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**TRANSLATIONS OF NOVELS IN THE ROMANIAN CULTURE DURING THE
INTERWAR PERIOD AND WWII (1918-1944): A QUANTITATIVE
PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract: This article continues the quantitative analysis of translations of novels in Romania for the 1918-1944 period. Baghiu discusses the decay of the French novel (from almost 70% of the total of translated novels during the *long* 19th century to almost 43% during the interwar period), and the case of two competitors in the second line of translations (American and Russian). The article turns then to the European and Global peripheries from the perspective of the colonial ‘20s and ‘30s, and discusses the *eco* narratives of the Nordic novel, and the *identity* function of the Asian novel within this translationscape.

Keywords: Novel, translation, World Literature, quantitative studies, interwar period, Romanian

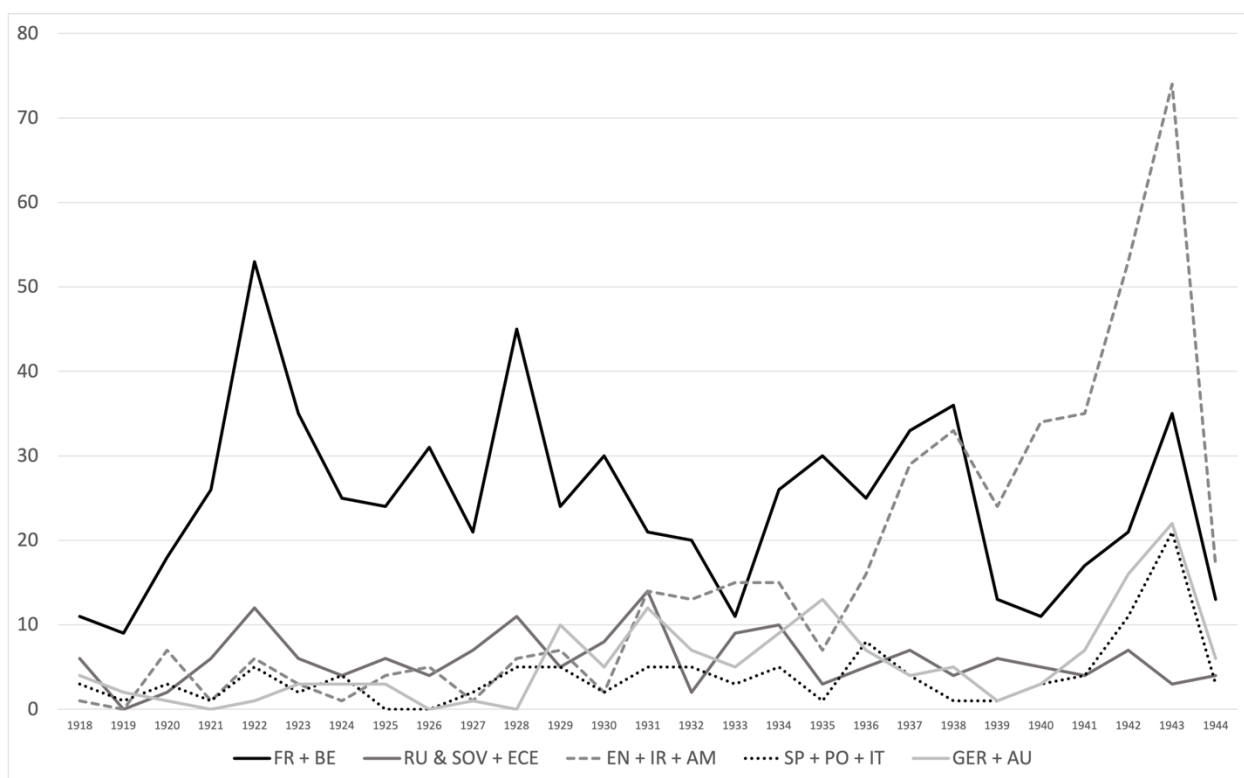
The interwar period is often described in Romanian literary criticism as a “golden age” of the novel, and the year 1934 has been labeled the “golden year of the interwar Romanian novel” (Cornea 375). While it is true that it really was a golden age for the local production, the number of translated novels sees a significant decrease between WW1 and WW2. This reveals that Romanian literature *stops being a minor literature*, if

we are to credit Sean Cotter, who envisions that “the minor is not a failed state or a potentially great one, but a translated nation” (Cotter 2), and that translations *fulfilled their accommodation role* they were assigned during the long 19th century. As Andrei Terian has shown, the proportions between translated novels and Romanian novels during the 1918-1940 period display a great *self-enclosure/enclavization/autochtonization* tendency through the “crisis and the boom” (Terian 2019, 62). The Romanian novel soars in the context of the local economic crisis during the ‘30s, yet translations dominate the literary field only after 1940. This is indicative of a special situation, in which crises are responsible for the growth of the local and changes in political administration are responsible for the increase in translations (Baghiu 2021). Of course, the “golden age” of the Romanian novel is also marked by strategies that *bolster* the introduction of several foreign narrative techniques into the literary discourse, beyond mere translation. The interwar period is known for the rise of modernism, through novels of Anton Holban, Camil Petrescu, and Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu, among many others. At the same time, it was a time in which the social novel enjoyed favorable conditions for growth, as local researchers have recently shown (Terian et al. 54), while minority and feminist narratives gained preeminence through the novels of I. Peltz, Alice Gabrielescu, Cella Serghi, and others. Those writings were mainly driven by a *synchronist* drive aiming at catching up with the European production of fiction. Yet, they were not always driven by translations. As André Lefevere has shown, translations are only partially responsible for the accommodation of a culture within another:

I would like to turn to the strategy cultures use to let in or keep out prospective imports. This strategy is by no means limited to translation, but also includes criticism, historiography, the anthologizing of texts, in a word, refraction, the cultural strategy that becomes operational when a text belonging to another culture is rewritten in such a way as to become acceptable to the patron, or patronage groups dominating the receiving culture at a certain point in time (Lefevere 129).

Therefore, being compelled by the *untranslated* novels that influenced local canonical production, I will try to discuss the Romanian novelistic translationscape as a separate

entity from the Romanian novel. As Andrei Terian has shown, “Romanian critics’ stance on translation witnessed the beginning of a new stage in history in 1918,” meaning that “translations became a topic of great interest, debated not only by critics and ideologues, but also by prominent writers” and that “this period also witnessed significant improvement in the status of translations, which, although far from being officially recognized as a canonical literary category, were nonetheless included in yearly critical reports” (Terian, *Translating the World* 24-25). The Romanian cultural space of the early 20th century is marked by such debates on translations stemming from various agents on the ideological spectrum. Yet what I aim for now is mapping the *origins* of those translated novels.



Graph 1: *Main Areas (1918-1944): 1. French; 2. Russian, Soviet & East-Central European; 3. English & American; 4. Spanish & Italian; 5. German & Austrian*

The methodology for this research borrows that of my earlier article on the long 19th century (Baghiu, *Translations*). I have used the database of the Romanian Academy, the main Romanian resource for mapping novelistic production, *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului tradus în România de la origini până la 1989* (Burlacu et al., 2005), and

reorganized its contents on the basis of every import's country of origin. I have only taken into account complete novelistic series published in magazines (*feuilletons*), as well as independently published volumes – meaning that I did not take fragments or unfinished translations into account. The main reason for this, as I argued elsewhere, is that translated fragments are closer to short prose, since they function well as self-sufficient and independent pieces. It is true that they *familiarize* the reader with many of the *worlds of the novel*, yet it would be unfair to take them into account alongside other complete translations: a published fragment from Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* does not make up for the rendition of the first volume, let alone for the translation of the entire series. In this particular case, although Proust was a very important presence in Romanian interwar literary debates, he is important – in translation – only after WW2.

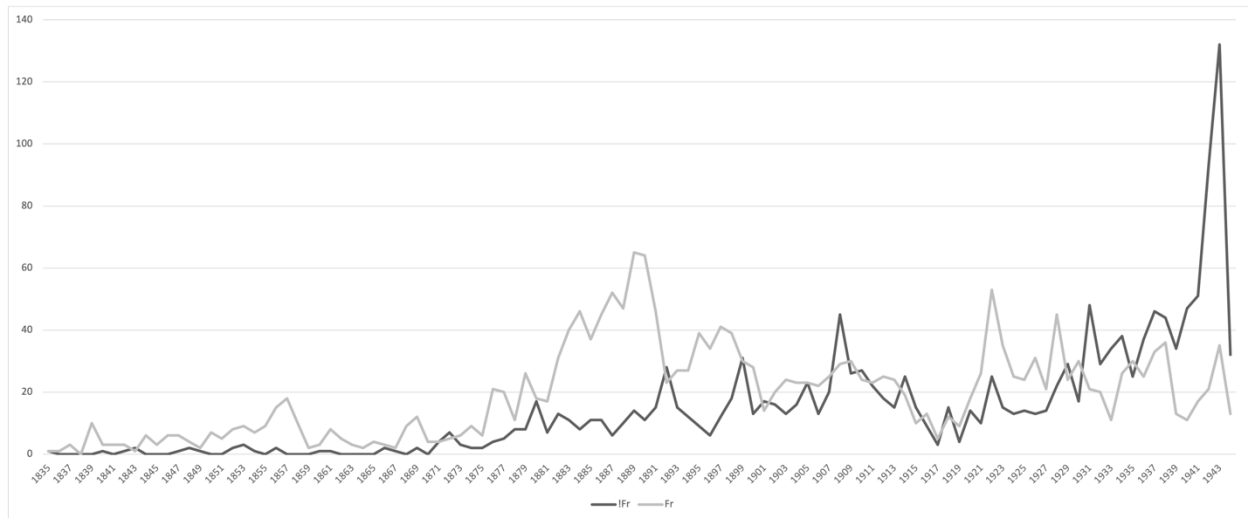
Proportions of imports

Source country/culture	No. of Novels (1918-1944)
French	664
English	267
American (USA)	156
German & Austrian	150
Russian	108
Italian	75
East European (Hungarian, Serbian, Czech, Polish, Slovakian)	52
Nordic (Danish, Swedish, Icelandic and Norwegian)	49
Spanish	33
Asian (Japanese, Indian), African, Central American	11
TOTAL	1565 (901 non-French)

In contrast to the 1794-1918 period, the 1918-1944 timespan can be defined especially through a decrease in the French dominance. This is strange – and completely unexpected –, since the general orientation of the critical discourse on the novel in the interwar period mainly revolved around French models. Whereas during the *long* 19th century, the French novel amounts to over 70% of the absolute number of translated novels' (Baghiu, *Translations* 94 – see table there), during the interwar period, the proportions change dramatically. Only 43% of the translated novels are of French origin, while 57% represent non-French literatures. Of course, the French novel still accounts for almost half of translations, but nonetheless, there is a huge difference between this proportion and the dominant role it played from its beginnings up until the end of WWI. This points to the fact that we are dealing with a massive shift in the orientation of Romanian culture, especially after 1930, when English and American novels are preferred over French ones, and even more visible after 1940, when an unprecedented number of translated novels are rendered in Romanian, especially of English and American origin.

For the interwar period, in addition to the French novel – which is the main source of translations – the hierarchy is the following: 1) the top importers are no different from the 19th century ones, but they are in a different order: The English novel – the greatest runner in the translation race –, the American novel, the German & Austrian novel, the Russian, and the Italian novel. The changes from the long 19th century are the demotion of the German novel and the rise of the American. 2) the peripheric cultures occurrences are the same as in the long 19th century: East European novels (Hungarian, Serbian, Czech, Polish, Slovakian), Nordic novels (Danish, Swedish, Icelandic and Norwegian), Spanish novels, and Asian (Japanese, Indian) novels, with the addition of African and Central and South American ones – one novel for each continent, and both are debatable cases. I will thereby describe the evolution of the French novel and the evolution of two of its competitors, and that of two peripheric imports: for the competitors, I have chosen to discuss the American and Russian cases – as political narratives that are most important for socialist movements during this heavy ideologized era –; for the seldom occurrences, I will further investigate translations from Nordic cultures and Asian and African ones.

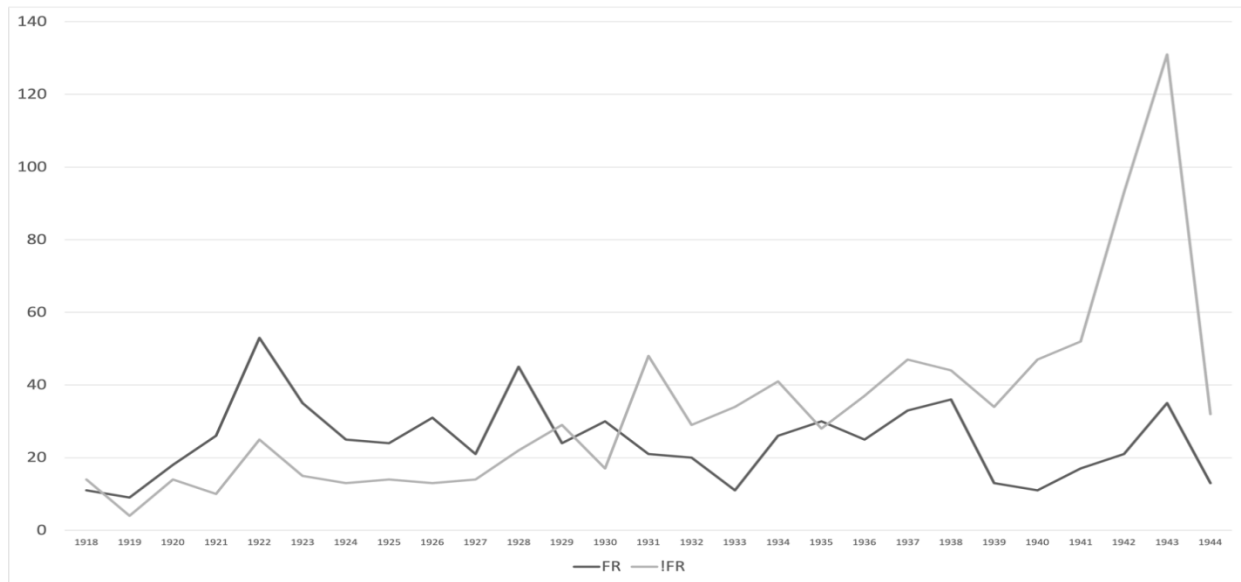
Building a French cultural “colony” and dismantling it



Graph 2: The Dynamics of Translation (1835-1945) between French (Fr) and Non-French (!Fr) novels

Starting with 1877, the number of renditions of French novels grew exponentially until 1890 (Baghiu, *Translations*), thus concluding a first wave of state-building process through imports. This period also represents one of the most important moments for French women novelists (Baghiu, “*Romancierele*”) and for genre literature in Romanian translation (Terian et al., “*Genurile romanului românesc în secolul al XIX-lea*”), meaning that the first state-building phase following the War of Independence – and right before becoming a Kingdom in 1881 – requires the diverse appropriation of a monolithic culture. The French culture is – as *Graph 2* shows – the main source for the local literary translation scene in respect to the novel, and non-French literatures are only soft “competitors” in this arena until 1890. The French novel is now represented by Alexandre Dumas-Père’s and Jules Verne’s adventure novels, Xavier de Montépin’s and Alexis Bouvier’s sensational novels, Pierre-Alexis Ponson du Terrail’s historical fiction, and Louis Amédée Achard’s “cloak and dagger” espionage novels – and, of course, many other representatives of those genres. This diverse genre dispersion merges with the Romanian genre fiction of that time. Alex Drace Francis observes an explosion of

“paraliterary” novels, especially between 1871 and 1890, and describes “the flooding of the new market for reading matter with cheap foreign goods against the artisanal production of local petty bourgeois” (Drace Francis, *The Making* 165). The massive domination of translated fiction between 1877 and 1914 can also be read as a subtle strategy during the post-ottoman state-building process. Translations are now used for reaching readerships beyond the cultivated cultural elites, since those elites shared the ability of reading “good” novels in the original language. Moreover, translating less groundbreaking novels enables local authors to more easily achieve canonical status. But the dominance of the French novel in this shape and form prompted responses from all sides. The Conservative circle of “Junimea” [The Youth], led by Romanian literary critic Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917), aimed at imposing a *German model* in Romanian literature within the context of the new German Royal Family in Romania. Andrei Terian read this as a “compensation” process through which Romanian literature would diminish the *self-colonizing* tendency expressed towards French literature (Terian, *National Literature* 9). Subsequently, populist movements of the late 19th century and the early 20th century poised themselves against *depraved* foreign literature and sought out a “healthy” local alternative through turning to more suitable influences. Cosmin Borza recently interpreted the translations from peripheral literatures instituted during the first decades of the 20th century as *anticolonial* strategies, through which nationalist movements aimed at reducing the French dominance (Borza, *Translating Against*). What is clear is that the state-building process between 1877 and 1918 was based mainly on *building a market*.



Graph 3: French and Non-French Novels (1918-1944)

Breakdown of the French influence and the rise of English and American novels

Although the French novel dominates the novelistic translationscape (Smith, *Translationscapes*) in Romania between 1918-1935, it must be acknowledged that the translated titles during the '20s and '30s are becoming quite predictable. During the entire interwar period, translating the French novel brings to the fore a perpetual *déjà lu*. Émile Zola, the most prominent author of this list, was already translated in 1882, 1888 (twice), 1893, 1895 (when the most renowned female author of the time, Sofia Nădejde, translates *Roma*), 1896, 1897, and so on. Romain Rolland, the 1915 Nobel Prize winner, is only translated once (*Colas Breugnon* in 1923, with the next one, *Vie de Michel-Ange*, being published only in 1946). The French novel lacks innovation and trusts 19th century genre authors to maintain the dominance in translation. To understand the inconsistent domination of the French novel, one has to know that in most Eastern European countries, the fascination with modernism during the interwar period unfolded in the absence of translations from Proust and Joyce. It is sufficient to mention that Proust's first volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu* was only partially translated in the late '20s, and that a first Romanian translation of the entire first volume can only be found in 1945 (Baghiu, *The French Novel*). Writers were fascinated with Proust and Gide, yet the French translationscape consisted of other authors. This is very similar to what took place in the second half of the 19th century, when the French

translationscape grew massively without consistent translations from Balzac or Stendhal. If we investigate the two peaks of French novel in Romanian translation from 1922 and 1928 more closely and correlate the data with the titles, we can observe that the big numbers corresponding to the French novel owe to renditions of already translated authors – seven novels by Jules Verne in 1922 and seven novels by Alexandre Dumas Pere in 1928. Authors of adventure novels and historical fiction such as Maurice LeBlanc and Victor Margueritte are often translated alongside Benoit Pierre, Louis Dumur (Swiss) and Maurice Dekobra. Far from dismissing these authors as nonimportant, I believe it is clear that *the interwar literary field does*, and in my interpretation, this is the main reason for the *French downfall* of the '30s and '40s. The French novel in translation now brings together new names that are rarely commented in the local press and canonical figures of genre literature. Which means that, in the moment when the Romanian translation market witnesses the downfall of French dominance, it immediately relaxes through diversifying names without deploying a particular strategy – other than a market strategy, of course.¹ But those are both elitist and militant times in Romanian literary criticism, and a market strategy is not enough to counterbalance the intensive social and aesthetic debates around the novel. Except for Romain Rolland and André Maurois, no other *functional* names are to be found. And by *functional*, I mean names that elicit a palpable shift within the target culture, that change Romanian literary debates or the literary scene. Until 1935, *nothing interesting happens* with the French novel. Although translations from French literature looked really promising right after WWI, with Henri Barbusse's *Le Feu* (translated in 1918 by well-known Romanian writer and translator F. Aderca), and Zola's *Nana* (translated in 1918, followed by *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret* in 1920 and *Fécondité* in 1922; his reputation soon grew: 1926 saw the publication of the Romanian renditions of *Le Docteur Pascal*, *Le voeu d'une morte*, and *Au Bonheur des dames*), the translated novels of the next few years that have been most commented are those written by Honoré de Balzac, Théophile Gautier, Victor Hugo, Alphonse Daudet, and Prosper Mérimée. The French translationscape is, between 1918 and 1944, a reiteration of a

¹ This brings along again, same as in the 1877-1900 period, a diverse approach to the French novel, with titles such as *Aphrodite* by Pierre Louÿs in 1921 or *Sans famille* by Hector Malot in 1922.

prior translationscape. The translation, in 1935, of *La Condition humaine* – prefaced by the most renowned interwar literary critic, Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943) – is followed by a plethora of articles discussing the “novel of negativism” and the “merchant of despair,” followed in 1945 by new debates on the *Resistance* writers. Yet, this is the only case when French literature gains some consistent attention within the interwar translationscape. The rise of English and American translations quickly follows suite, and other authors take centerstage.

The American fascination

The ‘30s and ‘40s are mainly marked by the rise of the English and American novel during the mid ‘30s – when a new fascination was born following the Nobel prize nomination first of Sinclair Lewis in 1930 and then of Pearl S. Buck in 1938. This helped create the image of a coherent literature – both in social and academic terms. The social – and often socialist – novels of Theodore Dreiser and Upton Sinclair – who was even challenged as writer in the US at first – were now followed by the highbrow works of new Nobel prize winners. Whereas, during the early 20th century, *The Times* “panned” Dreiser’s *Sister Carrie* and Upton Sinclair’s *The Metropolis* (Harlan, “When the Times”),² their later success in Europe – where the books were popular among working class readerships (Anderson, *The Swedish* 35-36³) – was decisive for the popularity of American novels overseas. The *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* indicates the new interest in English and American fiction in Romania during the ‘30s, doubled by a strong drive to reassess the former literary canon:

² An anonymous review in *The Times* in 1907 panned *Sister Carrie*, saying “It is a book one can very well get along without reading” and another one in 1908 panned *The Metropolis* claiming that “Mr. Upton Sinclair’s new book is not important, it is not literature, it is not ‘a good story.’ To say of it that it has a sneer on every page, and on many an incendiary utterance, might be giving the author too much credit. ... It has all been done, and much better.”

³ „Two contemporary American authors, however, had amassed extraordinary numbers of readers, even though they may be said to have enjoyed no reputation whatever among serious readers and the major Swedish critics. Upton Sinclair and Jack London entered Sweden through the kitchen door and factory gate and seldom penetrated to the upstairs parlors and lecture halls of «respectable» literature, yet London set new book-selling records in Sweden, and Sinclair’s readers, though many fewer than London’s, remained loyal for more than forty years.”

Other writers translated or retranslated during this period include Jules Verne, Oscar Wilde, Mikhail Lermontov, Ivan Goncharov, Rainer Rilke, Eugene O'Neill, Francois Villon, Mark Twain, Marcel Proust, and Balzac. These translations were the result of personal affinity and individual choice on the part of the translators rather than of official planning. Publishers were mainly interested in producing lucrative, popular literature. However, high quality literature could also be successful. One of the most popular authors during this period is W. Somerset Maugham: almost 30 of his titles were translated by the Romanian writer J. Giurea and published between 1930 and 1945 (Baker, *Routledge Encyclopedia* 538).

This process is similar to what was taking place throughout other East European cultures, which, in a similar manner, appropriate the English and American novel as shining example for local production. This is visible in the Czech translation sphere:

[t]ypical of Czech translation work between the wars was an increased interest in American literature. [...] Interest in contemporary American literature was so lively in the Czech Lands in the 1920s and 1930s that many novels appeared in translation very shortly after the publication of the English originals. The most successful American author in Czech translation was Upton Sinclair, many of whose novels were published from 1906 onward. Also successful in Czech translation were Willa Cather, Theodore Dreiser, Scott Fitzgerald, Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos, John Steinbeck, Thornton Wilder and, among dramatists, Eugene O'Neill (Baker, Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia* 382).

In Romania, publishing houses boost the American translationscape only in 1922, through translations of works by Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Jack London, and Mark Twain, yet American literature in translation gains momentum in 1925, through several consistent translations of novels written by Upton Sinclair – *Jimmie Higgins*, translated by socialist author Ion Pas, *Iubire* [*Love's Pilgrimage*] in 1926, *Cataclismul. Roman din anul 2000* [*Millenium: A Comedy of the Year 2000*] in 1930, rendered by A. Mibashan, followed by a local SF imitation/tribute written by Dorina V. Ienciu in 1933, *Cataclismul anului 2000 –*, *Petrolul* [*Oil*] is rendered in 1931 by Mibashan, *Brigada noastră* [*No pasaran! A Story of the Battle of Madrid*] is translated in 1937, and *Mi se spune dulgherul* [*They Call Me Carpenter*] appears in 1940. Upton Sinclair is by far the most

important American author of the '20s and '30s in Romanian translation, and his success explains the enthusiastic reception of translations of novels by Theodore Dreiser and James Oliver Curwood in 1932 and 1934, respectively. After 1936, other authors gain prominence in Romania: Pearl S. Buck and Sinclair Lewis. Pearl S. Buck's *Mama. Romanul vieții chineze* [*The Mother*] is translated in 1936 by famous local author Camil Batazar, alongside *Ogorul* [*The Good Earth*]. Following her 1938 Nobel Prize, Romanian translators turn their attention towards *Vânt de răsărit; vânt de apus* [*East Wind; West Wind*], translated in 1938, and in the same year, Sinclair Lewis is rendered with his two volumes of *Dodsworth*.

Russian dilemmas

The most interesting aspect of translations, if we think of the political context of interwar Romania – the ban of the communist movement in 1921, the rise of far-right movements in the early 1930s – is the slow rise of Russian and Soviet narratives in translation. 1918 witnesses a highly appraised and intensely commented translation of Maxim Gorky, titled *Copilăria mea* [*My Childhood*]. In 1921, the popular fiction author N. Rădulescu Niger translates *Lepădăturile societății* [*Creatures That Once Were Men*]. Translations continue during the '20s and '30s, alongside those of authors such as Dostoyevsky and Turgenev – marking a combined effort by both socialist and orthodox circles to accommodate the Russian populist and pre-existentialist narratives. Alexandra Kollontai's *Căile dragostei* [*A Great Love*] appears in 1927. Feodor Gladkov's *Ciment* [*Cement*] is translated by the socialist writer Ion Pas in 1930, his *Pământ nou* [*Novaia zemlia*] in 1933. Sergey Semenov's *Hunger* is translated during the same year – Semenov being very close to the revolutionary movement of the early 20th century and one of Gorky's intimate friends. Dmitry Furmanov's *Ceapaev* is translated in 1936, way before the English translation of 1940. A period of stagnation for revolutionary and Soviet translation occurs quickly after, yet translations of novels written by Ilya Ehrenburg are reestablished in 1944, when ...*Și a fost ziua a doua* [*Deni Vtoroi*] is issued, alongside Boris Gorbатов's *Neînfrânții* [*Nepokorënie*]. This bears, of course, witness to a striking Russian translationscape in Romania, since Mircea Martin affirmed that “in countries like Poland, in Romania there were neither favorable conditions nor earlier manifestations or anticipations of Social Realism” (Martin, Moraru, Terian,

Romanian Literature as World Literature 241). I would rather follow Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu's description of the literary field, who claims that leftist publications such as *Bluze albastre* [*Blue Blouses*] and publishing houses could represent an interesting precedent for postwar doctrines, through "an action of support for the pacifist Congress [1932] and joining the adherence of Bernard Shaw, Maxim Gorky, Romain Rolland, Heinrich Mann, Theodore Dreiser, Upton Sinclair, and Henri Barbusse" (Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română* 148). The *Bluze albastre*, *Șantier* [*Construction Site*], *Era nouă* [*New Era*] magazines translated the works of revolutionary and leftist American and Soviet authors as well.

The Nordic phenomenon

Between 1918 and 1945, one of the most interesting cases of Romanian translations is that of the Scandinavian literatures. Starting with the 1919 Swedish novel *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* [*Nils Holgersson*] by Selma Lagerlöf, originally published in 1906-1907, Nordic literature gains more and more visibility in Romanian culture. Even though, as Cosmin Borza argued, Nordic literatures entered the scene of Romanian translations even before this moment, through Romanian populists' efforts to construct an anticolonial strategy (Borza, "Translating"), the number of translated novels from Nordic literatures before 1918 is only 16, whereas during the interwar and WWII period, this number grows to almost 50 titles. Selma Lagerlöf received the Nobel Prize in 1909 and this observation, together with the ones regarding the American Nobel Prize winners, points to a multinational and geographically dispersed *literary prestige translationscape*. As Camille Deschamps Vierø has recently argued, Lagerlöf's novel has some ecological undertones, visible in the debates on protecting nature and in the critical engagement with exploitation and extractivism that feature throughout the book (Deschamps Vierø, "Seasons"). These narratives were popular in Romanian literature as well and as recently shown by Andrei Terian, they were responsible for the birth of early local versions of magical realism (Terian, Neoextractivism). Lagerlöf's novels are also translated in 1927 (*Gösta Berlings saga*), 1929, and 1931 (*Ierusalim* [*Jerusalem*]), and during the following years, her popular narratives are followed by translations from Danish authors such as Karl Adolph Gjellerup and Karl Ewald. Danish literature also consists of novels by Karin Michaëlis (*Copiii din Danemarca* [*The Child Andrea*], 1938).

Strindberg's novel, *Fiu de slujnică* [*The Son of a Servant*], translated in 1940, is a most interesting case, since its translation, five decades after the original publishing of the first volume in the series, has to be linked to a similar Romanian novel (*Fecior de slugă*, 1933), by Nicolae D. Cocea (1880-1949). Starting with 1926, the Nordic novel is enriched by the rise in the translation of Norwegian novels, beginning with of Knut Hamsun's works – *Pan* and *Foamea* [*Sult/Hunger*], both published in 1926 –, and continuing with Johan Bojer's novels – *Foamea cea mare* [*Den store Hunger/The Great Hunger*] in 1932; *Emigranții* [*Von Egen Stamme/The Emigrants*], 1939; *Cântecul prizonierului* [*Fangen som sang*], and *Din senin* [*Troens magt/The Power of a Lie*], both in 1943. The translations from Nordic literatures reach a climax during the '40s through authors such as Sigrid Undset, who also won the Nobel Prize in 1928, and Finnish authors such as Frans Eemil Sillanpää and Mika Waltari – representing first contacts with Finland's novelists.

Asian and African shy openings

Asian literature started being translated in Romania first as a result of curiosity by proxy. The “exotic” extra-European exploratory novels written all throughout European colonial literatures gradually became prototypes for Romanian novelistic plots in the late 19th century and of the early 20th century. Regarding the translation of Asian literatures, 1921 sees the translation of Kenjiro Tokutomi's *Între moarte și iubire* (*Hototogisu*) [*The Cuckoo*, 不如歸], a Japanese bestseller in late 20th century Europe. The novel depicts the events of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and, as it was published between 1898 and 1899, it represents a contemporary historical novel. Similarly, as it was published in Romania before the translation projects from extra-European and North American literatures had had time to fully mature, the novel delivers a *firsthand insight* into the different forms of Japanese social structures. But the main reason for its translation was, nonetheless, linked to its global circulation: “The book went through a hundred printings by 1909. By 1927, there were one hundred ninety-two printings, which added up to some 500,000 copies. There is evidence that the work attracted readers from a broad range of backgrounds” (Ito, “The Family and the Nation” 495). Similar to how the second Japanese novel translated during this time,

Kiku Yamata's *Eterna iubire. Masako* [*Masako*], translated in 1926, provides interesting commentaries on interculturality and otherness, drawing on metaphors about "pure Asia" versus the "impure Western world" (Ames, Yamata Kiku 407). Another famous name of Asian literature, translated in 1924, is that of Rabindranath Tagore, with *Bimela* [*The Home and the World*, Ghare Baire, 1916], a similar plea for renouncing Western civilization and denouncing Eurocentrism. Of course, these three cases of translations from Asian literatures cannot *alone* configure a local anticolonial debate but coupled with the populist movements of the early 20th century, formulating, through critics such as Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940), genuine attacks against Western culture, they represent forms of resistance to Western civilization, wherein the European semiperiphery draws from global peripheries both forms of resistance and reactionary pleas. Two interesting cases in the period, in addition to the translation of Asian literatures, are those of Guatemalan and South African literature. The former consists of a romanticized biography of Mata Hari (*Viața, amorurile și moartea celebrei dansatoare și spioane Mata Hari*, 1932 [*The Life, Love, and Death of Famous Dancer and Spy Mata Hari*]), written by Enrique Gómez Carrillo, classified as Guatemalan literature, although the author spent his entire life in Paris. Notwithstanding the fact that his novel addressed colonial issues, especially in regard to the relationship to Japan and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the novel does not represent a precedent in the translation of literatures Central America and Latin America.

As concerns Africa, the only Romanian translation preceding the communist period is that of *Caravana morții* [*Turning Wheels*], by Stuart Cloete, published in Romanian in 1943 and in English in 1937. The novel complements a series of African and English writings about The Great Trek and as shown by Frederick Hale, it

[e]ngendered one of the most bitter controversies in South American literary history, an initially ethnic dispute which soon reached into the political arena and affected such mundane areas of life as library circulation policy and retail book sales. The strife was centred in Cape Town and, to a lesser extent, Stellenbosch, but soon spread throughout much of the Cape and had ramifications elsewhere in the Union of South Africa.

In such works as *Kinders van die Voortrek* by Miemie E. Rothmann (1920), *Twee Voortrekkers* by Pieter van der Merwe Erasmus (1935), *Far Enough* by Eugenie de Kalb

(1935), *They Seek a Country* by Francis Brett Young (1937), *Turning Wheels* by Stuart Cloete (1937), and *Die Wit Kraai* by Anna de Villiers (1938) one finds varying degrees of authorial willingness to contribute to the heroic image of the Voortrekkers which Gustav Preller and other nationalists had carefully cultivated as a means of uplifting the morale and nurturing the ethnic cohesiveness of the urbanising volk. Occasionally the promoters of the 1938 centenary called attention to some of these literary works, especially those by Rothmann and Erasmus, and recommended them to both adolescent and adult Mrikaners seeking a deeper anchoring in their cultural heritage. (Hale, “Defending the Great Trek Myth”).

The strictly contemporary perspective on translated peripheral realism (WReC, *Combined and Uneven*) is here noticeable. As I stressed out, alongside other scholars, in respect to the Romanian novel, the employment of the *present* in local narratives marks a modernization of the Romanian novel. Contemporaneity of narrative time becomes an obsession of the ‘30s (Vancu et al., *Temporalitatea*). The more modern the Romanian novel becomes, the more it tends to depict contemporary events. It is interesting to witness the *contemporaneity* of events narrated in the peripheral novel translated in Romania, since this observation points to a double process of modernization in respect to literary imports: the geographical dispersion and the contemporary tendency.

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