

The Import of the Latin American Novel in Romania

“Meaningful Voids” and Selection Principles of a (Semi)peripheral National Market

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VERY FEW Romanian or international scholars have paid attention to probably some of the most provocative lines ever written about the Romanian novel. They belong to Franco Moretti, who makes Romania an important case in explaining the harsh rules of centralization that govern the rise of the European novel in the 18th and 19th century. According to Moretti, the market economy of literature, rather than encouraging “intercourse in every direction,” as the optimistic Marx foresaw—merely restricts the creative autonomy of most of the national literatures. “From the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature,” reads the *Communist Manifesto*, but that’s not how it is; rather, there arises a planetary reproduction of a couple of national literatures that find themselves in a peculiar lucky position.”¹ In order to “measure the internal variation of the European system,”² Moretti initiates an experiment where he studies the diffusion of 150 British and French novels (Paris and London are the undisputed centers where the novel is produced) in a number of countries that include Denmark, Spain, Holland, Italy, Hungary, and Romania. Where does Romania stand on this map of divided Europe? I quote Moretti again:

For my part, I see this: Three countries that seem to be always in the leading group: France, Britain, Denmark: the center, the core of the system. Then, two or three countries with a very uneven behavior: Spain, Holland, and partly Italy. Then again, two countries (Poland and Hungary) that are limited to a half-dozen forms, or little more. And finally, isolated, Rumania (that may however be joined, in the case of British novels, by Spain, Hungary, and Poland). So: a small group with easy access to a lot of European narrative; two groups in the middle, that in their different ways have access to 30–50 percent of the market; and a country at the bottom, with just one form per generation. There is only one country (in that peripheral position where one would expect many more) for this reason, presumably: because

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*at the periphery of Europe the bibliographical tools that I have used either don't exist, or have remained inaccessible to me. Almost by definition, the periphery of the system is the place where data are least abundant; this is why it is here represented by Rumania alone.*³

These unflattering remarks, based on a quantitative analysis of the literary systems of several countries, would probably not hold such significance if Moretti would not equate this low circulation of foreign novels in 19th century Romania with a poor import of novel forms as well. The 150 novels upon which Moretti bases his experiment are representative for several genres or subgenres, from sentimental novels to oriental tales, historical best sellers, religious novels, war stories and so on. Consequently, the fact that underprivileged literary cultures translate less has important consequences not just for the sum total of books populating that culture, but—most importantly—for its structure. The same thing holds true for the Romanian case:

*Rumania imports far fewer forms than Italy, or Denmark, because it is a much smaller market: and a smaller market, as we have seen with circulating libraries, does not behave like a large one on a smaller scale: it behaves differently. Instead of importing one-third, or one-tenth, of every available form, it selects very few of them, and locks out the rest. Tons of Dumas, Hugo, Bulwer-Lytton's melodramas, then: but no Captain Marryat, no Our Village, no oriental tales, no industrial or silver-fork novels.*⁴

However astute Moretti's argument may be, the problem of import in the 19th century Romanian context—and Romania is, most likely, not the single culture that illustrates this situation—is far more complicated than the author of the *Atlas of the European Novel* might want to accept. Firstly, because the number of translations which Moretti takes into account do not exhaust the number of imports. Due to the fact that the Romanian bourgeoisie of the 19th century is largely familiar with French culture, a considerable number of books are imported without translations. This means that the novel forms Moretti thinks are excluded from the Romanian system may as well be present if a wider research would consider the private collections of the period. Another important objection that could be raised regards Moretti's conception of the national cultural spaces. When trying to explain why some (semi)peripheral literatures import fewer books—and consequently—fewer novel forms, Moretti writes the following: "Lack of interest? More probably, lack of space."⁵ However, it is not very clear how space is defined and how one can circumscribe its limits. If we are to see national literary markets as systems made up of forms or techniques (and Moretti's acclaim of Russian formalism is no secret to anyone) seen as hegemonic economic goods that circulate from the core countries to the less privileged areas, it is hard to envisage them as closed systems. Can the observation that Romania—or another national culture—does not import oriental tales be explained by lack of space, or, perhaps, by the fact that the form identified as oriental tale is already provided by the local tradition? Or, more importantly: does every national market necessarily have to contain in its structure the feature "oriental tale"? And if that particular feature is missing, does it mean that the catalogue of forms existing in that national market is necessarily impoverished?

“Meaningful Voids” on National Markets

IN FACT, all the aforementioned questions can be summed up to the fact that the model of hegemonic exchange between national markets—as delineated by Moretti—tends to completely disregard the behavior of (semi)peripheral cultures. By adopting the theoretical framework of descriptive translation studies, the present paper challenges the vision that semi-peripheral cultures are mere recipients of literary innovation and that the pressure of the literary symbolic market—as defined by Pascale Casanova⁶—is the sole agent of the internal dynamic of forms. Rather than passive actors of the international literary market, these cultures function as systems engaged in the creation of world genres or in establishing the circulation value of forms or techniques. In order to describe this mechanism, I will take a closer look at the Romanian translation market of the 20th century, with a main focus on the period of the Thaw and liberalization. The 1956–1971 timespan can be a privileged interval of reflection on the (semi)peripheral-core cultures dynamic due to several aspects: firstly, the data about the translations are abundant—and as we have seen, Moretti complained about the lack of information for his study; secondly, the fact that the socialist state supervises the strategies of translation without exerting complete control—as in the early 1960s the literary field already gained autonomy from the political one—can provide firm guidelines for the function of cultural import in less privileged contexts.

My study develops the argument that rather than a passive agent that merely mirrors the world hierarchy of genres of forms—as Moretti suggested—, Romania’s liberalization period acts as an agent that selects forms or models according to the internal needs of the system. Descriptive translation studies insist not only that “translations are facts of target cultures,”⁷ but that they are to be investigated in terms of the role played in the development of the national market as a whole. In Gideon Toury’s terms,

translation activities and their products not only can, but do cause changes in the target culture . . . Thus, cultures resort to translating precisely as a major way of filling in gaps, whenever and wherever such gaps manifest themselves—either as such, or (very often) from a comparative perspective, i.e., in view of a corresponding non-gap in another culture that the prospective target culture has reasons to look up to and try to exploit . . . the more persuasive rationale is not the mere existence of something in another culture/language, but rather the observation that something is ‘missing’ in the target culture which should have been there and which, luckily, already exists elsewhere.⁸

Do translations fill in gaps or, to put it otherwise, is their absence indicative of important gaps in a certain literature?

However provocative, this questions risk remaining unanswered if the investigation concerns well established systems, where the intricate relations between literary products make terms like “internal needs,” “repertoire,” or “voids” difficult to circumscribe. Toury’s line cited above referring to “something . . . ‘missing’ in the target culture which should have been there” is itself ill-defined when dealing with developed literary cultures. On the contrary, in the East European literatures of the 1950s and 1960s, when

the repertoire is highly limited by Soviet restrictions, the development of the systems can be described without the prospect of oversimplifying the exchange mechanisms. In most of these literary contexts, the circulation of the classical literary works—whether autochthonous or foreign—was blocked by the censorship, while the contemporary production was vigilantly filtered through the principles of Soviet cultural norms. This is why, starting with the 1960s, when the translation mechanisms no longer fully coincide with political planning, these cultures can become privileged sites of reflection on the selection principles operating in (semi)peripheral environments.

The Contemporality Index of Imports

IF THE Stalinist period is overwhelmed in Romania by Soviet or Russian translations, this hegemony is already contested at the beginning of the 1960s. Quantitative studies dedicated to novel translations prove that far from being monolithic or predictable—as most researches of socialist realism have claimed—, the 1950s and the 1960s witness an interesting competition of literary models.⁹ Statistical investigations also show that the 1960s mark the turning point from the hegemony of the Soviet or Russian novels to that of the Western European production: the latter is already outnumbered in 1964 by the translations from French.¹⁰ Strictly looking at quantitative data, it seems that the impact of French literature upon the autochthonous production replaces the Soviet or Russian influence. This would mean that, when the ideological monopoly is removed, the Romanian system selects the French novel as a privileged site of cultural interference. However, the sum total of novels translated from a specific culture is not always indicative of its influence on the morphology of the target culture. The index of contemporality, defined as the temporal distance between the publishing of the work in the source culture and its selection by the target culture, is an important criterion for measuring the urgent “needs” of the development of the latter.

In order to establish the contemporality index of the translated French novels in the 1956–1971 era (a period of major systemic changes, when the socialist realist canon was replaced by the so-called aesthetic norms), I ran an experiment: if we accept the convention that 10 years distance between the date of a work’s first publication and its translation can accurately account for its contemporary nature, being also a prerequisite for its impact on local production, then the abovementioned index allows for the formulation of hypotheses about the role of the system of translations upon the morphological evolution of national markets. This convention is by no means undisputable: a high contemporality index of a group of translated works does not automatically guarantee its revolutionary effect on the adopting context, while examples of works older than 10 years that exerted high pressure on the adopting cultures can also be invoked. Nonetheless, on a systemic scale—and without disconnecting it from other important contextual factors—, this convention can prove fruitful. As far as my study is concerned, the high number of novel translations from French during the Thaw and liberalization period—which produced the general thesis that Romanian literature (re)adopts Western patterns—is overshadowed by the weak presence of the contemporary novel. A statistical inventory

of the translations between 1956 and 1971 indicates a low contemporality index, of about 0.19 (calculated as the ratio between the contemporary novels and the sum total of translated novels from a culture): numerically, this means that out of the 246 French novels translated during the abovementioned timespan, only 48 are, according to the convention of my experiment, “contemporary.” In fact, out of the experimental prose emerging in the 1960s in France, only a couple of books were translated throughout the period: two novels by Alain Robbe-Grillet (*Les Gommages*, 1967; *Dans le labyrinthe*, 1968) and one by Nathalie Sarraute (*Portrait d'un inconnu*, 1967).

It is obvious, then, that rather than an innovating role in the evolution of the Romanian postwar novel, French translations play rather a conservative function, which was meant to restore the “classical infrastructure” of the system, dismissed by the Stalinist culture as reactionary or bourgeois. Moreover: in the absence of a systematic rendering of World Literature classics in the interwar period, when culture planning was entirely absent and foreign translations were left to the fluctuations of the market,¹¹ the 1960s essentially meant a general reconstruction of the Romanian literary system. In descriptive translation studies terms, at the beginning of the 1960s both the “evolutionary” and the “conservatory” needs of the system were deficient. In fact, the “exaggerated attention to the classics” is not characteristic only to Romanian literature, but describes a wider process deployed by the other East European cultures on their departure from Stalinism. A similar mechanism is identifiable in Hungarian literature as well:

Statistical data indicates, for example, that in the case of translated literature, the number of classic or canonical works was surpassed only by the texts of the so-called socialist countries . . . The classics offer authority, continuity, legitimacy, and education to the people, and, above all, they efficiently restrict the notion of progress. Reviewing the postwar lists of titles, twentieth-century avant-garde writers were included as an exception; it is clear that the publication of the classics flourished at the expense of more contemporary and innovative texts.¹²

There is another, more important explanation concerning this vast process of translating the classics: in a literary context with a high ideological charge, their works—dealing mostly with remote realities—were more easily acceptable. However “reactionary” the works of Diderot, Flaubert, Balzac, Zola or Jules Verne (to cite just a few of the most translated authors of the time) might have been, they did not endanger the general socialist aesthetics of the late 1950s or 1960s.

If the French novel was selected by Romanian literature to fill its conservative vacuum—nevertheless important in re-establishing the relative autonomy of literary values over ideological constraints—the numbers show that a competitor never fully acknowledged by the morphological study of Romanian literature under communism was the Latin American novel. Of course, the syntagm does not hold a univocal coverage.

Jorge Amado, one of Brazil's most popular writers, challenged the idea of a Latin American literature as a “false and dangerous concept,” insisting that there is nothing more different than a Mexican and a Brazilian, but he also admitted the fact that the writers placed

under this general frame are "united by what is negative—misery, oppression, military dictatorship."¹³

Even if the syntagm cannot account for the diversity of the writers or of the nations placed under its territory, most of the target cultures of the 1960s perceived and theorized the phenomenon as homogeneous.

At its starting point, the import of Latin American novel is part of a wider process—regulated by the Soviet cultural market—of establishing inter-peripheral relations as a means of interrupting the unidirectional influence of core Western literatures upon so-called marginal ones. Even if these inter-peripheral relations were often restricted to Soviet bloc cultures, Romania's translationscape displays an unprecedented diversity: between 1956 and 1971 novels from Hungary, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Serbia, Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Iceland, Algeria, Iraq, South Africa, Cameroon, India, Australia become part of the Romanian literary market. "Starting from the mid-1960s, translations of works from the global peripheries became the norm, and, judged collectively, they acted as a fierce competitor for European novels,"¹⁴ Ștefan Baghiu boldly states. I have already advanced the hypothesis that the Latin American novel is a serious competitor to the French import in the Romanian postwar national market¹⁵ without taking into consideration factual data. When looking at the numbers, the dominance of French translations in the 1956–1971 timespan is crushing. As compared to the 256 imported novels, the 40 Latin American imports indicate a significantly lower rate of cultural absorption. On the other hand, when taking into account the contemporaneity index of translations, the distance between Latin American and French translated books diminishes considerably. Out of the 246 French novels, only 48 were translated within 10 years from their debut in the source culture, while out of the 40 Latin American works, 31 are contemporary novels. In terms of the contemporaneity index, the distance between 0.19 and 0.77 in favor of the (semi)peripheral culture is illustrative. Not to mention that this brief inventory does not take into consideration the consistent fragments of American Latin novels published in literary journals such as *Secolul 20* (20th Century) or *România literară* (Literary Romania). At the other side of the spectrum, if we exclude from the French list consumer novels like those of André Maspaigne or Charles Exbrayat, the amount of works likely to produce morphological changes in Romanian literature is even smaller.

Still, these bare numbers would not be indicative of any shift in Romanian literary forms—to return to Moretti's terms—if they were not confirmed by other mechanisms that prove the complex intercourse between the Latin American novel and the Romanian Thaw novel. As Gelu Ionescu, a close observer of the translation processes in Romania, states,

If Gide influenced Romanian literature without being translated, it is certain that the reading through translations of the novels of Faulkner or of the Latin American prose writers (Márquez, especially) has had a certain echo in the Romanian prose writing of the past ten years. This echo was not crystallized in the content of the novels, but rather in the mode

*of narration, in the epic composition, in the relation between the story and the way it is rendered.*¹⁶

The general impact of this fictional formula can be detected in the works of Ștefan Bănuțescu, D. R. Popescu, Nicolae Velea, George Bălăiță, Sorin Titel, Constantin Țoiu, Nicolae Breban, Alexandru Ivasiuc (in *Racul*/The lobster, the dystopia is placed in a Latin American country), or Ștefan Agopian. It is not the aim of this paper to detail the complex relationships between the two cultures at the end of the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, partly because the inventory has already been made.¹⁷ Instead, I would like to outline the morphological conditions that made the Romanian novel select the Latin American model rather than the French Nouveau Roman.

At the beginning of the 1960s, the simplistic norms of socialist realism, which conveyed the Party principles in a novel formula indebted to the 19th century realism, were challenged both by the advocates of the autonomy of the literary field and by the protectors of the ideological status quo, who maintained that the complex reality of socialism cannot be fully rendered into such a schematic rhetoric. The high appraisal for Roger Garaudy's 1963 book, *D'un réalisme sans rivages*,¹⁸ translated in Romania only in 1968, but already a strong reference in the 1964–1965 debates on the novel, points towards a search for novel forms that could end the monopoly of realism over other modes of representation. In Garaudy's account—widely adopted in the Romanian debates on the novel—the enigmatic, the absurd or the oneiric are not excludable from the realist representation of reality, but are constitutive parts of it. At stake was a general renewal of novel techniques that would end the monopoly of the Balzac era, artificially revived by the formal anachronism of socialist realism.

The need for the import of techniques that could dismantle the traditional modes of representation is manifest in the paratexts that accompany the American Latin translated novels of the 1960s.¹⁹ These modern devices were sustained not by imaginaries that could encourage elitist thinking or reflect the dehumanizing tendencies of the Western late modernism, but were devised in underprivileged (rural) contexts, where the sense of social emancipation was not yet devalued. In the absence of this common ideological background specific to peripheral contexts, the novel experiments of the Western cultures are denounced as gratuitous or decadent. The 1963–1964 debates on the “new modalities of the novel” testify to this general rejection of the Nouveau Roman. Al. Piru denounces the so-called “novels without subject” and accuses the “anti-novel” movement of agnosticism and skepticism towards social progress:

*for the representatives of the “nouvelle vague” resurrection, the human being is an undefined entity (Nathalie Sarraute, *Portrait d'un inconnu*), history repeats itself in a closed circle (Claude Simon, *Le Palace*), while the world is nothing but a futile labyrinth (Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Dans le labyrinthe*).*²⁰

Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu dismisses Beckett's *Comment c'est* for displaying a “semi-articulate” narrative voice,²¹ while Irina Mavrodin accuses the lack of sense and human perspective specific to the French “novels without authors.”²²

As opposed to the French contemporary novel, the Latin American production fulfilled crucial needs of the Romanian national market in the mid-1960s: it provided a model of formal experiments that could undermine the anachronistic realism of the 19th century, while at the same time reflecting the social ethos of emerging or (semi)peripheral nations. The formula was successful in Romania as it concomitantly responded to at least three demands: firstly, the ideological background of the writers met the approval of socialist authorities in Romania. Eight novels were already published during Stalinism and after the Cuban revolution the ideological consent between the two zones (Latin America and Eastern Europe) became officially ratified. This is why even before the boom of the 1960s in the United States or Western Europe, the countries in the Soviet bloc already constituted an important sales market for the Latin novel. Secondly, the interesting formula of rendering archaic or exotic realities in an ultramodern expression, initiated by Faulkner but widely exploited and regenerated by Latin American writers, guaranteed the revolution of a literary expression rooted in the local soil. Ștefan Agopian's prose, D. R. Popescu's *F* cycle or Sorin Titel's *Banat* series offer telling examples of the formal revolution of the Romanian rural novel. Secondly, the import of the Latin American novel offered the liberalizing voices of the mid-1960s, which tried to tacitly disconnect from Soviet norms in favor of Western European modernism, the promise of becoming citizens of the World Republic of Letters. In Jay Watson's terms, "What Faulkner offers to 'disadvantaged' writers situated along the rural peripheries of Casanova's world republic of letters is above all access, via formal inventiveness, to 'total, literary and aesthetic autonomy' for their works."²³ Last but not least, starting with Asturias's *El Señor Presidente*, already translated in 1960, the Latin American novel put a label on the theme of power and dictatorship, very frequented by notable Romanian novels with subversive undertones, like Eugen Barbu's *Princepele* (The prince), Alexandru Ivasiuc's *Racul*, or Nicolae Breban's *Bunavestire* (Annunciation). To briefly conclude, in the mid-1960s, when the autochthonous canon of the Romanian novel was about to undergo systemic changes, the Latin American model seemed to be a suitable import for all the three categories of writers involved in this shift. The formula met the expectations of the socialists, who sought to enlarge the canon under new leftist premises, of the modernists, who used experimental formalism as a currency for inscribing Romanian narrative in the Western circuit, and of the subversive writers, who found in the Latin American prose a model of codifying resentment against local repression. The paradoxical nature of the formula allowed the coexistence of divergent literary strategies on a world literature scale: while for the socialists the American Latin novel was the proof that progress can occur outside Western innovation, for modernists its formal inventiveness offered the guarantee of catching up with the latest world literature devices. It is noteworthy that the antagonistic dimension implied in the syntagms "socialist aestheticism"²⁴ or "socialist modernism"²⁵ put forward by Romanian critics in order to describe the 1965-1980 is embedded in the subtle ideology of the American Latin novel.

The selection of the Latin American novel as an important morphological nudge under the Soviet bloc was by no means a Romanian peculiarity. The same pattern, responsible for the establishment of a powerful world genre that made South America a "temporary sub-center" of the novel itself,²⁶ can be identified in other Eastern European cul-

tures on their departure from Stalinism. In Hungary, in 1972 texts from South America arrive from Manuel Puig, Mario Benedetti, Augusto Roa Bastos, Julio Cortázar, Adolfo Bioy Casares, Ernesto Sábato and Jorge Luis Borges, as a result of translation planning:

As one can read in a Party decree from 1975 . . . , the presence of the new Latin American literature in Hungary was attributable not to desire to translate works that were bestsellers in the West, but rather to the political motive to “direct the attention of the reading public not to Western bourgeois texts, but to the non-European literature that was growing . . . in the Third World.”²²⁷

If the author of the study insists on the ideological motivations of the import in Hungary, in Czech and Slovak contexts American Latin novel “would be selling out in bookstores even before it was shelved.” For Slovak literature, its fictional worlds sharply contrasted with the materiality devised by the socialist realist formula, while also fertilizing the local scenery:

The tense life dramas of an individual were new and attractive to the reader, mainly in comparison with the domestic topics of socialist collectivism. The pictures of exotic, wild nature were in stark contrast to the construction novel in the socialist realist style with its images of a Slovak village or industrial sites . . . In this way, translations from Spanish contributed to reviving the domestic tradition—these elements (Romanticism and folk tradition with natural phenomena motifs, existentialism, lyrical prose) had been present in Slovak literature before, but as a result of various (predominantly political) factors, disappeared from it.²²⁸

What Eastern literatures—situated at a similar stage of system development and sharing a common ideological ground—had in common with the cultures of Latin America was the trust, deconstructed by core European cultures, in “the Enlightenment project of modernity.”²²⁹

The pattern of import described above does not regard semi-peripheral contexts as blind actors on the international market, but as active forces with their own agenda set by the dynamic of local traditions, or by political or social aims. Moreover, the relationship between the 1960s Eastern literatures and the American Latin novel dismantles the univocal direction of consecration delineated by both Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova: if the former describes the circulation of forms by insisting on the pressure exerted from the center to the peripheries, Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters* envisages an apparently more flexible model of literary trade: the writers of the periphery can gain international recognition and become exportable provided they are consecrated by the centers (Paris, mainly). Contrary to this presumed literary law, the Latin American novel is selected by the Romanian literary market not as an outcome of its consecration in centers like Paris or New York, but due to a dynamic that implies inter-peripheral relations or parallel diffusion in different areas of the globe. Perhaps the consecration of the Latin American novel as a world genre is indebted to these offshore literary economies that nevertheless add value to its formula. The so-called minor literatures are not excluded from the international mechanism of establishing cultural values, but are integral

parts of it. Last but not least, the case exemplified above dismisses the binary model of literary interference restricted to the relations between the source culture and the target culture in favor of a world system dynamics called by Dionýz Ďurišin “interliterary processes.”³⁰ The adoption of American Latin novel in East European contexts during the liberalization is the outcome of the relations not only between Eastern European and the temporary sub-center of Latin American literatures, but also between each one of them and the hegemonical “capitals” establishing the cultural legitimacy: the Soviet Union and Western Europe.



Notes

1. Franco Moretti, *The Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (London–New York: Verso, 1998), 187.
2. Moretti, 175.
3. Moretti, 184.
4. Moretti, 177.
5. Moretti, 177.
6. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, translated by M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, MA–London: Harvard University Press, 2004).
7. Gideon Toury, *Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond* (Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995), 29.
8. Toury, 27.
9. Ștefan Baghiu, “Translating Novels in Romania: The Age of Socialist Realism: From an Ideological Center to Geographical Margins,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai: Philologia* 61, 1 (2016): 5–18.
10. Ștefan Baghiu, “Strong Domination and Subtle Dispersion: A Distant Reading of Novel Translation in Communist Romania (1944–1989),” in *The Culture of Translation in Romania/Übersetzungskultur und Literaturübersetzen in Rumänien*, edited by Maria Sass, Ștefan Baghiu, and Vlad Pojoga (Berlin etc.: Peter Lang, 2018): 63–84.
11. Gelu Ionescu, *Orizontul traducerii* (Bucharest: Univers, 1981).
12. László Scholz, “Squandered Opportunities: On the Uniformity of Literary Translations in Postwar Hungary,” in *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, edited by Brian James Baer (Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011), 208.
13. Suzanne Jill Levine, “The Latin American Novel in English Translation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel*, edited by Efraim Kristal (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 302.
14. Baghiu, “Strong Domination and Subtle Dispersion,” 73.
15. See Alex Goldiș, “The Functionality of Literatures Translated within the Romanian Thaw Polysystem,” in *Beyond the Iron Curtain: Revisiting the Literary System of Communist Romania*, edited by Ștefan Baghiu, Ovio Olaru, and Andrei Terian (Berlin etc.: Peter Lang, 2021): 235–251.
16. Ionescu, 20–21.

17. See: Ilinca Ilian, "Destinul literaturii latino-americane în România regimului comunist (1948–1989)," *Philologica Jassyensia* 15, 1 (29) (2019): 165–176; Elena Crașovan, "Magical Realism Avatars in the Romanian Novel," *Dacoromania litteraria* 7 (2020): 36–55.
18. Roger Garaudy, *D'un réalisme sans rivages: Picasso, Saint-John Perse, Kafka*, foreword by Louis Aragon (Paris: Plon, 1963).
19. A more detailed discussion of the Romanian paratexts that praise the composition of Latin American novel can be found in Goldiș.
20. Al. Piru, "Direcții în romanul românesc contemporan," *Gazeta literară* (Bucharest) 10, 52 (1963): 7.
21. Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, "Romanul fără autor," *Gazeta literară* 10, 35 (1963): 7.
22. Irina Mavrodin, "Romane fără autor?," *Gazeta literară* 11, 20 (1964): 8.
23. Jay Watson, *William Faulkner and the Faces of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4–5.
24. Mircea Martin, "Despre estetismul socialist," *România literară* 37, 23 (2004): 18–19.
25. Andrei Terian, "Socialist Modernism As Compromise: A Study of the Romanian Literary System," *Primerjalna književnost* 42, 1 (2019): 133–147.
26. Mads Rosendahl Thomsen, *Mapping World Literature: International Canonization and Transnational Literatures* (New York–London: Continuum, 2008).
27. Scholz, 210.
28. Eva Palkovičová, "From Periphery to Centre (and Back?): On the Reception of Hispanic American Fiction in Slovakia," in *Identity and Translation Trouble*, edited by Ivana Hostová (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 67.
29. Márcia Rios da Silva, "Jorge Amado: The International Projection of the Brazilian Writer," in *Brazilian Literature As World Literature*, edited by Edouardo F. Coutinho (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 200.
30. Dionýz Ďurišin, *Theory of Interliterary Process*, translated by Jessie Kocmanova and Zdeněk Pištěk (Bratislava: Veda, 1989).

Abstract

The Import of the Latin American Novel in Romania:
"Meaningful Voids" and Selection Principles of a (Semi)peripheral National Market

By adopting the theoretical framework of descriptive translation studies, the paper investigates the selection principles that govern the Romanian system of novel translation during the period of thaw and liberalization. It engages polemically with Franco Moretti's model of circulation of forms put forward in *The Atlas of the European novel* by showing that rather than passive actors of the international literary market, semi-peripheral cultures function as systems engaged in the creation of world genres or in establishing the circulation currency of forms. In Romania, but also in other East European cultures, the import of Latin American novel not only fulfills the systemic needs of emerging literatures, but also exemplifies a case of inter-peripheral processes that dismantle the hegemonical distribution of formal innovation from centers to peripheries.

Keywords

translation studies, Franco Moretti, novel translations, Romanian thaw literature, American Latin novel, circulation of literary forms