

# Glocal Literatures in the Making

## The Interstitial Novel in Modern Romania

### As World-Literature

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**I**N THE sixteenth chapter of his most recent novel, writer Dan Lungu depicts, through the narrator's voice, one of the most comical episodes of Romanian life during the postcommunist transition ever presented in the novelistic universe. Informed that he is to receive a computer for the village hall, mayor Polovăț prepares for this event to the best of his abilities: he brings forward an entire arsenal of behaviors inherited from the recent past. Although initially suspicious, he takes care of the attire, of the location, of the welcome ceremonies, of training the employees involved in this grand event for which their village hall was selected, for yet to be revealed reasons, as the target of American generosity. Polovăț's running around sounds as follows:

*Why their village hall, and not another one? Why a computer? For what purpose? What does it take to prepare for this? Then, not to be neglected, who is paying, for he had not received a hefty expense budget. He knew what a computer was; he had seen it once at the Computing Center, a grey building with many, unwashed, windows; he had also taken a perforated card as a souvenir, which Porfira used as a bookmark for a long time. If he searched for it well enough, he might find it on the bookshelf. . . . The phone rang in the morning and he was informed that the computer was about to arrive, along with the representative of the American foundation. For a few seconds, panic paralyzed him. He did not know where to start, how to get it together. First of all, he shaved . . . , he sent Vălică to keep watch on Cosoi's hill, from where the road could be seen far and wide, in order to notify them when he glimpsed the convoy, military or civilian, he didn't yet know . . . Afterwards, the problem of the brass band came up. Such a moment had to be festively marked . . . He then giddily looked for the new flag, Niculina had no clue where she'd put it, maybe in the storeroom, maybe in the archive, maybe she'd lent it to the dispensary, at last he hollered at her that she should take the already displayed one and wash it, put it in some vinegar to brighten up its colors, because he cannot make a fool of himself in front of the Americans.<sup>1</sup>*

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The mayor's disappointment is considerable when two volunteers of an association for democracy bring him, without any festivities, a smaller computer than expected, the place and purpose for which he struggles to find until, discovering the CD-ROM, he changes its function to an excellent stand for his coffee cup.

It would be bizarre, at the very least, within Romanian critical culture, for Dan Lungu's 2018 novel to be talked about in terms of modernity and, perhaps even more bizarre, in terms of world literature. For the authors of *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015),<sup>2</sup> however, the present novel could be a good candidate for exemplifying world-literature, a literature which, irrespective of when it has been produced in the last 200 years, metabolizes the (g)local forms of capitalist transition, the superimposition of a capitalist form over an autochthonous backdrop which retains archaic reminiscences in the social, economic, and, ultimately, human conduct.

For the present paper, the abovementioned example, although not part of the targeted novel production, can provide a supplementary argument for the functioning of a methodological transplant of the theoretical notions put forward by the Warwick Research Collective in Romanian literary studies, towards a relatively new perspective in the analysis of the modern Romanian novel. The aims of the present paper are related to the doubly peripheral condition of the Romanian novel produced between 1845 and 1939. I am interested, on the one hand, in the external condition of peripherality in which this literature is written and, on the other hand, in the novels that explore peripheral, transitory spaces. This analysis has two starting points. The first one is the way in which the aforementioned authors understand the notion of modernity (and modernism) and the derived one of world-literature, to which I will return in detail in the following section. The second one is the subgenre I have previously proposed<sup>3</sup> and which intends to comprise novels placed in suburban spaces, between town and village, in the countryside, in transition spaces, in medial areas, in peripheries, in boroughs etc.—the *interstitial novel*. A qualitative argument and a quantitative one will accompany the discussion around this subgenre which, I believe, has great potential when revisited through a frame such as the one put forward in *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*.

## A System Based on Inequality

THE MARXIST theory used by WREC to implement the principles of combined and uneven development in comparatist and transnational literary studies helps initiate a dialogue which does not only aim to revisit global modernity and the current forms of investigating the products of national literatures in their race for modern evolution, but also to put forward a new analytical system. The triad formed by the Trotskyist theory, the notion of modernity, and the one of world literature circumscribes the work space of the volume, with the authors' main thesis gravitating around the—necessary—relationship of the three. The working notion most at hand, the one of

system or *world-systems*, already has a rich history in literary studies, especially when the reading frame of world literature abandons or does not align itself, from the start, with the romanticized vision of “a single world” in which national literatures had and have equal chances of manifesting themselves and circulating globally. The notion proposed by Immanuel Wallerstein and employed within world literature studies, *world-system*, is, undoubtedly, the one that does the most justice to (semi)peripheral literatures and which opens a real conversation around the dialectic between periphery and center.

From this point onwards, the authors engender a paradigmatic shift in the conception of modernity, on the one hand, and of world-literature, on the other. They understand world literature as “*the literature of the world-system*—of the modern capitalist world-system, that is,”<sup>4</sup> as *world-literature*, with a hyphen. The notion of modernity they operate with returns to rather traditional roots (when compared to the latest research in postcolonial studies), which envisaged a *singular modernity* (in Fredric Jameson’s connotation of the term), given that the models of “alternative modernities” put forward relatively recently in international comparative studies are less compatible with the effort of understanding a *world-system* as a capitalist *world system*. The literary system is, therefore, compatible with the political and social system. This is in contrast to Pascale Casanova, from whom *wrec* departs when the francophone researcher isolates the literary system, the “republic of letters,” from the socio-political life of states, treating the literary system as a parallel universe.<sup>5</sup> Capitalist modernity can be conceived as singular modernity, but it is not, from afar, a levelling phenomenon. On the contrary (as the authors of the volume highlight, in the wake of comprehensive research and signaling which precedes them), the onset of capitalism deepens inequalities.<sup>6</sup>

In this context, *wrec* recalibrates the way in which we read the literary production, especially the one from (semi)peripheral areas. Literary modernity receives a paradoxically looser definition than the one it traditionally gets (the literary production which begins with the Long 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and stretches towards contemporary decades), one more limited, in interpretation, to the potential of literature to metabolize the effects of the onset of capitalist modernity and the rewriting of forms of socio-economic conduct over a national, archaic substratum.<sup>7</sup> A reconceptualization of the notion of modernity, as proposed by the authors, is articulated around abandoning the most intensely circulated idea: that modernity is a product of the West, of the Center, which, adopted by (semi)peripheries through imitation and import of cultural capital, generates simultaneous modernities. Capitalist modernities and, in extenso, the literary capitalist “modernity is both what world-literature indexes or is ‘about’ and what gives world-literature its distinguished formal characteristics.”<sup>8</sup>

This is the ideological and theoretical frame through which both the authors of the volume and the present paper carry out their analysis of novelistic production. The capitalist modernity established ca. 200 years ago—as it is mirrored by the novel of the peripheries—is, therefore, the subject matter; in other words, the novel of this modernity as world-literature. The evolution of the modern novel, in its national context, mirrors the evolution of a transition to new modes of existence of unequal communities. This way of thinking and using the novelistic subgenre in research, as a space of critical mirroring of phenomena which lead to the most acute forms of inequality, is not

left without consequences for the ways to make and understand literary history as such and, particularly, comparative literary history. In the wake of Jameson's 1986 study,<sup>9</sup> WREC highlight the fact that employing this theory of uneven development asks for a new type of comparatism, one that does not compare texts (as individual objects), but rather the contexts in which they are born and to which they answer. Such a mission of comparative studies is reminiscent of what Andrei Terian calls *processual comparative studies*, a framework that is primarily concerned with comparing processes, not products.<sup>10</sup> Testing the implementation of a perspective as the one exposed above, which engages the symbiotic relationship of capitalist modernity, world-literature and the novelistic subgenre, seems to me, at least at this point, a beneficial alternative to canonical perspectives.<sup>11</sup>

## The Interstitial Novel in Romania (1845–1939)

**W**HAT IS, then, the place of a novel which was systematically neglected by the ideologues of the time in which it was produced, always linked to one of the dominant spaces of cultural and literary discourse, split between urbanity and rurality in and for Romanian literature? In the era, promoting the rural novel or, on the contrary, the urban one was primarily a socio-political gesture. Be it in terms of promoting or anathematizing, the strongest positioning remains the one towards the rural novel, which is also more productive in terms of emulations (this phenomenon is visible when extensively surveying the periodicals of the era). The illusion of the Romanian novel as literature for peasants is, as we shall demonstrate, a product of ideology, not of the actual book market. At the other end of the spectrum, the notion of urban novel has found itself at the critical intersection of its promoters—of the fashionable decorum, of the intellectual character, of the fresco of the bourgeois society, and its detractors, which viewed the previously listed elements as a threat to national specificity. If the rural novel must be a national product, the urban one is a mimetic phenomenon, enabling synchronization through the imitation, import, and adaptation of the modern Western novel.<sup>12</sup> However, it remains to be seen how and if the imperatives of these two intensely politicized subgenres will materialize on the book market.

Space	1845–1899	1900–1918	1919–1939
Urban	≈50%	≈55%	≈35%
Rural	≈23%	≈23%	≈15%
Interstitial	≈22%	≈18%	≈40%
Other	≈5%	≈4%	≈10%

The data above<sup>13</sup> was collected through the distant reading of a digitized corpus of novels which represented ca. 90% of the novels published between 1845 and 1899<sup>14</sup> and ca. 60% of the novels published between 1930 and 1939.<sup>15</sup> Quantitatively, most of

the volumes are part of the second interval, 1930–1939, congruent with the increased novel production following the First World War. The novels classified as urban are those which predominantly take place in a capital (be it Bucharest or international capitals) or in towns which were relatively relevant in the era as urban formations, like Iași, Brașov, or Sibiu. The rural novels have their plot located in the countryside, naturally. The interstitial novel suits the description I have already offered: the plot is set in provincial towns, boroughs, slums, and the peripheries of Bucharest. The last category refers to hardly classifiable novels, given that it reunites historical, science-fiction, philosophical novels which are located in settings which are different from the ones of interest here (medieval settings, outer space etc.).

The interest for urbanity drastically decreases towards the end of the 1930s, just as the interest for the literature of the village slowly disappears (naturally, without these environments registering dramatic declines—they remain relevant both as settings and as forms of sociability explored by our novelists). If the nineteenth century produces and sells a literature for the privileged classes (novels of the high class about travels to the European capitals) and for amateur literary consumption (sensation, mystery novels), in the interwar period, the professionalization of the novel and the psychologizing attempts of the Romanian novel, following the Western canon, are, I believe, also transparent in the evolutionary path of the interstitial novel.

## The Interstitial Novel As World-Literature

**T**HE QUANTITATIVE argument represents one side of the coin for the present argument. I attempted to retrace the (quantitative) evolution of this subgenre. The prevalence and importance of this subgenre only guarantees its world-literature status up to a certain point, that of representativeness. In the following, final section of my paper, I will therefore try to more closely look at two novels from this corpus, one canonical and the other one, forgotten.

The canonical one is Ioan Slavici's *Mara*. Serialized at the end of the nineteenth century and published in print in the first decade of the following century, in 1906, *Mara* comes out in a moment in which, as we have seen above, the Romanian novel was taking place in the city—and when it was not, it was set in villages and rather *natural* interstitial spaces. Launching such a novel on the book market is an event from this point of view, from the perspective of the spatiality it puts forward. Set in a small Transylvanian borough, Slavici's novel presents a world and a protagonist that find themselves in a time of transition. The story of *Mara*, the “poor widow with three children,” is the story of a world in which economic rules are written by and for men being navigated by a woman who first and foremost looks after her capital. *Mara*'s “businesswoman” sensibilities have been addressed before.<sup>16</sup> The way in which the protagonist builds her existence, guided by the accumulation of capital, entails the organization of every professional and biographical detail. *Mara* is the expression of an entire community willing to go beyond racial, religious and class prejudices when the problem of the capital intervenes. Almost every scene of Slavici's novel can be read through this perspective. One of the strongest

examples is linked to the religious compromise the widow makes for the education of her daughter, Persida. Despite being Orthodox out of inertia rather than as an active practitioner, Mara's adhesion to the religion she was born into is firm. However, when the abbess of the Catholic monastery is willing (following numerous manipulative gestures on Mara's part) to welcome her daughter into the monastery for free, until she reaches adolescence, she is willing to compromise. Religious transgression is a recurrent tactic the protagonist employs when it can increase her capital:

*Although a true Christian, Mara would sometimes go to this church, but she would worship in a Christian manner, making the sign of the cross and bowing, as it is right to do in the face of God. She did not believe that the icon could do miracles; she knew all too well that a German Mother of God is not a true Mother of God. Something else was going on . . . It's good that people come to pray to Maria Radna, and Mara is overjoyed when the weather is good around the time of the Dormition of the Mother of God, so that people come for a whole week, groups and groups, with their flags flapping in the wind, and with their crosses decorated with flowers, singing psalms and litanies. Now, when hundreds of them come, and thousands get together on the large plain in front of the monastery, now it is Mara's time to reap, for she goes out in the morning with all her baskets full and returns in the evening with all of them empty. That is why Mara prays to that icon as well.<sup>17</sup>*

Compromises and religious "liberties" are not the only things Mara allows herself when a more important purpose intervenes. The interethnic conflicts stop where the good management and organization of the business come into play:

*Being a smart woman, Mara knew that she would never lose her money if she took up with Hubär [a Jew]. Indeed, she was making less; but that was the least of her concerns, because she still got something, for her trouble, when the debtor made his payments, and—and this was a given—, she was not afraid that Hubär would raise the lease on the bridge. Then, the socks grew along with the children. Oh, God! The way everything grows in this world.<sup>18</sup>*

Mara's attitude mirrors the relations in the interethnic community we find in the novel, in which, despite the prejudices each character is guilty of, they are all brought together by capitalist practices. It is precisely in such interstitial spaces that the ways in which modernity is assimilated by the peripheries becomes obvious, and a novel like Slavici's *Mara* can be the object of a more ample study of the hybrid modes (modern practices on archaic foundations or with archaic motivations) in which the personal household, on the one hand, and the community, on the other, are both symptoms and results of the modernization of peripheral countries in the nineteenth century, of the borrowings of capitalist conduct within a still undefined socio-political structure, functioning following archaic laws.

The second novel considered within this paper is by an author who rarely enjoyed critical attention. *Madona cu Trandafiri* (Madonna with roses), authored in 1931 by G. M. Zamfirescu, is a novel which seemed to have the prospect of a positive critical reading, a minor novel, containing elements of the sensation novel, located in the atmosphere of a provincial town. At first sight, it does not seem to be a good candidate for such an

analysis, given that it is primarily centered on sentimental tribulations. The aim of my analysis is however tied to the somewhat intrinsic ability of interstitial novels to present the effects of the transition to the capitalist world in a space which still functions following rather archaic laws and reflexes, with less of an aesthetic, and more of a documentary function, on the one hand, and presenting local material with new formulas, on the other hand. *Madonna with Roses* is a radiography of a small provincial town, a town with “three churches, a cinema and a familial tomb,” which gravitates around the social event—in the economy of their social lives—, of the death of the prosecutor’s wife, who kills herself and generates a chain reaction: her motive is enveloped in a mythology, which transforms the one called “Madonna with roses” into a local deity. The social codes presented in the novel still follow a rural, archaic architecture—we know that this town has two centers, the railway station tavern and the barber’s shop—in which all the local gossip takes place and among which the locals are divided. Against the backdrop of these spaces of sociability, the author exposes communitarian reflexes which start to diverge from the logic of the slum and to get closer to a worldly one. We still know very little about the development of the Romanian novel in terms of large-scale narrative devices, but we can confidently assert that the development of worldly plots is such a catalyzing phenomenon of the Romanian novel, which, towards the end of the interwar period, almost fully abandons rural literature (i.e., addressing the specific problems of rurality). The novel at hand, as an intermediate step in this itinerary and as a sample of minor literature, is however an eloquent example illustrating this interstitial area. First of all, the novel presents the intersections of at least three character typologies. It commences with the figure of Sandu, the son of shepherds, a representation of the primitive man:

*Sandu had never worn an overcoat. He had never been cold, he didn't know what winter was. Weren't he so afraid of what the people would say, he would go around through the snow wearing a coat, and a sailor's t-shirt in the summer, without a collar and without many other accessories, namely the tie, the collar, and the belt with a metal buckle.*<sup>19</sup>

Each character is almost exclusively described through their clothing. Following the figure of Sandu, whose personality is “gnarly, childish, frivolous like a shepherd dog who would crazily play among kittens,”<sup>20</sup> and translated in his being repulsed by the socially validated fashion conduct, Mănăilă is introduced as an “old sparrow with bowler hat and galoshes, who has a tux for balls and weddings and a frock coat for official ceremonies, funerals and baptisms,”<sup>21</sup> with liberal conservative beliefs, whose main source of capital is the existence of a familial tomb—a sign of luxury and wealth. New reflexes (the accumulation and the display of wealth) overlap the old, archaic reflexes of the man for which the event of death remains a greatly significant event, both on a familial and a communitarian level (this will also be obvious later, in the case of Madonna’s funeral). The third typology is, at the beginning of the novel, a construct: Octav, who maintains a bizarre and peculiar friendship with Sandu, following their shared experience in the war, is the modern man, the one with his “head hidden in the expensive fur collar,”<sup>22</sup> who lives in the capital, and for whose arrival Mănăilă spares no effort:

*Where will Octav sleep, where will he eat, to which families would they introduce him, when will they take him to the cinema and to which movie, when and how would they walk with him to the city center, how would they get him to the city park and at what time would they invite him to the cemetery to see Mănăilă's familial tomb?*<sup>23</sup>

The hospitality ends exactly where Mănăilă's personal validation begins, for whom hosting a modern man from the big city brings a significant amount of social capital in the small circles he is part of. Therefore, *Madonna with Roses*, generally presented as a documentary novel of provincial sensibility, in the reviews, which, at the time of its publishing, were signed by authors like Camil Petrescu and Felix Aderca, is, in fact, the novel of socialite parody. The three central characters of the novel form a network of mimetic relations of the capital's sociability. Octav is the intellectual agent, educated and well-dressed, who disturbs the provincial universe for several days, and whose engagement in personal drama profoundly upsets Sandu, who fails to recognize in Octav the friend with whom he had shared the war experience, and who encourages Mănăilă's efforts to do justice to the dead Madonna.

The feminine character, Lucia or the "Madonna with roses," remains voiceless, an icon around which the men triggered by the event build an entire fiction. We firstly learn that she was a true golden girl, born in Bucharest, in a rich family,

*a Bucharest madwoman, somewhat educated, somewhat well-off, and giving herself airs, talking loudly in the street, entering bodegas and cinemas by herself. . . She was somewhat beautiful, but glacial. Anyhow, a madwoman giving herself airs, who dreamily played the countess,*<sup>24</sup>

only to then discover, deep within the fiction born around her, that she was a saint who had secretly suffered during her marriage to the jealous and boorish prosecutor, to whom she had, in truth, offered his position, with the help of her family's wealth. The evolution of this fiction is interesting because it starts from a commonplace—an unhappy, unfaithful woman, putting on airs, kills herself, leaving her devastated husband behind, and goes through a sort of purgatory in which those who comment on her death find out that she had been unhappy in her marriage, despite owning a greater amount of capital than her husband:

*And who was Ștefaniu, anyway? A small judge, earning several thousand a month, who ate at the tavern, like the widowers, and dressed in the American fashion, namely in instalments. The family and Madonna got him off the streets. Gave him money for clothes, for shoes, pocket money, took him everywhere, took the peasant to the salons, recommended him to the elites, praised him, made him a prosecutor, gave him a girl like Lucia, gave him millions, gave him palatial mansions. This Ștefaniu gentleman, this son of the people, is starting to become a crested shoe! That is to say, my men: that which cannot be done, unless you have a good family upbringing and something thin and rare in your blood.*<sup>25</sup>



Following the overthrow of the victim, Lucia becomes a saint. The capital has its effects on the gender and power dynamic, seeing as it is only after the inventory of her goods that Lucia receives praise for her “feminine” traits—beauty and purity. The adulterer’s redemption in the collective imaginary happens through the power of class. Within this society, love and gender relations are starting to subordinate themselves to capital. The whole society is rallied around its image and does not only grieve for Madonna’s death, but also for her provincial life, for which she had given up on “her life of education and butter tartines.” For the first time, the woman’s figure throws light on the true image of the slum:

*Fences are inexistent and the sidewalk is fixed with wooden posts stuck into the ground, here and there. Throughout the big yards, there are haystacks, wobbly stables and servants in greasy overcoats, walking through the thick snow as if on stilts, in their oil smeared high boots. In this dirty white and deserted environment, . . . she suffered and killed herself.<sup>26</sup>*

The reality of the slum has nothing to do with the locations in which the plot takes place, with the billiard cafes in which “like in any select venue, there are, for the town’s elites, wooden spittoons filled with sand, in which nobody spits, and ceramic ashtrays, while the galoshes are left at the door.”<sup>27</sup> Fashionable imports engender a profound inequality among those owning a “scarf, galoshes, and a walking cane made out of sea reed,” and the “greasy overcoats,” solely brought together by gossip: “a new figure in a provincial town is a reason for turmoil, news which jumps from neighbor to neighbor and from one gate to the next, like a torch that everyone has a duty to catch and throw further.”<sup>28</sup>

The conclusion to which my interpretation leads is therefore linked to the ability of interstitial literature, be it major or minor, to metabolize these glocal tensions and to be relevant, even when lacking great literary assets. The revival of sociological tools in literary studies is a noteworthy and welcomed event, especially when related to a transnational perspective on national literary productions. The case of the Romanian interstitial novel is a telling one, not only because it can address a much-needed conversation about how canonical views and canonical writers manufactured an image that was never true about the Romanian novel, but also because it can inscribe this novel—no matter how “big” or “small”—in a supranational circuit and help shape a new understanding of the notion of social literature.



## Notes

1. Dan Lungu, *Pălpăiri* (Iași: Polirom, 2018), 123–127.
2. WREC (Warwick Research Collective), *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).
3. See Daiana Gărdan, “Interstitial Spatiality in the Romanian Novel of the Interwar Period: Mute Rurality and Subverted Urbanity,” in *Ruralism and Literature in Romania*,

edited by Ștefan Baghiu, Vlad Pojoga, and Maria Sass (Berlin etc.: Peter Lang, 2019), 69–80.

4. *Combined and Uneven Development*, 8.
5. *Combined and Uneven Development*, 9–11.
6. *Combined and Uneven Development*, 12–13.
7. “Modernity is neither a chronological nor a geographical category. It is not something that happens—or even that happens *first*—in ‘the west’ and to which others can subsequently gain access; or that happens in cities rather than in the countryside; or that, on the basis of a deep-set sexual division of labour, men tend to exemplify in their social practice rather than women. Capitalist modernisation entails development, yes—but this ‘development’ takes the forms also of the development of underdevelopment, of maldevelopment and dependent development. If urbanisation, for instance, is clearly part of the story, what happens in the countryside as a result is equally so. The idea of some sort of ‘achieved’ modernity, in which unevenness would have been superseded, harmonised, vanquished or ironed out is radically unhistorical,” *Combined and Uneven Development*, 13.
8. *Combined and Uneven Development*, 15.
9. Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65–88.
10. See Andrei Terian, *Critica de export: Teorii, contexte, ideologii* (Bucharest: Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2013).
11. Recent Marxist readings of modern Romanian novels with outstanding results can be found in Ștefan Baghiu and Cosmin Borza, “The Sickle and the Piano: A Distant Reading of Work in the Nineteenth Century Romanian Novel,” *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 6, 2 (2020): 107–128 and Ovio Olaru, “Producing Social Mobility: Class and Travel in the Romanian Novel 1901–1932,” *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 6, 2 (2020): 148–159.
12. See David Décarie, “L’Évolution du roman urbain (1934–1945): Du roman bourgeois au roman du peuple,” *Voix et Images* 41, 2 (2016): 21–33; Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Ray Hutchison, ed., *Encyclopedia of Urban Studies*, 2 vols. (Los Angeles etc.: SAGE Publications, 2010).
13. Part of this data was previously published in my aforementioned article, “Interstitial Spatiality.” This table is the result of revised and extended analyses on the topic that no longer relies only on the *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până la 1989* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2004) database, but on an additional distant reading of a sample of the targeted novelistic production.
14. Only books are accounted for this analysis. Serial novels, which were quite numerous in the era, were impossible to digitize in a quantitatively relevant number so far. See Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc: Secolul al XIX-lea* (Sibiu: Complexul Național Muzeal Astra, 2019).
15. Most of the novels are also part of Ștefan Baghiu et al., *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc 1900–1932* (Sibiu: Complexul Național Muzeal Astra, 2020) archive. A part is completed through an individually digitized archive.
16. See Nicolae Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe: Studiu despre romanul românesc*, definitive edition (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2018).
17. Ioan Slavici, *Mara* (Bucharest: Adevărul, 2009), 14.

18. Slavici, 32.
19. G. M. Zamfirescu, *Madona cu trandafiri* (Bucharest: Hoffman, 2017), 8.
20. Zamfirescu, 9.
21. Zamfirescu, 10–12.
22. Zamfirescu, 13.
23. Zamfirescu, 13.
24. Zamfirescu, 13.
25. Zamfirescu, 37.
26. Zamfirescu, 82.
27. Zamfirescu, 62.
28. Zamfirescu, 41.

### **Abstract**

#### **Glocal Literatures in the Making The Interstitial Novel in Modern Romania as World-Literature**

Starting from the Warwick Research Collective's new approach to the notion of modernity, in their seminal volume *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (2015), the present contribution aims to address the case of the modern Romanian novel as world-literature. Owing to Fredric Jameson's work that advocated for a "singular modernity," the authors of the abovementioned editorial project re-evaluate the timeframe of modernism while proposing a reinterpretation of a selection of (semi)peripheral novels as world-literature, as literature that encoded the installation of capitalist modernity in peripheral cultures. Following their model, I propose an investigation, by means of both distant and close reading, of the Romanian modern novel that accounts for the shifts in social and economic practices in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. My inquiry will focus on what I call the interstitial novel—a subgenre that focuses on the suburban, peripheral communities (slums, small towns, intermediary places).

### **Keywords**

Romanian novel, modern novel, world-literature, modernity, peripherality