

# Cities, Networks, and Hierarchies: A Systematic Model of Romanian Novel

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*This article sets out to observe the manner in which using the city as a narrative scenario can determine the creation of a systemic model of knowledge. Based on Morillo's theory that urban spaces can be analyzed by observing the interaction between the networks they belong to and the hierarchies they form, eventually becoming "hubs of knowledge," we try to prove that the Romanian novels of the late nineteenth century and the interwar period are valuable points of reference for sketching a systemic model of the South-East European space. The specificity of Romanian literature, reflecting historical conditions and relations with empires such as the Austro-Hungarian or Ottoman empires, as well as the constitution of labor relations through the transition from rural to accelerated urbanization produces a viable matrix. These aspects can be encountered in the novels of Romanian writers such as Ioan Slavici and Liviu Rebreanu, who reflect the reality of the Transylvanian space and the relations between the communities of Romanians, Germans, Saxons or Swabians, Hungarians and Jews, to Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, the writer who creates the image of Bucharest as part of the European urban network, even if it is hierarchically subordinate to Paris.*

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The present study sets out from the observation that the manner in which cities are reflected in literature may determine the construction of a model of knowledge made up of networks and hierarchies. Starting out from this observation, we shall discuss the networks made up of interconnected urban nodes, by way of the literary texts advanced belonging to Romanian literature. We shall then analyze social and political hierarchies, as they appear in the same reflections of the urban

space, and in the last part we shall analyze the manner in which the two have interacted forming a systemic model. What is paramount for our discussion is Morillo's statement according to which "the cities were the hubs of knowledge formation and exchange because of the location of both markets and political centers in urban areas" (Morillo 15), a thing that implicitly generates the recognition of the importance of studying the city as a defining element for the sketching of social networks and hierarchies. The argument resorted to by Quayson "that the city tends to be the favored scalar unit for multiple world-making projects both below and above the nation-state scale. Cities are thus simultaneously sites where 'global designs' touch down, and matrices of possibility, where connectivity, reinvention, and self-translation also occur" (Quayson and Watson 7) leads us to the idea that the analysis of urban space generates an alternative model of knowledge. Applying this literature deconstructs a static landscape, determining the inclusion of literary works in a corpus essential for global knowledge.

The hypostases of cities presented as narrative frameworks, studied in the Romanian literature of the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century are reflections of urban networks created in Europe, as we shall see from the analysis of the travels undertaken by the characters and from the exchange of political, economic, social and cultural ideas between the nodes of this network, but also of the hierarchies created vertically, from urban centers such as Paris or Vienna, towards secondary cities, belonging, to use the term employed by World Literature, to the peripheries, such as is the case for the Romanian space. The city as a prop for the narrative scenario played a crucial role in the construction of fiction, advancing various visions characterizing the multitude of cultural landmarks in central and South-East Europe and the relations with cultural urban spaces. The core thesis we wish to start out from in the construction of the present paper's endeavor thus advances the creation of a model by which to prove that the evolution of knowledge took place in direct relation with the development of urbanism, aspects which are reflected in literature. Central and South-East Europe developed an entire network of communication through the nodes of which an accelerated growth took place in various domains of activity. In such a model, applied to Medieval Asia, Stephen Murillo showed that cities are placed at the intersection of two grand structures: networks and hierarchies, and the position they are in is a result of belonging to one of the two. Thus, networks can be defined as "the horizontal, extensive, cooperative, and economical-cultural links between cities large and small (and through those cities to

their economic hinterlands) [...] network flows also inevitably included people, ideas, and thus culture generally” and hierarchies as “vertical, coercitive and political structures, encompassing what are commonly called states, chiefdoms, and other sorts of polities into which specific societies tended to be organized. Complex, state-level hierarchies were almost always built on a base of rural agricultural production” (Morillo 2). These networks and hierarchies imply alpha type cities and secondary cities, which have developed around such large urban structures. One of the questions the present study attempts to answer is how is the connection between the urban space in East European literatures and lighthouse cities, which swallow them up, constructed? Are we dealing with peripheral or secondary urban spaces here?

Secondary literature has discussed peripheral and central cities, principal and secondary ones, which have changed their status according to industrial and technological development, as well as the relationship between the city and world literature (Quayson and Watson; Agathocleous; Eade; Lehan; McNamara; Soja). The criteria employed to categorize urban settlements are quite diverse, however, we hold that the central and East-European space brings up important arguments as part of this new classification, also in what the functions these spaces fulfil as part of this global urban network are concerned. An ample discussion was devoted to so-called alpha cities, which have shaped knowledge. Thus, Jason Finch, Lieven Ameel and Markku Salmela observed: “On a global scale, one can find a distinctive group of cities that could be called ‘alpha’ world cities: New York, London, Paris and Tokyo in economic terms.” (Finch, Ameel and Salmela 12) Such a relationship can be envisaged between Paris and the Romanian space, to be more precise the capital Bucharest, but also between the Transylvanian space of the twentieth century and the imperial capitals Budapest and Vienna. Pascale Casanova considered Paris a center of “world literary space,” a Greenwich meridian (Casanova 34) for World Literature, alongside London and New York. The question thus arises whether the literary reflection of cities belonging to semi-peripheral or peripheral geographic spaces can bring elements of novelty to global knowledge: “Compared to peripherality, secondariness is perhaps at once more ordinary and more visible, a condition that is hidden in the open. Most urban dwellers experience their cities as somehow secondary to other, bigger, or more famous, cities.” (Finch, Ameel and Salmela 96) We can thus observe that “secondary cities” fulfil certain functions, whether we refer to being political, cultural, or economic centers or important nodes of a network. Jacques Derrida in his essay “Plato’s Pharmacy,” discussed

as early as 1972 the oppressive component implied by a relationship between a dominant and a dominated. Cities can be subordinate to such centers, while simultaneously being part of a hierarchical pyramid, but also nodes of a cultural, economic, political or religious network.

The case studies we employed as part of the present discussion focus on three authors who are representative for the chosen time frame and for Romanian literature. Their selection was also determined by the accessibility of prose and translations. The first of these authors, chronologically speaking, Ioan Slavici, is the one who contextualized the discussion regarding the power relations between Transylvania and the capital of the Austro-Hungarian empire, identifying both networks and hierarchies existing at the level of urban spaces. Another Romanian writer, Liviu Rebreanu, brought up the multicultural component of Transylvania, but, at the same time, advanced images of the secondary city, as perceived through the lens of the multiethnic. The third example is Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, an author who focused on the description of the capital city, Bucharest, analyzing French influences, but also aspects connected to the construction of a network by means of the characters' travels, as well as the establishment of hierarchies between Paris and Bucharest, aspects which define Romanian culture integrated into the European space. We can thus notice a break with traditional spatial patterns, an aspect which will be noticeable in the differences between the urban representations of Slavici, a writer rather connected to the nineteenth century and Rebreanu and Papadat-Bengescu, modern writers, with whom space fulfils different functions. As noted by Eric Bulson, part of what made realist novels so powerful was their capacity to make readers believe that fictional cities had "a counterpart in the cities of the earth" (Bulson 34). This is precisely what happens also in Slavici's writings, whose texts belong to nineteenth century realism.

### **Networks featuring urban nodal points**

The construction of a network of urban nodal points is obvious in Slavici's prose (1848–1925), as the cities he mentions in Transylvania are secondary type ones such as Arad, Radna and Lipova, narrative stages for the characters, but at the same time starting points for the construction of a commercial, economic, political and religious network. Slavici's novel *Mara* (published in a magazine in 1894, and as a volume in 1906) contains references to the construction of such

relationships. Beyond the story of the main female protagonist, Mara, additional details surface regarding wealthy families, localized action, based on historical information offered, between the years 1850–1860 (Slavici 844). Thus, when the circumstances are revealed that led to their reaching the provincial town, Slavici resorts to the identification of geographical landmarks. The multi-ethnic component shapes the narrative discourse, the novel being characterized by the permanent tension between the German, Hungarian and Romanian communities. Thus, the family of Națl Hubăr, who becomes the husband of Persida, Mara's daughter, belongs to the Swabian community of Banat and, implicitly, to a different social class, due to Hubăr's job as a butcher. The origins of Hubăroaie, Natl's mother, are localized in the Austrian Empire, in Buda, while Hubăr, the father, comes from Vienna, the capital. We can thus notice that the urban networks become forms of analysis of social relations, status and the roles played by the characters:

A Swabian from Buda, she had married Hubăr while still very young, an industrious and merry Viennese, but with a short temper, and they had come here not so long ago, where they did not know anyone. With the help of her dowry, Hubăr had managed to gather within a few years, especially during the 1848 revolution, quite a fortune. They were even luckier after the revolution, when Hubăr became, due to his being a German from Vienna, very respected, and their household became one of the most prominent ones. (43)

Special emphasis is placed on the presentation of ethnic origins, because not only did Hubăr hail from Vienna, but he was also German, being thus a double exile. Characters are thus moving between Arad and Vienna, with the latter being perceived as a space where they can sometimes seek refuge and find a solution to their personal or economic problems. The network created also advances a transfer of knowledge, as the characters bring with them to the region they settle in new mentalities, customs and cultural constructs.

Slavici imagines the character of the Jewish merchant Griner who gives them a loan, playing the role of a creditor,<sup>1</sup> an ever-present personage in any era. The leather merchant lends him three hundred florins, in order to be able to leave in the aftermath of the conflict with his father, at other times it is mentioned that he wants to borrow a couple of hundred florins in order to leave “far away from this world,” and during another episode of emotional turmoil he acts repetitively:

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<sup>1</sup> Interest for economic elements in Slavici's novels appears as early as 1943, e.g. Iorgulescu.

“Tuesday evening, when Persida was with Bandi on the bridge, Națl was sitting with his face in his hands, tormented by intense emotions before Oancea. He had taken five hundred florins from Griner and he had decided that he would depart for Arad and then for Vienna as soon as the sun would set.” (103) The florin was the currency the protagonists used in order to travel to imperial territories. Thus, for Persida, Vienna is simultaneously a point of attraction but also of repulsion, being seen as “the big noisy city,” and socializing as well as adapting to its rhythm changes Persida’s perception of it: “They spent the evening with Burdea, and around ten, when they returned home, Persida no longer felt that life in Vienna was insufferable. Time had passed without her noticing it; she had never spent more agreeable hours than those.” (178) The places of origin of the two characters are brought up, whether under the form of references to Națl’s visit to Buda, to see Hansler, his mother’s cousin, whether it is the discussion of cities where he had relatives: “Especially Hubăroaie was happy. They had friends in Arad, Timișoara and Lugoj; they had relatives—she in Buda and Pojon, and her husband in Vienna: wherever he would have gone, her son would have been well received, he would have even found a bride fit for his social status.” (43) The power centers brought up are Buda, Bratislava (Pojon) and Vienna, perceived as friendly cities for the inhabitants of Transylvania, which was part of the Empire.

What is also interesting is the characters’ relation to linguistic aspects, that creates a network generated by the urban spaces they hail from. Thus, the narrator points to the extent of the linguistic contamination process and to the imposition of a dominant of power which constructs a hierarchy: “Persida and Națl always spoke German. [...] You will hate me terribly one day, he told her in Romanian.” (156) We can thus observe that during the moments of crisis, the couple renounces the official language, in order to use the language closer to their hearts as a linguistic vehicle, considering that Persida was the daughter of the Romanian Mara. About Națl we get to know that having been “raised among Romanians, he spoke Romanian just as well as German” (37). Similarly, changing discourse according to the situation is done in order to highlight the manner in which the two communities relate to one another. During an argument with his father, the character tells him: “The drunkard Germans, he said in Romanian, are fighting like animals. Yes! He continued in German, they are right to mock us!” (143) We encounter here a reference to the prejudices surrounding ethnic Germans, but also to the objective of appealing to the consciousness of the merciless father. Mara’s observations regarding the

community churches brings up the topic of “colonizing,” as well as of the construction of a network made up of the clash between civilizations: “if one crosses the Murăș one gets to Lipova with its sparkly and ornate tower of the Romanian church, and downstream there is the endless plain of Hungary” (33; see also Bako). The tensions between communities are also fed by the fact that the times were ripe with ideas of independence, and the dissolution of the empire was at hand. Slavici introduces also a short analysis of foreign politics: “The young men enrolled in Mantua, Verona and Venice were writing that a certain Garibaldi had appeared, a great general, who seeks to unite Italians and raise them above the emperor; while Hungarians were whispering and bragging that their Kossuth had connections to Garibaldi and that he would return in spring in order to drive away the emperor’s guards.” (236) Indeed, the year 1859 is representative for the fundamental changes of political regimes, Garibaldi, who starting with the year 1860 coagulates a revolutionary movement in Italy, and the relationships between various conservative and liberal groups with immigrants gathering around Kossuth being destabilizing elements of the Austrian Empire. Important power centers now shift towards Italy and the Hungarian resistance, both becoming models for the fight for independence. The example suggested by Slavici is presented with honesty, with the reader finding out that the Italians are fighting the foreign administration, throwing them into the sea, into the Garda Lake, into the Adige River and suggesting that Hungarians might do the same in order to gain independence. We are thus dealing with a European contextualization of Transylvania’s situation, where the administration was the body representing Austrian power. Not accidentally, I. Negoïtescu notices the fact that on the one hand “cosmopolitanism brings the author of *Mara* closer to the values of the old continent [...] a typical representative of the spirit of Central Europe,” and on the other hand we notice that “provincialism” one can find also in “the Italian novels of the second half of the 19th century” (Negoïtescu 116). The idea of an obvious belonging to European literature is expressed, but which is nonetheless original by bringing to the forefront the particular situation of the Romanian space.

On the other hand, in the novel *Cel din urmă armaș / The Last Governor* (published in 1923 and apparently written in the Văcărești prison), the characters travel one step further from a geographical point of view. The time span of events is 1875–1880. In this time frame, the protagonist Iorgu and his wife go beyond alpha cities, those power centers, and reach the west, equating the journey to a process of

refining and climbing the social ladder and constructing a network. They use Vienna only as a stop on their way to Paris or as a medical center. Slavici associates Vienna with a space where characters can heal: “[W]e decided to stop in Vienna. There is a Romanian doctor there, Sterie Ciurcu, who opened a sanatorium and has connections to all medical celebrities. We will stay with him for a while and we will see what the Viennese celebrities will tell us.” (Slavici 269)

We find the same association also with Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Vienna becoming an alpha city in this network, a space of healing by offering solutions to bodily problems. The nineteenth century writer however observes that the best manner to have access to Viennese medical services is by means of acquaintances, in this case the character of Stere Ciurcu. We can sense a certain degree of insecurity in handling the problem here, with the supporting character being characterized as a “Romanian doctor.” *Dishevelled Maidens* presents the protagonists on their journey to Vienna, the alpha city is analyzed also in her other novels, seen from a double vantage point: a place of education, but also perceived from the perspective of medical institutions, meant to bring about healing: “Lenora had gone to Vienna lately, where Coca-Aimee was studying and for a medical check-up. A hypochondria typical of spoiled women [...]! It was caprice that had brought her to Vienna instead of Bucharest.” (Papadat-Bengescu 40) The urban space of Warsaw is associated with “a big export business” run by Drăgănescu. The journey then proceeds “with a stop in Vienna, in order to provide the doctors taking care of Lenora the latest medical letter” (53). What is also brought to the forefront are protagonists’ visits to Vienna, such as the one where in the course of ten days “Lenora walked around with Coca-Aimee, bargained, and made graceful conversation with the doctors” (54). However, the small landowner Drăgănescu becomes impoverished, the reason being “the trips to Vienna, the exaggerated unforeseeable spending, brought about by Lenora’s disease, his being kept from keeping an eye on the estate, that he had previously never abandoned.” (57)

The travels feature Vienna as a mandatory stop, seen as a city that simultaneously attracts and repels. If in the novel *Mara*, previously discussed, the protagonists had relatives in the Austrian Empire, and could thus identify with the space granting them power, even from a distance, in *The Last Governor*, alpha European cities are perceived by the protagonist as a power that attracts and fascinates, while at the same time remaining foreign. Whether they spend their honeymoon in “Vienna, where the newlyweds planned to stop for a few days and ended up staying



for a few weeks” (Slavici 441) or make a short stop before heading further to Paris: “They were after all not the only Romanians who stopped in Vienna on their way to Paris” (442). We can notice the construction of a network corresponding to tourist destinations. From euro-peripheral spaces such as Bucharest or from rural spaces characters travel to European capitals, either in order to be fashionable, or out of snobbery, or because large urban settlements mean a loss of identity and an intense experience of life, involving gambling, parties, psychedelics or Bacchic orgies. For example, Mrs. Margot confesses to Iorgu her affairs with Zonas and the African Ali Buduc and the hallucinatory hashish experiences: “We were both taking hashish in our coffee.” (445) Thus, the characters advance practices typical for urban spaces. The urban network transfigures the characters who moving from one city to another come to experience new things. The characters’ journeys establish a true European itinerary, leading through Zurich, Geneve where Zonas buys pearls, through Nice and up to Paris where Iorgu becomes a cultural attaché. Travels are recorded with stops of several hundred kilometers, such as the following: “It seems like I caught a cold on the way, so I was very worried and had to stop in Vienna and then in Munich. I did not find Zoe in Zurich, but I was told she had departed to Geneva—and not alone, but accompanied by a rich Brazilian.” (447) Cities sometimes become a place of refuge, at other times the protagonist perceives the distance to his home country as an obligation, a duty by means of which he gained access to the new social class he was part of: “So, they all went to Paris, where it was even better and more beautiful than in Zurich. Iorgu felt like a stuffed doll being dragged around, that a madman had scornfully tied to the tail of a horse that had been whipped.” (470) Simultaneously, another hypostasis is the one of escaping personal issues by entering “the midst of people who are unaware of them, whether in Paris, in Switzerland, or in Munich” (474). Slavici’s characters are small landowners who have to constantly choose between taking care of their estate, or selling it and moving to the Capital, in order to experience the ongoing process of urbanization. Iorgu, torn between the two different attitudes understands “what the landowner loses if he gives up his estate,” an opportunity for the writer pleading for human rights to bring up the issue of property. If landowners had “been allowed to create the necessary agricultural installations” (478), then, the character notes, the country would have also profited from it. The small Romanian landowner is attracted to foreign cities, traveling to such alpha cities becoming an obligation in order to maintain social status: “Most of them take loans in order to be able to spend the winter in Paris, Nizza or even Monaco” (478) says Talpă, one of the

novel's characters. The influence of the cultural spaces visited is obvious, even in the interior design of homes: "The room was ready: ceiling and walls painted in the same color, the color of oily milk. The others, Pompeii style. The nobleman, a stylish man returning from Paris, had chosen everything to be simple but very beautiful, especially the ceiling, and the plasterer was working alongside two journeymen on the decorations on the edges." (478) The association with central spaces such as Paris becomes a form by means of which everything becomes contaminated with its image. Whether they are going to Nice or stop in Zurich to find "letters from home" (453), the characters travel through Europe sometimes out of sheer snobbery, at other times in order to maintain their status, but at all times relating to their acquaintances back home, in the Romanian space, whom they never break with. It is a journey that always bears a double sense: attraction towards the alpha city, contamination with its force, transformation and the return to one's own country, where social status is being reinforced. In fact, this is the role of the alpha city in the novels discussed: to offer the protagonist reaching them some of its attributes of force, to use them in the subordinate space. The global cultural network is described, based on the circulation of goods. Social status is measured by the desire to accumulate goods from far-away places. The centers of wealth, seen as the only instrument for social climbers, are the European cultural spaces, to which objects from farther and farther places are added, like in an interconnected network: "Today furniture from Paris or at least Vienna, tomorrow Russian horses and expensive carriages, the day after that Persian rugs, gobelins, paintings, vases and various frills, and on top of that servants and more servants dressed like in Paris and offered a good life." (287)

For the modernist novelist, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, giving up the estate and along with it life in the countryside brings about an emotional metamorphosis detailed by the narrator by means of allusive observations: "Mrs. Eliza whispered something in approximate French," "for the first time in city attire," "an overcoat that seemed to hinder him" (Papadat-Bengescu 128). The description of another one of the characters, Mika-Le, is done by means of mentioning brands that marked the evolution of fashion in the beginning of the century, such as, precum Maison Lys or Couturier Premet: "[A] mannequin from Maison Lys, with very narrow hips, without life-giving thighs, created not for bearing children, but for wearing the latest creations of Premet, some silk scarf covering a non-existing body." (128) At other times, reflector characters such as Mini and Nory bring up gossip topics, for example the remark concerning doctor Rim:

You, a feminist, the adept of great mentalities, harbor this sarcastic and vulgar tone! Still, she too said to herself inside her head, even if not out loud: “That ugly German!” It seemed like there was some method in the Romanian’s bad habit: elegance and cordiality towards strangers are always dependent on the latter’s attitude. Today, it was all Rim’s fault. He acted too aggressively and too much like a foreigner. (44)

In other novels such as *Drumul ascuns / The Hidden Road*, references to such spaces as Mont-Cenis appear, “where the guide teaches you to lean over and gaze into the abyss ...” (Papadat-Bengescu 1087), or Geneva and Zurich: “Elena had been startled to find out that he had sold his apartment in Geneva, when he had departed for Zurich” (1087), centers of power especially from the perspective of Marcian’s profession of a musician. What seems interesting to us is the tableau-like insert that brings up Darwinism, by means of a portrait hanging in doctor Walter’s salon: “The en pied portrait of Darwin was surveying them.” (1103) Papadat-Bengescu multiplies perspectives out of a desire not to contour a dominant idea of the text, “the ancestral grimace” being useful for the human being in order to justify any action from a Nietzschean perspective. Corporeality is an animalic element, by means of everything that prompts us to identify humans as “beasts,” as bereft of any moral principle. It is a remark reminiscent of Dostoevsky that the narrator makes here, because bringing up bestiality, lack of self-control, representing a hypostasis of the “body” associated with a diseased consciousness. The constructed network becomes an evolutionary chain where the travelling characters exchange ideas, adopt attitudes or take over clothing preferences, all contributing to an interconnectedness of the Romanian and the European space.

### **Hierarchies: The city between subnational and supranational**

Beyond the shadow of a doubt the history of literature is traced by means of the history of cities and the relationships existing between them, relationships that have shaped society since the earliest times. Whether we are speaking about antique spaces where manuscripts have encountered a space to expand, or whether we move closer to more recent times, the urban spaces have always shaped the itinerary of cultural ideas. The second idea supporting the model we initially advanced is the one of hierarchies. Thus, we can notice between the cities depicted in the novels analyzed not only a horizontal relationship which constructed the networks, but also a vertical one, which

determined hierarchies: “Cities are simultaneously subnational, operating below nation at regional level, and supranational, transcending nation via city-to-city global circuits.” (Rooney 280) We notice that such a statement is applicable also to the cities depicted in Romanian novels. The Romanian space has a special status, because in its case we are dealing with a double hypostasis: firstly, the territorial fragmentation before the unification of 1918 and the different cultural adherences which have shaped the Romanian provinces in radically different ways. While Transylvania established hierarchical relations with the Austrian, and then the Austro-Hungarian Empire, of which it was a part for a period of time, the Romanian Principalities maintained a constant relationship with the Ottoman Empire and Oriental culture (even after the War for Independence in 1877). Some writers, among them also Slavici, whom we have mentioned above, insert ideas related to foreign politics into their novels, containing this above-mentioned hierarchy.

If war were to break out between the Turks and the Russians, the battles could only have taken place at Romania’s borders with Russia, Romania being a vassal country of the Ottoman empire. [...] Others thought that it would be best for the country to declare its independence, to cut ties with the Ottoman kingdom, which would have stopped the Russians from claiming right to cross the Prut River. (Slavici 235)

This is a sort of negotiation of power relations between global spaces, a realignment of hierarchies by means of force. Studying the manner in which hierarchical relations with “global” cities are reflected in literature proves a transnational interaction with other cultural spaces. This hierarchical pyramid generated by the relations between cities and implicitly between countries/empires can be traced also from the perspective of the peculiar situation of the Romanian spaces. Thus, in the case of Rebreanu’s prose hierarchies are established at a primary level by means of a certain “colonization” that is brought up by means of the linguistic criterion. In the novel *Ion* (1920), the Transylvanian writer, even though he brings to the narrative foreground an individuality, by means of the portrait of the Romanian peasant from Transylvania, creates a backdrop against which social, economic, political and cultural realities of the region are painted. Close to the moment of disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Rebreanu’s characters experience intense personal and national tragedies. These are introduced into the narration in order to prove the existence of a latent state of tension. Thus, the deputy of the “constituency” in Armadia, Ion Ciocan,

even though he was the principal of the Romanian school, “had flirted with the Hungarians, making compromises for their sake, introducing, mainly through the back door, the Hungarian language into the study programs” (Rebreanu, *Opere* 148, vol. 4) and being consequently rewarded with the position of a deputy. The same attitude of compromise can be observed in the following fragment, “independence then gained him the professorship of Romanian literature at the University of Budapest and maintained the representation of Armadia in parliament until his death” (149). The lingering conflict between communities is captured by presenting the two candidates for the available position of deputy, after Ciocan’s demise. The two candidates represent two communities: “Victor Grofșoru, a prominent lawyer from Armadia, supported by the entire Romanian community, and the banker Bela Beck, a Hungarian Swab from Budapest, who it was rumored was willing to spend even a hundred thousand crowns and being a member of the government had at his disposal, with a most efficient discreetness, the support of bigger and smaller authorities” (149), two hypostases corresponding to two attitudes regarding the role of the Romanian community in the Budapest Parliament. Secondly, the hierarchy is established by means of belonging to a social or professional category, as exemplified by Morillo’s pyramid, who placed local elites on the bottom, followed by elites and on top a “unitary political leader.” A character from Rebreanu’s prose, Ion Pinteș, from Cernăuți, caught up in a debate with Titu, explains the role of politics and hierarchies, as experienced by a middle-class governmental clerk, by resorting to words such as “political turmoil,” “fights, harassment, scandal, filth,” “their small ambitions,” “disgust.” The conclusion that astonishes Titu and grants a new meaning to the ideas he had previously stood for is a sort of demolition of patriotic discourse:

I believe freedom is the greatest misfortune for the nation not prepared for it. This is why you people here are happier, in spite of all your whining and revolt ... This is the truth, my dear Sir! Here the Hungarians, foolishly, harass you, persecute you, subdue you—that is all true. This is your only luck, because this is what makes you strong, united and determined. The moment you would be granted liberty, you would do the same as us ... The Hungarians are dumb and make you stronger instead of weakening you. They would however destroy you the moment they would unchain you! (181)

The bitter conclusion reached by the character who had experienced such liberty in Cernăuți is internalized by Titu, a defender of Romanianism in all its forms. The discussion thus advances a hypostasis by means of

which solidarity is generated by a common enemy, a goal for which members of the community come together, a principle according to which even social movements function. Power, represented here by the dominating empire, plays the role of a “necessary evil,” which the others, the weaker ones, gather to fight.

Another hypostasis of the hierarchies represented by the creation of an elite shaped in imperial cities such as Budapest, due to the characters’ studies at Hungarian universities. In *Forest of the Hanged*, Apostol Bologa receives a scholarship in order to study there: “The answer arrived three weeks later: he was granted a place in a ‘student college’ in Budapest, full board and even with a few crowns monthly as pocket money.” During the two years he spends studying in the capital-city he grows as an individual, however Rebreanu attributes a hypostasis to him by means of which the nostalgia for his native Parva and the nature which granted him freedom are seen in opposition to “life in the capital” which “he found insufferable. The noisy streets, people’s egoism, the mechanization of life bothered him” and “in nature he felt free and closer to the world’s heartbeat. Any time he could, he escaped the city. He knew the hills around Buda as well as the surroundings of Parva ...” (Rebreanu, *Opere* 88, vol. 3). Thus, a hierarchy of cities is produced, according to the manner in which Apostol Bologa relates to these spaces: the urban development of Budapest and to what this power-space could offer him, he realizes that his manner of feeling is different, unable of granting him the individual protection he is craving. We can observe that certain tension between modernity, meaning evolution, including by bringing up university education, a source of changing mentalities, and the traditional represented by the attachment to his native, rural space. The incapacity to adapt is justified by his emotional makeup insufficiently adaptable to urbanization. In the novel other characters with different journeys appear, which are briefly described, in the manner of a biographical note: “He told him that he was a Saxon, the son of a peasant, from a village next to Braşov, half of which were Romanians and the other half Saxons. [...] He liked the book and he graduated from the Commercial Academy in Vienna. He had secured a position as accountant in a bank in Sibiu ...” (88) In another one of Rebreanu’s novels, *Răscoală / The Uprise* (1932) Grigore Iuga studies abroad, but only in order to return to his country and “import” the knowledge he gathered there. The hierarchy is quite clear, advancing the solution of learning the “know-how”:

He had gone to Germany to specialize in agronomy, after he had received his BA in Law in Bucharest, not in order to practice, but merely to have a title. He left for three years, his mother died during the first year and the old man asked him to stay home, to abandon all this useless science. He barely agreed to allow him to continue studying for one more year. He returned from abroad with a head full of grand plans and with certain solutions for all hardships. (Rebreanu, *Opere* 88, vol. 8)

The 24-year-old young men had left to Germany to specialize in agronomy, an idea concordant with his country's obvious ruralism, during those times. The influence of the German culture and education is obvious, as the character's studies were meant to modernize the traditional system. The father, "the old man" as he calls him in the novel, is the one who does not trust science, taking up a retrograde attitude, not at all open to novelty, and the son who could have changed something falls prey to the Nadina's allure and renounces the power conferred to him by his studies abroad. In *The Uprise* comparisons to other alpha cities appear: the two capitals, Bucharest and Budapest. In a comment referring to the state of Father Belciug, a character in the novel *Ion*, it is noted that "Belciug should return to the country, as he had promised when the new church in Pripas was built; being a rich widower, he can easily come here and he won't regret the money spent, because Bucharest is a more likeable city than Budapest, apart from being the heart of Romanians" (229). Paris, the French capital, is mentioned in connection with shopping for clothes, necessary for taking part in events such as the ones mentioned by Nadina:

There was, only in November, the opening of the Parliamentary Session, the Eleonora Duse and Feraudy performances, apart from the Paderewski concert. She had brought some things with her from Paris, when she returned home, but she soon realized with dread that with the multitude of events which claimed her presence, she could just well have been naked. (325)

As part of the same discussion, the relationship with the power center is analyzed by reminiscing about lost fortunes or big sums of money squandered, the city being seen as "a place of doom." Reminiscent of "creolization" a space is thus described, keeping important elements imported from the hierarchic pyramid:

A small night-time restaurant, in a back street. A modest exterior. Inside blinding lights, sought-after luxury, warm atmosphere, real French waiters and some sensational attractions. The owner, from a noble family, with a distinguished name, who spent a huge fortune in Paris and build the restaurant

from whatever money he had left, in order to have an occupation, receives his customers personally and ceremoniously like a senior would receive his guests to a stylish reception. Raul Brumaru, of course, a friend of the owner's, makes the introductions skilfully. And Nadina smiles delightedly and repeats over and over again: — Ah, oui, c'est vraiment très chic, très parisien! (323).

This mixture is created by bringing French elements to a Parisian location, as part of an overtly expressed influence. Such references appear even during moments of happiness as “Raul Brumaru, more of an early bird than all of us, came down fully groomed, happy, joyfully humming a new tune that was incredibly popular in Paris” (467). Nadina's husband, Grigore Iuga, realizes that his wife's life abroad implied “spending enormous amounts of money,” and what Platamonu had sent him, representing “his fall earnings paid out a few months in advance, even though only he knew how he had actually been able to conjure up such a huge sum” (479) had been squandered. The narrator's attitude evinces his sympathy towards the downtrodden, and condemns the attitude of estate owners and landholders.

### **A systemic model: The Romanian novel**

If in *Ion*, Rebreanu's novel, the discussion gravitated primarily around the Hungarian language, in *The Uprise* we realize that the hypostases of language are different, as “Nobody on the editorial board spoke any other foreign language except French, so that nobody could read to them,” and because Titu Herdelea was “from abroad,” the secretary asked him to select from the German and Hungarian press the news about Romania and enslaved Romanians. He immediately offered him an impressive pile of virgin newspapers” (136). If in the novel published in 1920, the world described had relationships above all with the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in *The Uprise* the vision is transformed, evincing a world “speckled like an oriental mixture” where we simultaneously see:

[W]orkers and clerks, then peasants walking in groups like scared sheep, servants in Hungarian peasant clothes, tiny soldiers, young ladies wearing excessive makeup, eyeing all men, apprentices and high school students teasing each other and bumping into people and walls, juice sellers, Bulgarians wearing brass bells, Turks carrying candy ... (23)

The mixture noticed also by Rebreanu proves the existence of a new systemic model, where networks, by means of horizontally shaped



relations between Romanian urban centers and foreign ones overlap with hierarchies, constructed vertically, as the oriental hypostasis evinces a taking over which brings chaos, as opposed to order. Nadina notices the “lack of civilization” that she attributes to the Orient, while Bucharest’s road to becoming a “civilized” city is attributed to the French influence. “Inside the carriage, wrapped in furs, Nadina said joyfully:—How good that Bucharest started to be more civilized, not only a place for grilled meat, loud music and bad behavior! ... Don’t you agree, Grig?—Yes, of course!—And the musician was quite interesting! She added after a pause. Did you notice that he only sang for me?” (153).

As Morillo pointed, “the general cultural difference between the two types of structures, and indeed the different purposes for which each type of structure existed, made the intersection of networks and hierarchies potentially tense and conflicted, requiring a variety of cultural and administrative mechanisms to mediate and regulate the tension” (Morillo 5). We can thus conclude that there exists, as part of the process of transferring knowledge, two essential phases that construct a viable literary model generated by the Romanian space: the first is the one by means of which urban spaces become nodal points for the characters’ travels, whether we are referring to journeys through Transylvania towards Vienna or Budapest, or from Bucharest to Paris or other alpha cities. In the prose texts of the three writers who have served as case studies one can notice this openness towards the integration of Romanian cities, by means of the characters, into a European network. The second phase is the one where hierarchies are established, as the urban node network also means a hierarchization of city spaces. Starting out from the linguistic vehicle used by the characters and the power relations we can encounter in this context, until the analysis of foreign policies and the manner of election of political leaders, according to the relation with a certain alpha city, a political center. The clash between cultural spaces is obvious in the texts analyzed, as inevitably between dominant and dominated an oppressive relationship is established, which also constructs the pyramid of power relations. The urban center becomes the reflection of this systemic model, produced by the intersection of knowledge acquired in central and western Europe and the Oriental heritage.

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## Mesta, omrežja in hierarhije: sistematični model romunskega romana

Ključne besede: romunska književnost / romunski roman / imagologija / mesto / omrežja / hierarhije / sistemski model

V članku opazujemo, kako je mogoče uporabiti mesto kot narativni scenarij in s tem vplivati na ustvarjanje sistemskega modela znanja. Izhajajoč iz Morillove teorije, ki urbane prostore analizira z opazovanjem interakcije med omrežji, ki jim pripadajo, in hierarhijami, ki jih vzpostavljajo, ter nazadnje postanejo »vozlišča znanja«, bomo skušali dokazati, da predstavljajo romunski romani s konca 19. stoletja in iz obdobja med vojnama dragocene mejnike za zarisovanje sistemskega modela Jugovzhodne Evrope. Specifičnost romunske književnosti, ki odraža zgodovinske razmere in odnose z imperiji, kot sta avstro-ogrski ali otomanski, ter vzpostavitev delovnih razmerij ob prehodu s podeželske na pospešeno urbanizacijo ustvarja ustrezno matrico. Te vidike lahko srečamo v romanih pisateljic in pisateljev romunske književnosti, kot sta Ioan Slavici in Liviu Rebreanu, ki odsevajo realnost transilvanskega prostora ter odnosov med skupnostmi Romunov, Nemcev, Sasov in Švabov, Madžarov, Judov, vse do Hortensie Papadat-Bengescu, pisateljice, ki je orisala podobo Bukarešte kot dela evropske urbane mreže, četudi hierarhično podrejene Parizu.

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