

Translational Layers and Transnational Identities in the Romanian Literature of the 1980s

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MY PAPER discusses the translational input within the creative paradigm, self-proclaimed postmodern, of the Romanian literature of the 1980s. This topic has remained unaddressed in the otherwise vast critical bibliography of Romanian postmodernism, which has largely focused on the stylistic features of the movement and on its homologues or disconnections from the social, political, and technological climate that nurtured Western postmodernism. Such questions of global synchronism might have been topical towards the end of the communist age, when many Romanian writers were striving to overcome their culture's forced isolationism and Ceaușescu's ethnocentric propaganda. They remained relevant after the fall of the regime, as Romanian culture was trying to account for its European identity and local postmodernism, in particular, was celebrated for its experimental writing which had countered the nationalist drive of the 1980s. By the same token, a fairly consistent trend in the reading of Romanian postmodernism has been asserting the radical novelty of its techniques,¹ in contrast with the local neomodernist poetry and the realist narrative, and has correspondingly downplayed pragmatic explanations concerning its emergence. As such, the few local lineages cited in this respect (such as the bookish prose of the Târgoviște School writers or the interwar avant-garde) appeared to be affinities selected in retrospect, rather than actual antecedents of the new creative paradigm. However, the global spread of postmodern movements, and their relatively homogeneous technical features, have been well-established matters for some while in international criticism.² Postmodernisms emerged in East-Central Europe during late communism made, of course, no exception from this transnational wave. As far as the latter were concerned, their particular relation to Cold War national and ideological narratives was brought to the fore, especially by critics originating from the same area, in order to account for their politically subversive edge and social relevance, which were otherwise seen as lacking in Western postmodernism.³

This (anti)political scenario was, in fact, overstated in the case of Romanian postmodernism, to the extent that the movement was explained first and foremost as a

deconstructive reaction against the precession of simulacra experienced in the context of state propaganda and of the enhanced artificiality of the official discourse within Ceaușescu's increasingly megalomaniac rule.⁴ Accurate as it may be in historical terms, this contextual explanation served to forge a heroicized depiction of Romanian postmodernism, as a harbinger of epistemic freedom and heteroglossia, rather than account for the concrete sources of the respective paradigm. As far as these sources are concerned, no critical work has analyzed the impact of translations in the emergence of postmodern techniques in the Romanian literature of the 1980s. Besides the general lack of popularity of translation scholarship in Romania, this topic remains difficult to assess in this particular case for several reasons.

Circuits and Varieties of Translation

THE FIRST, and most important, reason concerns the lack of full translations of the foreign authors/works that were claimed as direct influences by the Romanian postmodern writers of the 1980s.⁵ To account for their novelty and for their presumed homology with an international trend of postmodernism, these writers grafted onto a specifically North-American corpus of texts mostly comprising the Beat poetry and the postmodern narratives from the 1960s and the 1970s. Most of these texts had not been translated into Romanian, although some were available in original in libraries around specialized departments of Anglophone languages and literatures, and, in what concerns fiction, they also served as starting points for widely cited (especially by critics like Ion Bogdan Lefter) essays on postmodernism written by John Barth or Ihab Hassan. Few theoretical texts pertaining to postmodernism were translated as well, for instance, in issues of the specialist journals *Secolul 20* (1983) or *Caiete critice* (1987).⁶ Nevertheless, some of the notions of postmodernism that were put into circulation by North-American theoreticians were undertaken by Romanian writers to account for their new type of writing, alongside a variety of other theoretical sources outside postmodernism, among which, Wittgenstein's treatise on language, which had a seminal influence on the fiction written by Mircea Nedelciu and Gheorghe Crăciun, and which apparently circulated in a typewritten, unofficial Romanian translation, alongside a French variant.⁷

The second setback in assessing the translational background of Romanian postmodernism derives from the bookish character of its poetics, which makes intertextual references blend indistinctly within original texts themselves. Under the umbrella of a so-called new "authenticity," Romanian postmodernists practiced an intertextual writing that related to literary models by spontaneous, textually submerged citations. Even within the confines of biographical writing, which marked the distinct feature of the new Romanian poetry of the 1980s, these writers acknowledged, in some sort of a Bloomian euphoria of the canon, that "the poem is produced by the history of poetry, rather than by the individual poet who writes it."⁸ To that extent, poets like Mircea Cărtărescu, Traian T. Coșovei, or Romulus Bucur, acted as live translators as they appropriated in their original works personal renditions of selected verses from their North-American

masters like Wallace Stevens, Ferlinghetti, or Ginsberg.⁹ Such literal renditions added to a more sophisticated translational layer that was displayed through the works of the aforementioned poets by means of an ostentatious network of allusions, and even by a mimicry of American verse and syntax patterns.

The third issue that complicates the analysis of the role of translations within Romanian postmodernism relates to the heterogeneous nature of the translated texts that were actively involved in the original literary production of the respective paradigm. In fact, the surprising trigger in this respect did not come only from literary, but from theoretical/scientific translations as well. Even outside its more experimental branches—such as the so-called “textualist” prose, or the intertextually replete works of poets associated with the Bucharest “Monday Circle”—, the new literary paradigm of the 1980s displayed an emphasized theoretical build-up. This was largely indebted to the academic climate to which these young writers had been exposed in their formative years, a climate in which, after the demise of socialist realism, structuralism and semiotics had acquired the status of *doxa*. Acting up to this theoretical education, prose writers in particular handled their own narratives in the manner of theoreticians, as they attempted to demonstrate the composition and the functions of the fictional language.

Of course, Western readings of postmodernism have been consistently highlighting the theoretical bent of this type of fiction, which seemed to “demonstrate its own theories”¹⁰ and thus manifest the abstract teachings provided by structuralism and post-structuralism.¹¹ There is little doubt as to the role played by that particular theoretical mindset in the inception of metafictional narratives written from the end of the 1960s by the likes of John Fowles, Anthony Burgess, or Italo Calvino, all the more so as theoreticians like Umberto Eco or Christine Brooke-Rose took on writing postmodernist fiction themselves, as a follow-up and an illustration of their scientific works. To the extent that it raised awareness of the narrative conventions and the linguistic constructedness of fiction, (post)structuralist theory worked as a “formative influence and an imaginative resource”¹² within the metafictional texts emerged in Western literatures during the 1960s and the 1970s. The first wave of postmodernism displayed through the works of the aforementioned authors had a “cybernetic, rather than bioenergetic character,”¹³ as it played with the components of the literary structure that had been delineated by the theoretical discourse. The (post)structuralist demythification of the literary construct, down to its linguistic premises and beyond any illusion of referentiality, was attuned to the typically postmodern feeling of an “exhausted” literature that could do little more than recap its own history and textualize what was left after the “death of the author.” Fruitful as it was in Western readings of postmodernism, the lineage from (post)structuralist theory to fiction was not properly examined in respect with Romanian postmodernism, as the debates around the paradigm have focused, ever since their first occurrences during the 1980s, on the possible connections between the local movement and North-American poetry and fiction.

Dismantling the National Narrative

TO BE fair, it must be said that all the three issues I raised regarding the translational background of the Romanian literature of the 1980s exceed, in one way or another, the purview of linguistic equivalence for which translation studies have usually shown concern. Of course, following postcolonialism and world-systems theories of literary diffusionism, more recent work in translation scholarship¹⁴ has complemented the traditional linguistic approach with an ideological concern for the ways in which asymmetries of cultural power shape the translation process. Questions of cultural and ideological power are indeed topical for the Romanian case I discuss, considering the ethnonationalist context of Ceaușescu's late communism which imposed a cultural blockade resulting in some sort of translational boycott, but also considering the young postmodern writers' aim to define themselves by transnational interactiveness rather than by national filiations, in counterbalance with their more tradition-oriented Romanian neomodernist predecessors.

To further describe these writers' strategy of self-definition, which involved the various layers of translation I pointed out, and which attempted to reach beyond the frame of the national, it is worth citing two well-known critical viewpoints on the translation process. The first is Lawrence Venuti's argument against "domesticating" translation, which should be regarded instead as a foreignizing, and thus dissident cultural practice, based on its presumed ability to challenge domestic literary values by developing affiliations with literary strategies that were originally employed within foreign cultures.¹⁵ The second viewpoint I cite belongs to Sean Cotter and concerns the role of literary translations in supplanting the essentialist national imaginary with a self-imagining as a "minor nation" by way of emphasizing, or at least acknowledging first-hand, the idea of relatedness and the indebtedness to foreign literary models.¹⁶ To that extent, the "minor" acquires a positive meaning beyond the ill-reputed notion of "marginality," insofar as a translationally-inflected literary paradigm can posit itself at the crossroads of international cultural circuits. This positive meaning allows Cotter to challenge the hegemony/resistance model of cultural interaction that was still employed by Venuti, as the latter theoretician described translation as a primarily subversive cultural practice.

Despite their different interpretations of the translation process, both Cotter and Venuti shift focus from what is lost or gained in translation, towards what translation actively produces within new literary contexts. Both arguments, I believe, hold for the case of Romanian postmodernism. On the one hand, the respective Romanian writers employed a corpus of foreign references from North-American literature and French theory in a deliberate attempt to estrange themselves from the literary and ideological values that were dominant at home. Regardless if that corpus included texts that were officially translated into Romanian or not (in which case these writers resorted to personal translations woven into their own original texts), those texts played a crucial role in asserting distinction from: a). the literary values of the local neomodernism, whose fixation on an equally local interwar modernism reflected a certain bias for an organic national imaginary, and b). the official ideological values, which the young writers of

the 1980s challenged through the individualistic, anti-totalizing, anti-statist principles delivered especially by the North-American brand of postmodernism. But as far as this latter brand was concerned, Romanian postmodern writers did not quite hold on to the idea of being marginal in regard to a major center, as Cotter explains for other cases of the Romanian literary history when an actual translational corpus existed as such. Rather, they argued for equivalence by means of the largely employed notion of “structural homologies.”¹⁷ Obviously, emphasizing homology, rather than influence, suggests an assertion of power and self-awareness, which matches the Romanian postmodernists’ deliberate attempt to Americanize their literary language and imagination.

This conscious positioning towards the transnational confirms Theo D’haen’s argument that, rather than the deconstruction of the modern(ist) epistemology, postmodernism deploys a “crisis in the image that a particular nation has of itself.”¹⁸ The theoretician observes that it was first in its original American context that postmodernism aimed at dismantling the already triumphalist national narrative. In somehow similar terms, other critics also explained the emergence of North-American postmodernism as a reaction against the Cold War “containment paradigm” that was forged within the collective imagination during the decade following the victory in the Second World War.¹⁹ On the other hand, D’haen points out that North-American postmodernism’s deconstruction of the national should not be “extrapolated” into a “universal” characteristic of postmodernism. A different path in this respect was taken, for instance, by postcolonial literatures, which embraced similar postmodern techniques within different ideological mindsets that were bent on recovering formerly suppressed national narratives.

However, although it also stemmed from a marginal nation, Romanian postmodernism did not feed on any kind of nostalgic recovery of the national. Instead, it reacted against the very monumentalization of the national, which had become apparent both in the literary canon established on neomodernist grounds after the Thaw, and in the ethnonationalist cultural policy enforced during the last decade of Ceaușescu’s regime. At the turn of the 1980s, what Romanian postmodern writers perceived as a national narrative looked like an increasingly artificial construct, whose identity and authority were pumped up by state propaganda, and which encouraged kitsch displays of mass art. Within the literary national narrative, these writers felt equally out of place, as the local literary establishment—with its institutions and its corresponding canon—closed its doors after writers of the Thaw had occupied most of its positions.

Fiction As Translator of Theory

TO ACCOUNT for this cultural strategy of estrangement, as well as for the interplay of direct and indirect translations bestrewn within Romanian postmodern fiction, I will focus in what follows on the literary handling of foreign literary theory. Up to a point, questions of translation might seem superfluous in what regards the abstract theories involved in this case. Pertaining to the areas of structuralism and semiotics, these theories relied on concepts that were almost universally translatable and,

as such, they had already become part of an academic lingua franca. However, Romanian postmodern fiction was not only influenced by the official linguistic translations of theory that had been published in very popular series from the end of the 1960s (such as those marketed by the publishing house Univers), but it became itself an ad hoc translator of theory.

The direct translation of theory through fiction became apparent in the narrative texts authored by writers of the first wave (Gheorghe Iova, Gheorghe Crăciun, Mircea Nedelciu), and of the second wave of the 1980s' generation (Ioan Groșan, Matei Vișniec). Their literary works capitalized on the background provided by structuralism, semiotics, generative grammar, through attempts made by these writers to theorize metatextually, from within fiction proper, their own creation practices. As I already pointed out, the literary paradigm emerged in the 1980s displayed a theoretical awareness that was unprecedented in the history of Romanian literature. Alex Goldiș points out that the 1980s generation displayed “the only type of Romanian prose written during communism” that “undermines mimesis in favor of semiosis,” concerned with language and the production of meaning—see Alex Goldiș, “The Ideology of Semiosis in Romanian Prose under Communism,” *Primerjalna književnost* 39, 2 (2016): 91, which had traditionally cultivated Romantic myths of creative inspiration and genius. The future postmodern writers had attended university during the 1970s, in a climate of “philological awakening,”²⁰ when literary theory was taught in three out of four years in faculties of Philology, and the main discipline of linguistics garnered wide popularity, alongside elective courses in semiotics, as an alternative to the mandatory education of “scientific socialism.”²¹ This theoretical education sedimented itself throughout group talks and student workshops, before it could find its outlet in published literary works. The oral incubation of ideas was essential in this respect, especially because, at the turn of the 1980s, it had already become difficult for young Romanian writers to be published, as ideological restrictions worsened and censorship took new forms.

Looking back to the academic climate in which they grew up, many of the Romanian writers who debuted during the 1980s acknowledged the seminal role of theory in their own literary techniques, by citing scientific sources of inspiration, such as “*Tel Quel*, the linguistics of R. Jakobson, L. Hjelmslev, or N. Chomsky.”²² Their literary models remained difficult to account for in the absence of translations of the Western texts to which young Romanian postmodernists felt akin. However, such literary models were superseded by even more obvious “conceptual models.”²³ Having studied a lot of linguistics and structuralism at university, these writers developed a natural concern for the ways in which a text is produced and assembled, for the “formal coherence of the text and the performance of the linguistic level.”²⁴ They became accustomed with the constructedness of the narrative and with the linguistically inspired suspicion about referentiality, which were ideas overly exhibited throughout their metafictional texts. The “analytical awareness” cultivated by linguistics allowed a heightened emphasis on the processes of “text elaboration,” which was not seen as a formalist tendency, but rather as a more “authentic” position towards writing.²⁵ This claimed authenticity, which was a distinct feature of Romanian postmodernism, was an unexpected outcome of the otherwise rigid, scientist, abstract paradigms of structuralism (given the fact that the less sci-

entist post-structuralism only enjoyed delayed and very scarce dissemination and translation in Romania throughout the 1980s).²⁶ Even so, by problematizing the construction of the text, Romanian postmodern writers felt more attuned, with some sort of political urgency, to the “relations of aesthetic production”²⁷ that the realist narrative had usually camouflaged. Within this new fictional paradigm, textual mechanisms were examined with almost scientific accuracy not for the sake of self-referential experiment, but in order to provide a “more direct grip”²⁸ on the rhythms and tensions of the outside world.

The outside world was indeed addressed by means of double-coded theoretical concepts. In this respect, one of the most productive theories within Romanian postmodern fiction was also one of the least translated into Romanian at the time. It belonged to the French group *Tel Quel* and particularly to their more Marxist/Maoist type of work, which predated the anti-totalitarian turn that occurred in France by the mid-1970s.²⁹ Whereas, in Romania, American literature was more difficult to read in the original, given the stronger political anathema looming over the Cold War antagonist, French theory was widely available even outside official translations into Romanian. Libraries of the faculties of Philology received up-to-date French journals, which writer Mircea Nedelciu, for instance, confessed to having avidly read as a student. Throughout their Marxist stage, during which they allied with the French Communist Party and entertained the idea of a Maoist cultural policy, *Tel Quel* writers theorized the concept of a “text” that was able to counteract the passive aestheticism of “bourgeois” literature and challenge hegemonic ideologies of society which tend to deactivate literary texts by encouraging them to be consumed. Although *Tel Quel*’s literary models were selected from the avant-garde and capitalized on the contemporary *Nouveau Roman*, Romanian postmodern writers found in the French theories a channel to voice their own frustration with an ideological climate that had reduced them to passivity as well.

In a sometimes literal follow-up to the *Tel Quel* lexicon, fiction and essays written by Mircea Nedelciu, Gheorghe Crăciun, Gheorghe Iova,³⁰ Livius Ciocârlie³¹ displayed an amount of Marxist-charged notions that were striking for the habits of Romanian writers whose language had become increasingly aestheticized after socialist realism. Such notions frequently employed by young Romanian writers were: “revolutionary practice,” “revolutionary writing,” “the productive labor of the text,” “transformative activity,” “the social action of the text,” “a literature that actively participates in devising ideologies, rather than expressing them in a passive manner,”³² the avant-garde as “artistic insurrection” and “insurgency towards the automatisms of literature.”³³ Even the choice made by Romanian postmodernists of the term “text,” over the more traditional notions of “work” or “creation” that were still employed by local contemporary critics, was initially derived from *Tel Quel*’s concept of the “text,” seen at the interplay of literary, theoretical, and ideological discourses. However, the Romanian translation of this Marxist conceptual language—within postmodern fiction itself and especially in support of it—relied on a deliberate misreading of its ideological content. By this token, Romanian writers of the 1980s employed the Marxist discourse of *Tel Quel* with several interconnected aims: to parody the official political language, to mislead the enhanced censorship from late communism, and to convey an autonomistic view of literature,

which was considered, within the very same Tel Quel discourse, a privileged means of deconstructing hegemonic ideologies.

Such a misleading translation of theory is best displayed by Mircea Nedelciu's original foreword to his novel *Tratament fabulatoriu* (Confabulatory treatment, 1986). Here, Nedelciu exhibits a confusing combination of theoretical quotations interspersed with citations directly blended within his own arguments. Notions abridged from original Tel Quel works, which praise the text's resistance to ideologies, mix with unclear and rather irrelevant quotations from obscure Marxist authors (who censor themselves, suspected of having been simply made up), as well as from the writings of Marx himself. Throughout this white noise of references, which are oftentimes translated by Nedelciu himself, the author tries to make a point about the social status of art within "contemporary" society. He does that by apparently referring to the capitalist society, in which literature becomes subject to market laws. Instead, Nedelciu argues for the necessity of a "textual activity" that could resist commodification and passive consumption. He explains that the more unreadable the text is, by foregrounding its own process of construction, the more able it is to perform an "active intervention within society." Thus, the metafictional process whereby the textual labor is displayed is equated with the Marxist demystification of social labor, a conceptual overlap which enables Nedelciu to promote, and caution against censorship, the formalist literary principles which he and his postmodern colleagues supported at the time.

Of course, Nedelciu's diatribes against the capitalist commodification of literature were meant to be read within an Aesopian frame, which was essentially directed against communist propaganda. To this end, key notions of the foreword, like "massification," "exploitation," or "ideologization of art," hinged on a deliberately equivocal meaning, relying on the fact that Nedelciu's readers could only associate them at the time with local communism. The writer would make this double coding explicit in the explanatory notes added to his original foreword in the second edition of the volume published in 1996. Since even some of his colleagues were misled by Nedelciu's heavy use of Marxist notions and accused him, more or less explicitly, of complicity with the political power, the writer felt it necessary to explain himself on the occasion of the book's second, post-1989 edition. Here, he tried to disambiguate the abovementioned Marxist terms by indicating their hidden reference to communism, and reiterated his subversive attempt to trick censors by confronting them with their own language.³⁴

Conclusions

BOTH THE emergence of the Romanian postmodernism of the 1980s, and its strategy of self-definition, expressed metatextually or in additional manifestoes, were heavily indebted to a transnational frame of reference. While cutting ties with their literary predecessors and with the local literary tradition, in whose organic development the writers of the Thaw had deliberately tried to insert themselves, Romanian writers of the 1980s accessed a corpus of Western, mostly North-American, literature, both

from the original texts, and from theoretical essays written about it. In the absence of full Romanian translations, this corpus was processed through fragmentary direct translations blended by means of intertext within the original Romanian literary texts. Western literary theory, mostly selected from the area of linguistic structuralism, was even more impactful in the inception and legitimization of Romanian postmodernism. Besides the vast amount of translations from this domain, which filled the academic climate of these writers' formative years, theory was translated directly into fiction. As such, French Theory inspired a structuralist conception of the text and allowed a deliberate misreading of some of its originally Marxist undertones. In the context of Romanian late communism, Tel Quel's arguments about "textual action" and about "the text's resistance to ideologies" were borrowed literally, even without full, official translations, by certain writers of the 1980s, in support of metafictional postmodern techniques. The translational corpus thus processed by direct or indirect pathways within Romanian postmodern literature enabled these writers to react against the national narrative of local literature and against the ethnonationalist narrative enforced by the regime. At the same time, the fictional processing of theory led to the deconstruction of the grand realist narrative, which had a spectacular development in the Romanian literature of the 1970s, as postmodern metafiction opted for short forms of prose, instead of the totalizing novel.

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Notes

1. Mircea Cărtărescu, *Postmodernismul românesc*, afterword by Paul Cornea (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999); Ion Bogdan Lefter, *Postmodernism: Din dosarul unei "bătălii" culturale* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2000).
2. See Theo D'haen and Hans Bertens, eds., *Postmodern Fiction in Europe and the Americas* (Amsterdam: Rodopi; Antwerp: Restant, 1988); Hans Bertens and Douwe Fokkema, eds., *International Postmodernism: Theory and Literary Practice* (Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1997); Christian Moraru, ed., *Postcommunism, Postmodernism, and the Global Imagination*, with an introduction by Aaron Chandler (Boulder: East European Monographs; New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Samir Dasgupta and Peter Kivisto, eds., *Postmodernism in a Global Perspective* (New Delhi etc.: Sage, 2014).
3. For a firm stance in this respect, see Marcel Cornis-Pope, *Narrative Innovation and Cultural Rewriting in the Cold War Era and After* (New York-Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001).
4. For more about the (anti)political reading of Romanian postmodernism, see Carmen Mușat, *Strategiile subversiunii: Incursiuni în proza postmodernă* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2008).
5. Alexandru Mușina was among the few to raise the issue about the lack of translations: "There are not enough translations of [Western postmodern] fiction and theory to justify the extent of the Romanian debate on postmodernism, save from a few fragments translated from Pynchon and Barth in *Secolul 20*, from Eco's *Marginalia*, Michel Tournier's *Friday*, Italo Calvino's novels"—see Alexandru Mușina, "Postmodernismul, o frumoasă

- poveste,” in *Competiția continuă: Generația '80 în texte teoretice*, anthology by Gheorghe Crăciun (Pitești: Paralela 45, 1999), 425.
6. See Umberto Eco, “Marginalii și glose la ‘Numele rozei,’” translated by Mara Pașca Chirișescu, *Secolul 20* 23, 8–9–10 (272–274) (1983): 87–106, and the special issue on postmodernism of *Caiete critice* 7, 1–2 (1986), with translated texts by John Barth, Gerald Graff, Jean-François Lyotard, Ihab Hassan and Guy Scarpetta.
 7. As recounted by Mircea Nedelciu, “Sînt atît de orgolios încît consider că nici n-am avut modele și nici nu m-am lăsat influențat,” interview by Andrei Bodiu, *Interval* 9, 4 (1998), accessed 1 October 2021, <https://interval.tripod.com/04-98/nedelciu.html>.
 8. Mircea Cărtărescu, “What Is Biographical Writing?” in *Competiția continuă*, 122.
 9. See Senida-Denissa Miricescu (Poenariu), “Influences of the American Poetry on the Poetics of the 80ist Literary Movement,” Litt.D. dissertation, accessed 1 October 2021, <https://www.unitbv.ro/documente/cercetare/doctorat-postdoctorat/sustinere-teza/2017/miricescu-t-senida-denissa/rezumat%20Miricescu.pdf>.
 10. Christopher Butler, *After the Wake: An Essay on the Contemporary Avant-Garde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 52.
 11. For a description of the modernist novel, illustrated by James Joyce’s later works, as “structuralist” avant la lettre, see Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction* (New Haven–London: Yale University Press, 1974), 168.
 12. Michael Greaney, *Contemporary Fiction and the Uses of Theory: The Novel from Structuralism to Postmodernism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 2.
 13. Scholes, 183.
 14. See Maria Tymoczko and Edwin Gentzler, eds., *Translation and Power* (Amherst–Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Brian James Baer, ed., *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia* (Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011).
 15. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd edition (London–New York: Routledge, 2008).
 16. Sean Cotter, *Literary Translation and the Idea of a Minor Romania* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014).
 17. Lefter, *Postmodernism*, 51.
 18. Theo D’haen, “Introduction: Cultural Identity and Postmodern Writing,” in *Cultural Identity and Postmodern Writing*, edited by Theo D’haen and Pieter Vermeulen (Amsterdam–New York: Rodopi, 2006), 6.
 19. See Alan Nadel, *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age* (Durham–London: Duke University Press, 1995); Daniel Cordle, *Late Cold War Literature and Culture: The Nuclear 1980s* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
 20. Vasile Andru, “Textualism și deșteptare filologică,” in *Competiția continuă*, 385.
 21. Magda Răduță, *În context: O lectură sociologizantă a literaturii române din ultimul deceniu comunist* (Bucharest: Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2019), 66.
 22. Gheorghe Iova, “Despre text,” in *Competiția continuă*, 292.
 23. Mircea Mihăieș, “Chestiuni de fapt,” in *Competiția continuă*, 232.
 24. Nedelciu, “Sînt atît de orgolios.”
 25. Gheorghe Crăciun, “Autenticitatea ca metodă de lucru,” in *Competiția continuă*, 271.

26. Roland Barthes et al., *Pentru o teorie a textului: Antologie "Tel Quel" 1960–1971*, foreword, anthology and translation by Adriana Babeți and Delia Șepețean-Vasilu (Bucharest: Univers, 1980); Roland Barthes, *Romanul scriiturii*, anthology, selection of texts and translation by Adriana Babeți and Delia Șepețean-Vasilu, foreword by Adriana Babeți (Bucharest: Univers, 1987).
27. Gheorghe Crăciun, "Arhipelagul '70–'80 și noul flux," in *Competiția continuă*, 215.
28. Ion Bogdan Lefter, "Introducere în noua poetică a prozei," in *Competiția continuă*, 229.
29. For a detailed account of this theoretical group, see Philippe Forest, *Histoire de Tel Quel 1960–1982* (Paris: Seuil, 1995).
30. Gheorghe Iova, *Ațiunea textuală: Bunul simț vizionar* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 1999).
31. For an enthusiastic reading and critical application of Tel Quel's concepts, see Livius Ciocârlie, *Realism și devenire poetică în literatura franceză* (Timișoara: Facla, 1974).
32. Livius Ciocârlie, "Literatură și semn," *Orizont* (Timișoara) 11, 5 (1974): 4.
33. Gheorghe Crăciun, *În căutarea referinței* (Pitești: Paralela 45, 1998), 29.
34. See Mircea Nedelciu, "Avertisment la ediția a II-a," in Mircea Nedelciu, *Tratament fabulatoriu* (Bucharest: Allfa, 1996).

Abstract

Translational Layers and Transnational Identities in the Romanian Literature of the 1980s

This article tries to assess the impact of translations on the inception and legitimization of postmodern techniques developed in the Romanian literature of the 1980s. One aim of the study is to outline: a) the various translational channels that were active within the respective paradigm, ranging from official linguistic translations, to fictional translations by way of intertext; b) the different translational corpora, ranging from the literary (mainly selected from North-American postmodernism), to the theoretical (pertaining to the area of linguistic structuralism). A second aim is to outline the transnational positioning of Romanian postmodern writers, by means of foregrounding their foreign models, and by polemics with the national narratives which either accounted for an organic development of local literature, or were enforced by means of political propaganda. To illustrate the function of theoretical translations within Romanian postmodern fiction, the article develops a case study concerning the assimilation of Tel Quel's concepts.

Keywords

Romanian literature, postmodernism, structuralism, national, communism

