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# Marcel Avramescu and Interwar Romanian Esotericism

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*“God made me from wood  
and strawberries, in a time  
of wrath, but in a citadel  
of fire.”*

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**Paradigma puterii în secolul al XIX-lea** (The paradigm of power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century) (2011).

**T**HE LOOMING spiritual crisis, as well as the ideological conflicts following the First World War, heavily marked the socio-political and cultural atmosphere of Romania in the 1920s, and determined a regrouping of intellectuals within the tense setting created by tradition and modernity. Under the heterogeneous banner of tradition, the “new spiritualist generation”<sup>1</sup> emerged as a non-homogeneous intellectual movement, with groups willing to transform ethnicity and Orthodoxy into an ideological basis of well-defined political self-sufficiency, converted in the 1930s into fascism. Heterogeneous as it was, it also consisted of factions oriented exclusively towards the spiritualist nature of nationality, the amalgamated recovery of the esoteric Tradition and the import of religious-existential formulas coming from the East, especially from India and the Arab world, which were considered culturally unaltered and redeeming (Buddhism, Brahma-

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nism, Yoga, or the Islam). The assault of the neo-spiritualist movements (spiritualism, theosophical mixtures or occultism) does not leave Romania's intellectual life unaffected. The greatest impact is that of René Guénon's "traditionalist" metaphysical thinking, whose vivid imprint upon Romanian intellectual life determined Claudio Mutti to classify Romania as "the most Guénonian country in the world."<sup>22</sup> The Italian scholar explains the huge domestic success of Guénon's traditional thinking not only through the favorable intellectual conditions created by many spiritual ideologies interested in traditional culture, such as those promoted by Nae Ionescu, Vasile Pârvan and others, but also through the Romanian people's traditional interest in "Urgrund" phenomena, like national ontology, "Dacianism" (an ideology attributing an unseen, primordial spiritual force to the early inhabitants of Romania, the Dacians), or popular culture and spirituality.

The "esoteric generation,"<sup>23</sup> to which Mircea Eliade, G. Călinescu, Ion Barbu, Eugen Ionescu, Dan Petrașincu, Mihail Vălsan, Vasile Lovinescu and Marcel Avramescu belong, takes shape in this environment. An enigmatic and rather inconsistent figure, dallying with avant-garde poetry, but definitely attracted by initiatory doctrines, by occultism and the Tradition as promoted by René Guénon, born in 1909 as a Jew but converted to Orthodoxy in 1936, Marcel Avramescu obtained a degree in theology with the work "Qabbalah, the Traditional Gnosis of the Old Law" and was ordained in 1951. He is one of the most fascinating figures of this generation, and the testimony of one of his contemporaries, Ieronim Șerbu, confirms it: "By far the most interesting member of this 'esoteric generation' that I have met is, without any doubt, Ionathan X. Uranus, Marcel Avramescu by his real name . . . thin, ascetic, with big, black, nocturnal eyes, the man emanated a hypnotic fluid, and from his entire physiognomic expression resulted a great power of profound introspective concentration, due perhaps to the intense energy of the various spiritual 'experiences' he had had, or to an exceptional vocation for inner meditation."<sup>24</sup>

Named Marcu officially, a name which he changed to Mihail upon his conversion to Orthodoxy, Marcel Avramescu—as he signed his name as the editor of the periodical *Memra* or as a mature author—had nearly sixty identities in the interwar press, pseudonyms, cryptonyms, agnomens or abbreviations, most of them carrying an explicit symbolic meaning. Thus, the X. from Ionathan X. Uranus, Ierusalim X. Unicornus, Father X. Uranus, Ionathan Marc Mihail Shalom Abraham X. Uranus and from I.X.U. is interpreted by Avramescu himself as the ratio of the circumference of the center with the circle. Justified by the wish to increase and stimulate the energies of the spirit, his natural inclination towards identity mythologizing generated a number of other names: Ștefan Adam, Mihai Stavrîn, Micael Baari, Yang, M., Mem. (or Memra in the homonymous periodical), Uranus, Ionathan N. Uranus, Marc Man or Mihail Man. In his writings, Marcel Avramescu called himself Astro-Magul (the Astro Magus), Astro-Magul Marc, the Honorable Master (thus fueling speculations regarding his belonging to the freemasonry), Marduk Shalom or Carmel Mascaveru. His recourse to pseudonyms "involved the risk of anonymity"<sup>25</sup>—as Geo Șerban remarked in "Ionathan X. Uranus, an Author with many Disguises"—because it greatly hindered the possibility of an objective, historical and literary recovery. It is also true that by generating confusion and exoticism through all these cryptic and paradoxical identities, the writer stirred incessant interest around his person, and thus boosted his personal legend.

A possible model for the rabbi's son in Mircea Eliade's short story, "Pe Strada Mântuleasa," but also for the character Octav Boianiu in Marin Preda's novel *Delirul*, "the fascinating Marcel Avramescu became a legendary figure in Bucharest in the 1940's."<sup>96</sup> Several memoirs written by some protagonists of the interwar period offer enough data for a viable attempt at a portrayal. Thus, Ieronim Șerbu's memoirs speak about a Marcel Avramescu involved in everyday entertainment magic, guessing before an audience which playing card will be extracted randomly from the deck or which book will be taken from the shelf, amusing tricks which, along with his reputation of being a horoscope teller, a parapsychologist, hypnotist, astrologer, graphologist, physiognomist, telepath and occultist ensured him social success within the intellectual and mundane social circles of interwar Bucharest. Similar talents secured his involvement in the publicity campaign directed by the periodical *Realitatea ilustrată* towards the end of the year 1930, which presented him in nearly legendary terms: "From the earliest age he studied astrology, graphology, palm lines, psychometrics, oracles, the art of the fakirs, the interpretation of hermetic studies."<sup>97</sup> People said that at the age of fifteen he had gone through a series of near-death experiences, that his being and composure indicated the possession of extraordinary magical abilities, as proven by the magic shows he performed within select social circles, or by his amazing divination skills. Marcel Avramescu's irresistible erotic aura, witnessed by many women of the period, also contributed to the consolidation of an ambivalent notoriety. "I was most amazed at the time"—Amelia Pavel says—"by his fulminating success with women, who were utterly fascinated by his emaciated presence, with his long face and his piercing look, of a glacial grayish green."<sup>98</sup> His histrionic abilities, as well as his occult magnetism, would also impress Petru Comarnescu, who volunteered for a graphology and physiognomy study, while his intelligence and esoteric culture determined the same Comarnescu to classify him as a man "deeper, but also more diabolical"<sup>99</sup> than Constantin Fântâneru or Emil Cioran.

Ieronim Șerbu remembers how, during a dispute on the limits of logic that took place at the Capșa restaurant between Marcel Avramescu and Oscar Lemnaru, the former claimed with conviction that "everything around us is full of mystery,"<sup>100</sup> without which the universe would be poor. "Man is above any logic, above his biological and social condition. Each of these perspectives explains him partially, but a complete understanding of man is not possible unless you integrate him in an entire system of symbols, as it is done, for instance, by traditional esoteric doctrines."

According to the "Obituary,"<sup>101</sup> published by Marcel Avramescu in the 22 November 1931 issue of the periodical *Vremea*, the "dryness of logic" which he managed to realize explained not only his propensity towards occultism, disseminated under the pen-name Mark Abrams, but also his paradoxical avant-garde identity, Ionathan X. Uranus. We call it paradoxical, because the avant-garde literary ideology, which is essentially anti-traditional, contradicts the implicit traditionalism of esotericism and that of his later Orthodoxy. This is perhaps also the reason for the skeptical attitude displayed by literary historians of the avant-garde phenomenon towards the work of Marcel Avramescu. Thus, he is listed in Sașa Pană's famous groundbreaking anthology (*Antologia literaturii române de avangardă*, 1969), is mentioned expeditiously and erroneously<sup>102</sup> in that of Ion Pop (*Avangarda în literatura română*, 1990), but is missing from Ovid S.

Crohmălniceanu's work (*Evreii în mișcarea de avangardă românească*, 2001), or from that of Gabriela Duda (*Literatura românească de avangardă*, 1997). While many critics detect an irreconcilable conflict between avant-garde and traditionalism—Alexandru Paleologu<sup>13</sup> integrally challenging Marcel Avramescu's belonging to the avant-garde—, Cornel Ungureanu<sup>14</sup> mediates the dispute, and diagnoses in the case of Marcel Avramescu's literature the existence of a mixed formula: an avant-garde generated by a polemical traditionalism. Beyond the hermeneutical extremes of Marcel Avramescu's literary options, it is clear that he voluptuously flaunted to others his conflicting identities and programmatically played upon their confusion, based on the principle that *perplexity*<sup>15</sup> represents the living spring of all spiritual abundance, equally useful to ensure the necessary shock needed to register avant-garde writings and the fascination awakened by the discourse pertaining to the occult. Marcel Avramescu owed his avant-garde debut<sup>16</sup> to the challenge posed in 1928 by the inexhaustible poet Tudor Arghezi, the chief editor of the periodical *Bilete de papagal*, open both to modernists and to the "classics" of Romanian literature, but virulent in regard to nationalist manifestations and, implicitly, to the Orthodox-mystical intolerance so popular at the time. To mark the publication of the one hundred and fiftieth issue of the tiny publication, Tudor Arghezi initiated an open literary competition, those interested being invited to develop the starting topic of the so-called "exorbitant man," portrayed as an atypical and eccentric individual, shaped by a mixture of grotesque and parody, quite shocking for the common sensibility, ossified by flat means of expression. Appearing in the 156<sup>th</sup> issue of the periodical, Marcel Avramescu's article "Omul exorbitant"<sup>17</sup> (The exorbitant man)—the very first response to Arghezi's challenge—combined the typically avant-garde aggressive activism with the esoteric-messianic self-embodiment, amplified by the secrecy of the signature, Ionathan X. Uranus: "I am the Lord's chosen. The world does not know me, because if it did, the truth within me would blaze, and all that exists today would catch fire, would disappear or evaporate—which is not advisable and not according to my will so far." "Autobiografie"<sup>18</sup> (Autobiography) an article published in the 168<sup>th</sup> issue of *Bilete de papagal*, constituted a playful relapse of this avant-garde and esoteric mixture, signaled also by the double epithets added to his signature: "Seraphic and Bohemian": "I am the only human being who was born without the intervention and concurrence of parents of both sexes. God made me from wood and strawberries, in a time of wrath, but in a citadel of fire." The lack of parentage and the divine principle indicated a heroic and messianic outcome, which gradually diluted into the extension towards parody of the autobiographical scenario, in an accumulation of fantasies and absurd sketches: the new-born baby is dressed in a crusader's attire, is hailed by equine creatures and is accompanied by a hallucinating cortege, with three leeches in the place of the well-wishers, etc.

God is replaced by the sun in "Tratat practic și teoretic despre soare"<sup>19</sup> (A practical and theoretical treatise on the sun), a sun latent in every human being, but activated exclusively through spirit, art and dream, a triad which guarantees its handler virtually unlimited power over all things. The symbolic overlap of the cosmic Sun and its inner counterpart evolves within the frames of an esoteric image derived from the symbolic persuasions defined by Guénon. Seeing himself as a Chosen, a messenger of a redee-

ming truth within a world falling into decline, Marcel Avramescu retorted to the violence of avant-garde poetry in order to suggest that the spiritual horizon of humanity must change, the turnover being possible only within the context of an initiation. The message is typical for the decadent ages, favorable to the emergence of people who claim to be saviors. However, in Marcel Avramescu's specific case, the image of the Savior is somewhat ridiculous, given its relative playfulness and its appeal to the absurd and fantastic rhetoric of the avant-garde. Besides God and the double folded Sun, Destiny is also assumed as an entity responsible for the genesis of Marcel Avramescu's multiple identities. In "Ionathan X. Uranus,"<sup>20</sup> a text from 1929, published in the periodical *Radical*, he writes: "Destiny, which Tradition has established as being blind, but which is actually highly insightful and prone to jests, once merged by vocation two contradictory essences, one of a monster and the other of a prophet, and thus came into existence, in the year one thousand nine hundred and nine, Ionathan X. Uranus, seraph and boxer, and the great master of circumstances in your Worship." Avramescu fully assumed the role of a prophet in a text written in 1929, "În potruva veacului: Manifest și proclamație"<sup>21</sup> (Against the century: Manifesto and proclamation), published in the periodical *Bilete de papagal*. Being faithful to his chosen motto, "Apocalipsa" (Apocalypse), the author unyieldingly and terrifyingly announces the collapse of civilization, the end of the world and definitive absence of the perspective of resurrection, from which only complete faith may save the spirit. Chaos, blood, fire and eternal suffering outline a powerful apocalyptic scene, short-circuited only by the sudden messianic embodiment—"I am only one, the sent one and the true one"—, followed by a sophisticated identity construction of divine implications and a post-script which definitively undermines the gravity of the discourse, because, due to this assumed messianic identity, the author solicits "sincere adhesions, followed by a profession of faith written by hand and with an original signature." The jocularity and the taste for messianic pseudo-mystifications written in esoteric keys do not exclude avant-garde extremism, as we find in the sharpness of the "Manifest către hingheri"<sup>22</sup> (A manifesto to flayers), in which the author announces a genuine tabula rasa: "I shall bring together around me all those who are costive and cerebral whom humanity has at its disposal, all those who are sexually hyper-energetic or atrophied, sensible and intellectual, all those sour grapes of the spiritual world and all the cacophonies of the spirit, and, after I have treated them with a reasonable discourse, through which I will explain why their presence among us is useless and foul-smelling, I will steadily crush their throats until their eyes jump out of their sockets, their tongues come out and they hawk for good and all."

Marcel Avramescu's passion for astrology surpassed his fame and deeply permeated his early texts, benefiting from the subtle irony, the absurd and the free associations inherent to avant-garde poetics. Published in two consecutive issues of *Bilete de papagal*, as a letter addressed to the famous Coco, the oracular parrot of the periodical run by Arghezi, "Manualul bunului zodiac"<sup>23</sup> (The textbook of the good zodiac teller) sets up a pseudo-Christian mythology based on the twelve signs of the zodiac presented as fallen angels, bound to the celestial sphere as divine punishment, and whose only solace remains the power they have over mortals. Surpassing the mystifying discourse, the text becomes in an emphatically joyous presentation of each sign of the

zodiac, which makes their portrayal a merely gratuitous literary game rather than a credible hint to the personality of those born under each sign.

Another branch of the occult exploited in a literary and playful manner by Marcel Avramescu is numerology. According to his understanding, the number surpasses the realm of quantity, and becomes a qualitative, symbolic entity, able to reveal inner personality secrets and destinies. In an article published in 1932 in the periodical *Ulise*, with the title “Despre șapte: Mic tratat cu consecințe nebănuite”<sup>24</sup> (On the number seven: a small treatise with unexpected outcomes), he formulates an anthropomorphic and polemic speculation, in order to demonstrate that 7 is indeed the oldest and the most important number, endowed with creative and all-powerful virtues. Exalting the primordial quality of the hole as a Void, as all-emerging Chaos, remarking then that the human head has seven cavities (a mouth, two eyes, two ears, two nostrils) he finishes by transforming the universality of the number 7 in the foundation for a non-discriminatory and universal acceptance of the human being as a primordial creature, master and supreme reference for the existence of the perfect Cosmos, since everything is governed by the digit seven, the true key of the universe. In the “apodictic” sentences gathered in “Monolog nocturn”<sup>25</sup> (Nocturnal monologue), Mihail Avramescu associates an extremely sophisticated esoteric-Christian hermeneutics to the understanding of the apocalyptic digit. In his quest for the “(revelatory) *spiritual formula*,” he starts from the words of the Revelation of John—“Here is wisdom. He that hath understanding let him count the number of the beast for it is the number of a man. His number is six hundred sixty-six”—, and, in Ivan Karamazov’s fictitious company, he finishes by asserting that the apocalyptic cipher of man coincides with the number of the beast. In an ambivalent and contradictory, absurd and grotesque manner, the number six comes out from several arithmetic combinations, each of them aiming to decompose and multiply the human cipher. Thus,  $6 = 3 + 3$  expresses an apparent and extremely unstable human balance,  $6 = 2 + 4$  destroys the possible balance of the quaternary, and  $6 = 5 + 1$  indicates the diabolical anarchy of the inverted binomial and the dream to dominate. According to Mihail Avramescu, the calculations of the human cipher prove “the fundamental futility and the literally monstrous and catastrophic perspectives of any form of anthropocentrism . . ., of any forms of humanism or humanitarianism,”<sup>26</sup> with the exception of the divine philanthropy in the Greek-Orthodox dogma and of pity in the Mahayana School in Buddhism. However, surpassing the precarious condition of man implies an addition,  $6+1$ , thus coming to the formula of the Septenary, concentrated in the sabbatical number seven, playfully exalted in the already cited “On Seven: A Small Treatise with Unexpected Outcomes.”

Founded in 1929 in Craiova, the *Radical* declares itself “a periodical without a program,”<sup>27</sup> created by an effervescent intellectual group to which Marcel Avramescu also belonged, as a subscriber to this anarchist-avant-garde flavored “Program” and as a man of playfully blurred messianic ambitions. In its pages, Ionathan X. Uranus is known as Mark Abrams, a.k.a. Marcel Avramescu, in the privileged position of occultist author. In this respect he writes “Note preliminare la o filosofie a magiei”<sup>28</sup> (Preliminary remarks to a philosophy of magic), an article which draws attention upon the fact that magic “must be perceived with an attitude,” and hailed “especially as a solution for the achievement of interior balance.” Based upon “the principle of the spiritual structure,” the magical atti-

tude necessarily calls for an intellectual construction, in other words a powerful dogma, at the center of which lies the divinization of man, because magic relies on the premise that within this center there exist, in latent form, the attributes of the Absolute. The second part of the “Preliminary Remarks to a Philosophy of Magic”<sup>29</sup> investigates the white magic—dark magic dichotomy, and arrives at a fundamentally ethical conclusion, popular for that matter, that the difference is made by the inner structure of the person who practices them. More exactly, egocentrism and the self-sufficient tendency to subordinate everything inevitably lead to the dark path, while altruistic readiness to conceive the existence of equal entities ensures the luminous experience of the Absolute. However, before the prospect of the ubiquity of this phenomenon could terrifyingly absorb the readers, the author eliminates any possible anxieties or hopes regarding the practice of magic, saying that it is very rare and actually limited to self-knowledge. Obscurity remains nevertheless necessary, as the writer demonstrates in “Despre beznă”<sup>30</sup> (On darkness), because the excess of light, as well as the excess of darkness destroys human balance, and leads the spirit astray. Their antidote is said to be the so-called spiritual gymnastics, defined as “the progressive disciplining of the activities of our soul, in order to bring them to a perfect interior balance, and to an integral harmonization with the spiritual pulsation of the cosmos.”<sup>31</sup> Conceived as a practice of initiation having a vague orphic skeleton, the spiritual gymnastics facilitates the perception of the spiritual worlds to which our soul, which is captive in the body and limited to its materiality, belongs. Once the absolute purity of the soul is attained, the inner eye opens, and “the eternal Man is resurrected within us.” As a modest messenger of the Occult Tradition of the Orient, Marcel Avramescu dissects in “Crist în lumina învățaturii ezoterice”<sup>32</sup> (Christ in the light of esoteric teaching) the occult implications of the man-God Manichaeism. Starting from the assumption that by birth each body is given a Spirit, which descends from the upper realms in order to become its moving vehicle, the author concludes rather abruptly that the Spirit incarnated in Jesus shares the substance of the unique and great flow of time, Zarathustra being among its former hosts. Later on, identified as a Solar Spirit, which is synonymous to the Logos, it took shape into the Savior following his initiation—the baptism of John—, becoming the “Spirit of the Earth.” Because of that, Jesus’ words at the Last Supper must not be taken symbolically, but literally, as they are endowed with a profound esoteric meaning: “Because, if Christ is the spirit of the Earth, and the Earth is the physical body of Christ, then any solid and living substance of the Earth, anything that grows out of the Earth, is a small part of the body of Christ, because bread is wheat, which takes from the earth all its sap; and any sap that saturates the harvests of the Earth is a part of the wine sap, of the blood of Christ...” By revealing the true wisdom of the Gospels as esoteric, the author recommends that the mystery of the presence of Christ ought to be experienced organically and constantly, because only through it one can achieve a “spiritual insight.”

As an established traditionalist interested in secret sciences and hidden cultural messages, Marcel Avramescu published in 1928, in *Bilete de papagal*, a series of articles on spiritual awakening, one of them being “Știința pe tobogan sau Cronica misterelor eficace”<sup>33</sup> (Science down the slide, or the chronicle of efficient mysteries). Set out on a crusade to rehabilitate Occultism, defined as a “real science” that allows the full understanding of the laws of nature, he specifies that the fundamental principle of the occult

doctrines is to reach the “objective reality of the spiritual worlds.” In his particular approach, the premises of reconsidering the role of Occultism in the revival of Western civilization, which is stuck at the moment in an overwhelming positivistic crisis, are Sigmund Freud’s and Henri Bergson’s ideas, namely the supereminence of the unconscious and that of intuition, both favoring the regression towards the Hindu origins of modern occultism. A further comparative analysis outlined in “Ezoterismul în Orient și în Occident”<sup>34</sup> (Esotericism in the East and in the West) interpret the experimental and analytical tendencies inherent to Western civilization as being opposed to Oriental contemplativeness, a dichotomy which is also mirrored in the field of Esotericism. However, what is really interesting here is not the canonical profile of the two types of Esotericism which are compared, nor the statement that “Anthroposophy” (the successor of the Christian Esotericism of the Rosicrucians, practiced by Rudolf Steiner) is “a spiritual discipline of the most implicit necessity,” but the criticism of the Theosophy (as a derivative of oriental Esotericism) practiced by Helena Blavatsky. We must therefore not forget that René Guénon was one of the fiercest detractors of Theosophy.

“Today, Ionathan X. Uranus and Mark Abrams, my demented zanies, have killed themselves”<sup>35</sup>—writes Marcel Avramescu at the end of his “Necrolog” (Obituary) in 1931, denouncing the playful inconsistency of the absurd he himself had professed as an avant-garde writer, as well as the inability of occultism to lead to the Truth. Avramescu critically scrutinized his former alter-egos fascinated by esoteric games, challenging the limits of the knowledge which leads towards the Truth, but did not deny the existence of truths lying well beyond the possibilities of the human mind: “Mark Abrams, but more gently. One of the many merry jesters, tortured—while reaching up for the Truth—by the mismatch of the mind’s patterns with the fullness of life, still lured by the dead glow of a bridge, by the left hand. Occultism, with its special games and shrouds. There are locked truths out there, but under useless keys. To find them, it would be enough to be caressed by the generosity of the Superior. Occultism, with its multitude of small truths, does not, however, reach the Truth. Occultism, through its discipline, does not mean anything but laboring through your own person.”

**T**HE STATEMENT from the “Obituary” is the equivalent of a symbolic suicide, meant to announce a rebirth and a new identity, the Orthodox one, free of *superbia*, of the pride that marked the author’s avant-garde and occult exercises. However, despite the trenchant dramatics by which Marcel Avramescu disposes of the avant-garde and of Esotericism in this text, discreet traces of them will be still detectable in his forthcoming writings, as his evolution within Orthodoxy incorporated both Guénon and the playful nature inherent to his being. Nevertheless, when we come to the controversial nuances inherent to priest Mihail Avramescu’s religious discourse, restraint is a must, since Orthodoxy does not accept the doctrine of the “transcendental unity of religions” promoted by Guénon. Even Hesychasm proved to be at a certain level isolated and eccentric, as we see it in the “Rugul Aprins” (The Burning Pyre) movement, a group whose members (especially Anton Dumitriu) continued to believe in the esoteric dimension of Romanian Hesychasm, which attracted him during his interwar years. Marcel Avramescu continued

to plead for the conciliation of Guénon's Esotericism with Romanian Orthodoxy, thus defying the clear separation between esoteric initiation and the initiations into other mystical and spiritual formulas, operated by René Guénon in an article written for the periodical *Memra*, whose title is "Există încă posibilități inițiatice în formele tradiționale occidentale?" (Are there still initiations in the Western traditional formulas?). The French thinker listed Ignatius of Loyola's "spiritual exercises" under the label of undesirable spiritual practices, considering them a dangerous form of asceticism with an exclusively religious character. The "prayer of the heart" heralded by Hesychasm is not too far from that. Tied either to the priest Kulygin, who had fled from Russia and resided a while at Cernica monastery, or to the Burning Pyre group, "the prayer of the heart" also includes positional and respiratory techniques similar to yoga practices, which made Marcel Avramescu to reassert his conviction, owed to Guénon, that spiritual practices are in fact all equivalent, since they branch out from a single primordial Tradition.

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## Notes

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2. Claudio Mutti, *Guénon în România: Eliade, Vălsan, Geticus și ceilalți. Succesul lui Guénon printre români*, trans. Elena Pîrvu, preface by Florin Mihăescu, with a presentation by Enrico Montanari (Bucharest: Vreimea, 2003), 21.
3. Ieronim Șerbu, *Vitrina cu amintiri* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1973), 205.
4. *Ibid.*, 206–207. Quite interesting is the fact that the "big, black, nocturnal eyes" are of an intense blue according to Șerban Foață: Șerban Foață, "Culoarea ochilor," *Orizont* (Timișoara), new ser., 15, 44 (31 October 1986): 74–76.
5. Geo Șerban, "Jonathan X. Uranus, un autor sub multiple deghizări," *Observator cultural* (Bucharest), new ser., 11, 554 (9 December 2010), online version, [http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Ionathan-X.-Uranus-un-autor-sub-multiple-deghizari\\*articleID\\_24674-articles\\_details.html](http://www.observatorcultural.ro/Ionathan-X.-Uranus-un-autor-sub-multiple-deghizari*articleID_24674-articles_details.html).
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7. Șerban.
8. Amelia Pavel, *Un martor în plus* (Bucharest: Universalia, 1997), 16.
9. Petru Comarnescu, *Jurnal (1931–1937)* (Iași: Institutul European, 1994), 45.
10. Șerbu, 209.
11. Jonathan X. Uranus, *În potriva veacului: Textele de avangardă (1926–1932)*, eds. Mariana Macri and Dorin Liviu Bîțfoi (Bucharest: Compania, 2005), 191–194.
12. Jonathan X. Uranus, alias Marcel Romanescu, in Ion Pop, *Avangarda în literatura română* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1990), 374.
13. Alexandru Paleologu, "Părintele Mihail," preface to Mihail Avramescu, *Fragmente reziduale disparate din Calendarul incendiat al lui Ierusalim Unicornus trăndav și neiscusit aspirant uce-nic al Sfintei Smerenii*, published with the blessing of His Holiness Nicolae Corneanu, Bishop of Banat, afterword by Mihail Constantinescu (Bucharest: Anastasia, 1999), 14.
14. Cornel Ungureanu, *Istoria secretă a literaturii române* (Brașov: Aula, 2007), 229–236.
15. Jonathan X. Uranus, "Jonathan X. Uranus," *Radical* (Craiova) 1, 3 (April 1929): 1.
16. Tudor Arghezi, "Un concurs literar: Omul exorbitant," *Bilete de papagal* (Bucharest) 1, 151 (2 August 1928): 1.

17. I.X.U., "Omul exorbitant," *Bilete de papagal* 1, 156 (8 August 1928): 3–4.
18. Ionathan X. Uranus, Serafic și Boem, "Autobiografie," *Bilete de papagal* 1, 168 (23 August 1928): 4.
19. I.X.U., Mare Adolescent Român, "Tratat practic și teoretic despre soare," *Bilete de papagal* 1, 175 (30 August 1928): 2.
20. Ionathan X. Uranus, "Ionathan X. Uranus," 1.
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## Abstract

### Marcel Avramescu and Interwar Romanian Esotericism

Still poorly known and sporadically treated in the intellectual history of the period, Marcel Avramescu is the key figure of Romanian interwar esotericism (1919–1938). He founded *Memra* (1934), the only interwar Romanian esoteric periodical, and played the role of a bizarre sage and magic trickster, the main protagonist of the so-called "esoteric" generation, which included, amongst others, the historian of religions Mircea Eliade. Playfully hiding behind many forged and eccentric names and signatures (Ionathan X. Uranus, Mark Abrams, the Astro-Magus a.s.o.), Marcel Avramescu went through an avant-garde period, then an openly esoteric one, indebted to René Guénon, and finished by becoming an Orthodox priest. The following text analyses Avramescu's spiritual evolution as mirrored by several controversial texts he had written, and the socio-cultural profile of the Romanian interwar cultural life, as a specific mixture of modern and traditionalist ideologies.

## Keywords

René Guénon, tradition, esotericism, theosophy, avant-garde, Romania, interwar period, Mircea Eliade, Marcel Avramescu