

Appropriations: Competing Modernisms in Transylvanian Railway Architecture, 1930s - 1940s

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During the interwar period, the North-Western Romanian territory, unified with the Old Kingdom at the end of World War I, remained a battlefield: besides the political and administrative appropriation of the united regions, a symbolic “taking into possession”¹ was very much at stake too. Thereby, public buildings played a prominent role as national-cohesion signifiers. In architecture, nationalism and modernity, while apparently complementary cultural goals, brought forth stylistic dilemmas and debates. Furthermore, the Hungarian annexation of Northern Transylvania between 1940 and 1944 occasioned competing territorial-appropriation discourses, made visible through architectural signifiers as well. While the Paris Peace Treaties returned Northern Transylvania to Romania, public architecture produced immediately before and during World War II reflected re-appropriation discourses through hybrid stylistic choices, idiosyncratically mediating between vernacular sources, Classicism and Modernism.

Meanwhile, railways held an exceptionally privileged status among the public institutions of the interwar period. In Romania, as well as in the states of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, railway systems became powerful centralized institutions after 1900, through the nationalization of the initial, privately owned and operated lines. The states’ “second armies,” symbols of progressive agency during the interwar decades, state railway companies, whether in Romania or in Hungary, ran architectural design services and represented foremost mission providers for industrial, public, and residential architecture. Investigating the 1930s - 1940s architecture of Transylvanian rail lines, the paper outlines symbolic appropriation battle lines, addressing a few key questions. How did railway architects deal with the national-versus-modern stylistic dilemmas of the interbellum? Were there clear-cut differences between the architectural options of the Romanian and the Hungarian railway production of the period? Conversely, beyond these differences, was there a similar *Zeitgeist* at work? How did railway architects stylistically respond to the increased political radicalization around World War II?

Historiographical Contexts

Against the backdrop of general reappraisal conferred upon the interwar period within the Romanian post-1990 historiography, architecture has enjoyed special attention. Considered against the communist period’s compromises and failures, many achievements of the Romanian interbellum architecture became, comparatively, reference models, revisited by contemporary practice in search for reliable quality standards. These cultural landmarks have been brought back into public attention through academic research, including articles, exhibition catalogues,

1 Carmen Popescu, *Le style national roumain. Construire une nation à travers l’architecture. 1881 – 1945* (Rennes: Presse Universitaires de Rennes; Bucharest: Simetria, 2004), 206-207.

monographs or thematic surveys.² However, the railway context remains a hitherto underused lens for the study of autochthonous interwar architecture.

Internationally, a still emerging and by excellence interdisciplinary field, railway history has been so far dominated by technological and economic aspects.³ In this context, the paper aims at contributing to the knowledge of Romanian railway architecture as a cultural signifier, adding to and deepening the rather few railway architectural history studies. A focus on the interbellum seems therefore all the more relevant, since in railway historiography generally this is usually outshined by the antebellum period, perceived as railway's heydays. Drawing on surveys conducted by the authors, on historical documents and on analogy and comparison, the research outlines an ordering and contextualized perspective of interwar railway architecture in the North-Western Romanian territory, imprecisely henceforth referred to as Transylvania (Fig. 1).⁴ We address the architectural language, more specifically on stylistic aspects of the most representative railway edifice type - the passenger buildings. The latter are studied both synchronically, by identifying and comparing station classes belonging to the same family, and diachronically, by relating stylistic choices to the period's geopolitical upheavals and cultural discourses.

Precedents

Crystallized in parallel with other national applied arts and architecture schools, characteristic throughout Europe about 1900, the Neo-Romanian (National) style developed around the founding figure of Ion Mincu (1852-1912), and became the official pre-World War I architectural language in the Old Kingdom. Pleading for an architecture simultaneously "modern" and "national," the promoters of the Neo-Romanian style expressed their visions through both their practice and in programmatic texts, especially after 1906 - first-issue date of the national magazine, *Arhitectura*. Architectural Modernism came forth relatively late and only theoretically at first. Symptomatically, it was only in the late 1930s that *Arhitectura* began publishing modernist architects' projects and buildings. Moreover, the small autochthonous architects' community was divided between traditionalists and modernists.⁵

Before World War I, the coupling of nationalism and modernity had operated convincingly as ideological substrate of the theorization and practical deployment of the Neo-Romanian

- 2 Some examples include: Carmen Popescu (ed.), *Spațiul modernității românești 1906-1947* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Arhitect Design, 2011); Carmen Popescu, Ruxandra Demetrescu and Irina Cărăbaș, *Dis(continuități). Fragmente, de modernitate românească în prima jumătate a secolului al XX-lea* (Bucharest: Simetria, 2010); Paul Cernat, *Avangarda românească și complexul periferiei. Primul val* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2007); Tom Sandqvist, *Dada East. The Romanians of Cabaret Voltaire* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2006); Luminița Machedon and Ernie Scoffham, *Romanian Modernism. The Architecture of Bucharest* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999). ***, *București, anii 1920-1940: între avangardă și modernism* (Bucharest: Ed. Simetria, 1994); Nicolae Lascu, Ana Maria Zahariade and Anca Bocăneț, *Horia Creangă. Catalogul expoziției organizate la împlinirea a 100 de ani de la naștere* (Bucharest: Uniunea Arhitecților din România and the Ministry of Culture, 1992).
- 3 Günther Dinohobl (ed.), *Eisenbahn/Kultur Railway/Culture* (Vienna: Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs 7, 2004); Ralf Roth and Marie-Noëlle Polino (eds.), *The city and the railway in Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Michael Freeman, "The Railway as Cultural Metaphor. 'What Kind of Railway History' Revisited," *Journal of Transport History* 2/20 (1999): 160-166.
- 4 There are two main ways in which scholars use the name Transylvania: the first, restrictive meaning, refers to the intra-Carpathian region, corresponding to the historic Great Principality of Transylvania (1526 - 1865); the second, more encompassing, yet contested meaning, denotes the entire North-Western region of today's Romania, corresponding to the territory united after World War I to the Old Romanian Kingdom, including, besides the former Principality, also the *Partium* regions - Crișana, Sătmăr, Maramureș and Banat. Notwithstanding its being contested among historians, the second, large-encompassing meaning is used here.
- 5 Gabriela Tabacu, "Arhitect Florea Stănculescu or on Modernism in the Romanian Interwar Architecture as Negotiation between *Genius Loci* and *Zeitgeist*," *studies in History and Theory of Architecture* 2 (2014): 52-76.

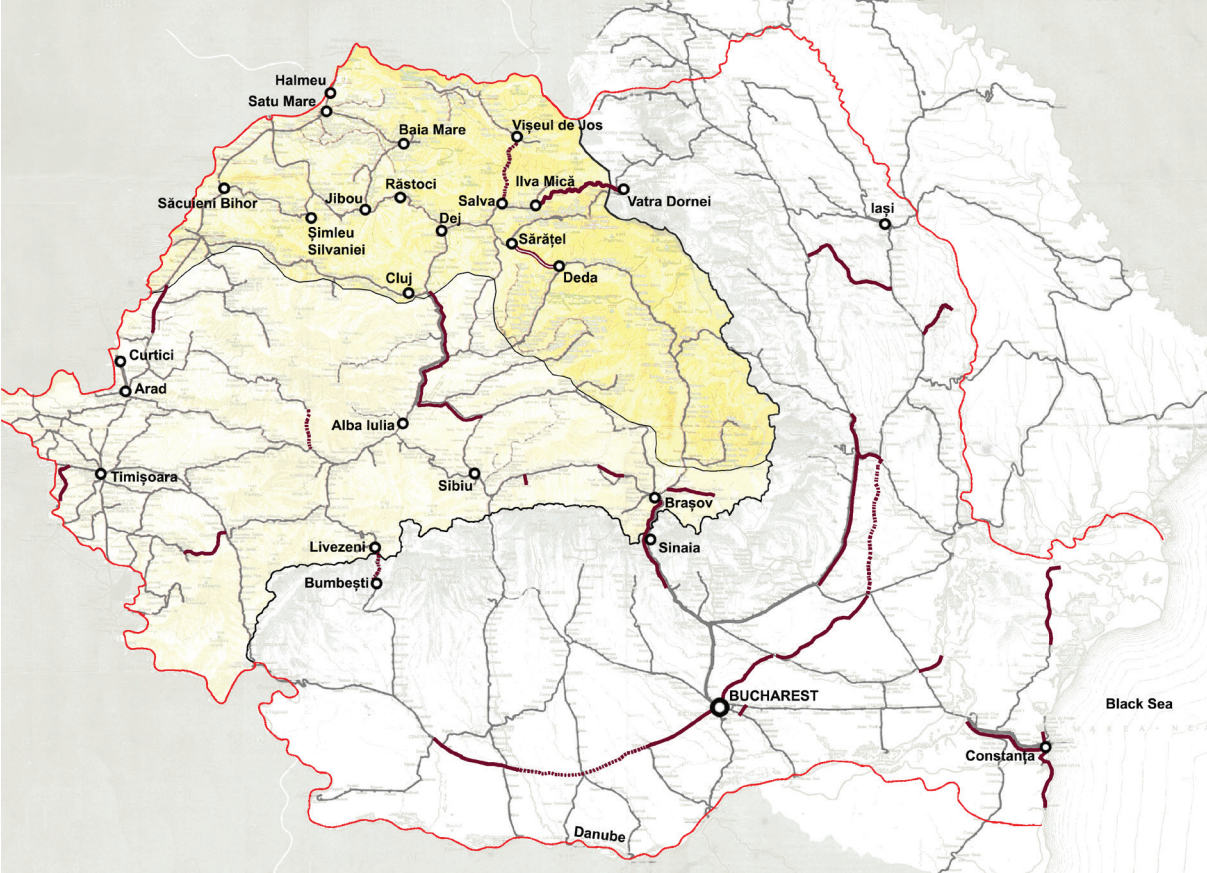


Fig. 1: Edited map of the interwar Romanian railway network
 Borders and territories: red contour: present-day borders of Romania; black contour, dark and light yellow: studied territory; black contour, dark yellow: territory occupied by Hungary between 1940 and 1944
 Railway lines: continuous dark red: railway lines built between 1919 and 1944; continuous dark red and grey: railway lines doubled between 1919 and 1944; dotted dark red: interwar railway lines finished after 1944; dark red and white: line built by MAV between 1940-1944

style, for at that time modernity in arts and architecture was conceived as regional or national detachment from Academism. On the other hand, during the interbellum, the same two ideals - nationalism and modernity - proved more difficult to be coherently conveyed through the language of architecture. Keen to proclaim both its Romanian-ness and its attachment to modernity, the interwar Romanian society from Transylvania was thus faced with a stylistic dilemma. While in the Old Kingdom nationalism did not require an ostentatious display any longer, since Greater Romania (*România Mare*) had been achieved, for the recently united territories, the Neo-Romanian style seemed naturally proper. Carmen Popescu highlights the National Style's role as "territorial unifier through its vocabulary that claims to be a synthesis of tradition." Referring to the style's interwar deployment, she coins the expression "architecture of taking into possession, exalting the values of Romanian-ness in the annexed territories."⁶

During the 1920s and the 1930s public and private architecture in the National Style proliferated in the new territories of Greater Romania, although in the Old Kingdom the proponents of Modernism contested the traditionalist paradigm. However, in the Old Kingdom too, modernist architecture only developed via private (often residential) developments during the late 1920s, before its growing adoption for public buildings as well, triggered by the economic crisis of 1929-1933. The Government sought to counter the crisis's effects by stimulating investment in the building sector, especially through the Act of 1930. In Bucharest especially, the post-World War I housing shortage, combined with the economic crisis and

6 Popescu, *Le style national*, 206-207 (our translation).

the progressive views of professional and private business circles, became favoring factors that privileged Modernism's stylistic austerity against Academism's or National Style's elaborate decoration.⁷ In Transylvania, however, in the late 1930s, important Neo-Romanian-style public edifices for health, culture or education were still created. As a case in point, one may evoke the extensive deployment of the National Style in the remote coal-mining Jiu Valley in southern Transylvania, for representative architecture including the monumental townhall, cultural palace, clinics and higher-rank employee housing.

Regarding railway architecture, in the Old Kingdom, a more elaborate formal language emerges before World War I, departing from historicism and typical for the first generation of railway edifices, initially built by foreign concessionaires. Toader Popescu identifies a CFR style (CFR - Romanian Railways - *Căile Ferate Române*) of the 1880s, followed by the gradual appropriation of the National Style around 1900. Among the pre-World War I mature architectural achievements of the CFR may be highlighted: Calafat (1895), Râmnicu Sărat (1897), Curtea de Argeș (1898), Ploiești Nord (1908), Oltenița (1910), Obor Station in Bucharest (c1910), Piatra Neamț (1913), Buzău (1915), culminating with the unbuilt National-Style project for the capital's central station (eng. A. Periețeanu, arch. V. Ștefănescu, 1913).⁸

Stylistic Dilemmas

The pre-World War I Transylvanian railway stations feature historicist stylistic idioms, firstly of Gothic-Revival inspiration (the original buildings of the First Transylvanian Railway trunk line, Arad - Alba Iulia, open in 1868, the first stations of Arad and Oradea, both open in 1858); then of more austere declinations, deploying classicist features (original buildings of Oradea - Cluj - Brașov line, open in 1873); thereafter embracing Eclecticism around the turn of the twentieth century (e.g. the stations of the second generation, such as Timișoara, 1897, Cluj, 1902, Oradea, 1902, Brașov and Sibiu, c. 1906, Teiuș, 1908, Arad, 1905-1910) and Secessionist motifs, searching for a national-Hungarian stylistic formula (such as Teiuș, 1908 or Războieni, c. 1910). Thus, the buildings inherited by the CFR from the MAV (Hungarian State Railways - *Magyar Államvasutak*) had a strong historicist character, denoting their stemming from the much-despised - at that time - Dualist Monarchy. Therefore, the National Style might have allured to the interbellum railway authorities. Considered against this background, the commitment of the CFR for proclaiming the railway's progressive symbolism through the modernity, the up-to-datedness of its architecture, is even more noteworthy.

During the interwar period, for Transylvanian railways the traditionalist paradigm would almost only be deployed for CFR employee housing, since these were based on standard projects, elaborated before the war. The apartment buildings in Cluj, Timișoara or Satu Mare, belong to this family. An exception for Transylvania is the National Style building at Budila (Brașov - Întorsura Buzăului line, 1923-1931). A triad of factors may explain the decided, yet rather surprising favoring of Modernism in the interbellum Transylvanian railway architecture: programmatic factors - railway transportation has a universal character, by excellence; practical factors - the implicit (though not precise) association of railway architecture with industrial architecture and therefore the option for a rational approach to building, further stimulated by the 1929-1933 economic crisis; subjective factors - the progressive personal views of the architects working in or employed by the CFR administration.

In the theoretical sphere, the dilemma of "national" versus "modern" was, as already mentioned, intensely debated within the professional circles. As shown by Gabriela Tabacu, a rather

7 Anca Bocăneț, "Epoca lui Horia Creangă. Contextul introducerii și asimilării stilului modernist în arhitectura interbelică românească" in *Horia Creangă. Catalogul expoziției organizate la împlinirea a 100 de ani de la naștere*, Nicolae Lascu, Ana Maria Zahariade, Anca Bocăneț (Bucharest: UAR and the Ministry of Culture, 1992), 14-20.

8 Toader Popescu, *Proiectul feroviar românesc (1842-1916)* (Bucharest: Simetria, 2014), 199-237.

original position was that of architect Florea Stănculescu (1887-1973), who defended a stylistic approach according to building types.⁹ Interestingly, in Stănculescu's 1935 article "Romanian Style - Modern Style," the railway buildings might fall in two categories.¹⁰ Even if he does not explicitly mention railway stations among the first group of building types which, "through their destination, require universal character," these could be naturally counted with "a retail store, a hotel, a bank, a theatre, a *blok-haus* (sic), a silo, etc., [that] are international through the concept of their program and therefore also through its materialization."¹¹ On the other hand, other building types "require local character: a house in a park, a country house, a watchman house along the country's road, a tavern, etc."¹⁴ Meanwhile, the universal – versus local stylistic dilemma has always been intrinsic to railway architecture. In his famous 1855 treatise, French railway engineer Auguste Perdonnet recommended monumentality (universal, classical grandeur) for larger stations, paired by a chameleonic integration in context for the small stations, which were to appropriate regional features.¹²

It must be stressed that, typically for the professional community at the time, some architects in charge of the CFR's drafting services were long-standing promoters of the traditional paradigm, while others were advocates of Modernism. Among the former, one may mention Victor Ștefănescu (1877-1950), Ioan Niga (1888-?), architect in the CFR General Department between 1919 and 1937, initially architect of the MAV (1909-1918),¹³ and Constantin Pomponiu (1887-1945), chief architect of the CFR's social welfare *Casa Muncii*, author of the CFR allotment Nicolina, Iași (1922-1935).¹⁴ On the other hand, Tiberiu Niga, Ioan Niga's son, was a major proponent of Modernism and a collaborator of Duiliu Marcu's, the architect of the CFR's administrative Palace (1934-1937, today the headquarters of the Ministry of Transports).¹⁵

CFR's Transylvanian Modernism

The following three sections discuss noteworthy chapters for the 1930s production of the CFR in Transylvania, proof of the institution's embracement of Modernism, as the representative vehicle best conveying both societal prestige and progressive ambitions, and Transylvania's belonging to a country firmly engaging modernity.

The Someș Valley Standard Projects

During 1936-1937, seven new reception buildings were created along the Dej - Jibou railway line, five (Cițcău, Gălgău, Glodu Someșului, Răstoci, Băbuțeni) being reconstructions, while two (Căpâlna pe Someș, Rus) being entirely new stations (Fig. 2). The same standard project has been deployed at Leghia (Oradea - Cluj line). The line had been opened in 1890 by the private Society of the Someș Valley Railways, as a development of Transylvania's trunk railway system. It connected Dej and implicitly the Oradea - Cluj line (open in 1870) with the railways of Maramureș, having reached Satu Mare in 1871 and Baia Mare in 1884.¹⁶ The original

9 Tabacu. "Arhitect Florea Stănculescu": 52-76.

10 Florea Stănculescu, "Stil Românesc - stil modern," *Arhitectura* 1 (1935): 13-14.

11 Ibid.

12 Auguste Perdonnet, *Traité élémentaire des chemins de fer* (Paris: Langlois et Leclercq, 1855-1866), Vol. 2, 112-118.

13 Mădălin Ghigeanu, "Profil de excelență în arhitectura interbelică românească: Tiberiu Niga." *Arhitectura* 11 (2001).

14 Andrei Voinea, "File of the architect Constantin Pomponiu," *Un secol de arhitectură românească - on-line encyclopedia*, <http://www.e-architecture.ro/fisa.php?id=709>, last accessed May 16, 2019.

15 Mariana Croitoru. "File of architect Duiliu Marcu," *Un secol de arhitectură românească - on-line encyclopedia*: <http://www.e-architecture.ro/fisa.php?id=710>, last accessed May 27, 2019.

16 Hermann Strach (ed.), *Geschichte der Eisenbahnen der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* (Vienna: Karl Prochaska, 1898-1899, Vol. XII): 30.

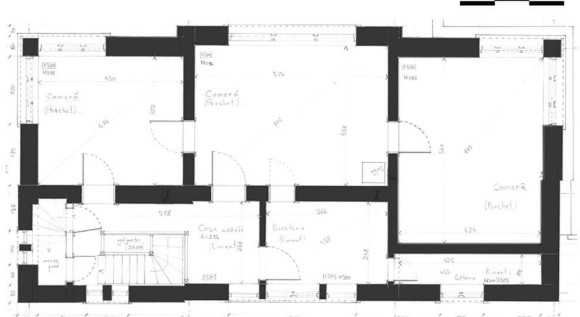
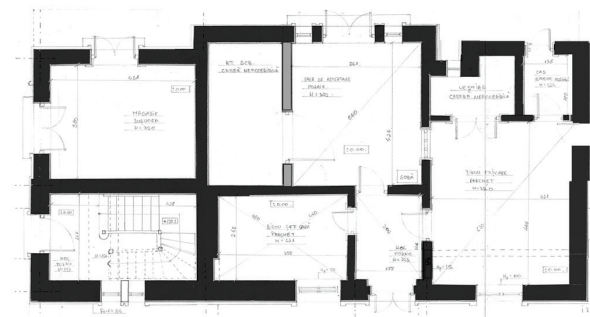
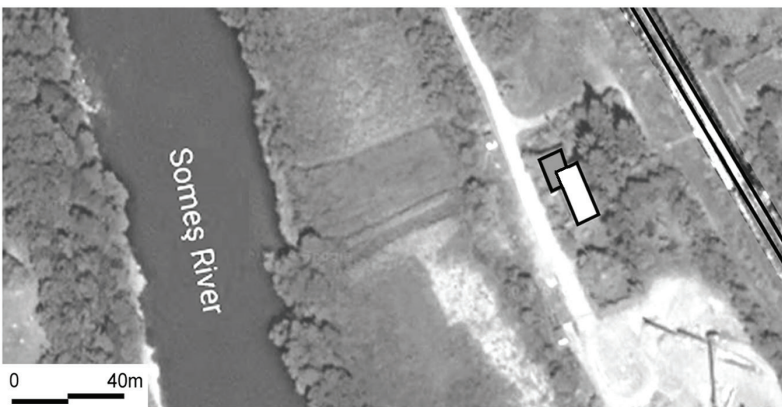


Fig. 2: Up to down, left to right: Galgău and Rus passenger buildings: railway-side views. Răstoci station site plan. Răstoci passenger building: railway-side façade; river-side façade; ground floor plan; upper floor plan

stations belonged to the Dej architectural family, such as the extant ones in Letca and Ileanda. The extension was probably triggered by the increased traffic needs. The station yards were prolonged, and the reception buildings were replaced by considerably larger new ones. Opened in 1937, according to the CFR records, all seven buildings deploy the same standard project, apart from Răstoci, where the latter has been altered, as subsequently discussed.¹⁷

The planimetric configuration of the stations is simple and compact, featuring both the asymmetry and dynamism of the 1920s and early 1930s International Style. Of relatively small size (c. 8m x 17m), the plan displays three successive bays along the axis parallel to the railway, the central one slightly broader than the side ones. Two uneven bays make up the short side: the bay of the main rooms (station chief's office, waiting room, traffic office) overlooking the rails and the secondary bay (stairs, travelers' hall, cashier's desk and ticket office, archive) overlooking the access road and village. The stair and station chief's office (connected through an inner door) are detached from the rest of the plan, through a slight setback from the railway-facing facade, respectively, through a slight outward projection from the opposite one. The volume of the station chief's office and the above apartment room, slightly withdrawn from both adjacent facades, creates a subtle asymmetric vertical accent, through its plan layout and through the attic's heightening.

The station is built of load-bearing brick masonry and reinforced-concrete floor slabs. Rainwater is collected in a gutter along the building's single overhanging eaves, on the facade opposite to the rails. On the other three sides of the building, the metal sheet roof is masked by heightened attics, to convey the "modern" image of a terraced roof building. The horizontal shadows of the wall profiles and window sills, outlining the entire building's perimeter, confer an abstract, purist aspect to the smoothly plastered, light-cream painted volume. The composition privileges the railway-side image of the building, the railway side thus appearing as more important than the settlement side.

The facades configure a series of stylistic elements, characteristic both to International Style Modernism and to Art Deco, the latter often hybridizing Romanian Modernism. Grouping the door and window openings in horizontal friezes, by projecting framing profiles, highlights horizontality through proportions and relief, the vertical supports between the windows being recessed. First floor and attic corner windows are also configured to privilege horizontal continuity, using the profiled frame, in contrast to the recessed corner pillar. A modernist architectural feature by excellence, the corner windows emphasize even more the composition's accent volume: the station chief's office and the first-floor living room. The doors towards the platforms are covered by a reinforced concrete projecting slab, a strong unifying element for the rail-facing facade, highlighting the horizontal dominants as well as the asymmetry of the accent volume. In contrast, the bays corresponding to the waiting rooms and the traffic officer's room, brought in the same plan and volumetrically integrated through a small offset wing towards the rails, are treated symmetrically. The plastic formula of grouping the three doors symmetrically as to the central axis of the volume, with the corresponding three windows of the first floor and attic, grouped in friezes, decline rather Art Deco's classical elegance than Modernism's asymmetric dynamism. Another relatively ambiguous stylistic feature is the insertion of the CFR logo, an abstracted representation of the winged wheel, in the symmetry axis of the accent volume, the volume being otherwise treated asymmetrically. Still, by subdividing the glazing through the fine horizontals of the wooden joinery, a more intimate scale and an additional detailing level is provided, highlighting the austerity of Modernism, as well as its characteristic horizontality.

Along the Apahida - Dej line (opened in 1881), the 1935 passenger building at Livada, constitutes a smaller-scale declination of the modernist type featured above. Some differences

¹⁷ The reception buildings' opening date has been communicated by the CFR Cluj staff, based on the company's records; however, the authors have not been yet able to find the original projects.

deserve mentioning, evidence for a more refined solution at the 1937 larger applications of the type: a pyramidal symmetric composition is preferred at Livada, with projecting wider and higher central bay, whereof rail-side window and door openings are covered by a cantilevered concrete slab, again symmetrically configured. Instead, the building at Livada features the round window, another typical interwar modernist element, absent at the Dej - Jibou stations.

Derailed Modernity? Răstoci as Exception

At Răstoci, the standard project implemented at Cițcău, Căpâlna pe Someș, Gâlgău, Glodu Someșului, Rus and Băbuțeni, is altered, both regarding its situation within the station's perimeter and its inner configuration. While future archival information might elucidate the reasons behind these changes, we may so far only hypothesize. What is certain is that the Răstoci passenger building is recessed by c.45m from the first line, a much longer distance than is usually the case. At the same time, this withdrawal, together with the planimetric alterations, seems to favor housing - the complementary function in the building.

Figure 2 includes part of the survey undertaken at Răstoci in July 2016.¹⁸ In contrast to the design deployed at the other six stations, here the standard plan is "mirrored" in relation to the axis parallel to the railway. Thus, at an exceptionally long distance from the tracks, one finds the annexes bay: the stairs to the upper floor apartment, a small entrance hall for passengers and the traffic officer's room. On the opposite side, towards the Someș Valley and the road connecting the station with the road and the village, there is the bay of the main spaces, including the waiting room. This ground floor layout results in the fact that the main spaces of the upper floor, the apartment's three spacious rooms get an extremely favorable south-west positioning, as well as a beautiful view to the green Someș Valley. The secondary dwelling spaces (staircase with the access to the attic, kitchen and storage) are thereby left towards the railway. As described above, in the standard project, railway space and implicitly the travelers were privileged both through the planimetric display and through the plastic treatment of the facades. Thus, the station chief's apartment opened its most honoring rooms towards the railway space. In contrast, at Răstoci, this is sacrificed, in favor of what seems to be the most convenient configuration of the housing upper level. Screened from the railway and the road, the apartment overlooked the calm, luxuriant and sunny Someș Valley side. Hence, the domestic function and therefore the private interest of its inhabitants appears to have prevailed here, despite the transportation function and, ultimately, despite public interest. Consequently, travelers must sit in the waiting room without being able to see the railway lines, as well as have to walk a considerable distance to reach them, regardless of weather conditions.

It may be argued that the recessed position of the Răstoci building could have been motivated by the need to provide room for future enlargements of the station. However, the reconfiguration of the plan, such as to place the waiting room abnormally towards the riverside instead of the railway, may not be reasonably explained. In this light, modernist architecture may be read both as a vehicle of modernity, understood as the democratic embracing of public interest, and as a battlefield for modernity's inherent conflicts.

Halmeu: Outpost of Modernity and Involuntary National Memorial

Open on the eve of the war - 1939, according to the CFR records, the passenger building at Halmeu is an outstanding example of the interwar architecture nationwide. It stands out among a group of similar yet smaller CFR stations outside Transylvania, such as Sihlea (line Buzău - Dărmănești), Buhuși (Bacău - Piatra Neamț line) or Băldana (Bucharest - Pitești line). A new frontier point of Greater Romania, Halmeu was an important strategic location, justifying the establishment not only of large railway infrastructure but also the creation of a representative

¹⁸ The survey was carried out by students of the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Albu Bogdan, Birsan Andreea, Cioară Daniel, Damian Sabina, Duma Cătălin, Lazăr Anamaria, Lăpușan Agota, Pop Valentin-Ionuț, in July 2016 and was coordinated by Andreea Milea and Cristina Purcar, in cooperation with the CFR.

architectural statement. The building replaced a more modest initial one, most probably dating from 1871, as part of the railway connection Debrecen - Carei - Satu Mare - Sighetu Marmăției.

In its January-March 1941 issue (celebrating the jubilee of the Romanian Architects' Society, founded in 1891), the magazine *Arhitectura* published a photographic documentary illustrating representative contemporary architecture, from the territories lost as a consequence of the August 1940 Vienna Dictate.¹⁹ The anniversary issue features tree photos of Halmeu station, mentioning the CFR Architecture Service as the building's authors (Fig. 3). Halmeu is the only station included among the other c. 35 edifices, examples of representative public architecture comprising churches and cathedrals, university halls, research institutes and museums, social-insurance headquarters, hospitals and sanatoria, prefectures, telephone exchanges. Stylistically, most of these 1920s - 1930s buildings are either monumental versions of the National Style, or different hybrids of National Style, Classicism, Art Deco and Modernism. While less than a third straightforwardly assume Modernism, Halmeu station stands out from this smaller group, together with sanatoria such as Ciuc and Cetatea Albă.

Compared to the Dej - Jibou 1937 serial passenger buildings, the architectural quality of Halmeu station is noteworthy, suggesting its author having been an important figure of the time, while future archive research might reveal his/her identity.²⁰ If the standard project stations remain relatively modest and ambiguous appropriations of the International Style hybridizing Art Deco, at Halmeu Modernism is convincingly deployed in its three-dimensional asymmetry and dynamism. The composition's dominant is the massive, double-levelled central body displayed parallel to the rails. The building's northern end, heading towards the frontier, is treated as the volume's accent, through the subtle imbrication between the dominant, long volume and the two-level-high passenger hall, via the stark vertical of a massive office tower. The station's largest interior space, the passenger hall, is expressed through a clearstory, exceeding the height of the ground floor U-shape volume, embracing the hall. During the daytime, the natural light pervading the hall by means of the continuous glazing frieze of the clearstory generates exceptional visual effects.

From the railway side, the tower appears completely opaque, while the office windows open eastwards, towards the settlement. Contrasting the robust character of its elevations, the tower's upper part reiterates the hall clearstory motif, conferring a floating effect to the tower's projecting roof slab. The force and dynamism of the western, railway-facing facade is further enhanced by the slender, broadly projecting platform canopy, emphasizing its horizontality. The canopy continues boldly, covering the platform beyond both ends of the building. On the eastern side, facing the road and the village, the entrance to the administrative area is singled out by a projecting volume, which generates a covered platform on the ground floor and terrace on the first floor. The plasticity of the elevations is enhanced by the massive and opaque appearance of the exposed brick walls, echoing the characteristic bare-masonry image of many *Belle Époque* stations, both Romanian and Austro-Hungarian.²¹ The darker brick tone contrasts the whitewashed concrete profiles, outlining the ground floor's window friezes on the east facade, and framing the platform-facing openings or the hall clearstory.

Halmeu station's engagement with modernity may be better gauged when set against the 1933 station at Curtici (then Decebal), where another post-World War I new frontier station received

19 Gheorghe Liteanu, "Opera de creație și construcție românească în teritoriile pierdute," *Arhitectura* (1941): 125-149.

20 Maria Mănescu (ed.), *Documentare privind Enciclopedia Gărilor din România* (București: C.D.C.A.S., 2003), 92-93. The authors of the Encyclopedia notice "a master's hand," suggesting, through analogy with the Malaxa or the Ford factories in Bucharest, the hypothesis that Horia Creangă or P.E. Miculescu might have designed the station.

21 Characteristic examples are the stations designed by the MAV architect Pfaff Ferenc (1851-1913), at Satu Mare (1899), Cluj (1902) or Pécs (Hungary, 1900; the brick slips largely-used at stations was produced there).

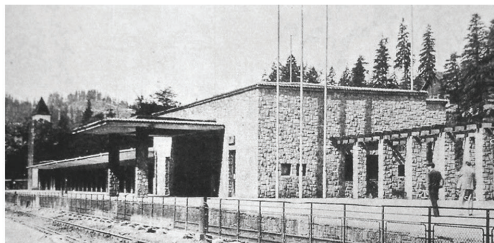
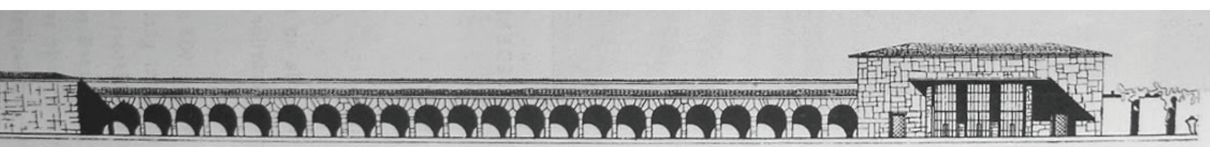
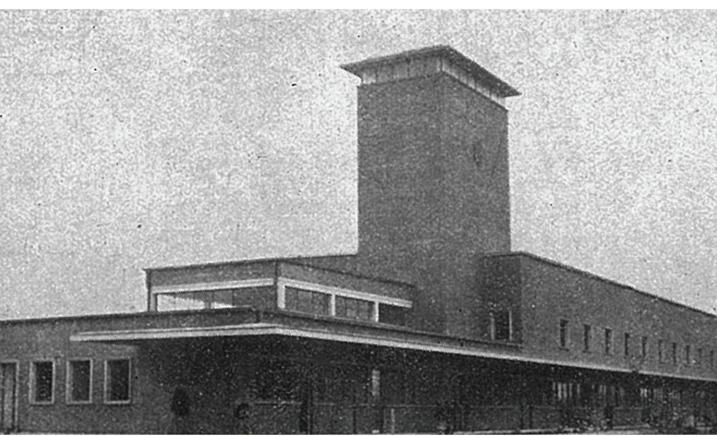
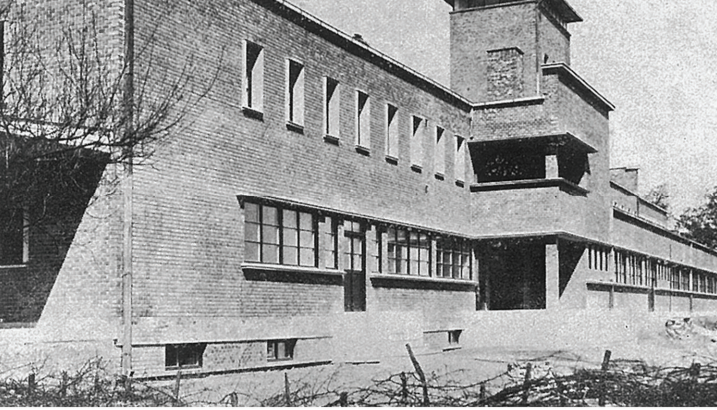


Fig. 3: Up to down, left to right: Halmeu passenger building: road-side façade looking north; south façade; railway-side façade looking south; c.1939. Main hall, view towards north, 2008. Sinaia royal station, 1938. Architect Duiliu Marcu: railway-side façade; road-side view; railway-side view

in 1933 a late-Academism-, nineteenth-century reminiscent building. Further, the radical modernist architectural language at Halmeu is more subtly highlighted when compared to the 1938 royal stations of București Băneasa and Sinaia, both designed by Duiliu Marcu (Fig. 3 down). The vertical and monumental symmetry of their main volumes, albeit masterfully balanced by the horizontals of the platform canopies and pergolas, display the late 1930s Art Deco and Classicist autochthonous hybridizing of Modernism.

For Halmeu station, however, the stylistic option is clearly modernist. The stations' most impacting image is from the railway side, more precisely as perceived approaching the building from the frontier, just having entered the country. This denotes the intention of creating an imposing and honoring symbolic gate to the enlarged Romanian territory. Significantly, after 1941, this symbolism dramatically transformed its meaning into a memorial one, in the aftermath of the Vienna Dictate resulting in territorial losses. In Gheorghe Liteanu's words, the architectural selection commemorated by his photo-gallery from *Arhitectura*, should "always witness to future generations the presence of the autochthonous Romanian soul."²² In this discourse, national identity was predicated on and expected to emerge from *the quality* of the architecture, regardless of stylistic options. In the face of territorial loss, modern style public buildings – as well as national style ones – were likely envisaged as signifiers of Romanianness. Decidedly modernist through its plastic values – abstraction, dynamism and openness, but also equilibrium – Halmeu station's architecture represented railway mobility as a vital resource of modernity towards which the interbellum Romanian society aspired.

The CFR's Tempered Modernism

Marked by the rise of totalitarian regimes and the radicalization of nationalist doctrines, the late 1930s artistic sphere witnessed the ascension of what could be called anti-modernist currents. Jean Cocteau's famous 1919 essay, "Rappel à l'ordre," epitomized these attitudes, already surfacing in the aftermath of World War I. The essay proffered a return to the alleged stability of Classicist values, discrediting the excess of pre- World War I vanguard movements such as Cubism, Expressionism, Abstractionism, Futurism and Constructivism. In reaction, interwar artistic currents emerged, such as the German *Neue Sachlichkeit*, the Italian *Il Novecento*, Picasso's and Paris School's classicizing period, the Soviet Socialist Realism, the American Precisionism, the Mexican Muralism, etc. In European architecture, these tendencies mostly became prominent during the 1930s, especially towards the decade's end, while in Romania the instauration of Carol II's royal dictatorship in 1938 intensified them. Distanced from the functionalism of Modernism and aesthetic Purism, these attitudes appropriate either Classicist principles, such as stripped Classicism or classicizing Modernism (depending on the emphasis) or regional, vernacular features but also combinations thereof.

As a major representation tool of one of the most influential public institutions of the time, railway architecture mirrored, but is also likely to have influenced these evolutions. By 1940, the railway administration was keen to assume a civilizing mission through its public image tending to "create a true railway style, which would play its part in the process of enhancing the aspect of the Country's (sic) buildings."²³ In Transylvania, most of this period's architectural production combines modernist elements (such as compositional tri-dimensionality, the horizontal grouping of windows via whitewashed profiled sills, further emphasis on horizontality via fine window rails subdividing the glass panes, etc.) with traditional volumetric solutions, especially in, but not limited to mountainous regions. Characteristic is

²² Liteanu, "Opera de creație," 125-149.

²³ ***, 1930-1940. *Un deceniu de realizări CFR* (Bucharest: Regia Autonomă CFR, 1940), 137.

Fig. 4: Up to down: Lunca Ilvei passenger building: railway-side view. Coşbuc passenger building: railway-side view. Dealul Ştefăniţei passenger building: railway-side view

the material diversity of the facades, the juxtaposing of stone-clad ground floors or pedestals with the apparent brick of the upper tiers and the whitewashed horizontal profiles. There is a leaning towards the picturesque, the vernacular, the massive, through the expression of brute materiality, albeit well-tempered by modernist sobriety and by a search for institutional representativeness rather than for domestic qualities. Such stylistic options are deployed at Poiana Ilvei, Leşul Ilvei, Măgura Ilvei, Ilva Mare, Lunca Ilvei (Ilva Mică - Vatra Dornei line, 1934-1938), Ezeriş (Caransebeş - Călnic line, 1935-1938) or Coşbuc and Telciu (Salva - Vişeu de Jos line, 1939-1949), Livezeni and Lainici (Bumbeşti - Livezeni line, 1924-1948) (Fig. 4). It remains to be clarified, however, to which extent these stations received their present-day image before, during or after World War II, as war-destruction repairs. Near Cluj, for instance, the 1871 passenger building at Apahida, repaired in 1945, displays some modernist stylistic features similar to the 1937 Dej-Jibou stations described above. The sloping roof was visually setback by the stepped horizontal parapets, while the window and door openings and joinery were similarly refashioned. The same kind of transformations took place at the currently derelict transshipment station at Turda. Tempered Modernism may also best characterize the small new stations along the Cluj - Alba Iulia line (1871-1873), such as Buju, Valea Florilor or Mirăslău. However, at the 1948 station Dealul Ştefăniţei (Salva - Vişeu de Jos line), it was Regionalism rather than tempered Modernism that was preferred (Fig. 4 down).

The MAV's "blending with the environment in contrast with functionalism"

In the Transylvanian railway palimpsest, the stations built or modernized by the Hungarian MAV during 1941-1944 constitute another layer as part of a different constellation. Within the territory occupied following the Vienna Dictate, these buildings decline regionalist stylistic features, also retrievable in present-day Hungary. In a broad-scope survey, outlining the evolution of Hungarian railway architecture, Mihály Kubinszky emphasizes the stations of the 1942 Deda - Sărăţel line, as a significant phase therein (Fig. 5).²⁴ The line's strategic importance was to connect the so-called Szeklerland in south-eastern Transylvania to Hungary's network. Nevertheless, the architectural type mentioned by Kubinszky is retrievable along other lines from the occupied territory and in present-day Hungary. Its main defining trait is the evocation of the vernacular, conceived in opposition to Modernism's purism and abstraction. As noted by Kubinszky: "The superstructures of this line were based on the then-popular features of folk architecture, and represented a differentiated mass composition, blending with the environment in contrast with functionalism," and deployed "Hungarian motifs."²⁵

As with all railway architecture, also the above type includes several declinations, according to the station's and served town's network importance: (a) small, ground-floor buildings; (b) medium buildings, combining a two-levelled central volume with one or two ground floor side wings; (c) large(r), more complex compositions for the junction stations. Constantly, this architectural family features c. 40° hipped roofs with a lower concavity; under a unifying roof, the arcaded portico opens a variable number of arches towards the platforms; triangular or trapezoidal pediments, volumetrically contrasting the hipped roofs; sometimes, trapezoidal-plan bow windows; partial wooden first floors; circular staircase towers towards the settlement-connecting road; rusticated or unpolished stone cladding of the door verticals, etc.

24 Mihály Kubinszky, "Architectural Feature of Hungarian Railways," in *The History of the Hungarian Railways. 1846-2000*, ed. Kovács László (Budapest: Hungarian State Railways Co. Ltd., 2000): 196-197.

25 Kubinszky "Architectural Feature." Partial translation from the original: "The superstructures of this line were based on the then popular motifs of folk architecture, and represented a differentiated mass composition blending in the environment in contrast with functionalism."



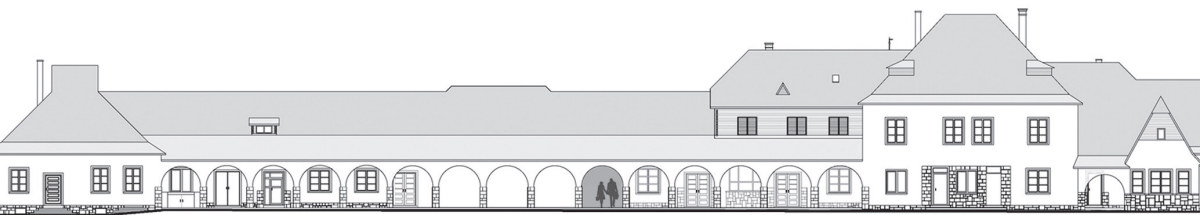


Fig. 5: Up to down, left to right: Jibou passenger building: road-side façade; railway-side façade. Deda passenger building: Road-side view. Medieșu Aurit passenger building: railway-side façade. Apa passenger building: railway-side façade

Among the first category (a), we identified the buildings from Apa (Satu Mare - Baia Mare line) or Abrami, Ip, Suplacu de Barcău, Nușfalău (Săcuieni Bihor - Șimleul Silvaniei line), but also the building from Bag in Hungary (Budapest - Hatvan - Miskolc - Sátoraljaújhely line). The most characteristic group of the family is that of medium stations (b). These feature a contrasting composition of the main, one-storied volume and the ground floor side wing, wherein the side wing's ridge level is at the same height with the main volume's eaves level. The side wing comprises the waiting room's portico, with three, four or five arches. A trapezoidal bow-window sets off the main volume's rail facade expressing, in functionalist manner, the station chief's office. The staircase has filleted corners and sometimes, tower-like, conic roofs. Accessed by the latter, the upper floor housing overlooks the neighborhood by a wooden loggia and the rails by four equal windows. Some buildings feature domestic-alluding window shutters. Examples of this group are the stations at Odoreu, Medieșu Aurit, Ilba (Satu Mare - Baia Mare line), Ulmeni Sălaj (Baia Mare - Jibou line, open in 1899) or Salva (Salva - Vișeu de Jos line began in 1938 and finalised in 1948) but also stations outside Romania, such as Béreg (Bački Breg, today in Serbia, Baja-Hercegszántó-Zombor line), Gádor (Gakovo today in Serbia, Baja-Gara-Regőce - Zombor line), Regőce (Ridica today in Serbia, Bácsalmás - Ólegyen - Regőce line) or Abádszalók (in Hungary, Kál-Kápolna - Kisújszállás line).

The family's largest station (c) is Jibou (Dej - Zalău line, opened in 1890), while the slightly smaller building from Deda (Deda - Sărățel line, opened in 1942) was destroyed during the Hungarian-German troops' withdrawal at the end of World War II. Figure 5 shows part of the survey undertaken at Jibou in July 2015.²⁶ An important Transylvanian railway junction, the Jibou station amplifies the standard project described above through the addition of an extensive 15-rounded-arch portico. The latter is enclosed at one end by a square-plan volume, the roof thereof slightly higher than the portico volume, and at the other end by the two-level main volume. The latter volume extends by two ground floor bays and concluded by the station chief's office, emphasized via a rectangular bow window, covered by a trapezoidal, steep-angled pediment. Like in the small stations of the type, the office is accessed through another small arched portico. The main volume's attic continues over the porticoed wing, through a wooden structure bay, clad in horizontal planks, the roof ridge slightly lowered and ending in the characteristic trapezoidal pediment on the short side. Other stylistic traits include the conically covered filleted staircase, romantically evoking a castle tower; the first floor's wooden loggia with X-shaped incised decoration; the trapezoidal pediments ending each volume. Altogether, these features echo the famous residential ensemble Wekerle in Budapest (1912-1928), partly planned and designed by Transylvanian architect Kos Karoly (1883-1977). Under the loggia, the two rounded arches, respond to the porticoes on the railway side. The destroyed Deda station had slightly pointed archivolt, like those from Wekerle. The wooden shutters of the upper floor apartment carried tulip-shape cuts, a typical Hungarian folk art symbol.

According to a site plan from CFR Cluj, the Jibou building seems to have been enlarged shortly after its construction. Stylistically homogenous, the extension lengthens the building beyond the station chief's office by a ground floor wing; four of the five transversally open bays, that initially connected the access road and the platforms were closed, creating a classroom for staff training. Both Jibou and the former Deda stations (d) feature a taste for volumetric diversity and fragmentation, obtained through the interplay of different heights, uneven roof slopes, contrasting materials, juxtaposing fine and coarse textures. Effects of craftsmanship, texture and human scale are thus achieved, suggesting organic growth,

²⁶ The survey was carried on by first and third year students of the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning from the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca: Ioana-Nirvana Oltean, Andreea-Renate Macarie, Răzvan Lucaț, Anita Deac, Ioana Pătruț, coordinated by Cristina Purcar and Ana Maria Rusu, in cooperation with CFR.

domesticity and picturesque character, in contrast to the rather institutional monumentality and abstract sobriety, denoted by the stations of the Dej - Jibou line and Halmeu. Thus, the MAV's 1941-1944 symbolic appropriation of Northern Transylvania counted on a return to the pre- World War I, allegedly more "rooted" Secessionist architectural idioms, as opposed to the CFR's decidedly modernist options.

Stylistic Prudence at Unwary Times?

The previous paragraphs outlined the stylistic evolution of Transylvanian interwar railway architecture against the major historic upheavals (the Great Union of 1918, the late 1920s economic crisis, the 1938 advent of the royal dictatorship, World War II and the occupation of Northern Transylvania during 1940-1944 and its post- World War II return to Romania) as well as against the societal and cultural ideals confronting the professional milieu (nationalism, Modernism, anti-Modernism, Regionalism). This research is limited to passenger buildings, yet a large part of the railway built production includes workshops, warehouses, technical annexes, housing. The study thereof might nuance our findings.

At first reading – highlighting differences – we may draw four conclusions: (1) the absence of the National Style from the 1930s Transylvanian buildings of CFR (except for earlier-designed standard employee housing), despite its assertive deployment as symbolic appropriation gesture for other public institutions late in the 1930s; (2) the straightforward 1930s option for International-Style Modernism, at the standard buildings of the Someș Valley and especially at the exceptional frontier station Halmeu, starkly staging the assuming of modernity, its universal claims included, as recast national emancipation project; (3) Modernism's tempering and hybridizing with either vernacular-alluding elements (hipped roofs, overhanging eaves, "pyramidal" tectonics, placing emphasis on the ground floor's massiveness, against the reduced height and relative lightness of the first floor, etc.), or with Classicist monumental rigor, in the CFR Transylvanian production immediately preceding and following World War II; (4) MAV's consistent 1940's option for revisiting the early-twentieth century Transylvanian-vernacular-inspired, domesticity-evoking architecture developed by Kos Karoly and the *Fiatalok* (Youth) group around World War I.²⁷

Only by moving beyond this first, reductive reading, can one gain insights into the subtler affinities between the social and cultural values embedded in the above architectural idioms, and highlight their similarities. Emphasizing difference, within the modernist idiom, the railway station appears as public space by excellence, crucible of universal values, while within the Regionalist idiom, the station seems conceived as a kind of home, space of the local/regional community, of the familiar. Beyond these differences, however, modernist aesthetics manifests itself in the MAV Regionalist 1940s architecture too: via the functionalist impulse of individualizing certain important inner spaces such as the station chief's office, via the horizontal window railing, or the unadorned facades. Also, traits of the Regionalist type deployed at Jibou are reinterpreted at other stations such as Szekszárd (in Hungary, opened in the 1940s), this time in a tempered-modernist key: the filleted staircase receives a continuous vertical window topped by a rounded arch, while its upper tier displays a continuous window frieze and the pointed conical roof is flattened. At the same time, the Regionalism of some of the CFR stations from the late 1940s such as Dealul Ștefăniței (same standard project with Tarcău, outside of Transylvania) departs from the tempered Modernism of the late 1930s, becoming more alike the early 1940s MAV buildings. In both cases, the same *Zeitgeist* seems to be at work, domesticating Modernism's abstract, placeless appearance.

Notwithstanding the different vocabularies, the MAV's 1940s ideal, expressed by Kubinszky as "blending with the environment, in contrast with functionalism" is finally akin to the CFR's from the late 1930s - 1940s tempering of modernist aesthetics, expressed by architect Vasile

²⁷ Ada Ștefănuț, *Arta 1900 în România* (Bucharest: Noi Media Print, 2008): 42-43.

Rădulescu's 1941 assessment of the CFR's recent output: "the rigid utilitarianism commanded by the service requirements has been so happily attired in a garment fitting the environment and its colors."²⁸ On the one hand, during the 1930s-1940s along the Transylvanian railways, competing territorial-appropriation discourses overlapped society's modernization aspirations. The two ideals – modernity and nationalism – were simultaneously predicated on and informed apparently contrasting architectural signifiers. On the other hand, in the years around World War II, amidst the increasing radicalization of the political scene, architects in the railway departments might have found in the stylistic "impurities" of tempered Modernism, modern Regionalism or stripped Classicism a prudent by-pass of what had become the ideologically overcharged national-versus-modern dilemma.

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ILLUSTRATION CREDITS:

Fig. 1: Authors' interpretation, based upon Iordanescu D. and Georgescu C. *Construcții pentru transporturi în România*, vol. I (Bucharest: Centrala de Construcții Căi Ferate, 1986), 205.

²⁸ Vasile Rădulescu, "Istoricul și realizările arhitecturale în serviciile publice," *Arhitectura* (1941): 116-119 (our translation).

Fig. 2: Up to down, left to right: Authors' photo, 2015. Authors' survey, 2016.

Fig. 3: Up to down, left to right: *Arhitectura* (1941). Author's photo. *Arhitectura*.

Fig. 4: Up to down: Undated postcard, c.1940. Creative Commons photo by Hans Peter Fuchs (https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fișier:Cosbuc_BHF.jpg, last accessed May 28, 2019). Creative Commons photo by Hans Peter Fuchs (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5b/Dealul_Stefanitei_bhf.jpg, last accessed Sept 20, 2019).

Fig. 5: Up to down, left to right: Authors' survey, 2015. Undated postcard, c.1942 (Fortepan, Jáki László, http://www.fortepan.hu/_photo/download/fortepan_70358.jpg, last accessed May 28, 2019). <https://2img.net/h/i788.photobucket.com/albums/yy162/Ionutz/Calatorii/P1050994.jpg>, last accessed Sept 20, 2019. Authors' photo, 2016.