

# The Circulation of the Novel between Romania and (the former) Yugoslavia (1918–2020): Imperial (Dis)Continuities in Post-Imperial East-Central Europe

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*This article aims to investigate the circulation of the novel between Romania and (the former) Yugoslavia from 1918 to 2020. Based on the data provided primarily by DCRT (The Chronological Dictionary of the Translated Novel in Romania) and the COBISS database, the translation flows are analyzed in four subperiods: 1918–1946, 1947–1964, 1965–1989, and 1990–2020. The quantitative data are used to further examine which novels were translated and how they crossed borders in this part of post-imperial Eastern Europe. I show that, apart from communist internationalism, the imperial legacy, which was replaced by globalization processes after the fall of communism and the Yugoslav wars, also plays a major role in the dissemination of the novel, influencing both the corpus and the channels of circulation. I argue that acknowledging and analyzing the usually overlooked non-national, sub-national, and supra-national elements reveals the heterogeneity of these literatures, which could be construed as inter- and transnational literatures.*

Keywords: Romanian literature / Yugoslave literature / novel / literary translation / literary circulation / imperial legacy / semi-peripheral literature / ethnic minorities

One of Ivo Andrić's short stories, "Noć u Alhambri" (1924), is set in cabaret Alhambra, a well-known cabaret during interwar Bucharest. The story was published two years after Andrić left Bucharest, where he worked in the diplomatic service between 1921 and 1922. In 1933, Liviu Rebreanu visited Croatia as a representative of PEN Romania at the PEN Congress held in Dubrovnik (Rebreanu 248–250). More than two decades later, Mihail Sadoveanu also visited Yugoslavia, as can be

read in his diary. At first glance, what we see are a globally renowned Yugoslav author and two Romanian canonical authors writing about each other's country. At a closer look, however, we can notice that the encounter is rather extra-literary. We know that they visited or worked in the neighboring country but not much is said about their respective literatures. Moreover, in one of his diary entries from 1956, Sadoveanu writes that "while I stayed in Belgrade and Dubrovnik, I noticed that our literature is completely unknown not only to the regular citizens of the federal republics but also to the Yugoslav intellectuals and writers. The same unawareness of the literature and art produced in the neighboring country can be found in our country too" (Sadoveanu 402).<sup>1</sup> Through their time span and fictional or diaristic expression, these three examples address—directly or indirectly—the issue of literary circulation in Eastern Europe during the twentieth century. As argued by Franco Moretti, "movement from one periphery to another (without passing through the center) is almost unheard of; that movement from the periphery to the center is less rare, but still quite unusual, while that from the center to the periphery is by far the most frequent" (Moretti, "More" 75). However, there is an important footnote that makes this statement less disconcerting:

I mean here the movement between peripheral cultures which do not belong to the same 'region': from, say, Norway to Portugal (or vice versa), not from Norway to Iceland or Sweden, or from Colombia to Guatemala and Peru. Sub-systems made relatively homogenous by language, religion or politics—of which Latin America is the most interesting and powerful instance—are a great field for comparative study, and may add interesting complications to the larger picture (like Darío's modernism, evoked by Kristal). (75)

By acknowledging the possibility of unmediated circulation of the novel as well as the potential complications that can be derived from this type of comparison, we are faced with an important question: how and how much does the novel circulate between neighboring peripheries that are linguistically different, religiously varied, and that experienced multiple political changes after 1918? With this question in mind, I will try to investigate the circulation of the novel in post-imperial East-Central Europe (Biti 62–75), more exactly between the Romanian and the Yugoslav culture between 1918 and 2020. Given the political chang-

<sup>1</sup> "Cât am stat la Belgrad și Dubrovnik am putut constata că literatura noastră e perfect necunoscută, nu numai de către cetățenii obișnuiți ai republicilor federale, ci și de intelectualii și scriitorii iugoslavi. Aceeași necunoaștere ale literaturii și artei țării învecinate e și la noi." (translation is mine)

es, the quantitative distribution of the novel will be divided into four subperiods: 1918–1946, 1947–1964, 1965–1989, and 1990–2020.<sup>2</sup>

What interests me is what the specific works that cross borders convey about the source culture. I argue that the circulation of the novel between Romania and (the former) Yugoslavia reveals the heterogeneity of these literatures, which is the result of the incorporation of non-national, supra-national, and sub-national elements. Taking “the national” as the unit of reference, I understand a) non-national elements as novels written by exiled writers, which at the time of their publication were not perceived as representative for the literary production of the source-culture (Panait Istrati’s work is illustrative in this regard), b) supra-national elements as literary genres with a regional spread such as the “hajduk” novel, and c) sub-national elements as works written by, for, and in the languages of ethnic minorities. These elements shape not only the corpora of translations but also the channels of circulation. Needless to say, in the case of Yugoslav literature, the impossibility to discuss about *a* national literature is impossible from the outset because it was based either on a supranational or multinational model (see Wachtel, *Making*).

Several observations need to be made before delving into the analysis. The first one regards the methodology deployed in this study. I collected the data for my quantitative analysis primarily from *DCRT* (The Chronological Dictionary of the Translated Novel in Romania, 2005) and the COBISS platform. Although COBISS allows for an extensive search according to the original language, publication years, target language, and so on, the initial search encountered two obstacles and it had to be followed by more thorough ones. On the one hand, in order to obtain a comprehensive overview of the translations, the search was conducted by changing the subdomain and the TLD (e.g., cobiss.si, sr.cobiss.net, etc.). On the other hand, several search filters had to be eliminated. For instance, some of the bibliographical entries lacked

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<sup>2</sup> The delimitation of the subperiods is based on the Romanian historical timeline: the formation of Romania in 1918; in 1947, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Romanian People’s Republic; in 1965, following the death of Dej, Nicolae Ceaușescu became the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Socialist Republic of Romania; the fall of communism in 1989 and the transition to democracy and neoliberalism. Although it is not juxtaposed with the Yugoslav historical periodization, there are multiple junctions between the two. The reason I opted for a single timeline is based on the data I gathered for this study, which shows that the existent differences (which are underscored as such where needed) do not alter the analysis of the data.

information such as the publication year. Hence, the use of the “publication year” filter led to the omission of those novels. The last step in gathering the data involved confronting other libraries’ catalogs in order to acquire the missing bibliographical information. It should also be mentioned that in the case of Yugoslav cultural space, I used the target language as indicated in the dictionary and database. Based on these successive searches, I identified 49 novels translated into Romanian<sup>3</sup> and 55 from Romanian between 1918 and 1989. As for the subperiod from 1990 to 2020, I decided to provide only an approximate number of translated novels. My decision is determined by the fact that while COBISS allowed me to collect data regarding the novels translated from Romanian into Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Slovenian, the second volume of *DCRT* (2011) covers only the first post-communist decade, whereas all the other alternative tools, such as publishers’ catalogs, are not at all comprehensive. Suffice it to say for now that, despite the incomplete data, a few particularities of the Romanian translation market can still be discerned, which allows me to outline at least a fragmentary overview of translation trends.

The second observation refers to the post-imperial East-Central Europe. It needs to be underscored that the “post-” in “post-imperial” is not just a marker of chronological demarcation. Likewise, “East-Central Europe” is not just a mere geographical delimitation. Instead, both concepts point towards the (dis)continuity of a particular imperial legacy in Yugoslavia and Romania. My use of “post-imperial East-Central Europe” relies on Vladimir Biti’s research. In his article “Post-imperial Europe: Integration through Disintegration” (2019), Biti starts by distinguishing two different types of states that emerged after the dissolution of the German, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian empires: the imperial successor states and the newly established nation-states (63). The latter were culturally, ethnically, and religiously hybrid state formations wherein the power relations between the constituencies of the former imperial provinces were not abolished but reversed (i.e., directed towards the new minorities). In this context,

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<sup>3</sup> 47 novels were identified in *DCRT*. The other two were mentioned in Mircea Muthu’s bibliography of South-Eastern European literatures. Given the fact that the aim of the study is to offer an accurate picture—although I am aware of possible omissions—I decided to include these two novels in the analysis. The two volumes absent from *DCRT* but present in Muthu’s bibliography are Taško Georgievski’s *Crno seme* (1966) and *Crveni konj* (1975), translated into Romanian and published in a single volume in 1986, and one of Svetomir Rajkov’s novels, translated into Romanian as *Trifoi cu patru foi*, in 1988.

the victimized “nationally hybrid” or “*indistinct* subalterns” (66)—the terms used by Biti to refer to these constituencies—contributed to the establishment of cross-national transborder communities. However, argues Biti, the engineers of these transborder communities not only “gradually disintegrated the states they were affiliated to” but “homogenized the most heterogeneous victims, mobilizing them for their agendas” (67). After World War II, the ethnic heterogeneity (as a result of the imperial domination) is rediscovered. Yet, it is a particular imperial legacy that plays a role in the inter-peripheral circulation of the novel. As I will show in the article, several publishing houses translated and published works in the languages of ethnic minorities. Although my focus is on Serbian and Romanian, it should be mentioned that the other languages (German, Hungarian, Ukrainian) indicate a re-evaluation of the Austro-Hungarian legacy alone. In turn, the re-evaluation of the Austro-Hungarian legacy and the concealment of the other imperial legacies—especially the Ottoman—led me to refer to this region as “East-Central” rather than “Eastern Europe.”

The other significant change brought forward in post-imperial East-Central Europe is represented by the shifting centers. The collapse of the empires meant, first and foremost, a shift from Budapest and Vienna to Belgrade and Bucharest. In the field of translations, the impact of shifting centers is made visible by the high number of translations from and into Serbian and much less from and into Croatian, Macedonian, and Slovenian, as well as by the concentration of the publishing activity in Bucharest. Then, the disintegration of former Yugoslavia led to the consolidation of Zagreb, Sarajevo, Skopje, Ljubljana, and Priština as national centers. However, the national centers are not the sole mediators between these two cultures. In his systemic approach to the post-Second World War literature and culture of East-Central Europe, Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek identifies three centers of influence which, I would add, shape both the production and circulation of the novel: “1) the Marxist/socialist center (‘filtered’ through the colonialism of the USSR); 2) the Indigenous center (which contains earlier foreign influences); and 3) the Western centers (with varied German, French, etc. influences)” (Tötösy de Zepetnek 133). A closer look at the translation flows during each subperiod will shed light on how the imperial legacy, along with the pluricentric influence, uncover the non-national, supra-national, and sub-national elements, opening up the space for construing these literatures as inter- and trans-national literatures.

### **Small numbers, extensive routes (1918–1947)**

The compiled data in *DCRT* and *COBISS* shows that there was a scarcity of translated novels from Romanian into Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, and Slovenian and vice versa between 1918 and 1947. Out of the 49 novels translated into Romanian, only one was published during this period. Reversely, out of the 55 novels written by Romanian-born writers, five were translated into Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian. The dreams of national independence and of creating a united South Slavic state, which had been on the political agenda since the nineteenth century, was finally achieved: The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenians, which became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929 (see Wachtel, *Making* 67–127) and Greater Romania are two out of the many state formations created after 1918. For both of them, the main preoccupation was the creation of a national identity for an otherwise ethnically diverse population. In the cultural field, a similar preoccupation concerned Romanian intellectuals. As for Yugoslavs, a rather different approach was chosen. In this regard, Wachtel shows that “cooperation and compromise were more the order of the day” (73). These two attitudes towards the creation of a Yugoslav national culture point to the implementation of either a multinational or supra-national model, which led to the persistence of the distinction between the constituent literatures (cf. Juvan, “The Invisible”).

The national sentiments and the vindictive animosity between the new countries (Biti 64), which dominated the post-imperial political scene, did not lead to the self-isolation of East Central and Southeastern cultures. It should be mentioned that between 1920 and 1938 the two peripheries belonged to a relatively homogenous sub-system in political terms: The Little Entente, an alliance that included Romania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia, whose purpose was to defend these geo-cultural areas against Hungarian revanchism. According to Moretti, belonging to such a sub-system would allow an unmediated circulation. At the time, translated fragments or references to the Yugoslav novelistic production could be found in Romanian periodicals. Several chapters of Borisav Stanković’s novel *Nečista krv* (*Impure Blood*, 1910) were published in Romanian translation in four successive issues of the magazine *Boabe de grâu* (*Wheat Grains*, 1934). The interest in East-Central European cultures should not surprise us. As Cosmin Borza shows, the low number of translations is counterbalanced by “the constancy with which panoramic or synthetic articles appeared among the Romanian publications of the time” (158). This situation can be

also understood through the concept of “cultural dumping,” one of the three complex strategies described by Andrei Terian. According to Terian, cultural dumping presupposes the “multiplication of imports from as many cultures as possible, which should thus cancel the main dependence on German or French” (Terian, “National” 9). It is exactly what happens in the interwar period, when for the first time the number of novels translated from languages other than French surpasses that of novels translated from French, while the number of Eastern European novels in translation is almost the same as in the long nineteenth century (Baghiu, “Translations” 32). It is also the period when, for the first time again, the number of domestic novels exceeds the number of translated ones (28).

The fact that the “explosion” of narrative genres in interwar Yugoslavia—or at least in Slovenia (Dović 125)—was not followed by their translations into Romanian is surprising. The only integral translation into Romanian between 1918 and 1946 is a hajduk novel by Sava Bosulka.<sup>4</sup> The sub-genre is extremely relevant for the discussion, since the hajduk novel was one of the most successful sub-genres of popular fiction in nineteenth-century Romania (Terian et al. 18) as well as throughout the Balkans (Patraș 25). Hence, I would argue that given the regional dissemination of the sub-genre, the translation of Bosulka’s novel is an example of a supra-national element that contributes to the configuration of international literature.

Whereas the only translated novel from Yugoslavia is a hajduk novel, the corpus of translations from Romanian displays a different selection. The novels written by two Romanian-born authors were translated into Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian: Panait Istrati and Liviu Rebreanu. Istrati was a Romanian-born writer who lived in France and wrote in French. His novels *Neranțula* (1927) and *Kira Kiralina* (1924), the latter of which was prefaced by Romain Rolland, were thereafter translated from French as follows: *Kira Kiralina* was translated into Serbian in 1925 and *Neranțula* in Croatian and Slovenian in 1930 and 1935. A core literature acting as “mediator” is illustrative not only of the inequalities that shape the literary world-system but also of the establishment of the national literatures’ boundaries. Although a significant number of writers put Romanian literature on the world literary map during the interwar period, Romanian literary critics and historians

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<sup>4</sup> It is uncertain from which language the novel was translated. Although the bibliographical tools mention that it is “a Serbian novel,” there is no information about the source-language.



of the time “were often skeptical of or even hostile to Romanian-born authors who have been successful abroad” (Terian, “Romanian” 4). This skepticism is most visible in the reception of Istrati’s work as non-national (rather than transnational) literature. For instance, the fact that he does not belong to Romanian literature is stated sharply by G. Calinescu in his *History of Romanian Literature*: “Although Panait Istrati has also given Romanian translations of his French works, he will never be a Romanian writer, for his versions lack spontaneity and the servile rendering of idioms has an exotic effect in French.” (840)

Unlike Istrati, Rebreanu has been constantly seen as a Romanian writer. In addition to the long debates dedicated to his literary works, Calinescu takes Rebreanu’s literature as a reference point for intra- and inter-national comparison (Calinescu 621).<sup>5</sup> The role of these two strategies is to signal the canonical status of Rebreanu’s work in Romanian literature, on the one hand, and the relevance of Romanian literature in the world, on the other hand. The reason I made this observation is that the translation of his novels is dependent on his movement to the core (i.e., from the former periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to Bucharest). It is only after he moves to Bucharest that his works start to gain international visibility. His novel *Ciuleandra* (1927) was translated into Serbian in 1929 and *Ion* (1920) was translated into Croatian as *Plodovi zemlje* in 1943. Rebreanu’s case is an illustration of how “peripheralization” and “centralization” (“becoming-core”) are “multi-scalar, playing themselves out at multiple levels—neighborhood, city, nation, region, macro-region—in addition to that of the world-system itself,” as shown by Warwick Research Collective (WRcC 55). Taking into consideration Istrati’s case as well, I would argue that in the process of consolidation of national literatures (or at least of Romanian literature), the hierarchy seems to be reversed: the national core becomes more important than the Western cores. In other words, not being legitimized by the national core means not belonging to that national literature.

The extremely small number of translations between Romanian and Yugoslav literatures can be understood as the opposite of Moretti’s observation that “the smaller a collection is, the more canonical it is” (Moretti, *Atlas* 146).<sup>6</sup> What the existent data shows us is that the novels translated

<sup>5</sup> One of the most telling examples is the comparison of the protagonist of Rebreanu’s novel *Ion* with Dinu Păturică (the protagonist of Nicolae Filimon’s novel *Ciocoii vechi și noi*) as well as with Julien Sorel.

<sup>6</sup> It needs to be mentioned, however, that Moretti conducted his study on the catalogs of the British circulating libraries of the seventeenth century.



during the interwar period and World War II are, except for Rebreanu's novels, non-canonical. They are either related to the supra-national production and circulation of a sub-genre or to transnational literature, which in specific cases was construed at the time as non-national.

### **Zoom in on the ethnic minorities (1947–1964)**

After a few years of national or supranational instability caused by World War II, both countries adopted a socialist regime, which means that politics brought them together into a relatively homogenous subsystem once again. During this subperiod, 26 novels were translated from Romanian and 7 novels into Romanian. The change in the political climate in East-Central Europe influenced Romanian-Yugoslav relations as well. Initially found on the same side of the political spectrum, the relations between the two countries deteriorated in 1948, due to the Tito-Stalin split. Although there was not a single translated novel between 1948 and 1955—neither into Romanian nor from Romanian—scholars working on Yugoslav literature(s) signal that in the forties (or at least before the split) there was an increased focus on Polish, Albanian, Bulgarian, Czech, and, to some extent, Romanian literature (Grbelja qtd. in Leto 186). In the field of translations, the years 1948–1955 mark a disjuncture between Yugoslavia and Romania. While in the former, “the wave of increased ‘sovietization’ took place between 1947 and 1948” (Leto 189) and had an echo in 1949 as well (Šarić 419), in the latter, “the 1949–1956 period could, in fact, be said to have constituted a period of *geographic atomization* of Soviet literature, for it comprised not only Russian literature, but also the sum of translations of works produced in countries annexed and formed by the USSR” (Baghiu, “Strong” 68). Significantly important is the fact that during these years, most of the literary infrastructure that contributed to the later circulation of the novel between the two peripheries was created. In 1948, ESPLA (The State Publishing House for Literature and Art) was founded, and in 1947 the magazine and publishing house Lumina (The Light) were founded in Pančevo. In addition, writers’ unions were created, as well as the Union of Yugoslav Literary Translators in 1953 (Leto 192).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Leto argues the following: “Considering that 1953 was also the year in which the Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs (FIT) was founded, Yugoslavia played a pioneering role compared to East European countries in the creation of an institution that legitimated the work of translators and ensured them a certain freedom in their contacts with the West.” (Leto 192)

The Romanian-Yugoslav relations were reestablished in 1953 and translations started to be published on both sides after 1955, at a time when both countries (but especially Yugoslavia) sought to become more independent from the Soviet Union. Undoubtedly, communist internationalism (understood as an ideologically based solidarity existent even without the mediation of the Soviet Union) played a significant role in opening up the translation fields to as many literatures as possible. But, as Ioana Popa points out, “factors other than communist internationalism transformed into political injunction could favor East-to-East translation flows. Such was the case of pan-Slavic ideals, which partly relied on, and favored, translation” (Popa 432). Even though most of the states in Eastern Europe were Slavic, there are also exceptions (such as Romania and Hungary), which makes us look for other factors that may have led to the circulation of the novel. In this regard, I find Marko Juvan’s observation extremely useful. Talking about “a regional literary circuit among literatures in Slavic languages” (Juvan, *Worlding* 70), he underscores the fact that “ideologically based solidarity among literatures related to linguistic kinship and the same rulers served political needs—mutual support of stateless nations in their strivings for recognition and autonomy within the Habsburg Empire” (70). To put it simply, it is not only the linguistic kinship but also the imperial domination that contributes to the shaping of this regional circuit. Acknowledging the role played by a shared history of imperial domination in shaping a literary circuit means acknowledging and including in a different or extensive regional circuit the other regions that shared the same condition. As I will show, in the case of Romanian-Yugoslav relations, the imperial legacy played out in a post-imperial context and was used as a channel of circulation.

Ironically or not, the second translation from Serbian during this subperiod is yet another hajduk novel, Janko Veselinović’s *Hajduk Stanko* (1896, translated into Romanian in 1958). Just a year before, the Romanian translation of Dobrica Ćosić’s novel *Daleko je sunce* (1951) was published. Most of the translated novels were Realist novels, such as those written by Stevan Sremac, Ivo Ćipiko, and Borisav Stanković. As expected, in 1962 Ivo Andrić’s *Na Drini ćuprija* (1945) was translated into Romanian, but possibly from French (Nedelcu 54).<sup>8</sup> Undoubtedly, the translation of Andrić’s novel is triggered by the fact that the writer won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961. The

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<sup>8</sup> Nedelcu argues that neither Gellu Naum nor Ioana Seber, the two translators of the novel, knew Serbo-Croatian and that the Romanian title resembles the French one.

Nobel Prize and the possibility of a mediated translation from French pertain to the role of the world literary centers in inter-peripheral literary circulation. Istrati's novels—which were written in French—are to be found in the corpus of translated novels during this subperiod too, along with Rebreanu's novels. Furthermore, in 1960 a Slovenian translation of one of Zaharia Stancu's novels was published, and in 1964 the first translation of one of Mihail Sadoveanu's novels appeared.

All of the aforementioned novels were translated into the target culture (either Romania or Yugoslavia). This observation *per se* seems meaningless. Yet the situation becomes more interesting once we acknowledge that these translations represent only a part of the corpus. In fact, this is the point where the imperial legacy comes into play. ESPLA—from 1959 EPL (The Publishing House for Literature)—played a major role in publishing literary works written in the languages of ethnic minorities, as well as translating Romanian literature into the same languages. The coagulation of a coherent publishing program is recorded in the period's press as well. For instance, a short list containing several Romanian canonical and contemporary writers, whose works were about to be translated into Hungarian, Serbian, German, and Ukrainian is mentioned in a 1955 article: Ioan Slavici, Zaharia Stancu, Petru Dumitriu, to name just the novelists (Beram and Herescu 4). Not only that part of these translations can be identified in the libraries from the former Yugoslavia, but no less than 15 out of the 25 translations from Romanian during this subperiod were actually translated in Romania and exported to Yugoslavia. This compels me to see the promotion of the literature of and in the languages of the ethnic minorities as being simultaneously a strategy for exporting Romanian literature abroad. In the Yugoslav space, the ethnic minorities were engaged differently in the circulation of the novel. Mihai Avramescu's novel *Tinerete frântă* (*Broken Youth*) was written in Romanian and published in 1953 by Libertatea Publishing House from Pančevo. Two years later, it was translated into Serbian. A quantitative analysis of the Romanian translated novels in Yugoslavia highlights, thus, that any attempt to grasp the novelistic production in translation implies also acknowledging to some extent the production beyond the nation-state borders.

Broadly, it can be said that between 1955 and 1964, the number of translated novels both from and into Romanian was on the rise. Three factors contributed to this increase, although to a different extent: communist internationalism, the usually overlooked imperial legacy, and the mediation of world literary centers. The involvement of ethnic minorities in the circulation of the novel was anything but passive.

Seen from the outside, the routes appear to be absurd, given the fact that the Serbian ethnic community from Romania was the “carrier” of Romanian literature abroad. Reversely, the analysis of translated novels in Yugoslavia sheds light on the existence of Romanian literature abroad. To put it simply, the national literatures become refracted by incorporating and constantly negotiating the imperial legacy.

### **Multi-directional circulation (1965–1989)**

A significant share of the translations from and into Romanian were published between 1965 and 1989, amounting to 24 out of 55 novels from Romanian into Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian, and 41 out of 49 novels into Romanian. Moreover, as the existent data shows, the export of Romanian literature through internal translation—aimed to promote this literature in the languages of the ethnic minorities—was diminished. Only five novels followed this route. At first glance, it may seem surprising, given the fact that nationalism(s) was/were on the rise in both countries. While in Romania, a national-communist regime was installed, in Yugoslavia “particular nationalisms” (Wachtel, *Making* 167, 231) were on the rise starting from the 1960s. The most plausible explanation is the one offered by Wachtel. Understanding this region in comparison with other world regions, Wachtel defines Eastern Europe as “that part of the world where serious literature and those who produce it have traditionally been overvalued” (Wachtel, *Remaining* 4). What Wachtel refers to is Eastern Europe not in the *longue durée* but during a specific period, namely the communist one. Not only has the number of translations proliferated during this third subperiod, but a closer look at the translated novels will shed light on the multiplication of the circulation routes.

The increase, or better said, the appearance of translations from and into Macedonian is the great novelty regarding the Romanian-Yugoslav literary encounters during this subperiod. Overall, it can be noticed that in Romania, novels written by authors from almost all the republics were translated, unlike in the previous period, when most of the translated novels were written by Serb writers from Serbia, Bosnia, and Montenegro. It should be mentioned from the outset that representativity does not entail evenness. Even if the Romanian book market opens up to the novelistic production of *almost* all the republics, there are significant inequalities, in the sense that most of the writers whose novels were translated are Croats or Serbs, followed by Macedonians.

The geographical diversification can be related to “the gradual move from official endorsement of a supranational unitarist cultural policy to a multinational one” (Wachtel, *Making* 189) that occurred at the time in Yugoslavia. Yet this geographical pattern of circulation presents an anomaly: the near absence of Slovenian novels in Romanian translation. In Slovenia, during the interwar period as well as during Federal Yugoslavia, the share of translated fiction reached sometimes even 50% of the total translations (Dović 126, 129) and, as the data collected for this study shows, among the translations were novels written by Romanian writers. Hence, whilst the unequal situation was overshadowed by the dominance of Romanian-Serbian literary relations up to 1965, the multiplication of routes sheds light on this anomaly. One of the possible explanations may refer to the linguistic dissimilarity between Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian, the latter being the language of the majority of Yugoslav literatures.

A significant number of the novels translated from Serbian were historical novels, such as those written by Branko Ćopić, Mihailo Lalić, and Oskar Davičo. These translations follow the path opened by the Romanian edition of Ćosić’s novel *Daleko je sunce*. It is not by chance that I refer once again to Ćosić. His case is illustrative of the nationalist turn that began to mark Yugoslav culture. The partisan novel was “one of the central genres for the propagation of post-World War II supranational Yugoslav identity” (Wachtel, *Making* 198) and Ćosić was one of the representative authors. Yet in the early 1960s, he “played a central role in bringing discussions of nationalism back to center stage in Yugoslavia” (198). In addition to partisan novels, several canonical Modernist works were translated, among which some of the novels written by Ivan Slamnig, Miroslav Krleža, Miodrag Bulatović, Meša Selimović, and Ivo Andrić. Even though Miloš Crnjanski had lived for a few years in Timișoara, none of his well-known novels was translated into Romanian.<sup>9</sup> Whether partisan or historical novels, popular or canonical literature, these translations reveal a better representativeness of each republic’s literature.

The corpus of translations from Romanian has Mihail Sadoveanu at its core, whose novels were translated into Serbian, Slovenian, and Macedonian. In this case, surprising is not the translation of his novels but rather their delay compared to other East and East-Central

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<sup>9</sup> It is quite interesting that the only translated novel was *Kap španske krvi* (*A Drop of Spanish Blood*, 1970) and not *Dnevnik o Čarnojeviću* (*The Journal of Čarnojević*, 1921) or *Seobe* (*Migrations*, 1929).

European literatures (Baghiu, “Strong” 69). Among the other names are Marin Preda and Matei Caragiale. Three observations need to be made concerning the rest of the translations that complete the list. First, a few novels were translated in Romania and published by The Publishing House for Literature, namely novels written by Jean Bart, Matei Caragiale, Nicolae Breban, and Mihail Sadoveanu. Secondly, a significant number of novels written by the leading figures of the Writers’ Union and other literary institutions were translated in Yugoslavia. Taking into consideration the importance of such institutions at the time (Wachtel, *Remaining* 33), it can be stated that they contributed to the export of these novels into the neighboring countries. Such a statement is supported by the existence of a collaboration agreement between the Yugoslav and Romanian Writer’s Unions which encouraged the inter-peripheral circulation of books and writers. The press of the time constantly relates about the visits paid by the Yugoslav writers in Romania and vice versa, often mentioning that the respective visits were paid in the framework of the agreement. Two such visits from 1979 can be offered as examples: the Yugoslav Cultural Days were celebrated in multiple cities from Romania (Poenaru 1), and in Bled the 12<sup>th</sup> international writers’ convention took place, organized by the Slovenian Writers’ Association and Slovenian PEN. At this latter event, one of the books that was launched was the Slovenian translation of Augustin Buzura’s novel, *Orgolii* (*Egos*, 1977), as related by one of the Romanian participants (Hinoveanu 91). Thirdly, the literature of ethnic minorities continued to shape the corpus of translation. Exactly like Mihai Avramescu, Slavco Almăjan is a Romanian writer from Vojvodina, whose work was written in Romanian and then translated into Serbian and published by a Serbian publishing house.

Besides the significant number of translations, this third subperiod reveals the following situation. The gradual move from a supranational to a multinational model (which implied the rise of the republican nationalisms) entailed the involvement of the other republican centers, among which Zagreb and Skopje, mainly from the 1970s onwards, were the most visible. The effect of the translations into Romanian was their diversification based on the republic in which the author was born. Therefore, what the translation flows during the second and third subperiod show us is that while the supranational model led to geographical concentration, the multinational model led to geographical dispersion.

## **Translation subsidies as a path to visibility (1990–2020)**

As I stated in the introduction, it is extremely difficult to conduct a quantitative analysis of the inter-peripheral circulation of the novel due to the absence of temporally extended bibliographical tools. This obstacle is, however, one-sided. While the COBISS platform allowed me to gather the data for the analysis of the Romanian translated novel in the former Yugoslavia, the vice versa was not possible. Neither *Index Translationum* nor *The Chronological Dictionary of the Translated Novel in Romania (1990–2000)* covers the entire timeframe. Given their temporal limitations, I tried to use alternative consulting tools, such as *Bibliografia traducerilor din literaturile slave (1945–2011)* (*The Bibliography of Translations from Slavic Literatures (1945–2011)*) and the online catalogs of the publishing houses. I identified approximately 80 novels translated from Romanian and around 50 novels into Romanian. Even though it is fragmentary, the data points to a significant growth in the translations and calls for further discussion. The growth is gradual and dependent on socio-political and economic changes. In the aftermath of the Yugoslav wars and following the fall of communism, new publishing houses were created, and translations were no longer part of a state-run political program; instead, they were subordinated to market logic. This led to a shift in the structure of the book market in favor of ‘commercial’ literature (Dović 130), a category that rarely displays other source languages than English (Vimr 833). Another change, this time in favor of small literatures, occurred in the early 2000s, with the establishment of national and supranational translation subsidies.

Needless to say, the high number of translations from Romanian has a geo-political explanation: the novels entered not one, but six different national book markets. Probably the most telling examples are novels translated almost simultaneously into at least two different languages, as happened with Bogdan-Alexandru Stănescu’s *Copilăria lui Kaspar Hauser* (*The Childhood of Kaspar Hauser*, 2017), published in Macedonian and Croatian in 2020 and with Norman Manea’s novel *Plicul negru* (*The Black Envelope*, 1986), published in Croatian in 2011, in Slovenian in 2012, in Macedonian in 2015, and in Serbian in 2016. The Croatian edition of Manea’s novel was subsidized by the Translation and Publishing Support Program. The inclusion in catalogs and the funding of the translations of works written by exile or migrant writers, as is the case of Norman Manea, point to an institutional rehabilitation and promotion abroad of writers who have been marginalized in the Romanian literary field until 1989.



Regarding the translations from Romanian, it can be noticed that contemporary writers dominate the translation corpus. The translation of their books is dependent on two types of subsidies—source-country and supranational—as well as on literary prizes and festivals. As argued by Ondřej Vimr, the boom of the translation support programs between 1990 and 2010 “was spread evenly across the European continent and not primarily linked to the lifting of the political barriers in the former Communist countries” (Vimr 829). In the post-communist Romanian literary space, the translation program “20 authors” (2005–2012), launched by the Romanian Cultural Institute, has been rightfully considered the first coherent state-run program that aimed to facilitate the export of Romanian literature abroad. However, little attention was paid to the fact that, except for two translations into Polish, the program did not subsidize any other translation published in Central and Eastern Europe. This gap started to be filled a year later when the Translation and Publication Support Program (TPS) was launched.

As for the supranational subsidies, the most relevant for this specific inter-peripheral circulation are Traduki and Creative Europe. Both of them support and bring to the fore other literary agents, such as the BookStar Festival, held in Skopje. The invitation of Doina Ruști and Bogdan-Alexandru Stănescu at the 2016 and 2022 editions of the festival was determined by the translation of one of their novels, which, in turn, were subsidized by TPS and Traduki. A more complex picture is offered by Vilenica International Literary Festival, organized annually by the Slovene Writers’ Association. Unlike other festivals, Vilenica plays an active role in the translation of *some* novels, namely of those written mainly by the winners of Vilenica Prize or Crystal Vilenica award. The following timeline is illustrative in this regard: the Slovenian edition of Liliana Corobca’s *Kinderland* (2013) was published in 2015, after the author won the Crystal Vilenica award in 2014. A similar timeline defines the Slovenian editions of Florin Lăzărescu’s *Trimisul nostru special* (*Our Special Envoy*, 2005) and Dan Lungu’s *Raiul găinilor* (*Chicken Heaven*, 2004). The mere presence of the two writers at the festival triggered the interest in the novels but—and this is significantly important—their translation and publication were dependent on TPS (i.e., subsidies provided by the source country). Hence, I would argue that literary festivals may have a major role either in triggering the publication or facilitating the dissemination of translations but eventually the actual translations are, most often than not, dependent on translation subsidies.

On the Romanian book market, probably the most noteworthy observation regards the share of canonical versus contemporary translated novels. In the 1990s, the absence of translation subsidies, as well as the increasing dominance of English made it difficult for smaller literatures to be made visible on the Romanian book market. Yet, it is during these years that the project “A Treia Europă” (“Third Europe”) was initiated by a group of scholars in Timișoara, a project that set out to explore Central European literature. The results of the first stage (1997–2005) consisted of the publication of over 60 volumes, among which anthologies and translations of well-known writers (Babeți 16). Even though only a few of these translations were actual translations of Yugoslav novels, the project managed to draw publishers’ and readers’ attention to a usually marginalized literary category. Until 2010, the corpus of translations consisted mostly of canonical novels written by Milorad Pavić, Miloš Crnjanski, Danilo Kiš, and Miodrag Bulatović. After 2010, however, the share of translations shifted towards a different generation of writers and involved a gradual differentiation of publishers. While big publishers tended to publish new editions of canonical writers such as Ivo Andrić’s novels and transnational writers (e.g., Dubravka Ugrešić, Slavenka Drakulić, and Daša Drndić), small publishers were more interested in exploring contemporary novelists, among whom Faruk Šehić, Lidija Dimkovska, and Goran Vojnović.

As on the ex-Yugoslav side, the translation or dissemination of contemporary novels was triggered by literary festivals. A significant number of the post-Yugoslav writers whose novels were translated into Romanian were invited to one of the three international festivals of literature, held in Iași, Bucharest, or Timișoara (i.e., FILIT, FILB, FILTM). Moreover, at the time they were invited, they had already been the winners of domestic or international literary prizes and awards. Yet, regardless of their symbolic prestige, the translation of their novels proved to be dependent on translation subsidies. Such was the case of the Romanian edition of the *Ministry of Pain* (2004), published with the support of Traduki shortly before Ugrešić attended FILTM in 2010. Based on these recurrent patterns, I see literary festivals in Eastern Europe not so much as opportunities to increase book sales or even to ensure a straightforward translation of post-Yugoslav novels but rather as events that merely introduce a neighboring (and transnational) literary production to a Romanian audience.

Another strategy of self-promotion used by the source cultures is represented by the “internal translations.” An example is the collection “Serbian Prose in Translation,” launched by the Serbian publisher

Geopoetika in collaboration with the Serbian Ministry of Culture (Post). As in the case of Georgian literature, where this self-promotion strategy did not fulfill its aims (Kvirikasvili 821), the English-language translations published by Geopoetika did not get republished in Romania. This observation reinforces the idea that after 1989, when globalization begins to leave a mark on the small book markets from Eastern Europe as well, the inter-peripheral circulation of the novel depends almost exclusively on translation subsidies.

## Conclusion

The analysis conducted in this study shows that, besides the historical and political changes, the inter-peripheral circulation of the novel between Romania and (the former) Yugoslavia during an entire century was also determined by the gradual development of the book markets. The lack of a literary infrastructure can offer a justification for the low number of translated novels during the interwar period, when the two countries were part of the Little Entente and when the periodicals regularly paid mutual attention to the literary production. Moreover, the extremely small number of translations revealed that the national dimension of the two emergent literatures is significantly blurred. As such, it could be argued that the imperial legacy of the region subsequently led to the translation and circulation of supranational genres and transnational writers. After 1947, literary infrastructure ceased to constitute an issue. Multiple state-run literary institutions facilitated the inter-peripheral circulation of the novel. Communist internationalism was, undoubtedly, responsible for the dissemination of the novel across the Eastern Bloc. A simple look at the periods when the translation flows stagnate or rise is enough to prove it. However, the Austro-Hungarian imperial legacy also played a major role in the dissemination of the novel across neighboring countries. It influenced what was translated and how it was exported. More significantly, the involvement of ethnic communities as producers and as carriers of literature abroad suggests that the circulation of the novel between the two countries can be construed not only in terms of inter- but also intra-peripheral relations.

It is only after 1989 that the inter-imperial legacy starts to fade away under the pressure of globalization in the field of translation. The transition to a market economy demands not only a significant growth in the number of translated novels but also reshapes the corpus of translations and the channels of circulation. Starting from the early 2000s,

almost all translations into a peripheral language are subsidized. As for the corpus, it can be noticed that the underdog is finally given a voice. Who is the underdog? The migrant, the former “non-national” writer, the constantly rejected writer during communism and the Yugoslav Wars. In addition, the share of canonical and contemporary novels translated into Romanian underscore the coexistence of what can be called “Yugoslav” and “post-Yugoslav” literature which are, as even their names suggest, irreducible to national demarcations. Coming back to Moretti’s statement from the beginning of the article, I would like to conclude by saying that the circulation of the novel between two peripheries that are made relatively homogenous by politics does, indeed, “add interesting complications to the larger picture” (Moretti, “More” 75) and that these complications refer, first and foremost, to the heterogeneity of the peripheral literatures, which could be construed in terms of inter- and trans-nationalism.

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## Roman v obtoku med Romunijo in (bivšo) Jugoslavijo (1918–2020): imperialne (dis)kontinuitete ter post-imperialna vzhodna in srednja Evropa

Ključne besede: romunska književnost / jugoslovanske književnosti / roman / literarno prevajanje / literarni stiki / imperialna dediščina / polperiferna literatura / etnične manjšine

V članku raziščem, po kakšnih poteh je krožil roman med Romunijo in (bivšo) Jugoslavijo v letih 1918–2020. Predvsem na podlagi podatkov iz *DCRT* (Kronološki slovar prevedenih romanov v Romuniji) in podatkovne baze COBISS spremljam tok prevodov po obdobjih 1918–1946, 1947–1964, 1965–1989 in 1990–2020. Nadalje za raziskave o tem, kateri romani so bili prevedeni in kako so prehajali meje v tem delu post-imperialne vzhodne Evrope, uporabim kvantitativne podatke. Pokažem, da igra pri kroženju romana med bralstvom poleg komunistične internacionalizacije pomembno vlogo tudi imperialna dediščina, ki jo po padcu komunizma in jugoslovanskih vojnah nadomestijo globalizacijski procesi, saj ta vpliva tako na korpus kot na obtok del. Zago-varjam trditev, da pripoznanje in analiza ne-nacionalnih, subnacionalnih in nadnacionalnih elementov razkriva heterogenost teh literatur, ki bi jih bilo mogoče vzpostaviti kot internacionalne in transnacionalne literature.

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