



**ULBS**

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*The Translation of the Foreign Novel in  
Romania (1944-1989)*

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## SUMMARY

The work *The Translation of the Foreign Novel in Romania (1944-1989)* proposes an exhaustive analysis of the novels published in translation in Romania between 1944-1989 using quantitative methods. The main purpose of the research is to use the metadata provided by the chronological Dictionary of the novels translated in Romania from the origins to 1989 to establish the main relationships between the Romanian culture and foreign literatures entered through translation before and during Romanian communism. Because the reference period is one in which literature is subordinated to politics, quantitative research is instrumental here to establish possible delimitations of the cultural space depending on the tendencies of translation and to correlate these findings with the political-social movements of the Romanian communism.

Literary theory has undergone major changes in Western Europe and the USA in the last decades in terms of the use of statistical data in quantitative studies in the form of Distant Reading (the concept imposed by Franco Moretti) and, through computational interventions, in the general form of Digital Humanities. The computational analysis of literature today bears the name of macroanalysis thanks to Matthew L. Jockers and represents a way of studying literary phenomena by extracting big data and graphically representing these data through graphs, diagrams and maps. Thus, vital observations for the contextualization and morphological description of literary phenomena began to make their presence felt in a space usually reserved for subjective speculations / visions.

Moreover, in the same decades, the articles and volumes dedicated to the concept of World Literature, defined in different ways by theorists like David Damrosch, Pascale Casanova or Franco Moretti, have prevailed in the global academic space. By far the most famous definition of the concept belongs to David Damrosch, who calls it "a way of reading" of all the texts that modify foreign spaces from the one in which they were written. In short, all World Literature theorists have in common the intention of providing an effective response to the epistemological crisis in which the study of literature was found in the age of globalization and, implicitly, of global capitalism. That is why Pascale Casanova or Franco Moretti have often explained that the circulation of literature on a global level is a result of economic inequalities that cause cultural inequalities.

*The Translation of the Foreign novel in Romania (1944-1989)* uses the quantitative methods of literature analysis to solve the dilemmas caused by the contemporary perspectives on the global circulation of literature in the 20th century. Starting from the case of Romania,

several models of analysis are exposed to establish how the global circulation of literature in the post-war period is felt by the cultures of Eastern Europe. Under the political control of the Soviet Union but always attracted by Western tendencies, Romania is an extremely relevant case for studying cultural relations during the Cold War. First, because the program of translations from the communist period is visible both the program of translation of the Soviet Union, which reflects its global political aspirations and the autocolonial tendencies of local culture. Secondly, because Romania had different cultural models throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, from the French, the German and the Russian one, which allows to observe the changes made in the cultural space during the period Cold War.

A first chapter of this paper aims to explain the methodology and contains a brief history of the quantitative study of the literature, from its prefiguration during the 19th century to the 21st century, both in the literary theory at international level and in the Romanian space. The second chapter of the paper presents the three models of analysis that will be used in the research of translations of foreign novels into the Romanian space during the communist period: graphs, diagrams and maps. There are three separate chapters that use three different models of translation representation. The first one is dedicated to the graphs and quantitative study of the proportions between the literatures present in translation in the Romanian space for the periodization of the Romanian communism according to the alternation of the Soviet model with the Western one. The second chapter dedicated to quantitative analysis models presents a new concept in quantitative literary studies, that of quantitative translationscape and follows the complex chronological exposition of all the novels translated from French, Russian and Soviet literature and from American literature for the analysis of translation trends in regarding certain periods of the novels from the source cultures. The third chapter uses literary geography and maps the areas of origin of the translated novels to establish the different chronological geographies of the novel in the Romanian space and the way in which, through the translations, the Romanian culture came in contact with new geographical spaces, exceeding the extended Eurocentrism until mid-20th century.

The four major novel translation periods between 1949 and 1989 may be outlined according to the interaction between the two major political areas in Europe (and, by extension, on the East-West axis) during the Cold War. The first period (1949-1955) is marked by the dominance of the USSR and its satellite states; the USSR and Eastern Europe permeate

Romanian culture with ten times more novels between 1950 and 1953 than before, an influx that stabilizes at a ratio of 3:2 in 1955.

Between 1955 and 1963, the literatures of the USSR and its satellite states experience stronger competition from Western literature, while the second period in the history of the translation of novels into Romanian brought about a genuine openness to Anglo-American and French literatures. The third period, spanning the years between 1955 and 1963, is heavily dominated by Western literatures, with the recorded literary production as a whole far exceeding that registered in the previous period and which is also marked by a resurgence of interest in German, Italian, and Nordic literatures. The fourth period, although similar to the third, is marked by a significant decrease in translations at all levels, which, in turn, triggered a levelling-off of the two main competitors and a significant rise in peripheral literatures, especially in this new percentage diagram. And if we took into consideration that Soviet literature comprises, to a considerable extent, a vast array of Asian literatures, it would be evident that, in this period, a balance was struck once again between the East and West, albeit owing to less dogmatic means than in the 50s.

As an aside: what I understand by 'Western cultures' is a sum total of 20 Western, Mediterranean and Nordic countries, which abide by various ideologies, depending on their form of organisation. For instance, in the first period, translations of literary works originating in Western countries were undertaken only insofar as they built on the ideals of the international socialist realist programme, described by Rossen Djagalov as *the post-war People's Republic of Letters*. Put differently, what characterizes this concept, apart from its inherent ideological dogmatism, is a series of monopoly authors who serve as representatives of vast areas. As a result, in the first period, what features on the graph as Western literature is, of the 10-30 titles published per year, mostly comprised of progressive American literature, French critical realism, and French literature originated in communist circles. The best represented literature in cultural periodicals during the Western hegemony (1964-1975) consists of modernist novels that could not be translated during the realist socialist period or that had not been translated at the height of their European and transatlantic influence. Yet during this period, not only were Proust, Kafka, Joyce, Faulkner, and Woolf rendered into Romanian for the first time—although excerpts from Proust and Woolf and even a few of their works were translated into Romanian prior to 1948—, but an extensive recuperative campaign of the entire European modernism could also be noted, which was achieved in the early 60s by means of world literature anthologies which accomplished their mission when the Soviets themselves re-evaluated modernism. Jean Giroudoux, Jean Paul Sartre, Georges Perec, Thomas Mann, Stefan Zweig,



Robert Musil, Dino Buzzati, Italo Calvino, and Italo Svevo are but a few of the interwar and 1960s writers that were introduced to Romanian culture during this period.

In connection to the last section of this work, I set out to contribute to the usage of big data in Humanities, by deploying a Distant Reading of novel translations from the global South in Romania. By using quantitative methods in order to depict the global South translationscape in Romania, following Jordan A. Y. Smith's suggestion of "rendering critical metaphors of visibility into empirical research methods," the paper reaches two main conclusions.

First, novels from the Global South have only been translated in Romania only after 1948, due to Soviet interest. This aspect cannot be deployed without big data analysis, so that although this massive interference occurred at a specific point in time and has led to similar narratives in otherwise faraway literary systems, it has never been pointed out. This led to an impossible approach toward Romanian postwar literature as being related to the huge space of poverty narrations generated inside the global South, mainly in Latin America and Africa. Thus, quantitative translationscapes can be the departing point for very fruitful approaches due to their potential of envisioning literary circulation on the entire planet with different focal points, be they national or regional.

Second, the findings not only challenge Romanian literature to rethink the connection to the global South through novels depicting poverty, but also give a hint on what could be further developed in translationscapes studies. For the Romanian translation system inquiry shows that rethinking one of the main axis of world representation can raise new questions and draw to the great importance of the global peripheries narratives in shaping literature throughout the second half of the twentieth century. Though not by engaging close readings of certain works and authors, but rather by creating quantitative translationscapes in order to uncover barely visible, but crucial interferences.

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