

The French Novel in Translation

A Distant Reading for Romania during Communism (1944–1989)

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AS PASCALE Casanova demonstrates, France has elicited worldwide interest since the late 18th century, imposing itself as the home of a universal language for literary use. Alongside the schema of the European circuit of French literature frequently reiterated and explained by Franco Moretti in his *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900*,¹ Casanova often discusses the manner in which French itself was borrowed to aid the birth of literary language in other small or emerging literatures: “It is for this reason that certain authors writing in ‘small’ languages have been tempted to introduce within their own national tongue not only the techniques, but even the sounds, of a reputedly literary language.” Drawing on the case of Frederick II, who “regarded the reform of the German language as the necessary condition of giving birth to a classical German literature,” and the case of Rubén Darío, who pleaded for some sort of “mental Gallicism” in his attempt “to transfer into Spanish the literary resources of French,”² Casanova notes a very important dimension of cultural domination, i.e. the fact that most often the “small” culture—which uses a “small” language, expanding the concept proposed by Deleuze and Guattari³ to fit the entire European frame—feels self-confident in the wake of its development only by altering its local material with the one of the cultural metropolis. This fact has known several recent theorizations, from the “negative” implications put forward in Spivak’s “subaltern” concept⁴ to the “necessary” condition advanced by Alexander Kiossev in his “self-colonizing cultures” concept.⁵ What is sure though is that both views are possible at different moments inside the same colonial or self-colonial *réseau*: it is true that the “core cultures” impose their structure, language, and literary techniques, but it is just as true that the peripheries are often thrilled to give in to those central models, convinced that the “true” literary estate can only be gained through imitation and imports. This often results in periods of confusion, when local cultures engage in veritable literary civil wars on the question of national specificity.

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This is the same reason for which Romanian literary critic G. Ibrăileanu states in 1909 that local author Gheorghe Asachi (1788–1869) “embraced all literary currents and at the same time none,”⁶ as the author was one of the early Romanian poets most renowned for the constant adjustment of local language in order to gain literariness.⁷ In a bizarre shift—although absolutely typical for the modern process of development of national cultures—Asachi came to fight for the return to the language of the Orthodox Church, right after he had tested different combinations of Romanian and Italian, Latin or Gallic. This process defines local struggle in both language and literature since, especially for the 19th century, the emergence of Romanian culture meant melting foreign forms in an alloy that could be described as national specificity. In this respect, another telling example is the career of the alleged national poet of Romania, Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889). Although he massively imported Northern and Indian mythologies in his poems, and although his poetical style was based on the German model, he was only valued for the way in which he concealed these influences.⁸ Or, even more conclusively, the most important cultural legitimizer of the second half of the 19th century, the Junimea (The Youth) cultural society, led by the leading Romanian critic Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917), always validated authors inside its circle for the manner in which they melted foreign models into a local formula and for their inquiries into local folklore and tradition. Thus, the national element prevailed, even if the circle was behind the most important and diverse translation program of that time, and despite it having set the German cultural model as its pillar. In other words, although foreign influence is instrumental in the consolidation of European cultures during 19th century, small literatures only legitimize themselves by hiding or negating the foreign. These phenomena have been recently described by Andrei Terian as forms of “compensation,” “cultural dumping,” and “detour,” three extremely useful models in decoding domination and self-colonial tendencies, or the rejection of domination and the colonial itself.⁹ In short, the “compensation” appears as an “attempt to trim the heavy influence of a foreign literature by reorientation toward another foreign literature”; “cultural dumping” describes the process of “multiplication of imports from as many cultures as possible, which should thus cancel the main dependence on German or French”; finally, the “detour” is the attempt “to retrieve the process of the systemic development of another peripheral literature that, in the meantime, has managed to integrate in world literatures.”¹⁰ Aside from the last concept, the first two models are crucial for the general description of the importance and functions of the French novel in Romanian culture.

Thus, on the one hand, “compensation” can define the import of German literary models in Romania at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, *against* the domination of French culture. On the other hand, after World War II, it defines the import of French literature *against* the Soviet domination and socialist realism. Hence, the French culture finds itself both in the position of dominant culture, to which the “compensation” model sought to react, and the position of “compensation” agent against a strong domination. This is a particularly interesting double role, since in both cases French literature was imported through the Russian administration. As Alex Drace-Francis shows, in the 19th century, tsarist Russia’s administration brought the French culture to the Romanian territories as Russia was also fascinated by the French, and in

order to counteract the Ottoman influence.¹¹ After World War II, the Soviet domination in Eastern Europe brought along French literature as a legitimizer of socialist realism.¹² Later on, during the 1960s, French literature was used to overcome proletarian and socialist realist trends, and Soviet literature in general. In the case of “cultural dumping,” as Cosmin Borza has recently demonstrated, the French domination over Romanian culture in the second half of the 19th century incited national affirmation programs at the beginning of the 20th century—and even truly nationalistic ones, promoted by populist movements—to engage pleas for the atomization of influences, against the French domination.¹³ Still, as Rodica Dimitriu states, “at the turn of the century, even the selection of foreign works—other than French—by critics, publishers, and translators took place according to their success in Paris.”¹⁴

Considering these directional shifts and exchanges in the domination-compensation axis at the beginning and during the development of Romanian literature, the profile and the functions of French literature in the local literary experience become complicated. And this complication is mainly determined by the fact that in the bigger picture, French literature has always appeared as an undeniably complete model for Romanian literature, transplanted in its morphological integrality, and fully functional at every level of Romanian culture. But an analysis of the complex profile of French literature within Romanian culture implies the analysis of translation delays and reversible relations of domination. It would be rather easy, but all too little, to reiterate the locally famous words of Romanian-born poet Benjamin Fondane (1898–1944), who described Romanian culture as a “colony of French culture.”¹⁵ No matter how generally valid, such statements compromise the very understanding of colonial dynamics in self-colonizing cultures, and the “compensation” or “cultural dumping” processes. On the other hand, it is also difficult to depart from such a striking note as the one put forward by Fondane, since the French literary model practically gave birth to the Romanian one through often unmediated instances of copying. What are then the nuances that must be taken into consideration?

In what follows I will present the major moments in the translation of the French novel during the communist period in Romania from a quantitative perspective. My premise is that such an enquiry should only come after the full quantitative translation-scape¹⁶ of the French novel in Romania has been made visible. First, it is important to note that although the French novel has been the main model for the Romanian novel, influences are rather hard to track down at a macro level, and that I will further address this issue in terms of “interferences,” using a term put forward by Itamar Even-Zohar.¹⁷ Second, my focus will be on the dynamics of literary styles and currents, rather than on the social impact of the French novel, since a general Distant Reading of the French novel in Romania has not yet been available, while a social background inquiry of the field can be found in Ioana Macrea-Toma’s *Privilighenția*.¹⁸

1. Precedents: Translations and Imitation of the French Novel in Pre-Communist Romania

AN ANALYSIS of the French novel in translation should first consider of ultimate importance the specific translation culture in which it arrives and point out the peculiarities of this target culture. For example, during the 19th century, Alexandre Dumas and Victor Hugo enjoyed a great reception in South and Eastern Europe, while Eugène Sue fared significantly less well, at least according to the records made available by Franco Moretti in his famous *Atlas*, which I have confronted with local dictionaries of translated novels.¹⁹ Stendhal and Balzac were notable figures in Central Europe, but not in Eastern Europe.²⁰ If one were to think of a reason for this uneven distribution of French authors across Europe, a rather bizarre and intriguing cultural complex would appear as the main culprit, at least in the Romanian case. My explanation is that Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* was the main source for Romanian literary plagiarism. The translation of the French source in Romanian would have only been an act of self-denouncement to the reading public, since novels such as *Misterele Bucureștiului* (The mysteries of Bucharest) and *Mistere din București* (Mysteries in Bucharest) were published in 1862.²¹ Beyond the diminished interest in translations from French literature in a francophone country—since the small reading public could understand the original—the reason for the translation delay in the case of Eugène Sue's famous novel can be seen as an attempt to hide the original in order to protect the copy. This should also spark interest on the notion of copy itself in the epoch, while “original” only meant “published here,” and not really “new work.” The same reason can be invoked for the lack of translations of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* before 1946 in Romania. Although the main debates on foreign and Romanian novels were literally obsessed with Proust during the inter-war period, the volumes of his *À la recherche* were not translated until the first one appeared in 1946, and it was followed by the others only in the late 1960s and early 1970s.²² Therefore, although Romanian authors such as Camil Petrescu pleaded for Proustianism, some other “Proustian” prose writers never read Proust before writing their works.²³

There were only six renderings of Balzac's novels in Romanian in the 19th century, of which only two are full translations of novels. The first attempt (1836) would only contain fragments and would only be completed in 1923. Thus, the first translation of Balzac's works can only be considered to be the 1852 translation of *La Femme de trente ans*, and the second the 1896 rendition of *Eugénie Grandet*. Although Balzac was a common name for literary critics, his literature was widely unknown to the small reading public. Eugène Sue had his *Kernock, le pirate* translated in 1852, but his *Mistères* only in 1942, almost 80 years after the Romanian calques appeared. Although French literature has always been the dominant model for Romanian literature, there has been a natural resistance to the hegemony of the French culture in Romania, either through “compensation” and “cultural dumping,” or through a system protective of the national itself.²⁴ All of these have resulted in an non-systemic approach towards the translation of the French novel—although the French novel is the most translated of the European ones in the 19th century and first half of the 20th century. Therefore, what would be

witnessed in the 1944–1989 period, during the communist regime, is in a way a fast-forward revision of the entire chronological evolution of the French novel itself in an attempt to give it a backbone.

In other words, while the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century imported the French novel, the second half of the 20th century structured its image without special care that the national prevails.

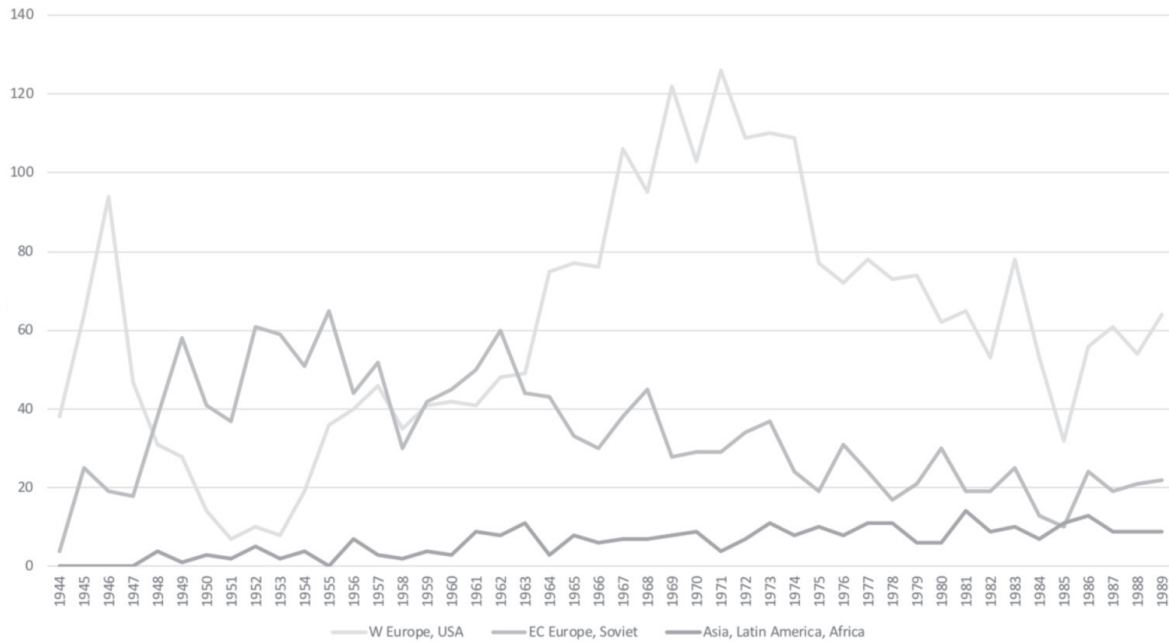
2. A Periodization of the French Novel in Translation: East-West Quantities

BEFORE DECODING the functions and morphologies of the French novel in communist Romania, a valid periodization of the novel translated in Romania should be performed in relation to the political dynamics of communist Romania. The periodization put forward by Georgiana Lungu-Badea,²⁵ although having very much to offer at an intuitive level, does not adequately connect the dynamics of literary forms to the political frame. Although politics and literature are inseparable during the Romanian communist regime, since the translation of novels is in its entirety state-sponsored and dependent on political decisions—especially during the socialist realist era—, the morphological schema of the rendered Western European and French novel did not always shift simultaneously with political will. Most often, the dynamics of literature announce or follow the political action. In other words, the period called by Lungu-Badea *de fermeture coriace* (“of coriaceous closing”) (1944–1958) should be reconsidered. Although Soviet troops entered Romania in 1944, the translations of Western literature were discontinued only in 1948 (see Graph 1). Moreover, *la fermeture fluctuante* (“the fluctuant closing”) did not occur “toward the end of the ’60s and the beginning of the ’70s,”²⁶ but as early as 1955 (Graph 1). For the general delimitation of these changes and fluctuations in the rendition of Western and French novels, I have put together an exhaustive graph structured according to the Cold War logic.

Graph 1 shows that the shutdown takes place in 1948,²⁷ as the Soviet novel rises, and that before this year Western novels dominated the scene, and that a “fluctuant closing,” which I recently called the “East-West equalizer” starts as early as 1956, followed by an irreversible Western domination after 1964. These periods should be carefully selected in order to get a valid image of the phenomenon, since a random selection inside the large period can generate unusable results at a macro level. In order to better place French literature inside this Graph 1, I have selected the “W Europe, USA” axis and separated it into various West European countries and languages (Graph 2).

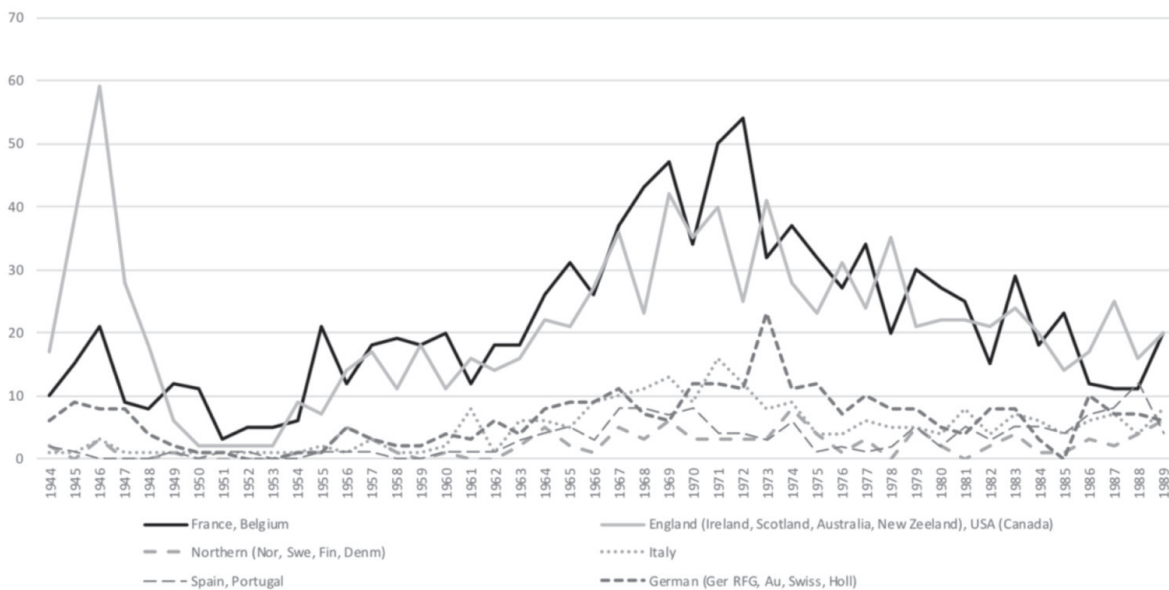
What strikes most in Graph 2 is the relatively *weak* position of French literature in comparison to the general expectations, and the relatively *strong* position of Anglo-American novels. In a country that had little debates on and translations of English and American novels, France looks terribly unstable. But in order to understand the atomization of national cultures that enter Romania through renditions during communism, one must know that translations of French novels dominated in the interwar

GRAPH 1. THE GENERAL TIMELINE FOR THE TRANSLATION OF NOVELS IN COMMUNIST ROMANIA^a



a. Graph 1 is presented for a better understanding of the number of novels translated from Western Countries and the Eastern bloc. For detailed information on the possible periodization, and also for more graphs, see 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*, 63–85.

GRAPH 2. TRANSLATIONS OF NOVELS FROM WESTERN COUNTRIES (1944–1989)^a



a. Baghiu, “Strong Domination,” Graph 3.

period. The postwar scale looks rather equitable, since the French/English&American proportions in novel translation decreased inside the Romanian translation system from 2:1 to 1:1.²⁸ Therefore, French literature during the 1960s and 1970s can be seen at once as the single “compensation” agent, and also as part of a “cultural dumping process,” alongside imported cultures such as the Italian, the German, the American, the English, and even alongside Latin American, African or Asian literatures. This drives me to the idea that sometimes, when the agents that make the “compensation” are not so visible, since they are democratically joined by other agents, transforming the “compensation” into what looks like a “cultural dumping” process, *space* may not be the only variable that matters in decoding the reaction, but *time* as well. It is clear that the Soviet domination has been overcome through the import of Western models, but through what sort of Western models and of which period?

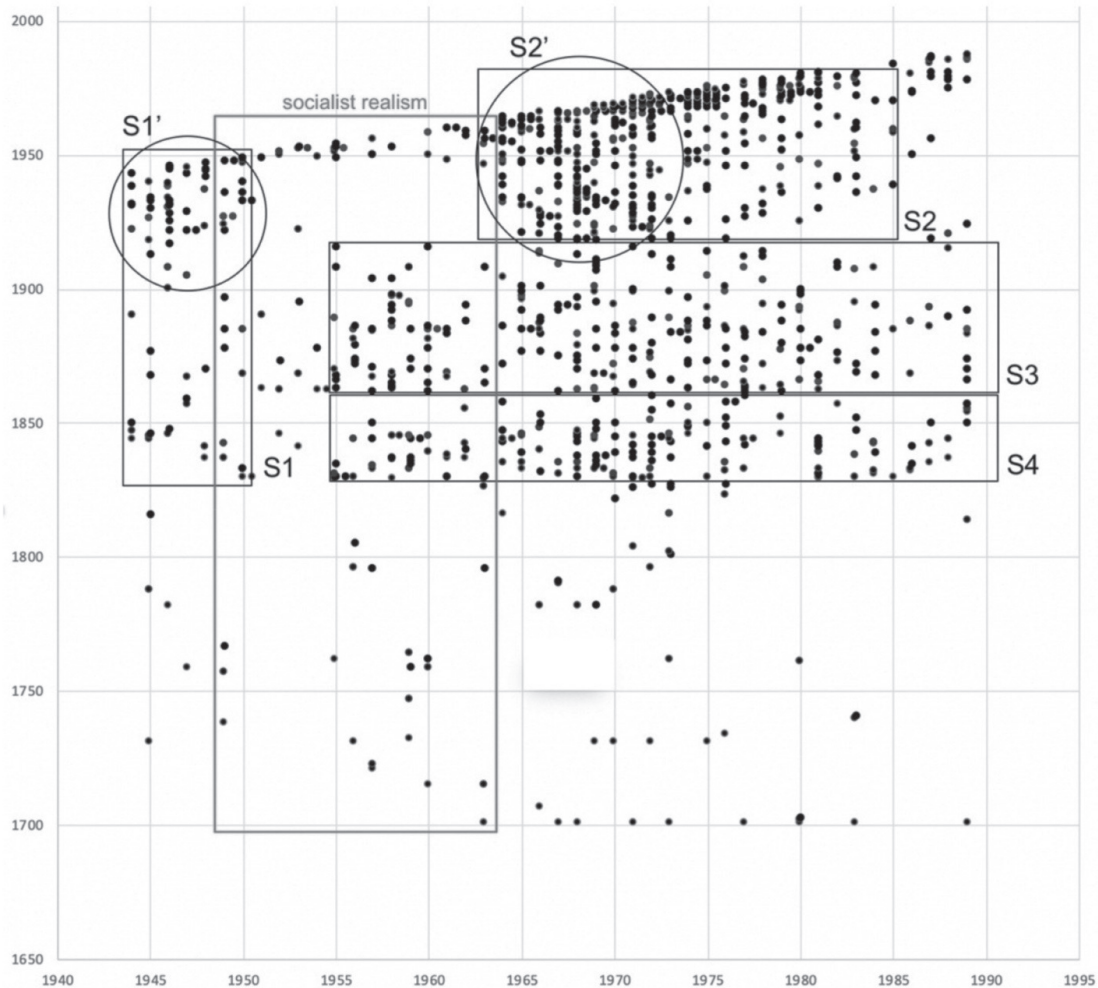
Then a question arises: when were the French novels translated during Romanian communism written?

3. Translating the French Novel during Socialist Realism: Filling Gaps While Avoiding Traps

AS DONALD Sassoon has shown in *The Culture of the Europeans*, until 1830 there has been a great resistance across Europe against the novel, which seemed to create an unfair competition to poetry and philosophy. This resistance stretches from the end of the 18th century in Western Europe to the early 19th-century in Eastern Europe and Russia: “One of the first German treatises on literature, Eschenburg’s *Entwurf einer Theorie und Literatur der schönen Wissenschaften* (1783), dedicated only nine pages to novels, short stories and fairy tales. Schlegel, in his lectures on literature, barely mentions novels, though he discussed Arabic songs, poetry, philosophy and chivalric epics. The great Russian critic Vissarion G. Belinsky (1811–48) lamented in 1835 that literature had become dominated by the novel, and poetry and philosophy were becoming unfashionable.”²⁹ Thus, a quantitative research of the French novel in translation should not find as a surprise that novels only count from 1830 onwards. It may seem like an outrageous statement, but a quantitative approach to any European system of translation of novels is actually a quantitative approach to literature written only after 1830 in Europe. Chart I features a chronological chart of French novels translated in communist Romania, and it clearly shows how rare and unimportant really are the translations of novels from before 1830, since the novel itself is much of an oddity before this year.

I have considered every translated French novel in Romania between 1944 and 1989 and compared its release in Romania to its initial publication in France. Therefore, one can find how many novels were translated in Romania every year (horizontal axis, 1940–1990) and from what period (vertical axis, 1650–1990). Since I have outlined the socialist realism period on the graph, one could easily see, for example, that socialist realism is absent in 20th-century French literature, but brings many renditions of novels from 1830–1900. At the same time, socialist realism is a period of severe decrease

CHART 1. SCATTERED APPROACH TO RENDITIONS OF FRENCH NOVELS IN ROMANIA (1944–1989)



in translations from contemporary French literature—that is, of the 1930s and 1940s. Since it imports so many contemporary novels from the Soviet space, the new political power somewhat tends to neglect or ignore contemporary French novel productions. Thus, no matter how many Soviet contemporary novels are translated, the French novel only brings the solid aid of its 19th-century masters.

Socialist realism can then be described as the legitimation of contemporary Soviet literature through classical European literature.

As for the French Enlightenment, with respect to the encyclopedic novelists, translations were made in Romanian as early as the 19th century, but the most important works only appeared during the interwar period and during the communist period. Although Voltaire and Rousseau had been translated as early as 1831 and 1837, *Candide* by Voltaire was only translated in 1947, with a feuilleton version in 1940; *Lettres persanes* by Montesquieu was only translated in 1957; Denis Diderot's *Le Neveu de Rameau* and *Jacques le fataliste et son maître* were only rendered in Romania in 1956 and 1957—

only Diderot's *La Religieuse* had been translated in Romania before that, in 1926. As for other classical authors such as Laclos and Marivaux, their novels were only translated in Romania in 1946 and 1975.

The pre-romantics and romantics knew renditions from the 19th century onwards, but were not translated during socialist realism (1948–1964). Thus, although Victor Hugo's novels are translated as early as 1839, Lamartine's in 1855, Alfred de Musset's in 1856, and Alfred de Vigny in 1907, it is only Victor Hugo's novels that kept on being translated in Stalinist and early post-Stalinist Romania. During socialist realism, authors such as Prosper Mérimée and George Sand were also glossed over, and the only novelist of the French Parnassian school visible in Romania since the 19th century, Théophile Gautier, was largely ignored.

As for the naturalist prose, although naturalists based their works on claimed scientific observation, the current was largely considered incompatible with the Soviet Marxist-Leninist direction, and naturalist writers were often accused of mysticism and psychologism. But even before the beginning of socialist realism in Romania, certain voices denounced naturalism. In 1945, Romanian critic Silvian Iosifescu declared that socialist realism, which was not yet implemented as an official doctrine, was opposed to the "narrowness of naturalism."³⁰ Moreover, in 1946, the attack on the naturalism that "lacks amplitude"³¹ of Ilya Ehrenburg was highly promoted. By the end of the year, Romanian critic Leonte Răutu, one of the founders of socialist realism in Romania, would attack Russian writer Mikhail Zoshchenko, along the lines of Zhdanov, accusing his prose of being "a mix of abject naturalism and Freudian introspection."³² Hence, the final result would be a 1948 definition of socialist realism as opposing "idealism and even classical realism and critical realism, just like romanticism and naturalism."³³ But Émile Zola was translated in 1949 and 1951, showing that this opposition aimed to only detach certain writers from their categories and reinsert them in a new one, more general and selective, often described as "critical realism." Socialist realism is, in this scenario, opposed to every literary trend and at the same time to none, since Chart 1 shows that, with exception of the interwar novel, no other period was actually cut off from the profile of the French novel. If, from 1944 to 1950, one can hardly detect any anomaly in the translation system, the socialist realist period changes the course of translations, only in the sense that it overlooks the interwar period completely.

Although it first opposes every literary genre of modern Europe, it keeps the canonical figures in France alive through authors such as Victor Hugo (1952; 1954; 1955), Zola (1949; 1950), and Balzac (1950; 1952; 1955), and then turns in 1955 to more nuanced approaches. Alexandre Dumas and Jules Verne are never forgotten or avoided in translation, not even during socialist realism. Thus, the canonical figures of realism experienced certain disruptions in translation, but recovered at the end of the 1950s: in 1956 through translations of novels written by Balzac and Diderot and in 1958 and 1959 by Flaubert and Stendhal, who return in translation.

Between 1944 and 1950, there is the same amount of interest in French novels written in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. But, although a first full translation, by Radu Cioculescu, of Marcel Proust's *À la recherche* is published, it is barely mentioned in the press. Only four articles in 1945 and six in 1946 announced the first complete transla-

tion of this first volume of the series, as the debate would be postponed to 1960, when Ion Ianoși published his *Romanul epopee în realismul socialist* (The epic novel in socialist realism) and when the most important Romanian literary theorist of the era, Tudor Vianu, would reinsert Proust in discussion during the debate over Romain Rolland's work.³⁴ But these two interventions are not entirely relevant for the broad reinsertion of modernist authors in the general discourse during Romanian communism, since a full reconsideration of Marcel Proust's works, and of modernist fiction, did not occur until 1964.³⁵ Although debates on modernism occurred right after the 1956 events in the neighboring countries, they did not lead to a better placement of modernist fiction within Romanian socialist realism.³⁶ Other authors had a more visible and important profile for local socialist realism, the most preeminent being Romain Rolland. A dossier was made in *Scântea* (The Spark) in 1946, the most important magazine during Stalinism and post-Stalinism in Romania, charting Romain Rolland's influence, and some of the names present in this collective work are stunning: Tudor Arghezi (1881–1967), the most important Romanian modernist poet of the interwar period, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu (1876–1955), the most important modernist female writer, and G. Călinescu (1899–1965), the most important literary critic in 20th century Romania.³⁷ They compare Romain Rolland to Balzac and present the author as being a "laic saint" (G. Călinescu). During the same year, the General Secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, invoked Romain Rolland as a model for the political implication of writers, against what Julien Benda had already called the "treason of the intellectuals."³⁸ Modernism had been replaced by engaged literature with the help of the modernists themselves, a transformation that would persist until the mid-1960s. But the most interesting aspect of translation during Stalinism (mainly in post-Stalinism and right after 1955) is the permanent reorganization of the literary canon of the 19th century, something that had never been done before.

4. The French Novel in Translation: Exhaustive System in Synecdoche Translation

CHART 1 shows that 1964 is the year that marks the return of the interwar French novel. While keeping the 19th-century fiction translation trend of the socialist realism, the Romanian translation system reintegrates modernism and existentialism as part of the French novel canon. It is this 1964–1975 period that I consider the period of *synecdoche translation*, when the French novel enters the Romanian literary polysystem in its full chronological and genre diversity (see Chart 1, horizontal axis between 1964 and 1975). Although the pattern for interwar and contemporary novels is similar in the S1' and S2' areas in Chart 1, the difference between these areas inside the French novel translationscape is the maturity of the Romanian translation system. Thus, although the 1944–1950 period is similar to that of 1964–1975, the differences lie in proportions, frequency, and quality. 1964 is the year of the first translations of novels authored by Albert Camus and Hervé Bazin. Although existentialist works enter Romania with the translation of Simone de Beauvoir as early as 1961, existentialism itself becomes a

trend in 1964 and 1965, when the most important novels of Beauvoir, Camus, Malraux, and Sartre are translated.³⁹ At the same time, 1965 was the year of a rapid growth of interest in the French *Nouveau Roman*, and authors such as Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor, and Alain Robbe-Grillet are also massively translated and discussed.⁴⁰ This comeback marks a period of “cultural liberalization,” as it has been described recently by Delia Ungureanu and Thomas Pavel, mainly for the return of the interwar period, “a time when writers felt close to Western European trends, in particular the French ones.”⁴¹ Thus, the actual “compensation” was made here through *time*, and not *space*, meaning that interwar literature came to counteract the strong 19th century domination during socialist realism. Between 1949 and 1964, existentialism, surrealism, and any other “anti-rationalist” movements had been silenced since 1946, when one of the most important early communist leaders, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, had denounced them as being reactionary.⁴² But during the 1960s, one cannot only point to a return of interwar trends, but also to a change in the systematic approach to translations, as it is evident from Chart 1. No other moment in Romanian culture has ever been so engaged in creating the synecdoche of another culture. This return of Western models in Romanian culture shows that the period between 1964 and 1975 is a decade when French culture makes its presence felt through its interwar representative novels (S2’), and also with an increase in the number of realist novel translations that emerged during the second phase of socialist realism.

During the second half of the 1970s, translations from French literature did not rely heavily on modernism and interwar novels. At a time when Western cultures started to discuss the role of genre literature, which culminated, in Michael Denning’s view, with “a renaissance in the study of popular or mass culture in the universities of the United States and United Kingdom,”⁴³ the French novels translated in Romania followed this trend. Sensationalist novels, detective novels, historical novels, fantasy and SF novels, and romances flood the Romanian literary polysystem, showing that although Romanian culture of translation showed a peripheral elitism during communism, it is highly engaged in the World System of literary trends. In 1970, French and Belgian authors such as Julien Gracq (with an SF novel from 1951) and Jean Giono (with an SF novel from 1930), but also contemporary writers such as Louis Huilloux and Robert Merle (both with SF novels from 1967) are being translated in Romania; for detective novels, authors such as Georges Simenon (with a novel published in 1961), Claude Simon (a novel from 1962), and Joseph Kessel (novel from 1967); other writers such as Armand Lanoux, Félicien Marceau, and Jules Romain are translated. This new interest in French mass literature and genre literature is doubled by the permanent search for a new highbrow cultural trend in translations, which is found in the Goncourt prizes and the French Academy. Though they have few readers, they are a reflection of the elitist modernist trend of the sixties. It is also a period of reinstalling a certain model of realist writing, after the interferences with local culture of the *Nouveau Roman* experiments created an “acute crisis of mimesis”⁴⁴ in Romanian writing. In this period, experimental novels are seen as a failure, and more reluctant positions emerge in Romanian literary criticism. Nicolae Manolescu, one of the most influential literary critics of the postwar period, stated that “the failure of the French *Nouveau Roman* in the ’70s, which tried to turn novelistic fiction in abstract form,

can be a clue for the resistance in structure itself to change.”⁴⁵ What follows next, during the second half of the ’70s and during the ’80s, looks more like a lack of inspiration in the translation of novels, mainly observable through the scattered and poor representation of novels written in France between 1900 and 1950. Contemporary French novels of the ’70s and ’80s are translated, but have little impact and are rarely discussed.

Conclusions

THE THREE periods that can be identified within the Romanian communist period in respect to the translation of French novels are: 1949–1964, the socialist realism period, which mainly features novels from the 19th century; 1964–1975, a period of “synecdoche translation,” in which translations from French recreate the exhaustive image of the French novel between 1830 and the 1960s and 1970s; 1975–1989, a period when the French novel in translation shifts from the modernist and existentialist core to genre fiction and award-winning French novels. The second period can be seen as the time of a chronological “compensation” model, if we are to modify Terian’s definition, while the third proves to be a case of genre “dumping.” While the second period (1964–1975) counteracts the fascination for the 19th century French novel of socialist realism through interwar literature “compensation,” the third period counteracts through genre “dumping” the modernist and existentialist core built in 1964–1975.

□

Notes

1. Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (London–New York: Verso, 1998).
2. Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, transl. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge–London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 18. See also Donald Sassoon, *The Culture of the Europeans: From 1800 to the Present* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 65: “At the court of Frederick II of Prussia—who despised German—the only language allowed was French.”
3. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, transl. Dana Polan, foreword by Réda Bensmaïa (Minneapolis–London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 16: “A minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language.”
4. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).
5. Alexander Kiossev, “Notes on Self-colonizing Cultures,” in *Cultural Aspects of the Modernisation Process*, eds. Dimitri Ginev, Francis Sejersted, and Kostadinka Simeonova (Oslo: TMV-Senteret, 1995).
6. G. Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura românească* (Iași: Editura Revistei “Viața Românească,” 1909).
7. “Linguistically, Asachi opted for the common-sense solutions, combining Italian-like words with French-like ones and reserving a large space to Slavic terms, archaisms and regionalisms.” Mihai Zamfir, *Panorama alternativă a literaturii române* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2011).
8. “Eminescu looks for the nation but finds the world.” Andrei Terian, “Mihai Eminescu: From National Mythology to the World Pantheon,” in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*,

- eds. Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian (New York–London–Oxford–New Delhi–Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 52.
9. The self-colonizing devices of Romanian culture during 19th century and the first half of the 20th century have been recently described as anti-colonial. See David Morariu, “Anticolonizare și autocolonizare: relație cauză-efect. Cazul traducerilor”, *Transilvania* (Sibiu), new ser., 47, 2 (2019): 5–11.
 10. Andrei Terian, “National Literature, World Literatures, and Universality in Romanian Cultural Criticism 1867–1947,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15, 5 (2013), <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss5/11>.
 11. “It would be a mistake to underestimate the importance for the development of print culture of the repeated Russian military occupations of the Principalities. Russian involvement has often been seen as negative by historians of Romanian culture, and has been given considerably less attention than that of Austria. Nevertheless, the Russians actively promoted an ideology of print during the successive occupations. In 1771, the Russian army brought a number of books with them for distribution, while Romanian monks travelled to Moscow and St. Petersburg to obtain more. The first translations of Voltaire into Romanian constituted pro-Russian journalism distributed in 1772 at the order of Catherine the Great” (p. 103); “Under the Russian protectorate French had the status of a more or less official language, used for correspondence with foreign powers, consular officials and so forth.” Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 63.
 12. Ștefan Baghiu, “Translating Novels in Romania: The Age of Socialist Realism: From an Ideological Center to Geographical Margins,” *Studia UBB Philologia* 61, 1 (2016): 5–18: “French literature brought a great contribution to this monolithic literary propaganda project: it had a huge readership in the area before World War II so it became a guarantee for the Soviet translations, and it provided—as the nineteenth-century Russian authors did—the image of a legitimate heritage for socialist realism.”
 13. Cosmin Borza, “Translating Against Colonization: Romanian Populists’ Plea for Peripheral Literatures,” in *The Culture of Translation in Romania/Übersetzungskultur und Literaturübersetzen in Rumänien*, eds. Maria Sass, Ștefan Baghiu, and Vlad Pojoga (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 31–45: “In another article, Iorga emphasizes the importance of this shift towards Polish, Norwegian, and Russian literatures by arguing that, unlike their French decadent counterpart, they are the ‘literatures of national and social duty’,” 36.
 14. Rodica Dimitriu, “Translation Policies in Pre-Communist and Communist Romania: The Case of Aldous Huxley,” *Across Language and Cultures* 1, 2 (2000): 179–192.
 15. B. Fundoianu, *Imagini și cărți din Franța* (Bucharest: Socec, 1922). Quotation from B. Fundoianu, *Imagini și cărți* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1980), 25.
 16. I draw on Jordan A. Y. Smith’s concept of “translationscape,” inspired by Arjun Appadurai’s “-scapes”: “the sum total of texts of a given literary set visible in another.” See Jordan A. Y. Smith, “Translationscapes: On the Legibility of Transnational Ideologies in World Literary Systems,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 54, 4 (2017): 749–770. Quotation from 751.
 17. Itamar Even-Zohar, “Interference in Dependent Literary Polysystems,” *Polysystem Studies* 11, 1 (1990): 79–83.
 18. Ioana Macrea-Toma, *Privileghiul: Instituții literare în comunismul românesc* (Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2009).
 19. This quantitative research is based on Doru Burlacu et al., *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului tradus în România de la origini până în 1989* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2005). This is an exhaustive resource of metadata of translations of novel in Romania from 1794 to 1989, developed in over thirty years, containing over 10,000 entries.

20. Moretti, 179.
21. “George Barozzi (1828–1896), *Misterele Bucureștiului*, and I. M. Bujoreanu, *Mistere din București*, both in 1862 . . . The only interest that these novels can create nowadays can be resumed to the description of the material and social background in Bucharest, as it was on its way to become a modern city. By describing it, Romanian novelists had in mind the tentacular city model of Western novels, Paris or London, and made whatever sacrifice needed so that the city on the Dâmbovița River [Bucharest] would resemble more the citadel monsters in the ‘noir novels.’” Mihai Zamfir, *Scurtă istorie: Panorama alternativă a literaturii române* vol. 1, 2nd edition (Iași: Polirom, 2012), 199.
22. For the better understanding of this phenomenon, one should visit Alex Goldiș’s concept of “structural correspondence.” See Alex Goldiș, “Beyond Nation Building: Literary History as Transnational Geolocation,” in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, 95–115.
23. “During his work on the novel *O moarte care nu dovedește nimic* [A death that proves nothing], he [Anton Holban] hadn’t read Proust. As an example, although Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, Lucia Demetrius, and even Ury Benador have been compared to Marcel Proust, they admitted to not having read him when they were writing their works.” Iulian Băicuș, *Entre chien et loup: Receptarea romancierilor Marcel Proust și André Gide în literatura română, interbelică și postbelică* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2011), 57.
24. This is highly visible up to the 1940s also, as G. Călinescu has been described as contributing to a “policy of minimizing and, sometimes, even negating the external influences on modern Romanian literature.” Andrei Terian, *G. Călinescu: A cincea esență* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2009), 290.
25. Georgiana Lungu-Badea, “Traductions d’hier, traductions d’aujourd’hui: Quelques considérations générales sur la traduction roumaine à l’époque communiste, suivies d’un mini inventaire des traductions du roman français (1960–1968),” in *Etudes interdisciplinaires en Sciences humaines* 4,1 (2017): 21–50.
26. “Le régime autoritaire de type fasciste, de 1940 à 1944, fut suivi par le totalitarisme qui débuta en 1944, avec l’entrée des troupes soviétiques sur le territoire roumain, continua avec l’instauration du régime communiste et allait prendre fin en décembre 1989. Ce régime totalitaire, durant lequel la traditionnelle ouverture de la Roumanie aux littératures d’Occident et à leur traduction fut brisée, a connu des périodes de fermeture coriace (1944–1958), imposée par un régime fermé et dictatorial, et de fermeture fluctuante, parfois permissive vers la fin des années 60 et début des années 70.” *Ibid.*, 22.
27. See also Eugen Negrici, *Literature and Propaganda in Communist Romania*, transl. Mihai Codreanu, rev. by Brenda Walker (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1999), 16. Negrici describes a “fundamentalist stage” as early as 1947.
28. Baghiu, “Translating Novels,” Chart 1.
29. Sassoon, 157.
30. Silviu Iosifescu, “Literatură și revoluție,” *Timerețea* (Bucharest) 1, 19 (1945), in *Cronologia vieții literare românești: Perioada postbelică*, vol. 2, 1946–1947, ed. Eugen Simion (Bucharest: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române, 2010), 359 (hereafter cited as *CVLR* 2).
31. *CVLR* 2: 78.
32. Leonte Răutu, “Raport asupra revistelor *Zvezda* și *Leningrad*,” *Contemporanul* (Bucharest) 1, 25 (1946), in *CVLR* 2: 206.
33. Petru Comarnescu, “Contribuții la cunoașterea realismului socialist,” *Națiunea* (Bucharest) 3, 642 (1948), in *CVLR* 2: 122.

34. Tudor Vianu, "Romain Rolland," in *Cronologia vieții literare românești: Perioada postbelică*, vol. 9, 1960–1962, ed. Eugen Simion (Bucharest: Editura Muzeul Național al Literaturii Române, 2012), 34.
35. See Georgeta Horodincă, "Probleme ale prozei occidentale contemporane," *Gazeta literară* (Bucharest) 11, 14 (1964), in *Cronologia vieții literare românești: Perioada postbelică*, vol. 10, 1963–1964, ed. Eugen Simion (Bucharest: Editura Muzeul Național al Literaturii Române, 2012), 512–513. Iulian Băicuș places the recovery of Proust only a year later, stating that "the first signal of Marcel Proust's rebirth in Romanian culture can be considered the appearance of the April 1965 special issue of *Secolul 20* magazine, dedicated to Marcel Proust." Băicuș, 130.
36. Modernism was rather discussed as modernity, since this was a more harmless term inside socialist realism, and mainly during the attempts of introducing "structures which were not conformed to socialist realism" in local literary criticism. See Alex Goldiș, *Critica în tranșee: De la realismul socialist la autonomia esteticului* (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2011).
37. *CVLR* 2: 20.
38. Gh. Gheorghiu-Dej, "Problemele intelectualității românești," *Contemporanul* 1, 20 (1946), in *CVLR* 2: 308.
39. In 1964–1965 the following novels are translated for the first time in Romania: *Memories of a Dutiful Daughter*, by Simone de Beauvoir; *The Plague*, by Albert Camus; *The Human Condition*, by André Malraux; *The Words*, by Jean-Paul Sartre.
40. In 1965 Nathalie Sarraute's *The Golden Fruits* is rendered, in 1967 Michel Butor's *The Transformation* alongside two other novels by Sarraute and *The Erasers*, and in 1968 and 1969 Michel Butor's *In the Labyrinth* and *Portrait*.
41. Delia Ungureanu and Thomas Pavel, "Romanian Literature in Today's World: Introduction," *Journal of World Literature* 3, 1 (2018): 1–9.
42. "French existentialism tries to start from Marxist postulates, surrealism tries to give itself a revolutionary content and states that it uses Marxist methods. Thus, all of these currents of dissolution self-proclaim to be leftist, and this is the main danger, in Romania, for this can create major confusions. Let it be clear: any mystical and anti-rationalist current, any rejection of the understanding of problems on the basis of objective research of reality can, in actual fact, only found reactionary currents." Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, "Curenți și tendințe în cultura românească," *Scânteia* (1946), in *CVLR* 2: 39.
43. Michael Denning, "The End of Mass Culture," *International Labor and Working-Class History* 37 (1990), 4–18.
44. "The Țirgoviște writers aligned themselves with the post-war Western trends of neo-modernism: the French Tel Quel, the Italian experimentalists of the 63 Group, the North American metafictional writers John Barth, William Gass, and Raymond Federman. Their obsession with the production of literature revealed an acute crisis of mimesis and a revolt against fictional representation." Monica Spiridon, "Models of literary and cultural identity on the margins of (post)modernity," in *History of the Literary Cultures of East-Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, vol. 1, eds. Marcel Cornis-Pope and John Neubauer (Amsterdam–Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 70–83.
45. Nicolae Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe: Eseu despre romanul românesc* (Bucharest: Gramar, 1998), 35.

Abstract

The French Novel in Translation: A Distant Reading for Romania during Communism (1944–1989)

This article uses quantitative methods to show the evolution of the translation of French novels in communist Romania. The author argues that the period between 1949 and 1989 can be separated in three different periods, according to a distant reading of the translated novels: 1949–1964, the period of socialist realism, which mainly features novels from the 19th century; 1964–1975, a “synecdoche translation,” in which French renditions recreate the exhaustive image of the French novel between 1830 and the 1960s and 1970s; 1975–1989, a period when the French novel in translation shifts from the modernist and existentialist core to genre fiction and award-winning French novels. The article uses Andrei Terian’s concepts of “compensation” and “cultural dumping” in order to better explain how interferences between cultures often create visible chronological delays or fast-forward synecdoche translations.

Keywords

French novel, translation of novels, Romania, quantitative analysis, distant reading