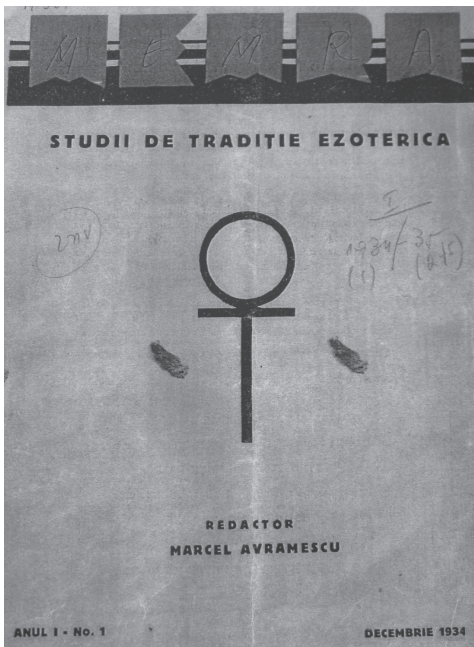

TANGENCIES

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Memra The First Romanian Esoteric Journal



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STILL POORLY known and only sporadically approached in the intellectual history of the period, Marcel Avramescu (born in 1909) was the key figure of Romanian interwar esotericism. In December 1934 he founded *Memra*, the only interwar Romanian esoteric periodical, and played the eccentric role of bizarre sage and magic trickster, as the main protagonist of the so-called “esoteric generation” (in Ieronim Șerbu’s words), which included, alongside other less famous characters, the historian of religions Mircea Eliade. Playfully hiding behind many made-up and eccentric names and signatures (Ionathan X. Uranus,

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Mark Abrams, The Astro-Magus a.s.o.), Marcel Avramescu went through an avant-garde period within the very active Romanian avant-garde movement, then through an openly esoteric one, indebted to René Guénon, and finished by becoming an ordained Orthodox priest. The correspondence between Marcel Avramescu and René Guénon started in 1934, the year in which he founded, in order to mark his acquaintance with Guénon, the only Romanian periodical of international esoteric studies, entitled *Memra*, meaning ‘word’ in Hebrew. Accidentally or not, Nae Ionescu’s contemporary and highly influential, Orthodox-centered, mainly nationalist periodical was also entitled *Cuvântul* (The Word). There might be a secret hint from Marcel Avramescu in this: Nae Ionescu’s newspaper had already been suspended for almost a year when *Memra* appeared, and would stay closed until 1938, when it registered an ephemeral comeback, before being definitely outlawed and his director sent to the Miercurea-Ciuc prison, where Mircea Eliade would join him a few weeks later. So, by using the word *Memra* for the title of his short-lived publication, Marcel Avramescu might have had the intention to suggest that there is a *Word*—the true, esoteric, traditional *Word*—which is higher in value than the anti-Semitic discourse used by his counterparts. We will never know whether the idea was intentional or accidental, but we might guess that, by using a Hebrew word in the title of his eccentric review, Marcel Avramescu deliberately challenged the almost official ideology of Nae Ionescu’s paper and of his followers, at considerable personal risk.

The minimalist cover of *Memra* featured the title and the subtitle of the periodical (*Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică*/Memra: Studies on the Esoteric Tradition), Marcel Avramescu’s name as single editor and the reproduction of the *Ankh*, the *crux ansata* (the cross with a handle), a symbol of the key to eternal life, placed in the center of the page. Despite having integrated the *Ankh* in the esoteric Tradition promoted by *Memra*, the symbolic caption of the eternal life would not ensure an ever-lasting career for the review, the periodical disappearing the following year (1935), after publishing a second, combined issue (no. 2–5, January–April).

Edited as an epigraph, adorned with a wide range of bold and capital letters, the “Manifesto” of the journal steps forward in promoting the authentic metaphysical knowledge, separated from “any modern forgeries of the initiatory Tradition . . . , from any ‘neo-spiritualistic’ currents and any pseudo-Esotericisms.”²¹ The new periodical asserts “the priority of the ESOTERIC TRADITION, as well as the uniqueness beyond diversity and the permanence beyond contingencies of the PRIMORDIAL TRADITIONAL DOCTRINE, from whose central Truth the principles and the methods of the TRADITIONAL SCIENCES derive, the Dogmas, Rites and Symbols of all ORTHODOX RELIGIONS and of all, Eastern or Western MYSTERIES OF INITIATION.”

“Criterii” (Criteria),² the programmatic text signed *Memra*, lists all the symptoms of the contemporary spiritual decay and those of the modern world’s crisis, describes the “Luciferian weapons” of the imminent apocalypse—humanism, individualism, rationalism, materialism, science, technology, “progressivism,” humanitarianism, communism, neo-spiritualism, theosophy, occultism etc.—, and warns that the only salvation is the return to “the Eternal Spiritual Tradition, on whose Principles was built, from the dawn of time, the existence of an unmarred humanity, whose internal balance derives from an integral Knowledge, or metaphysical order, and whose exterior harmony is built upon the recognition of the Primacy, the respect of Hierarchy and the belief that an Order is by all means obligatory.” To put it differently, we have here the classical thesis of the return to a world built upon Tradition, in René Guénon’s seminal understanding of the concept. Before proceeding further with our description, let us consider the understanding of the formula *Eternal Spiritual Tradition*. Starting from Prof. Moshe Idel’s seminal distinction,³ there were two kinds of spiritual reenactments of “plenitude”⁴ within the Romanian interwar period. One of them, chiefly connected to Mircea Eliade’s regression from the profane into the sacred, is “periodical,” which means a non-homogeneous acceptance of Time and of human activity. According to this understanding, from time to time—that is, periodically—the subject steps out of the profane, aiming at the “festive” content of the profane. The second one is related to the “non-periodical aspect” of spiritual learning, well known from Kabbalistic theurgy. “This is not a periodical re-actualization of the paradisiacal order, as Eliade envisions the nostalgia for Paradise”—Prof. Moshe Idel says—, “but a continuous effort to sustain the pleroma in its harmonious state.” It is obvious, therefore, that by quoting the “metaphysical order” of the new humanity built on the “integral Knowledge,” Marcel Avramescu not only indicated the necessity of a continuous, culminating initiation, but also the transformative existential “experience” acquired by it.

Also inspired by Guénon is the “Tradiția hermetică”⁵ (The Hermetic tradition), Marcel Avramescu’s essay signed with the pen-name Yang, dedicated to the doctrinal clarifications of Hermetic studies. A branch of Western esotericism, the Hermetic writings are assigned to the knowledge of the sage disciplines attributed to the Hermes–Mercury–Thoth tradition, disciplines of a metaphysical order, derived from the Great Mysteries, such as those which belong to a Sacerdotal Initiation, and disciplines of a cosmological order, which ensue from the initiation in the Small Mysteries and which are tied to a Royal Initiation. “The Hermetic Tradition” marks the quality of Alchemy as a Royal Art, and insists upon the over-sensitive and spiritual character of alchemic practices, before entering into a masterful description of alchemic symbolism, with ample hermetic digressions open to the fields of the history of religions, many of them

derived from Guénon's writings. Marcel Avramescu's discourse also massively absorbs Guénon's speculations regarding the Hermetic tradition, including the common elements shared with Freemasonry, such as the hermetic name of the Royal Art used by the Masons, the relationship between the symbolism of the Hermetic Philosopher's Stone and the dichotomy of rough stone–polished stone in Masonry, as well as the curious phonetic correspondence between Hermes and Hiram, names which have in common the consonantal group HRM, which indicates the inclusion of the Freemason initiation into the order of Cosmological Knowledge. As a matter of fact, the author concludes, the Reintegration of Man in the Cosmic Order by maximizing his spiritual potencies constitutes the supreme goal of the Hermetic initiation.

AS THE spiritual patron of *Memra*, René Guénon publicized in France the newly-founded journal of esoteric studies, and contributed articles to it, the first of them being translated into Romanian as “Învățătura inițiativă”⁶ (The esoteric teaching), which is actually a text previously published in *Le Voile d'Isis* (in the December 1933 issue), becoming later chapter XXXI of *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*. Operating within the bounds of the *initiatory–profane* dichotomy, Guénon disavows the confusions regarding the initiatory teachings, and explains the role of the symbolizing process as a means of expressing what cannot be expressed within initiation. As the cornerstone of any genuine initiation, symbolic initiation shares an esoteric component, because it can be also transmitted “by those who understand neither its meaning, nor its value,” but only perceive the process of reduction to the simple symbolic figure. This is the means by which an authentic initiatory secret preserves its secrecy amidst the profane and reveals itself only to the initiated.

According to Guénon's teachings, every human tends to extend within his or her being the Plan of the Great Architect of the Universe, contributing to its fulfillment. When this purpose is consciously assumed, a genuine initiation comes into existence, an initiation which is unitary and immutable at the level of the principles, but virtually unlimited and profoundly subjective at the level of the initiatory experiences, being practically impossible to conceive the exact form of initiation for two different individuals. In other words, if the practices and symbols of the initiatory teaching function as a general extrinsic frame meant to prepare the individual for a genuine initiation, the initiation itself is only performed as a personal spiritual endeavor.

The essay “Condițiile inițierii”⁷ (The conditions of the Initiation) proves to be again the Romanian version of an article initially published in *Le Voile d'Isis* (in the October 1932 issue), and included later as chapter IV of the *Aperçus sur l'Initiation*. Assuming the role of the Master, Guénon analyzes here the confusion between the esoteric and the initiatory domain on the one hand, and the field

of mysticism on the other, and proposes a few distinctions. According to him, mysticism is passive, whereas initiation is active, as conditioned by a “personal labor” which ensures the transformation of something which is initially only potential into a proper act. On the other hand, the participation in a recognized traditional organization functions as a necessary filter for the counterfeiting of initiation, especially in modern times, which are the perfect embodiment of the last era of the world, the Kali Yuga from the Indian tradition, when spiritual knowledge is waning.

Also taken from *Le Voile d’Isis* (the February 1931 issue) is J. H. Probst-Biraben’s essay entitled “Anima-inteligență (Qalb-aqel) în sufism”⁸ (The intelligence-heart: The Sufi Qalb-aqel), a selective introduction to orthodox Sufism, in the “appreciated” company of “Master René Guénon,” the constantly reiterated goal of the essay being to prove the compatibility between Intelligence and Love, as necessary parts of the same Unity. Dedicated to the memory of Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Mustafa Al Alawi (as spelled in *Memra*: Sidi Ahmed ben Aliua⁹), the founder of one of the most important Sufi movements of the twentieth century, Darqawiyya Alawiyya, J. H. Probst-Biraben’s article entitled “Un pas pe calea musulmană: Dhikr-ul”¹⁰ (A step on the Muslim path: The Dhikr), was written especially for *Memra*. Under the umbrella of Guénon’s assertions regarding the genuine status of the spiritual, separated from the positivism which dominates in contemporary universities and scientific laboratories, Probst-Biraben voices a complete eulogy of authentic Sufism, praised for being really rare, and provides a technical description of the ritualistic complex of the Muslim brotherhoods, detailing the spiritual aspects of the Dhikr, a devotional act which implies the ceremonial repetition of the name of Allah, of his divine attributes or of several verses from the Koran. Despite his admiration for the true Sufis, the author does not believe that the mass conversion of Westerners to Islam is possible, or desirable, considering that all forms of tradition—Christian, Judaic, Muslim, Hindu, Taoist—are equally good to follow, because each of them adapts in its specific way the Primordial Doctrine to the particular conditions of different races and historical eras.

René Guénon and J. H. Probst-Biraben are also presented in the final column of *Memra*’s first issue, “Convorbiri”¹¹ (Dialogues), in which *M* (alias Marcel Avramescu) supplies the readers with doctrinal clarifications and a bibliography. The following issue of the journal includes a review of Guénon’s essay *Orient et Occident*,¹² announces¹³ his readiness to collaborate with *Memra* and reproduces a fragment from Luc Benoist’s commentary¹⁴ on the importance of Guénon’s work, extracted from *La Cité Universitaire*. As a fellow of the *Religio Perennis* initiated by René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon also contributes to the 1935 issue of *Memra* with an essay entitled “Irelevanța metafizică a condiției spațiale”¹⁵ (The metaphysical irrelevance of the spatial condition), a fragment taken from *Leitge-*

danken zur Urbesinnung and dedicated to a highly sophisticated demonstration of the incongruence between Truth and space, caused by the inconsistency of space, by its negative virtues which generate only separation and contradiction. Preceded by a note signed *M* (Marcel Avramescu), meant to reaffirm Guénon's law of the absolute transcendence of the Principle in all traditional doctrines, "Li-Tse"¹⁶ reproduces a fragment from a Taoist treatise of the fourth century B.C. (*The Transcendent Book of Void and Perfect Correctness*), taken, along with André Préau's commentary, from the August–September 1932 issue of *Le Voile d'Isis*.

"Cărți"¹⁷ (Books), a column signed *Memra*, once again praises Guénon's works and activity, considered "of primordial significance for the true understanding of the esoteric doctrines." Stemming from a similar absolute admiration towards everything related to Guénon as spiritual phenomenon, the first section of the column entitled "Reviste"¹⁸ (Publications) applauds the nearly forty years' activity of the periodical *Le Voile d'Isis*, founded by Papus (a.k.a. Gérard Encausse) in 1890. *Memra* makes an inventory of the latest contents of the French periodical in its next issue,¹⁹ not forgetting to inform the readers that the tutelary spirit of *Le Voile d'Isis*, René Guénon, signaled the apparition of the Romanian esoteric periodical in the February 1935 issue of the journal. Less generous with local periodicals, Marcel Avramescu publishes a concise critique of *Biblioteca Metapsihică*²⁰ (The Metapsychical Library), a periodical edited in Craiova by Mihai Drăgănescu, specialized in translating fragments from Max Heindel's (1865–1919) works.

Considering that he will be able to continue editing *Memra*, Marcel Avramescu requests a previously unpublished text from Guénon. The Master sends him "Y a-t-il encore des possibilités initiatiques dans les formes traditionnelles occidentales?" (Do Western traditional forms still possess initiatory capabilities?), followed by a period of silence and then by the separation of the two, so the text would be published only in 1973 by Mihail Vălsan, in the 435th issue of *Études traditionnelles*, accompanied by a short history of its elaboration and of its initial destination. The text discusses the virtual initiatory links existing among different Western forms of Tradition, and poses the problem of the existence of a Christian esotericism, conceivable only within the Eastern Orthodox monasticism. Promoted as the only genuine esoteric doctrine—the author asserts—, the Tradition means the direct and uninterrupted transmission in time (*philosophia perennis*) of the primordial wisdom, together with a set of practices by which man can carry it out. Indissolubly linked to the Tradition, the initiation represents its operative part, the process through which the master transmits to the disciple the knowledge he possesses. On the other hand, according to Guénon's teachings, each form of tradition represents a transfiguration of the primordial Tradition, the difference being provided by the formal aspects and by the discourse of the two, and not by the doctrinal essence, which is practically un-

changeable. Due to the hidden equivalence of the doctrines, humans can adhere to the form of tradition inherent to their environment, in perfect harmony with their individual nature. According to the French thinker, the complete form of the Tradition encompasses both the esoteric, identified with the initiatory domain, and the exoteric aspect, identified with the domain of the religions, the rites playing an essential role in their concatenation. The decay of initiatory fervor represents a symptom of crisis in every society, exposed thus to partial degeneration and to the entrapments set forth by the false initiatory movements, which are mostly mystical in nature.

A letter dated 7 November 1937, sent by René Guénon to Vasile Lovinescu, indicates a drastic estrangement of the French writer from Marcel Avramescu, caused by the alleged “charlatan character”²¹ of the latter. In another letter sent to Vasile Lovinescu, dated 10 March 1938, Guénon voices his suspicion towards Anton Dumitriu and Marcel Avramescu, assessing that “the two figures have, more or less, the same value.”²² In 1946, Marcel Avramescu is tempted to resume his relationship with Guénon, writing to Hillel that he “is repenting for his past errors.”²³

The first issue of *Memra* also contains a virulent critique²⁴ of Vasile Lovinescu’s article from the October 1934 issue of *Azi* (Today), dedicated to Bô-Yin-Rà, alias Joseph Anton Schneiderfranken, an occult German scholar not particularly appreciated by René Guénon. Even though Marcel Avramescu insists on the anti-traditional elements found in the work of this alleged ambassador of the famous Great White Lodge, the true motif of his rejection is not Vasile Lovinescu’s positive opinion of Bô-Yin-Rà, but his adhesion to the Iron Guard, as shown by a text bearing the title “O nouă rasă de stăpâni” (A new master race), published in the periodical *Vremea* (The Times) on 18 February 1934. The differences between the two Romanian intellectuals are also reflected by their contrasting attitudes towards Julius Evola, admired by Vasile Lovinescu but disparaged by Marcel Avramescu, who even places him on the same level as Bô-Yin-Rà in a text from 1935, “Câteva aspecte ale pseudo-spiritualismului modern”²⁵ (Several aspects of modern pseudo-spiritualism). The animosities between the two, also fuelled by the role of confidant played by Vasile Lovinescu in the deterioration of the relationship between René Guénon and Marcel Avramescu, did not prevent the latter from praising *Al patrulea hagiialăc* (The fourth pilgrimage), Lovinescu’s esoteric study dedicated to Mateiu I. Caragiale’s novel *Craii de Curtea-Veche*:²⁶ “the nocturnal exegesis of Vasile Lovinescu recommends itself to any intellect . . . and does not need any verdict of ‘external’ value.”²⁷

Mircea Eliade was quite cautious in handling his relation with René Guénon, fearing a backlash with negative effects on his academic career. The cautious attitude also functioned when collaborating with *Memra*, as he was quite pleased by the editorial decision that “articles coming from the Romanian contributors

are to be signed exclusively with pen names²⁸ and contributed texts signed with the pseudonym *KRM*.²⁹ In a pioneering attempt, he offers the readers a translation from the *Katha-Upanishad*,³⁰ preceded by an introductory note where he presents this text as being, according to the Brahman tradition, a section of *The Black Yajurveda (Krishna Yajurveda)*, telling the legend of Nachiketa(s) visit to the kingdom of Yama, the God of the Underworld. The translator insists upon the philosophical significance of the fragment, also revealed by Max Müller, Paul Deussen or Paul Masson-Oursel, but limits himself to drawing attention to its initiatory value, without further elaborating upon it.

Recently returned from India, Mircea Eliade introduces the readers to Aurobindo Ghose (nearly unknown in the Western world at that time, but already legendary in India for being profoundly implicated in his country's fight for independence), as a philosopher, poet, guru and a true model to all those who search the spiritual synthesis between the Eastern and the Western worlds. Known as "The Integral Yoga" (or Supramental Yoga, as it has been called), Sri Aurobindo's system scrutinizes the evolution of the human race as striving towards self-perfection and the true union with the Divine. In his article published in *Memra*, "Un reprezentant al tradiției hinduse: Sri Aurobindo"³¹ (A representative of the Hindu tradition: Sri Aurobindo), the Romanian scholar praises the Bengalese yogi as "the most 'accomplished' man in today's India," his ashram in Pondicherry being "perhaps the only place where traditional science and traditional technique are sheltered from theosophical stupidities and positivistic irrelevance." Skeptical as regards a possible visit of Mircea Eliade to Pondicherry, Liviu Bordaș³² suggests that Mircea Eliade's memory of the place is indebted to Jenny Isaacson, Eliade's former "Tantric" companion in Rishikesh and the prototype for Jenny Isaac from *Maitreyi*, a former visitor to Sri Aurobindo's ashram. The correspondence with her, and the discovery of the book *Essays on the Gita* (1928), of which Eliade had probably heard in Calcutta for the first time, where Sri Aurobindo's name meant a lot, represented more than a starting point for the text published in *Memra*.

In his presentation of Sri Aurobindo's works and doctrine, Mircea Eliade also inserts one of his rare appreciations of René Guénon: "Together with René Guénon's *Introduction à l'Étude des Doctrines Hindoues*, Aurobindo Ghose's book [*Essays on the Gita*] is the only authorized work concerning traditional Indian truths." Through these words, Mircea Eliade invests both authors with the same attribute of authority, despite Guénon's bad feeling that Sri Aurobindo does not write the texts on his own, the alleged culprits for the editing being several suspicious French zealots. It is also true that Guénon ignored the very serious Western education Aurobindo had received, at the behest of his father who wanted to keep his sons away from the "dated and backward mysticism of India."³³

Despite its camouflage under pseudonyms, Mircea Eliade's collaboration with the periodical *Memra* did not go unnoticed by contemporaries, an ironic "Program of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Bucharest for the Year 1935"³⁴ mocking the intellectual obsessions of the new generation. We can learn from it that Emil Cioran teaches here as a member of the "Chair of Despair," Mihail Sebastian belongs to the department of "Biological Metaphysics," while Mircea Eliade belongs to the department of "Fakirism," and is tenured for a course entitled "The Perpetuity of the Non-Harmful Integral Wisdom," with practical seminars held by "Fakir Wady" and "Fakir Avramescu."

IN A further text entitled "Gnosis,"³⁵ also published in *Memra*, Marcel Avramescu draws the profile of the *traditional civilization* and reviews the different phases of the decay of the Western world, until the present stage of supremacy exercised by what is material, which is the clearest symptom of any spiritual decadence. Founded on Knowledge—understood by the author as the synchronizing process of the intellect and the profoundness of Truth, or as a bridge between the human spirit and the higher realm of metaphysics—the elements of the traditional civilization continue to exist in a few contemporary civilizations (Chinese, Tibetan, Islamic or Hindu), but after medieval Christianity they had become less and less present in Europe, whose culture was negatively marked by the Renaissance, the Reformation and the revolutions. The superimposition of the power of the material upon man marks the last step in the diabolical decay of Western civilization, regeneration being possible only through the rightful path of Knowledge, "the only means that can restore the spiritual balance in man, and traditional order within the world."

The spiritual imbalance is also deepened by the chaos of false Doctrines, carefully analyzed by Marcel Avramescu in "Several Aspects of Modern Pseudo-Spiritualism,"³⁶ a true indictment of Allan Kardec's spiritualism, Papus' occultism, Helena Blavatsky's theosophy, Charles Webster Leadbeater's liberal Catholicism, Rudolf Steiner's antroposophy, Bô-Yin-Rà's messianic anthropocentrism or Julius Evola's philosophical concepts. "He who seeks the true Doctrine today"—Marcel Avramescu says—"cannot find it except in the East, where the Tradition is still alive." East means Orthodoxy too, of course, understood in the true meaning of the word as universality, as "accordance with those Principles" which are equivalent to Truth. By this conceptual and esoteric reasoning, Marcel Avramescu transforms his subtle reverence in front of René Guénon into a discrete eulogy of the spiritual virtues of the Eastern Orthodoxy, developed in a spiritual landscape of continuous transferences between East and West, and announces his future plea for a conciliation between Guénon's esotericism and Orthodox Christianity.



Notes

1. *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* (Bucharest) 1, 1 (December 1934), inside cover 1.
2. Memra, "Criterii," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 1.
3. Moshe Idel, "On Paradise in Jewish Mysticism," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 10, 30 (Winter 2011): 17.
4. "Mysticism is, more than other forms of religion, a matter of experiencing a certain form of plenitude" (ibid.).
5. Yang, "Tradiția hermetică," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 6–10.
6. René Guénon, "Învățătura inițiativă," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 2–5.
7. René Guénon, "Condițiile inițierii," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 5–8.
8. Dr. J. H. Probst-Biraben, "Inima-inteligență (Qalb-aqel) în sufism," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 11–13.
9. His death is commemorated in the final section of the journal. M., "Convorbiri," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 30.
10. J. H. Probst-Biraben, "Un pas pe calea musulmană: Dhikr-ul," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 9–14.
11. M., "Convorbiri," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 18.
12. Memra, "Cărți," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 27–28.
13. M., "Convorbiri," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 30.
14. Ibid.
15. Frithjof Schuon, "Ire relevanța metafizică a condiției spațiale," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 21.
16. "Li-Tse," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 22–26.
17. Memra, "Cărți," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 17.
18. Mem, "Reviste," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 17.
19. Memra, "Reviste," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 29.
20. Ibid.
21. Cf. Claudio Mutti, *Guénon în România: Eliade, Vălsan, Geticus și ceilalți. Succesul lui Guénon printre români*, trans. by Elena Pîrvu, preface by Florin Mihăescu, with a presentation by Enrico Montanari (Bucharest: Vreamea, 2003), 97.
22. Ibid., 100.
23. Ibid., 101.
24. Mem, "Reviste," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 17–18.
25. Yang, "Câteva aspecte ale pseudo-spiritualismului modern," *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 16.
26. The title is difficult to translate. Suggestions include *The Lords of the Ancient Court* or *Princes of Bygone Times*.
27. Mihail Avramescu, *Monolog nocturn—în aforisme, anecdote și aproximații—despre Suverana Slobozenie a Singurătății între neființă și nebunie, precedat de 49 Sentințe apo-*

- dictice cu privire la Destinul cititorului*, preface by Andrei Pleșu, ed. Mariana Macri (Bucharest: Paideia, 2001), 72.
28. *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 19.
 29. Claudio Mutti attributes this pseudonym to the consonants from the Sanskrit noun “karma” or to the Arabic root “karīm” (Mutti, 110). Liviu Bordaș adds that “krîm,” Kāli-mantra from the Tantric cult, would be a more probable reason: Liviu Bordaș, “Secretul doctorului Eliade,” *Origini: Caiete silvane* (Zalău) 1 (2002): 85. Marcel Tolcea believes that the pseudonym KRM hides the consonants of the forename *Mircea* in a reverse order: Marcel Tolcea, “Memra’ – câteva deslușiri despre singura publicație românească de inspirație guénoniană,” <http://reneguenon339.blogspot.com/2011/09/memra-cateva-deslusiri-despre-singura.html>, 28 March 2012.
 30. KRM, “Katha-Upanishad,” *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 1 (December 1934): 13–16.
 31. KRM, “Un reprezentant al tradiției hinduse: Sri Aurobindo,” *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 19–20.
 32. Bordaș, 78–79.
 33. Angela Mayer, *Minienciclopedia înțelepților: Secolele XIX–XX*, trans. by Rodica Chirculescu (n.p.: RAM Publishing Company, 1995), 10.
 34. “Program al Facultății de Filosofie din București pe anul 1935,” *Revista burgheză* (Bucharest) 1, 6 (20 February 1935): 34–35.
 35. Memra, “Gnosis,” *Memra: Studii de tradiție ezoterică* 1, 2–5 (January–April 1935): 3–4.
 36. Yang, “Câteva aspecte ale pseudo-spiritualismului modern,” 15–18.

Abstract

Memra: The First Romanian Esoteric Journal

Still poorly known and only sporadically approached in the intellectual history of the period, Marcel Avramescu is the key figure of Romanian interwar esotericism. He founded *Memra* (1934), the only interwar Romanian esoteric periodical, and played the role of 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 made-up and eccentric names and signatures (Jonathan 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 present study analyzes Marcel Avramescu’s activity as the editor of *Memra*, his relationship with René Guénon, as reflected in several esoteric theoretical texts he authored, and the socio-cultural profile of 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