

***ManifestAzioni. Il manifesti avanguardisti tra performance e performatività* – Alessandro Catalano, Massimo Maurizio and Roberto Merlo (eds.). 2014.**

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*ManifestAzioni. Il manifesti avanguardisti tra performance e performatività* consists of a collection of articles presented at a conference organized by the Centre of Studies „Arti della Modernità” and which was held in March 2012 at the University of Torino. This conference brought together contributions from the most important countries in which the Avant-garde had a crucial aesthetic development in what concerns the literature of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The contributors were American and European literary critiques and theoreticians who are interested in what Avant-Garde literary phenomenon means. The result of this event is this specialized volume which surprises us with its extremely startling contents, studies which insist on the aspect of text as being a performative act and studies which reinterpret the text as being in a strong relationship with the idea of action. Among the studies we can find different types of experiments which are related to the Avant-Garde literary concept, starting with the Central-Europe area, crossing the borders of Italy, France, England, Romania, Poland, Czech Republic or Russia without leaving behind the American manifesto.

The first study is entitled “The literary manifesto – text, discourse, action” and belongs to Rodica Ilie. It is a congenial study which can be seen as an inaugural one for the whole volume because of its coverings and complexity. Ilie explores Paul Ricœur’s theory of seeing the manifesto as an event and, at the same time, as a translation of the event into language. Unlike Ricœur, Ilie uses the relationship between text and action as a pertinent way of underlying the importance of manifesto in the evolution of literature and, moreover, of its influence over the followers. Her study represents a reinforcement of the theory that the manifesto is a strongly sympathetic way of making literature and also a powerful expression of the ideological tension, politically and socially speaking: “it has to be regarded both as an intrinsic performative genre and the extrinsic trigger of creative cultural energies

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since it enhances disputes, confrontations, factional actions, affinities and ruptures, affiliations and divorces within literary coteries and groups” (Ilie 2014, 9). Moreover, Ilie underlines that this ideological character of the manifesto is not aggressive and does not make use of a persuasive tone. The theory is sustained by making eloquent text analysis of Marinetti, Tzara, Apollinaire, Kokoschka, Pessoa, Breton, or Mayakovsky. She establishes also a relationship between *utterance* and *uttering* and between *locutionary*, *illocutionary* and *perlocutionary* acts which are specific to the manifesto formula of elaborating the message first as a linguistic act, then as a gestural act and also as a social, cultural or political accomplishment:

The manifesto can also be understood as an illocutionary act because it condenses (by means of rhetoric, gestures and attitude) a sum of potential energies, acting as a stimulus for the plenitude of performance at the cultural level. This illocutionary force brings forth, as a perlocutionary outcome, a manner of complete existence (Ilie 2014, 13)

From the outset, Rodica Ilie states that the manifesto is a performance, an act of discourse, of text and of action, all at once, reconverting the manifesto into counter-theory and anti-theory:

The manifesto is the literary species with, perhaps, the most distinct final cause, its teleological character being enhanced not only by its ideological nature, but also by its programmatic, performative and dogmatic attributes. Therefore, the manifesto illustrates all the features of a complete speech act (Ilie 2014, 10).

The manifesto represents a stopwatch between tradition and novelty, between conservative and experimental groups because it perpetuates the exchange of culture and activates the intercultural transfer function says the author of the study. She extends Ricœur’s theory and underlines that in what concerns the manifesto the *function of exchange* is much more amplified by its universal, vivacious and dynamic nature. Ilie’s study counts as a framework for what is to follow, as she attempts to broaden the currency of Avant-garde manifesto and to establish the general context based on which the literary manifesto had developed. The readers may benefit from Ilie’s extensive knowledge of the Avant-garde movement as it will grant them a better understanding over the following studies.

The Avant-garde manifesto is more likely a *performative* act in a theatrical way and not in a rhetorical one. This aspect is very well illustrated by B. Zandrio who believes that the manifesto is an extremely interactive linguistic act which obtains its performative character and its connotative value as a perlocutionary and illocutionary act. The manifesto does not mean only the expression of a conviction; it is also the performance of an ethic and aesthetic philosophy.

The studies proliferate on the subject and the answers show themselves in the next articles. This argument is the best embodied by Eleonora Di Mario who provides an important literary perspective and speaks about the manifesto as being a formal one, an experiment which prepared the road for a new way of making art. The manifesto, says di Mario, permits a more intentional value, and does not forget that *poiesis* compulsory when it comes of art.

Consequently, there are a few attempts to contextualise the manifesto as a new order, a new reaction to the decadent and chaotic cultures. One of the attempts belongs to Sergej Birjukov who speaks about the Russian Avant-garde, the futurism of Michail Larionov' group, and concludes that this literary group dealt with a general type of manifesto, which had a few provocative elements, however it still rises attention through a well-defined poetics.

The literary manifesto had a paradoxical nature. However, it was a powerful movement which influenced the literature and raised radical opinions because of its expressivity and elaborated discourse. Another interesting essay is the one of Alessandro Catalano who sets up a theoretical framework of the literary manifesto as a connection between cubism, futurism and poetry in what concerns the Czech literature. He concludes that the Czech Avant-garde includes an elaborated system which is based on constructivism, autonomy and also on powerful emotions; this is why in what concerns the Czech literature we can still speak about a *manifesto in progress*.

No matter which culture we speak about, the Avant-garde manifesto had an important influence over its followers. For example, Emilia Parpală, in her study "Rhetorical acts, performative acts. Urmuz and the (meta)manifestos of Romanian Avant-garde", speaks about the fact that Urmuz was a forerunner of the Revolt because he anticipated Dadaism, Surrealism or the Absurdism and this is how Romania 'exported' the Avant-garde. Due to his specific disjunctive irony, Urmuz had a great influence over the Romanian Avant-garde as his works gained also advertising and poetic character in all the three specific directions: constructivism, integralism and surrealism. Her study underlines also that the seed of de-canonization, produced by Urmuz's anti-literature as a rhetorical act, had its roots as a performative act in Romanian and world Avant-garde. For all that, Parpală states that Urmuz does not reach the radicalism of the Dadaist movement. However, his specific discourse based on cohesion and parody cannot be denied (Parpală 2014, 63). The author of the study cleared out that the pre-avant-garde rhetoric model caused a vehement contesting not only of literature, but of all arts; at the same time their revitalization was welcomed, because it restored the contact with life, with the referent, with ideology (Parpală 2014, 69). The conclusion of Parpală's study is that Urmuz and his anti-literature inspired the Romanian Avant-garde mainly through the argumentative force of the stylistic model.

Related to the same subject, Rebecca Beasley speaks about the *radical realism* and *vorticist* manifestos in Ezra Pound's works and argues that the

modernist manifesto was not emptied out of its avant-garde content, as Puchner suggests. She convinces us that

The impact of the manifesto on the war-time poetry of Ezra Pound was not simply a formal impact. The manifesto offered a model of how one might perform an oppositional stance, which allowed one to critique, first, the contemporary political situation, and subsequently, history more broadly, and it did this by offering a model of what Pound and Lewis called *realism* (Beasley 2014, 134).

After she offers us a good understanding of what vorticism and radical realism means, the author sustains her theory with pertinent arguments regarding Pound's works, *Blast*, *Vortex*, *Pound*, *In a station of Metro* or *Dogmatic Statement on the Game and Play of Chess (Theme for a Series of Pictures)*. Beasley's analysis over Pound's *Canto IV* suggests that he learned from the vorticism a method of representing history: "In contrast to his own over-scholarly, self-consciously mediated descriptions, Pound commends the vorticist artists for representing history, both past and present, more simply, more vigorously, and in an effectively compressed form" (Beasley 2014, 143). However, she concludes that Puchner was not totally wrong and that manifestos and avant-garde collectives are a relatively rare phenomenon in British modernism.

Once and for all, the volume intended to make a comparative analysis between the ways in which the manifesto and the Avant-garde developed depending on each culture and I dare to say that it achieved its goal. As it is a very complex phenomenon, the manifesto remains also extremely interesting and raises discussions and opinions. Nonetheless, this compilation of studies is a gladly received contribution to the Central-European literature in what concerns the manifesto and, more broadly, the Avant-garde literature.

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