern with their own identity but also their sense of personal belonging, where a continuous process of becoming characterises the entire dynamics of identity production and where Jewishness plays a significant role, but not the only role. What this research has shown is that a discussion of Jewish identity requires not only a theoretically ambitious approach but also a certain degree of *chutzpah*, based on rigorous documentation, in addressing sensitive issues such as well-established beliefs on the topic, racist behaviour and antisemitic histories.

Throughout the thesis there are various points where the need for a future in-depth study on the different artistic and literary influences is shown, especially on

Tzara, whose influences come from the sphere of Romanian high-culture such as contemporary writers and novelists. This research wishes to encourage future studies to investigate how their artistic productions relate to this Romanian high culture of the time and whether they are steeped into the folkloric tradition manifested at times as a mechanism of belonging.

Finally, what this study wished to suggest is that its approach to Jewish identity opens up possibilities for work on other eminently self-aware Jewish modernist artists whose identities have been insufficiently discussed or considered rigid.

The way in which this research intends to progress in the future is by casting light on the misunderstood history of Jewishness, wrongly assumed to be homogeneous, in the case of Marcel Janco. His post-Dada art is to be seen as an analogy with Jewish experience. Although his emigration to Palestine in 1941 was considered ‘a return to his homeland’, Janco ‘remained a bit of an outsider in the State of Israel’, in his own country, as he later confessed. This future research will argue that Janco’s thinking about the nature and purpose of his Jewishness, while in the biblical homeland, bears resemblance to his avant-garde model, emphasising the importance of individual agency sustained by cultural tradition. Since Jewishness is not assumed by this research to be homogeneous, Janco’s case places him on the outside of his own identification as a Jew. It explores what contributes to his otherness among his own co-religionists: is his promotion of Jewish avant-gardism seen as a political force with the power to redeem modernity, or is the marginal position adopted by Janco due to his Jewish experience in Europe?

The lack of any concrete study on the Romanian-born Israeli painter and architect makes imperative such a research focusing on Janco’s Jewishness, especially after the Holocaust. It will be investigated what his attitude towards his Jewishness meant from the perspective of his art while in Israel and how, given the struggles encountered as a Jew in Europe, this impacted his persona. While in Israel, Janco was able to persuade the authorities to preserve existing Arab structures instead of bulldozing them, which provided an intriguing perspective on the relationship between Jews and Arabs seen through the eyes of a European avant-gardist. By careful examining of original sources located in the Janco Archives in Tel Aviv and Ein Hod, my future research wishes to show how important it is to differentiate when defining any ‘Jewish identity’ but also how Janco’s modernity made him believe that art should fill the gap left by religious differences. The aim of this research would be not to debunk his Jewish identity as an illusion, nor to reduce it to a secondary phenomenon

that can be explained by some other, more primal factor, but to illuminate how his otherness while in Europe helped shape his marginalised identity and made him dismantle anti-Palestinian reactions and attempt to bring about a new tradition (i.e. Ein Hod colony) that would bind society together.

* * *

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