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**IN THE LITERARY NEIGHBORHOOD: THE TRANSLATED ROMANIAN  
NOVEL IN (EX-)YUGOSLAVIA (1918–2020)**

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the literary institutions that facilitate the dissemination of the Romanian novel in (the former) Yugoslavia between 1918 and 2020. My approach consists of a two-fold analysis: quantitative and sociological. While a quantitative methodology is employed to extract information regarding the extent to which the Romanian novel was translated in the neighboring literary periphery, sociological analysis is required to properly identify and examine the literary institutions that are involved in the cross-peripheral circulation throughout the twentieth-century and the first two decades of the new millennium. What these two-fold analysis shows is: 1) that the gradual increase of the translated novels is a result of the development of a literary infrastructure in the source culture and 2) that the literary institutions open up direct routes of transfer, which proves that the mediation through a core literature is rather the exception than the rule in the case of literary encounters between Romania and (the former) Yugoslavia.

**Keywords:** translation, novel, Romania, Yugoslavia, channels of transfer, literary institutions.

In 2022, Romania was the guest of honor at the International Belgrade Book Fair. At that specific moment writers and publishers were presented with a remarkable opportunity to make Romanian literature visible in Serbia and to strengthen the cultural ties with their closest neighbors. A different project was initiated in Zagreb

just two years before: the bilingual literary magazine *Verso*, whose aim is to enhance the intercultural exchange between the two peripheral literatures. But what happened until then? How well did the neighbors know each other? And which were the literary institutions and agents that facilitated the circulation of Romanian literature beyond borders? Starting from these questions, the current article aims to offer insights into the channels of transfer at work in the translation and distribution of the Romanian novel in the (ex-)Yugoslav space between 1918 and 2020. As I will argue, cross-peripheral dissemination is not at all arbitrary. A wide range of cultural mediators – which are economically and politically determined – shape the corpus of translations and are responsible for the gradual increase in the number of translated novels. The analysis of the distribution from the point of view of the channels of transfer will reveal that most of the time the translations follow a direct route (i.e., they are unmediated by a core literature). A few methodological remarks need to be made before moving on to the analysis. I gathered the data for the current study from the COBISS platform. To get a comprehensive overview of the novels translated from Romanian, I followed several steps: 1) I used the “language of original work” filter, 2) I looked into each of the member countries’ catalogs, 3) given the extended timespan and the risk of omitting some translations with incomplete bibliographical information, I did not use the “publication year” filter, 4) I looked into other libraries’ catalogs to get the missing bibliographical information, 5) I included the retranslations in my analysis. As the compiled data shows, 135 Romanian novels were translated into Serbo-Croatian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovene and Macedonian between 1918 and 2020. The chart in Figure 1 offers an overview of the chronological distribution of the 135 translated novels that I identified. What can be noticed in this chart is, on the one hand, the quasi-absence of the translations in the interwar period and, on the other hand, that each growth<sup>1</sup> in the number of translated novels occurs at specific historical moments. Hence, I divided my analysis into four subperiods, according to the Romanian historical timeline: 1918–1946, 1947–1964, 1965–1989 and 1990–2020.

### **The Invisible Boom of the Romanian Novel (1918–1947)**

At the time when Mihai Ralea in his famous article “De ce nu avem roman?” (Why We Don’t Have Novels, 1927) was pointing to the post-World War I increase – rather

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<sup>1</sup> The growth refers not to the translated novels per year but per sub-period.

quantitative than qualitative – of the Romanian novelistic production, which he related to the growth of the European success of the genre,<sup>2</sup> Panait Istrati, a Romanian-born writer, had already gained international visibility. As can be read in his diary, “when I signed the contract [with Rieder Publishing House], *Kira Kiralina* had already been published in *Europe* magazine, with the famous preface titled ‘A Balkan Gorki’ and Rieder Publishing House had possessed eight requests for translation” (304, My translation).<sup>3</sup> The role played by Romain Rolland as the main cultural mediator is renowned. Less known is the fact that Rolland not only prefaced his novel but helped Istrati throughout the publication process, from advising him in matters related to the publication to recommending his works to publishers and other authors, among whom Maxim Gorki (Istrati 283, 291, 296). There are two reasons why I start with this observation. The first one lies in the fact that his novel, *Kyra Kyralina* (1924), was translated from French into Serbian in 1925, followed in 1930 and 1935 by the translation of another novel, *Nerantsoula* (1927),<sup>4</sup> into Croatian and Slovene, which means that he was imported as a French writer. The other refers to the evolution of reception in his home-country. As I will show in the subsequent sections of the article, there is clear evidence that after World War II his works figure among the exported Romanian novels.

Apart from Panait Istrati, whose novels were translated from French, the only novels translated from Romanian between 1918 and 1947 were *Ciuleandra* (1927, translated into Serbian in 1929) and *Ion* (1920, translated into Croatian in 1943), both written by Liviu Rebreanu. The two main questions that arise are: 1) Why is the number of translations so low? and 2) Why Liviu Rebreanu? Or more precisely, which are the cultural mediators that contribute to the translations of Rebreanu’s novels?

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<sup>2</sup> See Mihai Ralea, *De ce nu avem roman?:* “This need to write novels in our small literature too is stimulated by the success this literary genre has had in the entire Europe” (My translation). In the original: “Nevoia aceasta de a realiza și în mica noastră literatură romanul e stimulată mereu de succesul pe care-l are în toată Europa acest gen literar” (82).

<sup>3</sup> “când am semnat contractul, Chira Kiralina era deja publicată în revista «Europe», cu faimoasa prefață *Un Gorki balcanic* și casa «Rieder» era în posesia a opt cereri de traducere, venit de la cele mai mari edituri din lume.”

<sup>4</sup> In the case of Istrati’s books, I decided to give the French titles because they are the original ones.

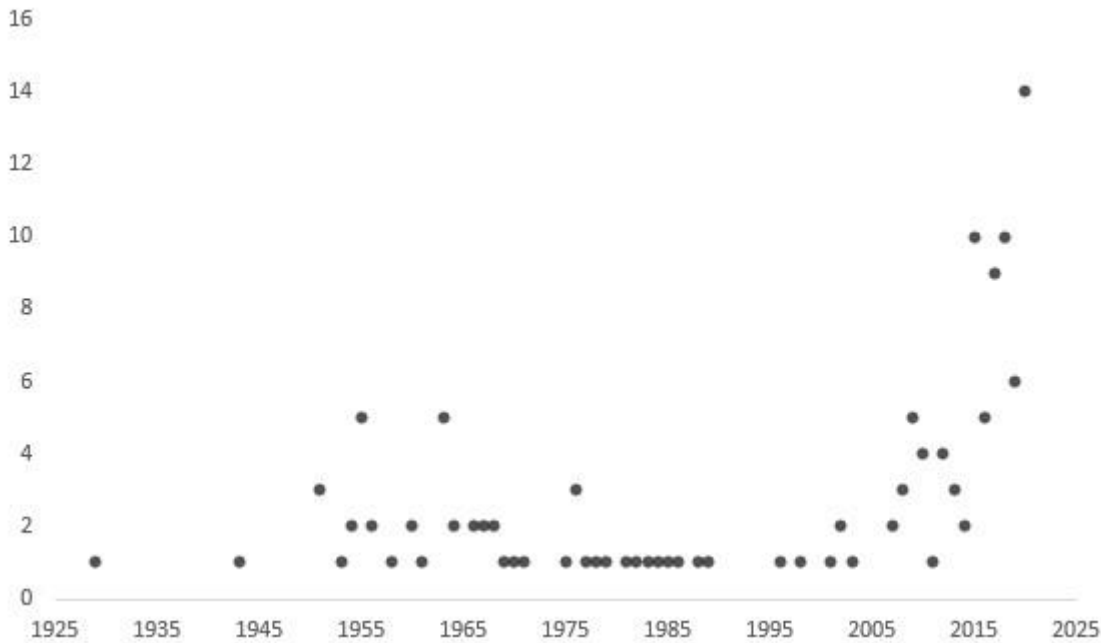


Fig. 1. Romanian translated novels in the (former) Yugoslavia: 1918-2020

The first question stems from the fact that it is during the interwar period that the Romanian novelistic production took off. As Andrei Terian shows based on quantitative data, “the early 1930s mark *the rise of the Romanian novel*, whose peak (...) is to be found in 1933” (63). It is also during the interwar period that the number of translated novels sees a significant decrease (Baghiu 28). To complicate this picture even more, one can notice that Rebreanu’s as well as other Romanian authors’ novels<sup>5</sup> had already been translated into several languages, both major and minor. Yet, only two were rendered in the official languages of Yugoslavia. In an interview from 1931, Rebreanu states that

Only *Ciuleandra* has been translated so far into French, a translation if not brilliant, is at least convenient. It was received with much goodwill by the French critics. Right now, *The Forest of the Hanged* is in the process of publication. Nevertheless, it was not in French that my books have been mostly translated. All of my novels were published in Italian. In English was published *The Forest of the Hanged*, both in London and New York. It was received favorably by the entire Anglo-American press. In Czechoslovakia *Ion* and *The Forest of the Hanged* have been published until now.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, *Baltagul* (1930) by Mihail Sadoveanu was translated into German (1936), Czech (1938), Slovak (1943), Finnish (1944), Italian (1945) and so on.

*The Forest of the Hanged* is about to be published in Dutch. It is also published in Polish. Only *Ciuleandra* is published in German so far (429).<sup>6</sup>

There is no mention of the Serbian rendition of *Ciuleandra*. This omission, together with the extremely low number of translations into Serbo-Croatian suggests a possible systemic indifference towards the translation of the Romanian novel not in peripheral countries in general, but in those geographically closest to Romania. It would follow that the stakes were exporting and promoting Romanian literature either in countries that would further increase the visibility of this emergent national literature or in countries geographically distant. In the Yugoslav cultural arena, or at least in Slovenia, the book market had a patriotic orientation too. Similar to Romania, Slovenian book production flourished in the interwar period while the field of translations was dominated at the level of large-scale production<sup>7</sup> by leisure fiction such as May, Doyle and London and, at the level of small-scale production, by translations of ‘great masterpieces’ as well as reprints of Slovenian classics (Dović 126-27). This would explain why no contemporary Romanian novels were imported.

Not even the translation policies established at the international level enhanced the reciprocal visibility of the emergent ‘national’ literatures in Eastern Europe. Two transnational cultural institutions were created in the aftermath of World War I: the International PEN Club, founded in 1921, and the International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation (IIIC), established by the League of Nations in 1922. The goals of the IIIC’s translation policies were to diversify the international cultural field and to promote lesser-known and less visible cultures, shows Diana Roig-Sanz (453). Although it had notable results, among which can be mentioned the creation of *Index Translationum* in 1932 and the publication of two literary translation series, one for Latin America and one for Japan (453), IIIC’s activities did not have an impact on strengthening the ties between European peripheral cultures (i.e., an impact on the actual translations). It can be said that the goals of the

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<sup>6</sup> “În limba franceză, nu a fost tradusă până azi decât *Ciuleandra*, într-o traducere dacă nu strălucită, în orice caz convenabilă. Ea a fost primită de criticii francezi cu foarte multă bunăvoință. Actualmente se află sub tipar *Pădurea Spânzuraților*. De altfel cărțile mele nu în franțuzește au fost mai mult traduse. În italienește au apărut toate romanele mele. În englezește a apărut *Pădurea Spânzuraților*, totodată la Londra și la New York. A fost primită favorabil de toată presa anglo-americană. În Cehoslovacia sunt deja apărute *Ion* și *Pădurea Spânzuraților*. În olandeză se află sub tipar *Pădurea Spânzuraților*. De asemenea o mai am publicată și în limba polonă. În limba germană deocamdată am *Ciuleandra*”. (My translation)

<sup>7</sup> On the difference between the pole of large-scale production and small-scale production, see, for instance, Gisèle Sapiro, “Globalization and cultural diversity in the book market: The case of literary translations in the US and in France”, *Poetics*, 38.4 (August 2010): 419-439.

international institutions were more of a discursive matter than a practice. However, they paved the way for future collaborations and, in particular cases, played an indirect role in literary translation and transfer.

Regarding the second question, it has to be mentioned from the outset that the translation of Rebreanu's novels is not at all accidental. After he moved to Bucharest, the author engaged in a variety of activities that enabled him to accumulate "social" and "cultural" capital<sup>8</sup>: in 1929 and 1941, he was elected director of the Romanian National Theater; he was the president of the Romanian Writers' Society (1926–1932); and a member of PEN Club Romania. In addition to these institutionalized positions, Rebreanu was a recurrent figure in literary journalism and the literary scene in general. To put it differently, he followed what Janssen calls "side-roads to success," which means that he was involved in sideline activities that helped him "establish social relations with relevant agents in the literary field (fellow-authors, publishers, editors etc.)" (270). The fact that he practiced sideline activities at home as well as abroad is noteworthy. For instance, he offered several interviews during his stay in Oslo, which were later translated into Romanian, and in 1942 he gave lectures about Romanian literature and culture in several European cities, among which Zagreb. Given all these roles and activities, it can be said that Rebreanu acted both as a cultural mediator (Roig-Sanz, Meylaerts 20) and as his own literary agent. The last brief observation I want to make in this section is that the two translations are not only culturally mediated but also historically determined. In contrast with the 1929 translation of *Ciuleandra*, which was published in Belgrade, the capital of centralized Yugoslavia (see Wachtel, *Making*, 67-127), the Croatian translation of *Ion* was published in 1943 in the Independent State of Croatia (1941–1945), which at the time was part of the Axis Powers, together with the Kingdom of Romania. At any rate, the most striking remark regarding the transfer of Romanian novels in the Yugoslav literary scene during the interwar period is that it was not embedded in any translation policy. The lack of a literary infrastructure explains why the boom of the Romanian novel was invisible across the neighboring borders.

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<sup>8</sup> On the concepts of "social" and "political capital", see Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, 241-259. Edited by J. Richardson. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1986.

## **The Central Role of Publishing Houses and Romanian Writers' Union (1947–1964)**

It is common knowledge that the cultural ties were strengthened between the Eastern Bloc countries after 1945. As I will show based on an analysis of the distribution of the translated Romanian novels in Yugoslavia, the channels of transfer and the cultural institutions established after 1947 – which are a result of communist internationalism – appear to play out differently when the Romanian-Yugoslav relations are questioned.

The data collected from COBISS shows that the number of translations increased significantly during this period: 24 Romanian novels were distributed in Yugoslavia compared to only two in the interwar period and during the war. Yet not a single novel published in Romania was translated in Yugoslavia before 1956. The 12 novels translated into Serbian until then and cataloged as such in the COBISS platform were either published by a Romanian writer from Yugoslavia and translated into Serbian for the Serbian readership (as is the case of Mihai Avramescu's *Tinerete frântă* (Broken Youth, translated in 1955) or translated into Serbian and published in Romania. As shown by Ioana Macrea-Toma, two publishing houses created after 1944 – ESPLA (the State Publishing House for Literature and Art) and Cartea Rusă (Russian Book) – handled the entire domestic production and translations until the 1960s (159). What I would like to add is that ESPLA seems to have also played a central role in exporting a significant number of Romanian novels in Yugoslavia. Starting from the 1950s, the editorial plan of the newly founded publishing house was shaped to a large extent by communist internationalism, which aimed to include and facilitate the literary production of and for other national minorities. The eleven novels identified in libraries from the former Yugoslavia were all written by contemporary Romanian writers and translated into Serbian for the Serbian readership existent in Romania. This type of editorial practice was continued for a while in the 1960s by EPL (the Publishing House for Literature). The major difference is that on the list of the translated novels published by EPL figures both contemporary and canonical writers.<sup>9</sup>

Although I did not manage to collect any data regarding the time of acquisition in the libraries, a few observations can be advanced that could support the hypothesis that the publication of translations in the languages of the national minorities

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<sup>9</sup> The novels written by Slavici and Istrati were translated into Serbian and published by EPL.

functioned simultaneously as a strategy for exporting Romanian literature in Yugoslavia. Firstly, it is well known that during this period print runs were efficiently disseminated in bookshops and libraries (Macrea-Toma 160). In addition, literature was highly subsidized at the time and communist states were concerned with allocating support to the exportation (cf. Sapiro and Heilbron 184-185), hence there are high chances that such translations were also aimed to move across borders. Secondly, a possible dissemination abroad is attested as such in the press of the time. The high relevance of literature during communism (Wachtel, *Remaining*, 4) presupposed constant notifications in the newspapers regarding the new literary publications. In an unsigned report on the books published in the languages of the national minorities, it is stated that such books are requested and exported in other countries, especially in Hungary.<sup>10</sup> Even though it can be mistrusted, such an account is reconfirmed in Tudor Vianu's study on the issue of world and national literature. Not only that he highlights the increasing visibility of Romanian literature in the world but the critic underscores the recent actions taken in this regard, pointing to the fact that Romania tried to promote its contemporary literary production by "making available abroad its periodicals and publications in foreign languages" (608).

As for the translations published in Yugoslavia, it can be noticed yet another pivotal literary institution mediates the transfer: the writers' union. Apart from Rebreanu and Istrati's novels, which continue to be (re-)translated during these years, four writers enter the Yugoslav literary scene through translation: Gica Iuteș, Vladimir Colin, Zaharia Stancu and Mihail Sadoveanu. While the popularity of the first two lies in the fact that they wrote genre fiction – science-fiction and children's literature –, Zaharia Stancu and Mihail Sadoveanu occupied successively the position of president of the Writers' Union, which meant that they also possessed political capital (see Macrea-Toma 44). Moreover, there are several entries in Sadoveanu's diary from the time he traveled to Yugoslavia, which – even if they are sometimes contradictory – bring to the fore the same issue: the need to strengthen the cultural ties between Romania and Yugoslavia.<sup>11</sup> As the next sections of the article will prove,

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<sup>10</sup> See "Cartea în limbile naționalităților conlocuitoare din R.P.R.," p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> While in a diary entry Sadoveanu notes that "exchanges of publications and translations begun to appear between the unions of Yugoslav and Romanian writers" (365, My translation), in 1956 he offers a contradictory remark by arguing that "there is a lack of cultural relations between us and the Yugoslav federation" (402, My translation).



this is exactly what was achieved after 1965: the consolidation of Romanian-Yugoslav relations.

However, before moving on to the next section, I want to come back to the case of Panait Istrati because three different translations of *Kyra Kyralina* were published in the first half of the 1960s. As expected, the Slovenian and the Serbian edition were translated from French but the Serbian edition published by ESPLA was translated from Romanian. Not only that Istrati considered himself a Romanian writer<sup>12</sup> and that he re-wrote Romanian versions of his notable works but even the post-World War II Romanian literary criticism started to make room for him in the Romanian literary canon. Nonetheless, the French consecration outplayed the efforts of the Romanian publishing industry which, given the translation policies of the time, started to promote his works in the languages of the national minorities.

### **The Dominant Position of the Writers' Union of Romania (1965–1989)**

The 1960s encountered two phases in the decentralization of the publishing houses: the first one occurred in 1962 (Macrea-Toma 70) and the second one in 1969 and aimed to “optimize the control and the cost of production” (170, My translation). In this context, the publication of novels in the languages of the national minorities was delegated to Kriterion, a publishing house established in 1969. This explains why only four out of the 24 novels exported from Romania to Yugoslavia were internally translated (i.e., translated in Romania) and why all four novels were published between 1967 and 1969. Moreover, an important observation is that once this channel of transfer had ceased to be lucrative, the translation of novels written by interwar writers faded away almost completely. Two out of the four novels that were internally translated were written by interwar writers: Matei Caragiale’s *Craii de Curtea-Veche* (1929) and Jean Bart’s *Europolis* (1933). It needs to be mentioned that I use “interwar writer” here to refer to writers who published *only* during the interwar period and not to writers such as Mihail Sadoveanu, whose canonical novels were published in the 1930s but who maintained his dominant position in the literary field after 1945. Given this distinction, it can be noticed that after 1970 when the

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<sup>12</sup> See the following diary entry: “*I care about being Romanian*. I care about this, not because this right was denied to me (...) but *because my sensibility*, realized by chance in French, springs from Romanian origins” (375, My translation). In original: “Eu sunt și țin să fiu român. Țin la aceasta, nu din cauză mi s-a contestat acest drept, (el mi s-a contestat de oameni care nu au nici o cădere!), ci fiindcă simțirea mea, realizată azi în franțuzește printr-un extraordinar hazard, izvorăște din origini românești.”

translation practices moved entirely to the Yugoslav space, yet another translation of Caragiale's novel was published as well as a Slovenian translation of Rebreanu's novel *The Forest of the Hanged*. Apart from these four editions, all the other translated novels were written by contemporary Romanian writers.

The domination of contemporary literature is generated by the professionalization of writers during the communist regime which, in turn, is the effect of cultural policies. Referring to the entire East European space, Andrew Wachtel notes that such policies "meant that, with the exception of the most notorious dissidents, the majority of even nonofficial writers were able to live and work as writers with the help of the state" (*Remaining*, 34). Starting from this observation, I will show that when it comes to the visibility abroad, only a few writers manage to achieve it, namely those who are best situated in the hierarchy of the Writers' Union of Romania.

However, any attempt to discuss cultural mediators during communism presupposes acknowledging the ideological factors at work both in shaping the mediators and the role they play in the exportation of literary works. As Sapiro argues, "in countries where the economic field is subordinated to the political field and where institutions govern cultural production, as in fascist or communist countries, the production and circulation of symbolic goods is highly politicized from the outset" (Sapiro and Heilbron 185). In the specific case of the writers whose novels were translated in Yugoslavia, it can be noticed that the symbolic capital coexists with the political capital. Being a member of the Communist Party is a requirement for the hierarchical ascension in the writers' union (Macrea-Toma 44). Political affiliation leads then to obtaining other positions, such as editors-in-chief and editors at prestigious literary magazines, directors of publishing houses etc. In her landmark book on the Romanian literary field under communism, Macrea-Toma identifies multiple such instances: for example, George Bălăiță becomes a Party member in 1959 and then secretary of the Writers' Union in 1979 and the director of Cartea Românească (Romanian Book) Publishing House in 1980 (44–45). Now if we look at the collected data, we can observe that his novel *Lumea în două zile* (The World in Two Days, 1975) was translated into Macedonian in 1984, which means that the translation was published after he started to occupy a dominant position in the literary field. A similar path to success followed Dumitru Radu Popescu, who became a Party member in 1961, then the president of the Union in 1981 and whose novels

were translated into Macedonian and Serbian in 1985 and 1988. The same pattern can be identified throughout the communist period. Writers achieve international visibility only after they had gained symbolic as well as political capital at home.

To this can be added “the institutionalized cooperation between the Writers’ Unions” (Popa 432). Although I did not manage to collect data regarding the relations of the Romanian Writers’ Union with the Yugoslav Writers’ Union after 1965, one can still notice that the increase in the number of translations is doubled by the linguistic diversification. What I mean by these is that after 1965 the number of translated novels into Serbian decreases while those translated into Slovene and Macedonian increases. It may be no coincidence that this linguistic diversification occurs at the time when “following a heated debate, the Congress of the Yugoslav Writers’ Union decided to change its statutes to introduce decentralization on a regional and national basis” (Dragović-Soso 270). The possibility that the translations are mediated by the writers’ unions can be raised once we acknowledge that the linguistic diversification is bilateral. Similarly, the data collected from *Dicționarul cronologic al romanului românesc de la origini până la 1989* (The Chronological Dictionary of the Romanian Novel) shows there is also a growth in the number of novels translated into Romanian from Macedonian and Slovene. More exactly, almost half of the novels translated after 1965 were translated from other languages than Serbian, with an emphasis on the increase of the translations from Slovene and Macedonian especially starting from the mid-1970s.

Besides the role played by the writers’ union(s), the higher number of translations during this period is a result of the position occupied by the translated literature within the Romanian literary system. Once again, the privileged position that the system of translations occupies is predetermined by political constraints. In the realm of literary production, authors deploy different strategies in their writings to avoid the official ideology. Their subversive prose throughout the communist period can be divided into two stages, as shown by Alex Goldiș: the so-called realist subversion and the “formalist subversion” (87). In this economy of subversive practices, translation was another strategy used by writers, one that was a safer way for them to avoid the official ideology and censorship and that simultaneously allowed them to accumulate symbolic capital (Macrea-Toma 165-167). In Yugoslavia, translation occupied a homologous position. The creation of the Union of Yugoslav Literary Translators in 1953 (Leto 192) is a good indicator of the privileged position

occupied by translations and translators in the field of cultural production. Apart from all of these, literary transfer was facilitated by communist internationalism in another sense too. Given the ideological proximities between the Eastern European countries, “translations in one socialist country of works originating in another one were subject to less censorship than those imported from capitalist countries” (Popa 432). Overall, it can be stated that while literary translations from Romanian and the promotion of Romanian literature abroad were on the political agenda during communism and, as such, they were supported by state institutions, there is a significant difference: starting from the late 1960s, the exportation of Romanian literature to Yugoslavia was not determined anymore by cultural policies that promote the translation of Romanian novels in the languages of the national minorities. Instead, the Romanians’ Writers Union became the major cultural mediator.

### **National and Transnational Cultural Mediators (1990–2020)**

Compared to other lexicographical tools,<sup>13</sup> COBISS platform is the most suitable tool for conducting a quantitative analysis of the post-1989 literary translations published in the ex-Yugoslav space. The main shortcoming, however, is represented by the fragmentary data regarding the translations into Croatian. This deficiency derives from the fact that the libraries from Croatia are not part of the COBISS.net network. Although faulty, the records still manage to point to the significant growth in the number of translated novels from Romanian. Out of the 135 novels, 85 were translated between 1990 and 2020. It has to be mentioned from the outset that a consistent yet slow growth occurs only after 2007. From 2007 until 2014 at least one novel was translated into Serbian, Croatian, Slovene or Macedonian. Nonetheless, it is only beginning from 2015 that the number of translated novels encountered a spectacular growth. Each year more than five novels translated from Romanian were published in the successor states of Yugoslavia. How can this growth be explained? In what follows, I will try to offer a few possible answers by taking into account the historical context as well as the national and transnational cultural mediators at work in the circulation of the Romanian novel abroad.

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<sup>13</sup> Another lexicographical tool usually used in statistical analyses, especially in those in which the object of analysis is the contemporary production, is *Index Translationum*. Yet the main shortcoming of the database is represented by the chronological limitations. Unlike COBISS, the last data processed data are from around the year 2010.

In postcommunist Romania, the transition to a market-oriented economy presupposed the privatization of the book publishing sector too, an action whose effects proved to be catastrophic for the former state-subsidized publishing houses, such as Minerva, Univers, Eminescu, Creangă and Meridiane. In these specific cases, “once the nationalization was achieved, the path to collapse or bankruptcy was straightforward” (Stan and Borza 389-390). The demise of these publishing houses due to privatization was doubled by the appearance of “alternative business patterns” (396) in the mid-1990s. Yet such emergent publishing houses did not contribute to the increase and visibility of domestic fiction until the mid-2000s,<sup>14</sup> when Polirom created the “Ego Proză” collection. In my view, such enterprises are at the core of “*the third rise of the Romanian novel*, which seems to occur around the year—against the backdrop of a global economic recession—so that the year 2013 boasts the publication of no less than *537 new domestic novels*” (Terian 68). They may also explain the spectacular growth of translated novels.

Once the domestic novelistic production took off, the pressing task that arose was to make it visible abroad. In this regard, a remarkable achievement is represented by the activity of the Romanian Cultural Institute, which funded, through the “20 de autori” translation program (20 authors), the translation of no less than fifty volumes between 2005 and 2012. Although its achievement is undeniable, this program brings to the fore “the Romanian writer’s [and, I would add, the Romanians’ generalized] obsession with being translated in the West as a form of symbolic hegemony on the international market” (Stănescu 99). None of the ten languages into which translations were funded is the official language spoken on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. On the contrary, the highest number is represented by renditions into English (15) and Spanish (11), followed by Italian and Hebrew (5), German (4), French (3), Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese (2) and Swedish (1).<sup>15</sup> A wider linguistic coverage defines another translation program, TPS—Translation and Publication Support Program, launched in 2006. As the collected data shows, the Slovenian

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<sup>14</sup> Compared to the 2000s, when domestic production took off, the mid-1990s encountered a translation frenzy. See Mihaela Ursa, “Made in Translation: A National Poetics for the Transnational World”, in *Romanian Literature as World Literature* 320: “There is a drop in translational activity in the early 1990s, but soon, in the mid-1990s, it goes back up spectacularly, a change of course that has a sheer quantitative, indiscriminate dimension to it and is part of the abovementioned ‘anything goes’ translational agenda at a time practically anything gets rendered into Romanian. Erotica and crime, fiction and nonfiction, as well as cheap editions of humanity’s ‘great books’ saturate the Romanian market.”

<sup>15</sup> See <https://www.cennac.ro/pagini/carti-aparute>.

translation of Dan Lungu's *Raiul gănilor* was supported by TPS already in 2007. Over the years, the number of funded novels increased to 19 and included writers already translated into worldwide languages, such as Dan Lungu, less visible ones, and canonical writers, among whom Liviu Rebreanu and Max Blecher. To this number can be added the other eight novels, published more recently with the support of Traduki, a transnational network whose translation program aims to promote the literary production to, from and between the German-speaking world and Southeast Europe.<sup>16</sup> Undoubtedly, the emphasis on translation programs is insufficient in explaining how all the novels crossed borders. The two channels of transfer presented above show how only a third of the novels were exported. There are also other literary agents and cultural mediators that contribute to the visibility of Romanian literature abroad, such as literary festivals, book fairs and even writers' networks with other writers and publishers from the target culture. In any case, if we can learn anything from this brief analysis it is that in the era of globalization, the inter-peripheral circulation of the novel is facilitated not only by the cultural policies and financial support provided by the source culture but also by transnational literary agents and institutions.

### **Conclusions**

As suggested throughout the brief analysis above, the visibility of the Romanian literature in (the former) Yugoslavia is dependent on the existence and consolidation of literary institutions and agents in the source culture. The absence of a literary infrastructure or their orientation predominantly towards core cultures – the interwar period is a case in point – leads to the quasi-absence of translated novels in the literary neighborhood. The crucial role of such institutions in the dissemination of translations becomes more obvious once we acknowledge that Romanian literature was not entirely invisible in the first half of the twentieth century. Exactly like in the Romanian literary space, where during the interwar period the low number of translated novels originating from East-Central Europe was counterbalanced by a consistent number of articles in literary magazines dedicated to these specific cultures (Borza 2022, 158), in the Independent State of Croatia articles about Romanian writers were published in *Hrvatska revija* (Luić-Vudrag 2016).

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<sup>16</sup> See <https://traduki.eu/about-traduki/>.

Two even more important observations derive from the analysis of the literary institutions involved in the export of the Romanian novel after World War II. Firstly, the emphasis on each subperiod brings to the fore different institutions. The constant changes of the leading institutions are, as expected, historically conditioned and politically determined. However, every major political change introduces new literary agents which outplay the previous ones. What I mean by this is that each new institution is not a mere substitution but it enhances the visibility of the Romanian novel in (the former) Yugoslavia. Secondly, all these institutions open up direct routes of circulation. Most of the time, the translations are not mediated by the core; they are a result of inter-peripheral negotiations. The most eloquent examples are the writers whose novels were translated into worldwide languages before the publication of edition(s) in the official languages of (the former) Yugoslavia. In such instances, most of the novels are translated directly from the source-language and are subsidized or funded through translation programs. In other words, although they are visible on the international literary scene, most often than not no action is taken in the absence of an institutional mediator.

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