

LATIN AMERICAN LITERATURE AS WORLD LITERATURE: CULTURAL AND POLITICAL GAMES BETWEEN PERIPHERIES AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR. THE ROMANIAN CASE

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Abstract: The globalization of Latin American literature after World War II is often associated with the emergence of a multitude of influential and successful fiction writers on the world cultural scene, collectively known as the *Boom*. This article aims to qualify this perception by emphasizing the importance of an earlier phase of globalization that occurred mainly in European socialist countries in the early 1950s under the auspices of the World Peace Congress. This phase had an important influence on the subsequent penetration of these countries by authors associated with the *Boom*. Focusing on Romanian culture, we demonstrate how it aligns with the successive phases of globalization of Latin American literature. We also highlight that the cultural connection between these regions is based on a dynamic of inter-peripheral relations that largely bypasses cultural consecration granted by traditional “centers” of legitimacy – whether Moscow or Paris.

Keywords: *Boom, politics, synchronization, translation, world literature.*

1. Latin American Literature in Light of World Literature Theory

The beginning of the twenty-first century has been significantly characterized in a substantial zone of literary studies by the reformulation of the comparative literature field as World Literature. The editions of Pascale Casanova’s *The World Republic of Letters* (1999, 2004), as well as works such

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as David Damrosch's *What is World Literature?* (2003) and the revolutionary proposals put forth by Franco Moretti in texts like *Modern Epic: From Goethe to García Márquez* (1996) and *Graphs, Maps, and Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (2005), have necessitated a fundamental rethinking of pair-concepts such as "center/ periphery", "original work/ translation" and "author/ gatekeeper", among others. The Latin American *Boom* of the 1960s – 1980s, a phenomenon of global recognition for authors considered quintessential to Latin American literature, represented for the initiators of this type of literary criticism a privileged case for reflection on the seemingly sudden and certainly spectacular globalization of a literature that had previously been considered peripheral. Conversely, from the perspective of specialists in Latin American literature, the reading offered by the proponents of the World Literature theory regarding this case of globalization warrants several amendments. In a work published in 2006, Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado convenes a series of leading researchers in Latin American studies to demonstrate "the consistent inability of European (and, possibly, North American) criticism to account for the role of Latin American literature in transnational literary systems"¹.

Almost all the authors cited by Prado express their reservations regarding Moretti's working method, "distant reading". However, what raises even further doubts in the specific domain of Latin American literature is the limitation to the realm of the novel. Although most of the writers of the *Boom* are indeed novelists, the core of the Latin American literary canon is Borges, an author of short stories, essays, and poems; this leads Moretti to omit Borges from his study. Furthermore, Borges did not receive the Nobel Prize, thus occupying a marginal role in Casanova's work². On the other hand, as Efraín Kristal points out, the exclusion of poetry from reflections on the globalization of Latin American literature results in a complete distortion of its specificity, given that in this case "poetry was the dominant genre until the 1960s"³. Kristal aims

¹ "la consistente incapacidad de la crítica europea (y, eventualmente, norteamericana) de dar cuenta del rol de la literatura latinoamericana en sistemas literarios transnacionales". Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado, "*Hijos de Metapa: un recorrido conceptual de la literatura mundial (a manera de introducción)*", in Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado (ed.), *América Latina en la "literatura mundial"*, Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh University/Biblioteca de América, Instituto Internacional de literatura Iberoamericana, 2006, p. 8.

² Graciela Montaldo, "La expulsión de la república, la deserción del mundo", in Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 263.

³ "la poesía fue el género dominante hasta los años sesenta". Efraín Kristal, "*Considerando en frío...*". *Una respuesta a Franco Moretti*, in Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 103.

to demonstrate that literary relationships do not necessarily radiate from the center to the periphery, but can have the most diverse orientations: as a proof, he provides the almost literal citation in a monologue from Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (thus from a play at the center of the Western canon post-World War II) of the poem *Considerando en frío* by the "peripheral" Peruvian poet César Vallejo, whom the Irish writer encountered while working as a translator for UNESCO in Paris⁴. Kristal's corollary is: "Moretti's model is designed to show how the periphery adapts the forms of the center, but it falls short on the other side of the equation"⁵.

The majority of authors reunited in the volume edited by Prado find even more troubling Moretti's reliance in his studies solely on Latin Americanist critics from the United States, such as Doris Sommer and Jean Franco, to the detriment of fundamental Latin American critics, such as Ángel Rama. They criticize Moretti's method of reading as one that "rests upon the prevailing geopolitics of knowledge in the center"⁶ and also detect colonialist reflexes and "centralized provincialism" when Casanova renders value judgments and canonical hierarchies from the position of the "center" based on an "aesthetic modernity"⁷ that has already become outdated. Likewise, Jean Franco reprove the critical delay of these critics, who seem to "discover the inequality of the world republic as if it were a novelty, ignoring that since the colonial period, Latin Americans have been fully aware of it"⁸, and she enumerates some tactics adopted in order to resist the hegemonic power: heterogeneity, transculturation, hybridization, "anthropophagy", which were deeply analysed by Latin-American scholars such as Antonio Cornejo Polar, Ángel Rama, Néstor García Canclini, and Oswaldo de Andrade.

One could argue that the dissatisfaction with the proposals of the two pioneering theorists in World Literature studies, as expressed in the essays compiled by Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado in the 2006 collective volume, stems from the fact that, when viewed from a broader perspective, regional literary

⁴ *Idem*, p. 110.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 112: "El modelo de Moretti está diseñado para mostrar cómo la periferia adapta las formas del centro, pero queda corto en el otro lado de la ecuación".

⁶ Graciela Montaldo, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

⁷ Hugo Achugar, "Apuntes sobre la « literatura mundial », o acerca de la imposible universalidad de la « literatura universal »", in Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 204.

⁸ Jean Franco, "Nunca son pesadas/las cosas que por agua están pasadas", in Ignacio M. Sánchez Prado (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 187: "descubre[n] la desigualdad de la republica mundial como si fuera una novedad, ignorando que desde la colonia, los latinoamericanos tenían plena conciencia de ella".

history, on the one hand, and the literary canon, on the other hand, display configurations that differ markedly from those familiar to local scholars. This phenomenon of distortion is in fact inevitable when a work, a movement, or a local theory are projected onto the global circuit, as David Damrosch previously argued⁹. Even so, certain distortions remain unacceptable to scholars who see their national or regional literatures being interpreted through the lens of a globalization theory that they regard as insufficiently robust on a theoretical level. Among the critiques raised, Kristal's observation regarding the partiality of a theory that fails to account for the predominance of poetry in Latin America up to the 1960s stands out. Similarly, Jean Franco's reservations about the superficial manner in which Pascale Casanova addresses the role of international politics in globalization processes are justified.

This article aims to substantiate the legitimacy of the reservations expressed by Kristal and Jean Franco regarding the foundational theories of World Literature, by drawing on arguments arising from the case of the reception of Latin American literature in Romania – particularly the Latin American *Boom*. More specifically, in response to the invitation for collective reflection posed by this *Synthesis* issue, we seek to illustrate the “synchronization” of Romanian culture through the translation of the Latin American *Boom* – a literary phenomenon that captivated countries on both sides of the Iron Curtain, albeit under significantly different conditions. At the same time, we argue that the globalization of Latin American literature is not just the result of its recognition in Western centers of consecration; rather, (semi) peripheral cultures in the Eastern Bloc have also played a significant role in this process.

The most salient feature of this cultural connection is its foundation in a dynamic of inter-peripheral relations that largely bypasses the cultural consecration granted by traditional “centers” of legitimacy – whether Moscow or Paris. Despite occasional influences from these centers, the cultural importation in question is ultimately shaped by local traditions, cultural needs, and sociopolitical pressures. In fact, much like the Latin American scholars mentioned earlier, Alex Goldiș has demonstrated that the reception of the

⁹ “As it moves into the sphere of world literature, far from inevitably suffering a loss of authenticity or essence, a work can gain in many ways. [...] To understand the workings of world literature, we need more a phenomenology than an ontology of the work of art: a literary work manifests differently abroad than it does at home”, David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton UP, 2003, p. 6.

Latin American novel associated with the *Boom* in the Eastern Bloc countries challenges the models of literary circulation established in World Literature studies by Franco Moretti and Pascale Casanova. These models are clearly “West-centric” and rely on a rigid distinction between major and minor cultures, or between source and target cultures. In contrast, Goldiș argues:

Perhaps the consecration of the Latin American novel as a world genre is indebted to these offshore literary economies that nevertheless add value to its formula. The so-called minor literatures are not excluded from the international mechanism of establishing cultural values but are integral parts of it. [...] The adoption of American Latin novel in Eastern European contexts during the liberalization is the outcome of the relations not only between Eastern European and the temporary sub-center of Latin American literatures, but also between each one of them and the hegemonic “capitals” establishing the cultural legitimacy: the Soviet Union and Western Europe.¹⁰

2. Beyond the Boom's Auto-Mythification: The First Phase of Latin American Literature's Globalization in the Socialist Bloc

Goldiș's conclusions are undoubtedly valid, but his focus exclusively on the novel and on the impact of *Boom* authors in Romania reflects the persistent impression that Latin American literature was suddenly “discovered” in the 1960s through the sheer magic of a set of captivating narratives and the exceptional talent of a few authors who succeeded in shifting their continent's literature from a peripheral position to the very center of the “World Republic of Letters”.

This understanding is not surprising, given that it aligns with the standard reading of Latin American literary history in Western literary scholarship. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that the thesis of Latin American literature's globalization via the *Boom* is a highly debatable one: it should be approached with caution because it has been promoted by the very figures who were both agents and beneficiaries of this literary globalization via the *Boom* – namely Carlos Fuentes in *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*, (1969), Mario Vargas Llosa, in the essay *Novela primitiva y novela de creación en América*

¹⁰ Alex Goldiș, “The Import of the Latin American Novel in Romania: « Meaningful Voids » and Selection Principles of a (Semi)peripheral National Market”, *Transylvanian Review*, supl. no. 1, 2022, p. 108–109.

Latina (1969), and José Donoso in *Historia personal del ,boom'* (1972). In his 1969 article, the author of *La ciudad y los perros* describes this phenomenon as “a climactic moment in Latin American narrative”, which he contrasts with what he perceives as the exhaustion of Western literature – once held as the unattainable pinnacle of literary quality:

In these times, when the European and North American novel is agonizing between hermetic formalist acrobatics and a monotonous conformity with tradition, we should rejoice. Not so much for Latin America, since the vitality of a narrative often signals a profound crisis in the reality that inspires it, but rather for the life of the novel itself.¹¹

What these three essays suggest is that the globalization of Latin American literature – its penetration into the world’s critical consciousness – is the result of overcoming a narrow provincialism, a realist tellurism lacking universal projection; in other words, it stems from a perceived “backwardness” in relation to other, “central” literary traditions. Beyond the skepticism that any unconditionally subjective account may provoke – especially when it bears self-indulgent overtones – and beyond critiques of its “metropolitan” subtext (where only what is “approved” by the metropolis is considered valuable), it must be noted that this heroic narrative presents problems even from the perspective of the global centers of cultural promotion. Indeed, long before 1961 – when Borges received the International Prize for Literature alongside Samuel Beckett – or 1962, when Seix Barral awarded the Biblioteca Breve Prize to Vargas Llosa’s *La ciudad y los perros*, which would be published the following year – Latin American literature was already widely translated and published in the USSR and other socialist countries. In the early 1950s we can speak about a “communist” globalization, in Jorge J. Locane’s terms – whose center of consecration was Moscow, not Paris, and whose protagonists were primarily poets (most notably Pablo Neruda, followed by Nicolás Guillén and Raúl González Tuñón).

¹¹ “En estos tiempos en que la novela europea y norteamericana agoniza entre herméticas acrobacias formalistas y una monótona conformidad con la tradición, conviene alegrarse. No tanto por América Latina, pues la salud de una narrativa suele significar una crisis profunda de la realidad que la inspira, sino, más bien, por la vida de la novela.”, Mario Vargas Llosa, “Novela primitiva y novela de creación en América Latina”, *Revista de la Universidad de México*, Vol. XXIII, no. 10, 1969, p. 36.

In fact, in the socialist Bloc, there was a significant temporal advantage over the West in recognizing Latin American literature as “world literature,” that is, literature capable of being exported and promoted as a collective phenomenon. The disparity in the penetration of Latin American culture between the socialist countries and the “central” (Western) ones gives rise to the notion of two distinct Latin American *booms*, as suggested by Pablo Sánchez, who claims that we might speak of an “*otro boom*” in the socialist countries¹².

To illustrate this assertion, the most compelling example is the comparison between the Romanian and French cases. In France, the literary discovery of Latin America began only in the early twentieth century¹³ and was shaped by Parisian exoticizing expectations rooted in the romantic invention of exoticism, which projected onto regions perceived as simultaneously distant and different – namely Africa, Asia, and Latin America. The reserved reception of Rubén Darío in France, subtly analysed by Sylvia Molloy¹⁴, stems from the operation of stereotypes, as encapsulated in Valéry Larbaud’s observation:

We do not ask them [Latin American poets] for poems of the *Cartier Latin* [...] but] visions of tropical villas, white and voluptuous cities of the Antilles, [...] the spectacle of nature, the exotic note, the sadness, the melancholy and also the tedium that emanates from certain Andean landscapes.¹⁵

Gustavo Guerrero wryly notes that the first chapter of any history of the world reception of Latin American literature should be titled “The Failure of Darío” [*El fracaso de Darío*], since the failure to understand Darío’s poetic originality in French culture indelibly shaped the fate of all Latin American literature abroad. After World War II, Latin American writers selected for translation into French continued to be framed in traditional exoticist expectations and were influenced by the individual cultural biases of gatekeepers. For instance, Roger Caillois sought to impart a documentary and ethnographic approach to Gallimard’s « Croix du Sud » collection as part of a postwar disciplinary,

¹² Pablo Sánchez, “Un experimento literario de la Guerra Fría en el mundo hispánico: Comiendo en Hungría.” *La palabra*, no. 4, 2024, p. 7.

¹³ Sylvia Molloy, *La Diffusion de la littérature hispano-américaine en France au XXe siècle*, Paris, PUF, 1972; Claude Fell, “La revue Mundo Nuevo, catalyseur du « boom » latino-américain”, *Cahiers de l’UFR d’Etudes Ibériques et Latino-américaines*, 1990, p. 163–172.

¹⁴ Sylvia Molloy, *op. cit.*, p. 58–79.

¹⁵ *Apud* Gustavo Guerrero, “Nueva narrativa del extremo Occidente”, *Letras libres*, no. 64, 2007, p. 24.

pedagogical, and popularizing agenda¹⁶, whereas at Seuil, Claude Durand and Severo Sarduy oriented their selections toward the “actual”, emphasizing formal experimentalism¹⁷.

The late penetration of Latin American literature in France – where, as Sylvia Molloy noted, French critics did not clearly distinguish between Spanish and Latin American literary traditions until after World War I¹⁸ – only partially explains the limited Latin Americanist tradition in Romania. Undoubtedly, it would have been nearly impossible for a country sarcastically labeled in the 1920s as a “French cultural colony”¹⁹ to be ahead of Paris, the very “center” of Western culture, in terms of literary recognition of Latin America. During the interwar period, the dissemination of Latin American literature in Romania was confined to a few translations of post-Romantic poetry published in cultural magazines²⁰. Despite their limited number, these translations do not necessarily reflect a nascent Gallic interest in Latin American poetry; rather, they indicate the influence of a trend imposed by several Romanian critics who, from the mid-nineteenth century modernization period to the early twentieth century, advocated for the young Romanian culture to engage not only with “central” but also “peripheral” cultures²¹. Had a different cultural trajectory been

¹⁶ Gustavo Guerrero, “« La Croix du Sud » (1945–1970): génesis y contextos de la primera colección francesa de literatura latinoamericana”, in Gesine Muller, Jorge J. Locane and Benjamin Loy (eds.), *Re-mapping World Literature. Writing, Book Markets and Epistemologies between Latin America and the Global South*, Berlín/Boston, De Gruyter, 2018, p. 204.

¹⁷ Gersende Camenen, “El momento latinoamericano de Seuil. La colección Cadre vert de Claude Durand y Severo Sarduy (1967–1979)”, in Gustavo Guerrero and Gersende Camenen (eds.), *La literatura latinoamericana en versión francesa*, Berlín/Boston, De Gruyter, 2022, p. 205.

¹⁸ Sylvia Molloy, *op. cit.*, p. 22: “Pour le moment, la critique française ne semble tenir compte que du domaine linguistique: Larreta, Gómez Carillo, Darío et les autres sont des Espagnols, d’Amérique si l’on veut, mais tout compte fait des Espagnols. Il faudra attendre l’après-guerre, lorsque les rapports plus étroits s’établiront entre les écrivains hispano-américains et les écrivains français, pour que ceux-ci comprennent que des très grandes différences séparent désormais la littérature d’Espagne de celle de ses anciennes colonies”.

¹⁹ B. Fundoianu, *Imagini și cărți*, București, Minerva, 1980 [1922], p. 25.

²⁰ In the interwar period, translations of Spanish lyric poetry were, obviously, much more numerous compared to Latin American literature. Between 1930 and 1946 one can mention only a few pioneers in the translation of this literature, including some poems published in the cultural magazines: by the Romanist Ovid Densusianu, translator of Santos Chocano, by the poet Ion Pillat and the Hispanist Popescu-Telega as translators of Rubén Darío (Iordan Iordan, Paul Alexandru Georgescu, *Los estudios hispánicos en Rumania*. București, Sociedad rumana de lingüística románica, 1964, p. 25), and by E. Schileru as translator of Amado Nervo.

²¹ Andrei Terian, “Translating the World, Building the Nation: Microtheories of Translation in Romanian Cultural Criticism (1829–1948)”, in Maria Sas, Ștefan Baghiu, Vlad Pojoga (eds.), *The*

followed, these tentative beginnings of a Romanian-Latin American cultural dialogue – mediated through Paris – might have developed into a tradition. However, this possibility was decisively thwarted after World War II by the literature promoted by the Soviet propaganda apparatus.

Indeed, in socialist Romania, Latin American literature spread through Soviet efforts to import literature into the socialist Bloc. Translations enjoyed a maximalist approach in the book market during this period: large print runs, multiple reprints, and widespread dissemination. The titles exported by the USSR included not only Russian or Soviet literature but also works from peripheral cultures – Asian, Latin American, African – as well as left-wing authors from the United States and France²². Thus, a positive consequence of Soviet translation policies was the opening of Romanian culture to the Global South, especially considering that until World War II, translations were practically limited to works from Western cultures and, to a much lesser extent, from neighboring cultures such as the Serbian, Bulgarian, and Hungarian²³. Evidently, the selection of translated authors was ideologically driven, privileging affinity with socialist realism.

For example, when Borges' *Ficciones* and Rómulo Gallegos' *Doña Bárbara* appeared in Gallimard's « Croix du Sud » collection in 1951, Romania had already made significant advances: Jorge Amado's *Terra Violente* and *As Terras do Sem Fim* were translated in 1946 and 1948 respectively; in the Spanish-speaking sphere, Jorge Icaza's *Huasi-pungo* and a fragment of Alfredo Varela's *El río oscuro* were translated in 1948; in 1949, fragments of Amado's *Jubiabá* and *Terras Sem-Fim* followed; and throughout the 1950s, multiple titles by Jorge Amado accumulated, including *São Jorge dos Ilhéus* (1950), *O Cavaleiro da Esperança* (1951), *Seara Vermelha* (1952), and *Os Subterrâneos da Liberdade* (1957). From the Spanish-speaking world, critical realist works such as *Mamita Yunai* by Costa Rican Carlos Luis Fallas (1956), *El hijo del salitre* by Volodia Teitelboim (1956), *Fronteras al viento* by Uruguayan Alfredo Dante Gravina (1956), *Lautaro, joven libertador de Arauco* by Chilean Fernando Alegría (1957), and the complete translation of *El río oscuro* by Alfredo Varela (1958) were also published. In total, between 1947

Culture of Translation in Romania/ Übersetzungskultur und Literaturübersetzen in Rumänien, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2018, p. 22–24.

²² Ștefan Baghiu, "Translating Novels in Romania: The Age of Social Realism. From an Ideological Center to Geographical Margins", *Studia UBB Philologia*, LXI, no. 1, 2016, p. 5.

²³ *Idem*, p. 15.

and 1960, about thirty Latin American novels were translated and published in Romania²⁴.

These authors and novels circulated widely in the European socialist space. The prominent presence of Jorge Amado's works, one of the most dedicated *fellow travelers* in the immediate postwar period and a central figure in the canon of world communist literature²⁵, stands out. Equally notable is the Argentine author Alfredo Varela, translated into no fewer than fifteen languages²⁶. For the Slovak context, at least, Varela was not merely an *auteur engagé* but a pioneer in revealing the richness of Latin American literature's stylistic innovations and narrative constructions – innovations that the Latin American literary *Boom* would later confirm²⁷.

Whatever success some of these prose works may have achieved, it is poetry that truly dominated the landscape of translations from American Spanish during the first stage of the communist regime, clearly reflecting the gradual shift away from the strict slogans of socialist realism between 1945 and 1964.

²⁴ *Idem*, p. 17.

²⁵ Jorge J. Locane, *op. cit.*, p.193.

²⁶ Eva Palkovicova "La literatura hispanoamericana en el contexto literario y cultural eslovaco del siglo XX", *Cuadernos del CILHA*, no. 28, 2008, p. 69–84.

²⁷ Eva Palkovicova identifies the 1951 translation of Varela's *El río oscuro* as "a real milestone," noting that its significance extended beyond ideological considerations to encompass important aesthetic contributions as well. She explains: "First, it introduced new themes into Slovak-translated literature, such as the exotic environment of the South American jungle, erotic scenes, the struggle of human passions and weaknesses, and the traditional theme of civilization versus barbarism. It also presented a rich vocabulary spanning multiple linguistic registers, including standard and substandard Argentine Spanish, vulgarisms, dialectalisms, expressions from indigenous languages and Portuguese, untranslatable lexicon, and terminology related to professional activities unfamiliar to our country. Secondly, from an aesthetic and literary perspective, it exemplified a fragmentary text in which multiple textual units of different genres and styles were employed – a narrative mode that would become increasingly prevalent in Latin American literature throughout the 1950s and 1960s." (*Idem*, p. 75).

In Romania – a country Varela visited in 1949 and 1953, where his abusive arrest in 1950 prompted, in the local press, a vigorous campaign of criticism against the perpetrators, which published numerous articles, poems, and other texts – the novel *El río oscuro* received two critical reviews. One, published in *Steaua*, praised this "creation of great epic vigor" for its "poetic value" and "frank style stripped of preciousness [...] with] an irresistible eloquence typical of the manifesto." However, despite this generally positive appraisal, the review reproached the novel's conclusion for being diluted by "a somewhat didactic insistence" (Modest Moraru, "Alfredo Varela: *Râul negru* (E.S.P.L.A., 1958)", *Steaua*, no. 7, 1958, p. 101). When considered alongside the reference to a "manifesto" tone, this critique may suggest the presence of veiled criticism expressed through esopic language.

In previous studies, we highlighted the significant role of Pablo Neruda in the global spread of Latin American poetry and examined how the early communist regime, guided by Soviet cultural policies, used translated poetry for political ends. Although, as shown in the aforementioned works, the large volume of propagandistic Latin American poetry translated between 1945 and 1964 had limited influence on Romanian culture, its reception nonetheless moved toward freeing itself from ideological clichés, coinciding with Romanian culture's gradual reclaiming of aesthetic independence.

A pertinent example of this shift is the enthusiasm inspired by the Peruvian poet César Vallejo in A.E. Baconsky, one of the main advocates of cultural *desovietization*. When Baconsky introduced Vallejo for the first time in 1960 in the magazine *Steaua*, he notably did not emphasize Vallejo's communist militancy, nor did he reference his travels to the USSR or his novel *El tungsteno* (1931) – written in the vein of critical realism and translated in several socialist countries. Instead, Baconsky translated two of Vallejo's poems that contrasted sharply with the propagandistic poetry typical of the period, one drawn from Vallejo's most experimental book, *Trilce* (1922). He also praised the concentration and density of Vallejo's verse, contrasting it with "the plethoric discursiveness of much of Latin American poetry, whose typical representative is his emulus and friend, Pablo Neruda"²⁸.

Twelve years later, in his *Panorama de la poesía contemporánea*, a selection of Western High Modernist poetry, Baconsky included the Latin American poets he considered most significant – Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriela Mistral, Vicente Huidobro, and César Vallejo – while explicitly expressing his aversion to Neruda's poetry, thereby justifying the Chilean poet's exclusion: "Excuse me, his dilated phrases, including his metaphorical material of impressive alluvium, have never meant much to me"²⁹. Baconsky's unequivocal preference for Vallejo over Neruda reflected not only a personal taste but also his broader antipathy toward the dogmatic poetry Neruda espoused during a certain phase of his career – a poetry that Romanian gatekeepers had faithfully translated under Soviet ideological directives.

Beyond Romania, the decline of Neruda's prominence alongside Vallejo's rising fame was also observable in Latin America itself. Saúl Yurkievich's study of the *Casa de las Américas* poetry awards reveals that Neruda's followers were

²⁸ A. E. Baconsky, "César Vallejo", *Steaua*, no. 2, 1960, p. 82–84.

²⁹ A. E. Baconsky, *Panorama poeziei universale contemporane*, București, Albatros, 1972, p. 17.

honored only during the first three years of the prize's existence, while from 1964 onward, the award predominantly recognized poets influenced by Vallejo³⁰. Teodosio Fernández attributes this transformation in Latin American sensibility to a crisis of "a certain vision of America: that of the cosmogonic Neruda who coexisted in *Canto General* with the political and historical Neruda born in the heat of the Spanish Civil War"³¹. Despite arising from different contexts, tastes in two geographically distant spaces – the Eastern Bloc and Latin America – evolved in parallel, in contrast to the West, as revealed by the canonization of Neruda in the "central" cultures through the Nobel Prize awarded to him in 1971.

The translation of Latin American poetry during this period was not merely an effect of obedience to Soviet cultural guidelines. A particularly notable event was the 1961 publication of a substantial anthology – nearly 800 pages – of Latin American poetry, selected by Jesualdo, a relatively obscure Uruguayan pedagogue who visited Romania in 1957 as part of his political pilgrimage through communist countries in Europe and Asia. This anthology was unique to Romania; it was not replicated in other Socialist Bloc countries nor in the USSR. The volume was translated by a sizable group of Romanian translators – most of whom produced high-quality renditions – including N. Argintescu-Amza, A.E. Baconsky, Teodor Balș, Mihai Beniuc, Radu Boureanu, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Geo Dumitrescu, Ion Frunzetti, Paul Alexandru Georgescu, Tașcu Gheorghiu, Edgar Papu, Al. Philippide, Veronica Porumbacu and Romulus Vulpescu. The publication of the anthology had a significant impact: from 1962 onwards, increasingly sophisticated and erudite syntheses on Latin American poetry began to appear in the Romanian cultural press. These articles, written by intellectuals not necessarily specialized in Latin American literature – such as A.E. Baconsky, Mircea Ivănescu, Romulus Vulpescu, and Șerban Cioculescu – attest to the assimilation of Latin American poetry in Romanian culture, at least in its lyrical dimension. Simultaneously, this phenomenon confirms Kristal's assertion of the preeminence of Latin American poetry over prose, at least until 1960, and underscores the genre's pivotal role in the globalization of Latin American literature, despite the significant losses suffered in the translation process.

Thus, it can be affirmed that what translators and commentators of Latin American poetry ultimately achieved was a highly significant cultural act,

³⁰ Saúl Yurkievich, "Prólogo". *Poesía hispanoamericana 1960–1970 Antología a través de un certamen continental* (segunda edición), México: Siglo XXI, 1976, p. 7.

³¹ Teodosio Fernández, "Pablo Neruda, poesía y política", *América sin nombre*, no. 1, 1999, p. 18.

preparing the ground for the reception of the Latin American prose writers of the *Boom* in Romania. The horizon of expectation was fertilized by poets such as Pablo Neruda, Nicolás Guillén, César Vallejo, and Raúl González Tuñón. While this poetry may initially have functioned as propagandistic “noise” alongside other “progressive” literature translated from the five continents, its aesthetic achievements gradually positioned it as the first major literary discovery of Latin America in socialist Romania.

3. The cultural Cold War in Latin American Literature and the Romanian Stance

The “communist world literature”, as Jorge J. Locane terms it, contrasting it with the “capitalist” globalization associated with the Latin American *Boom*, is a phenomenon that, between the late 1940s and early 1960s, produced a first significant homogenization of the translation landscapes across the European socialist countries concerning the importation of Latin American literature. A second, albeit shorter, phase of convergence between these countries, as regards the importation of Latin American literature, occurred in the early 1960s under the influence of the Cuban Revolution: Cuban novels of social criticism – generally promoted by *Casa de las Américas* – such as *Bertillón 166* by José Soler Puig, *Tigres y caimanes* by Dora Alonso, and *Aventuras del soldado desconocido* by Pablo de la Torrente-Brau (now largely forgotten), were translated into nearly all languages of this part of Europe. The third phase of convergence began in the mid-1960s, reaching its apex in the 1970s and early 1980s. Following a cultural thaw and an atmosphere of increased ideological liberalization, authors such as Borges and representatives of the Latin American *Boom* entered the Eastern Bloc literary space, thus synchronizing the socialist cultures with their Western counterparts in this regard.

Recent scholarship – such as Jean Franco’s *The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America in the Cold War* (2002), Germán Alburquerque’s *La trinchera letrada: Intelectuales latinoamericanos y la Guerra Fría* (2011) and Patrick Iber’s *Neither Peace nor Freedom: The Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (2015) – has made clear the extent to which the circulation of Latin American literature during the Cold War was sponsored and shaped by the cultural policies of the main Cold War rivals. As is now well-known, each superpower supported organizations with simultaneous cultural and political objectives: the World Peace Council (founded in 1947) for the Soviet Union

and the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom (established in 1950) for the United States. Franco summarizes:

The United States staged its cultural interventions during the Cold War as a defense of freedom against censorship, while on an altogether different plane, in what was pitched as a war of “values”, the Soviet Union defended a realism in which the “real” was defined as class struggle and “peace” became a political tactic. As far as the United States was concerned, there was a distinct advantage when the autonomy of art and the freedom of the artist could be pitted against programmatic realism. The appeal to Latin Americans dangled by front organizations, such as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, was not only freedom but inclusion in “universal” culture, although this disguised a not-so-subtle attack on national, ethnic, and local cultures, which were denigrated as aberrant, as merely provincial, or as idiosyncratic.³²

Vargas Llosa’s 1969 article discussed in the above text, takes on a different dimension when read in light of Franco’s insightful observations – especially considering that the Peruvian writer was among the most active and celebrated contributors to *Nuevo Mundo*, a magazine directed from Paris by the Uruguayan critic Emir Rodríguez Monegal, which operated – without its director’s knowledge – with CIA funding³³.

Aware of the inherent simplifications that obscure the contradictions, evolutions, and occasional renunciations of ideological positions throughout the Cold War, Alburquerque constructs an ideological map of Latin American intellectual life during this period. Although his focus is on the broader category of “intellectuals” as key disseminators of ideological positions – often more influential than politicians themselves³⁴ – the frequent overlap between intellectuals and writers makes his schema particularly useful for literary studies. On the left of this spectrum stand intellectuals (writers) who were steadfast supporters of the USSR: established communists such as Juan Marinello, Diego Rivera, Nicolás Guillén, and Jorge Amado; later, the poet Pablo Neruda and architect Óscar Niemeyer – both affiliated with the Communist Party after 1945. Cuban intellectuals shifted decidedly to the political left only in

³² Jean Franco, *op. cit.*, p 1–2.

³³ *Idem*, p. 43–50. Germán Alburquerque, *La trinchera letrada. Intelectuales latinoamericanos y Guerra Fría*, Santiago, Ariadna, 2011, p. 169–175.

³⁴ Germán Alburquerque, *op. cit.*, p.19.

the 1970s³⁵. Most intellectuals occupied a centrist position characterized by progressive ideals and occasional sympathy for communist ideas, while opposing their implementation as in the USSR. This centrist stance allowed for nuance and ideological diversity: among the *Boom* writers, Octavio Paz and Vargas Llosa are positioned further right, Carlos Fuentes occupies a central position, and Julio Cortázar and Gabriel García Márquez lean more to the left³⁶. On the right are intellectuals who were openly hostile to the USSR and sometimes sympathetic to the United States, despite the latter's widespread unpopularity in Latin America due to its interventionist policies; this group includes Germán Arciniegas, Luis Alberto Sánchez, Mariano Picón Salas, Juan Liscano, and Jorge Luis Borges³⁷.

The circulation of Latin American literature during this era was deeply shaped by the complex network of cultural institutions that supported intellectuals for ideological reasons. These networks played a pivotal role in shaping the literary canon that foreign translators, editors, and critics drew upon when selecting authors to introduce into their national cultures. The Cold War rivalry generated two primary canons of Latin American literature: one promoted by the Soviet-sponsored World Peace Council, which foregrounded communist poets such as Neruda, Nicolás Guillén, and Raúl González Tuñón alongside storytellers of social-realist orientation; and the other, fostered by the CIA-backed Congress for Cultural Freedom, which elevated authors with moderate political views or declared apolitical stances³⁸. To these two poles of canon formation – symbolically represented by Moscow and Washington, each promoting a “communist” and “capitalist” globalization of Latin American literature respectively – should be added, especially from the 1960s onward, Havana, with its *Casa de las Américas*, an institution committed to the cause of emancipation and which “situated Latin America as an ally of other Third World nations in the struggle against imperialism”³⁹.

In socialist Romania, from the period of the thaw onward (from the 1960s), authors spanning the entire political spectrum were translated, and the selection

³⁵ *Idem*, p. 26.

³⁶ *Idem*, p. 29.

³⁷ *Idem*, p. 31.

³⁸ Brian James Baer, “A Tale of Two Canons: The Making of Latin American Literature as World”. *Translating Socialism. International Symposium*, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, 18 October 2022.

³⁹ Jean Franco, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

of authors was freely inspired by both the “communist” and “capitalist” literary canons, with a noticeable preference for the Western canon. The thaw represents the culmination of Romania’s cultural reconnection with the West – a phenomenon reflected in the diverse landscape of translations into Romanian⁴⁰. During this period, not only were the major figures of High Modernism – Proust, Kafka, Woolf, Faulkner, Joyce, Musil, Thomas Mann – “recovered”, but Romanian culture also “caught up” by translating authors associated with the most innovative contemporary movements, such as the Nouveau Roman, Italian neorealism, and the Beat Generation. Regarding Latin American literature, it can be argued that the transition from the “communist” to the “capitalist” canon was facilitated by this symbolic return to Europe. Whereas the initial postwar connection between Romania and Latin America was framed as a relationship between cultural peripheries – a status deeply humiliating for traditionally philo-Western and Russophobic Romanians⁴¹ – the introduction of *Boom* literature during the thaw was experienced by Romanian intellectuals as an important gesture of long-desired reconnection and synchronization with the Western cultural “center”.

Focusing on the period 1965–1971 and the translations of “central” *Boom* authors published by Romanian publishing houses, we note the appearance of *El túnel* by Ernesto Sabato (1965)⁴²; *El siglo de las luces* by Alejo Carpentier (1965); *El coronel no tiene quien le escriba* (1967); *La muerte de Artemio Cruz* by Carlos Fuentes (1969); the anthology of selected short stories from *Bestiario* and *Las armas secretas* under the title *Sfârșitul jocului* (*The End of the Game*) by Julio Cortázar (1969); *Pedro Páramo* and *El llano en llamas* by Juan Rulfo (1970); and *Cien años de soledad* (1971). While this editorial output may seem modest in volume, it was supplemented by significant space devoted to Latin American literature in major cultural magazines, including *România literară* and *Viața Românească* in Bucharest, as well as *Steaua* and *Tribuna* in Cluj, *Cronica* and *Convorbiri literare* in Iași, *Ateneu* in Bacău, *Tomis* in Constanța, and *Orizont* in Timișoara. Undoubtedly, the magazine *Secolul 20* played a

⁴⁰ Ștefan Baghiu, “Strong Domination and Subtle Dispersion: A Distant Reading of Novel Translation in Communist Romania (1944–1989)”, in Maria Sass, Ștefan Baghiu, Vlad Pojoga (eds.), *The Culture of Translation in Romania / Übersetzungskultur und Literatursetzen in Rumänien*. Berlin, Peter Lang, 2018, p. 63–84.

⁴¹ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*. Berkeley, Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1991, p. 122.

⁴² The years indicated in brackets refer to the publication of the translations by Romanian publishers.

pivotal role in the dissemination of the Latin American *Boom* and cannot be overlooked⁴³.

Despite this surge in interest and publication, a broader look at the translation-scape of Latin American literature in Romania during the thaw period reveals a more complex picture. Alongside the translations of *Boom* writers, works of social criticism continued to appear – notably, *Lautaro, joven libertador de los araucanos* by Fernando Alegría was reissued in 1970. In addition, several prominent works recognized by the *Casa de las Américas Prize* were translated into Romanian. These works aligned with a left-leaning canon more committed to Third World anti-imperialist struggles, with Havana serving as the symbolic center of consecration⁴⁴. However, this “leftist” canon was not imposed solely due to ideological alignment – as may have been the case in the earlier Stalinist period – but rather reflected the need for Romanian cultural actors to orient themselves when selecting what was considered at the time the most valuable of an *in fieri* literary field. The search for literary value often led to hybrid selection criteria. For example, Romanian gatekeepers also drew upon the “Western” canon shaped by awards such as the Biblioteca Breve, as seen in the translation of *Los albañiles* by Vicente Leñero (awarded in 1963, translated in 1970).

The editorial landscape also included translations of foundational Latin American classics: *Facundo* by José Domingo Sarmiento (1967), *Raza de bronce* by Alcides Arguedas (1967), *Los de abajo* by Mariano Azuela (1969), and *Canaima* by Rómulo Gallegos (1966). Alongside these canonical texts, several titles – largely forgotten today – also appeared. Notably, three of the

⁴³ This magazine gives the most compelling evidence of growing interest for this literature: in 1967, it published extensive and erudite dossiers dedicated to Alejo Carpentier (March), Julio Cortázar (August), and Jorge Luis Borges (September). In 1968, translations of short stories by Cortázar, Borges, Bioy Casares and Rulfo appeared, followed in 1969 by another dossier devoted to Borges. In 1970, a penetrating essay on Borges’s concept of metaphor, authored by his important Romanian gatekeeper Cristina Isbășescu Häulică, was published, alongside an exclusive interview with Gabriel García Márquez conducted by film critic Manuela Gheorghiu.

⁴⁴ Representative examples include: *La situación* by Cuban author Lisandro Otero (1966; novel prize in 1963); *Los monos de San Telmo* by Nicaraguan writer Lizandro Chávez Alfaro (1966; short story prize in 1963); *Chulleca* by Argentine writer Octavio Getino (1966; short story prize in 1964); *Cualquiercosario y otras cositas* by the Argentine-Uruguayan Jorge Onetti (1969; short story prize in 1966); *No hay problema* by Cuban writer Edmundo Desnoes (1968; not a prize-winner but propelled to fame by the debate around the theme of „socialist realism” that its 1961 publication provoked in Cuba) and *Los años duros* by Cuban Jesús Díaz (1969; short story prize in 1966).

only four Latin American women writers translated into Romanian during the communist period were published in the thaw period⁴⁵: *La noche y el barro* by Estela Canto (1965), *Los burgueses* by Silvina Bullrich (1970) and *El hotel de la Luna y otras imposturas* by Gloria Alcorta (1970). Though these are three Argentinian writers of unequal talent and their presence in Romania reveals the relative uncertainty of the Romanian gatekeepers of Latin American literature during the 1960s and early 1970s in identifying representative works from a still-developing literary landscape. The difficulties are even more understandable when considering the struggles of the competing Cold War canons – Soviet, Western, and Cuban –, to which Romanians simultaneously referred when making their selections.

Despite the disruptions brought about by the *July Theses* of 1971 – Ceaușescu’s ideological directive that intensified nationalist discourse and reinforced the personality cult – Romanian intellectuals committed to the principle of aesthetic autonomy maintained sufficient cohesion to resist the full subordination of culture to the ideological apparatus. As Katherine Verdery subtly observes, the field of history was the most severely affected by this renewed politicization, while literature, although also targeted due to the central role of writers and critics in shaping public values, was influenced more profoundly by economic constraints than direct censorship: “Literature was also privileged, owing to the central role of critics and writers in formulating and disseminating values to the public at large, but literary production was more deeply affected than history by self-financing”⁴⁶. Indeed, as confirmed by numerous cultural figures of the period whom we had the opportunity to interview – such as Andrei Ionescu, Dan Munteanu Colán and Mihai Cantuniaru – the major obstacle cited was not censorship *per se*, but rather the state’s increasing reluctance to pay royalties for translations. Even in this restrictive context, Latin American literature continued to be translated and published at a steady pace. In fact, the

⁴⁵ The other author translated is the Cuban Dora Alonso, whose work *Tierra inerme* won the Casa de las Américas novel prize in 1961. Its prompt translation into Romanian, in 1962, is a faithful reflection of the interest aroused by the literature of the Island, and furthermore, the book’s theme – the misery, oppression, and despair of peasants subjected to the abuses of provincial bosses between the 1940s and 1950s – corresponds to the type of social denunciation literature considered most interesting for acclimatization to Romanian culture. In fact, the novel was also translated into Russian and Hungarian (in 1963) and seems to have been a successful Cuban cultural export (Zsuzanna Csikós, “La recepción del *boom* latinoamericano en Hungría: algunas aportaciones”. *Cuadernos del CILHA*, no. 28, 2018, p. 17–33).

⁴⁶ Katherine Verdery, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

1970s marked the quantitative peak of Latin American literary translations in Romania, with 99 titles published between 1970 and 1979 – a sharp increase compared to the preceding decades (3 titles between 1945–1949; 9 between 1950–1959; and 56 between 1960–1969). Moreover, their cultural visibility was heightened due to the broader publishing restrictions imposed after 1974, which limited translations primarily to classical works⁴⁷. In contrast, many of the Latin American texts selected for translation were contemporary works, often recently published in their countries of origin, and their Romanian editions frequently coincided with international editions – on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The momentum gained in previous decades regarding the importation of Latin American literature remained largely unaffected by the ideological shifts following Ceaușescu's *July Theses* of 1971. In fact, many of the works that would become reference points in Romanian cultural life were published from this period onward. These include the anthology of short stories from *Ficciones* and *El Aleph* by Jorge Luis Borges, issued under the title *Moartea și busola* (*Death and the Compass*, 1972); Ernesto Sabato's *Sobre héroes y tumbas* (*Despre eroi și morminte* – On Heroes and Graves, 1973); Adolfo Bioy Casares's *Dormir al sol* (1974); the 1974 re-edition of Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (originally published in Romanian in 1971); Arturo Uslar Pietri's *Las lanzas coloradas* (1974); the first four volumes of Manuel Scorza's *La guerra silenciosa* pentalogy (1974, 1976, 1981, 1983); Alejo Carpentier's *Concierto barroco* (1975) and *El recurso del método* (1977); Bioy Casares's *La invención de Morel* and *Plan de evasión* (1976); Alfredo Bryce Echenique's *Un mundo para Julius* (1977); Miguel Ángel Asturias's *Hombres de maíz* (1978); García Márquez's *La increíble y triste historia de la cándida Eréndira y de su abuela desalmada* (1978, reissued in 1980), and *El otoño del patriarca* (1979); and José María Arguedas's *Todas las sangres* (1979).

Published in the large print runs characteristic of the socialist era, these titles received sustained attention in the Romanian cultural press, further amplifying their impact. Their reception was reinforced by the simultaneous appearance of major works by canonical authors of the Latin American tradition⁴⁸. While

⁴⁷ Ștefan Baghiu, *op. cit.*, p. 79; Alex Goldiș, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

⁴⁸ Ricardo Güiraldes's *Cuentos de muerte y sangre* (1970) – his most famous novel, *Don Segundo Sombra*, had already appeared in Romanian in 1964 and was reissued in 1980; José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* (1972); an anthology of short stories by Horacio Quiroga (1972); Ezequiel Martínez Estrada's *Radiografía de la pampa* (1976); Ramón Meza y Suárez Inclán's *Mi tío el empleado* (1978); and Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones peruanas* (1979).

the publication of classic authors carried the practical advantage of incurring no royalty costs, it also reflected a genuine cultural ambition to engage in a sustained dialogue with Latin America – a dialogue that did not occur to the same extent with other Global South literatures, particularly Asian and African. The often-invoked argument regarding the absence of area specialists does not entirely hold, as translators could have been selected from those trained in English or French philology. The more convincing explanation lies in the unmatched international prestige that Latin American literature enjoyed during this period.

Indeed, while the success of Latin American literature in Romania during this period can be partially attributed to the symbolic impact of the Cuban Revolution, authors from the Antillean Island were an indispensable part of the literary imports of the time. These works reflect a variety of literary styles and ideological orientations. Some were winners of the Casa de las Américas Prize – Lisandro Otero's *En ciudad semejante* (1973); Manuel Cofiño López's *La última mujer y el próximo combate* (1974, winner in 1971) and *Cuando la sangre se parece al fuego* (1977). Others belonged to the popular genre of detective fiction, such as Ignacio Cárdenas Acuña's *Enigma para un domingo* (1975), or gained international exposure due to their close connections with political power, as in the case of Raúl Roa's *Aventuras, venturas y desventuras de un mambí* (1972). Remarkably, Virgilio Piñera's *Pequeñas maniobras* was translated into Romanian in 1972, just one year after his marginalization in Cuba during the period of intensified cultural repression known as the *Quinquenio Gris* (1971–1976)⁴⁹.

⁴⁹ The term introduced by Ambrosio Fornet refers to the process of hyper-ideologization whereby “everything from hippie aesthetics to religious beliefs, through absurd theater or, of course, homosexuality, ended up becoming politically suspect practices” (Emilio José Gallardo-Saborido, “Cosido con tinta: literatura cubana, memoria y el Quinquenio Gris”, in *Asedios al caimán letrado: literatura y poder en la Revolución cubana*, ed. Emilio José Gallardo-Saborido, Jesús Gómez-de-Tejada and Damaris Puñales-Alpizar, Praga, Karolinum, 2018, p. 222). Another Cuban author affected by this context was José Lezama Lima. In 1972, Andrei Ionescu published an introductory article on Lezama Lima in *România literară*, accompanied by a translated excerpt from his masterpiece *Paradiso*. Ionescu subsequently dedicated two thematic dossiers to Lezama in the journal *Secolul 20*, in 1973 and 1985. In this case, the influence of the Western canon is unmistakable: the French translation of *Paradiso* had appeared in 1971, published by Le Seuil as part of an editorial initiative led by Severo Sarduy and Claude Durand, which aimed to “compete with Roger Caillois’s older Croix du Sud collection [...] and to impose another vision of Latin American literature – more avant-garde and contemporary” (Guerrero, *op. cit.*, p. 225). Lezama Lima’s international rise thus coincided with his growing marginalization and repression

In contrast to the international *Boom*, which privileged the novel as its defining form, the Romanian reception of Latin American literature during this period preserved a strong tradition of poetry translation. Notable volumes include Pablo Neruda's *Los versos del capitán* (1973), his first collection of love poetry to be translated into Romanian; Nicanor Parra's anthology *Los vicios del mundo moderno*; a new edition of Nicolás Guillén's *Poemas cubanos* (1976, following the first edition in 1963); and César Vallejo's *Los heraldos negros* (1979), rendered in a masterful translation by Mihai Cantuniari. The latter earned Cantuniari the Writers' Union of Romania Prize and, in 1987, the Order of Merit for Distinguished Services in the rank of Commander, awarded by the Republic of Peru.

Latin American literature continued to maintain a significant presence in Romania throughout the 1980s, despite the increasingly dire economic conditions associated with the limitations of a supply-driven economy, rather than a demand-driven one. Although the number of titles decreased slightly – 77 in the 1980s compared to 99 in the previous decade – this reduction was less severe than that experienced by translations from other literatures. While the 1970s had been dominated by Borges and García Márquez, the 1980s saw the emergence of Mario Vargas Llosa as the most prominent Latin American author in Romania. His major works *La tía Julia y el escribidor* (1985), *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1986), and *Conversación en La Catedral* (1988) were all translated and widely discussed in the cultural press. Ernesto Sabato also continued to attract critical attention with the Romanian edition of *Abaddón el exterminador* (1986), complementing his earlier translations. Adolfo Bioy Casares, another highly acclaimed author in Romania, was published with a second edition of *Dormir al sol* (1984) and the translation of *La trama celeste* (1987). Alejo Carpentier continued to garner reader praise with *La música en Cuba* (1984), *La consagración de la primavera* (1984), and *El arpa y la sombra*

within Cuba. Socialist countries in Eastern Europe responded to Cuban cultural policy with varying degrees of rigidity. In Hungary, for instance, dissident authors were effectively excluded even from cultural periodicals (Zsuzsanna Csikós, *op. cit.*), while in Romania, dissident voices such as Lezama's occasionally "slipped through", benefitting from the advocacy of figures like Andrei Ionescu, who promoted the Cuban writer with notable enthusiasm. Poland stands out as the only country in the Eastern Bloc where *Paradiso* was published (in 1979), and where Lezama Lima – despite his esoteric and baroque style – was particularly well received, with three of his works translated before 1989, see Małgorzata Gaszyńska-Magiera, *Traces of the Foreign. The Reception of Translations of Spanish American Prose in Poland in 1945–2005 from the Perspective of Intercultural Communication*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2019, p. 88.

(1988), along with the reissue of *Concierto barroco* and *El recurso del método* in a single popular edition (1988). The re-publication of a novel centered on a dictator at a time when Ceaușescu's own cult of personality was at its height is particularly noteworthy. Equally significant is the Romanian translation of another key work in the "dictator novel" genre: Augusto Roa Bastos's *Yo el Supremo*, published in 1982 in a translation by Andrei Ionescu. The edition was accompanied by an extensive critical study that could be considered a model of erudition and critical insight managing to sidestep political sensitivities – indeed, while the Paraguayan dictatorship is briefly alluded to, the name of Alfredo Stroessner is conspicuously absent.

Somewhat ironically and paradoxically, the disconnection between editorial demand and the available supply granted translators considerable freedom in proposing titles they wished to introduce into Romanian culture. The success of such proposals depended almost entirely on the outcome of their negotiations with editors, literary agents, and the authors themselves. As a result, the eclectic translation landscape of the 1980s encompasses a diverse range of authors with markedly different literary stature, political orientations, and stylistic approaches⁵⁰.

Arguably the most significant development in the final decade of the communist regime concerning the reception of Latin American literature was the emergence of a substantial number of critical studies and anthologies – an effort that demonstrates the translators' and Hispanists' commitment to offering their Romanian readers an informed and sophisticated engagement with this body of work. In 1980, Andrei Ionescu published the Romanian translation of a foundational work of Latin American literary criticism: Pedro Henríquez Ureña's *Corrientes literarias en la América hispánica*. That same year saw the release of a collection of Latin American legends and short stories (compiled by Tudora Șandru Olteanu), a comprehensive anthology of Central American

⁵⁰ This diversity is evident even in a small sample limited to relatively young fiction writers of the time: Manuel Puig, *Boquitas pintadas* (1981); Joaquín Gutiérrez, *Murámonos, Federico* (1981); Fernando Medina Ferrada, *Los muertos están cada día más indóciles* (1981, Casa de las Américas Prize, 1972); Luis Rogelio Noguera, *Y si muero mañana* (1986, published in the *Enigma* collection dedicated to detective fiction); Antonio di Benedetto, *Zama* (1988); Humberto Costantini, *De dioses, hombrecitos y policías* (1988, Casa de las Américas Prize, 1979); Manuel Mujica Lainez, *Bomarzo* (1987); Gustavo Álvarez Gardeazábal, *El bazar de los idiotas* (1987); Germán Arciniegas, *El caballero de El Dorado* (1987); Reinaldo Arenas, *El palacio de las blanquísimas mofetas* (1988); and Fernando Butazzoni, *Los días de nuestra sangre* and *La noche abierta* (1989, Casa de las Américas Prize, 1979).

short stories (selected and introduced by Sergio Ramírez), and an anthology of Chilean poetry (edited by Darie Novăceanu). In 1983, Dinu Flămând and Omar Lara published *20 Contemporary Latin American Poets*, and in 1988, as the regime neared its end, Darie Novăceanu introduced his anthology titled *100 años de poesía cubana (100 Years of Cuban Poetry)*. Even more noteworthy are the two anthologies compiled by Paul Alexandru Georgescu with the advisory support of Germán Arciniegas: *Antología del ensayo hispanoamericano* (1975) and *Antología de la crítica literaria hispanoamericana* (1986) (*Anthology of Hispanic American Essay*, 1975) and *Anthology of Hispanic American Literary Criticism*, 1986). These two volumes, published over a decade apart but largely featuring the same authors, reflect the rapid and lasting canonization of the Latin American *Boom* in Romanian literary culture.

4. Concluding Discussion

At this point, we possess a fairly comprehensive picture of the publication of Latin American literature in Romanian translation during the socialist period. What becomes evident is the very free and eclectic inspiration drawn from the two competing Cold War canons – Paris/Washington and Moscow/Havana. What we would like to emphasize is that the acclimatization of Latin American literature in Romania responded more to local needs for canon formation than to external pressure from symbolic centers of consecration. For example, the commitment to preserving aesthetic autonomy – hard-won between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s and explored in depth in previous studies⁵¹ – is clearly reflected in the Romanian reception of Latin American literature during that period. As a result, authors translated in the aftermath of the cultural thaw entered the Romanian cultural scene unburdened by political baggage. The overt leftist sympathies of Cortázar, García Márquez’s special relationship with Cuba, Alejo Carpentier’s privileged political position, or, conversely, the anti-communist stances of Borges, Arciniegas, Vargas Llosa, and Sabato, as well as the censorship and marginalization of Lezama Lima, Piñera, and Arenas in Cuba, are conspicuously absent from the erudite studies and extensive prefaces

⁵¹ Ilinca Ilian, “Latinoamérica en la prensa cultural rumana 1959–65: La historia de una instrumentalización política de la literatura”, *Hispanic Research Journal*, no. 22 (4), 2021, p. 286–306; Ilian, Ilinca and Emilio J. Gallardo-Saborido, “Desde los « scriitorii progresiști » al *boom*: Rumania y la mundialización de la literatura latinoamericana en el orbe socialista (1964–1971)”, *Anclajes*, XXVII (3), 2023, p. 61–83.

that accompanied their works in Romanian translation. Thus, the excessive politicization of the early dogmatic period (1945–1964) gives way, during the neo-dogmatic era (1971–1989), to a neutralization of politics – at least in the reception and interpretation of Latin American literature.

In this context, consider the remarkable success Borges enjoyed from 1967 onwards, despite his lack of political alignment with the socialist Bloc. Borges's purported apoliticism – which, according to Albuquerque's framework, masks a right-wing political stance – aligned well with his Romanian gatekeepers' deliberate decision to exclude political considerations from literary evaluation, thereby safeguarding the aesthetic autonomy of art. A comparable case is Germán Arciniegas, similarly positioned on the right of the political spectrum, whose works were actively promoted by Paul Alexandru Georgescu, himself a supporter of Asturias, who occupied a center-left stance according to Albuquerque. Notably, neither the preface to Arciniegas's masterpiece *Biografía del Caribe* (translated into Romanian in 1978) nor any other Romanian editions acknowledge his staunchly anti-Soviet position, despite his directorship of *Cuadernos* – a magazine associated with the CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom from 1963 until its closure in 1965. His anti-communist stance or his “moderate attitude towards the United States” (i.e., rather favorable)⁵² are omitted because, following the dogmatic excesses of the pre-1964 period, the political positions of newcomers to the Romanian cultural scene were considered irrelevant.

From a contrasting vantage point, if the impact of Cuban prose in Romanian culture is measured by the volume of reviews and critical discussion, Alejo Carpentier emerges as the most prominently represented author. *Secolul 20* dedicated an extensive dossier to him in 1967, which included his celebrated essay on the marvelous real, and his novels were translated promptly following their original publication. By contrast, Cuban works published under the immediate influence of the Cuban Revolution – such as José Soler Puig's *Bertillón 1966* (1961), Dora Alonso's *Tierra inerme* (1962), and Pablo de la Torriente Brau's *Aventuras del soldado desconocido cubano* and *Realengo 19* (1961 and 1964, respectively) – were received in the terms of the late dogmatic period, primarily for their documentary value concerning a heroic chapter of Antillean Island history. Over time, these authors were forgotten and excluded from the Romanian literary canon as representatives of influential

⁵² Germán Albuquerque, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

Latin American literature. Carpentier's appreciation, by contrast, was not due to his Cuban origins or political connections but to the literary brilliance he displayed in the post-Stalinist years with novels such as *El reino de este mundo* (translated into Romanian in 1963) and *El siglo de las luces* (1965), alongside other works that appeared and were reissued throughout subsequent decades. Equally notable is the Romanian cultural presence of three Cuban authors who stood in stark opposition to Carpentier's official status and political proximity: Virgilio Piñera, Reinaldo Arenas, and José Lezama Lima.

The presence of authors spanning the entire Cold War political spectrum in Romanian Latin American literary culture illustrates that the canon constructed in Romania neither fully conformed to the Soviet nor to the capitalist world's literary canons. Consequently, it resisted external pressures – including those stemming from contemporaneous Cuban cultural policies. Furthermore, the integration of Latin American literature in Romania, shaped during the era of communist globalization, cannot be understood through the “epic” narrative promulgated by *Boom* authors, which attributes the de-provincialization of their literature solely to writers established in the West from the mid-1960s onward. Paradoxically, the ostensibly apolitical nature of these authors' reception in Romania reflects a deliberate political stance: a refusal to succumb to communist propaganda and an insistence on maintaining aesthetic autonomy despite significant ideological pressures. This observation supports Jean Franco's critique regarding the partiality of a World Literature theory – such as that proposed by Casanova – which tends to overlook the role of international politics in shaping literary circulation beyond national borders. Similarly, it corroborates Goldiș's argument that the acclimatization of Latin American literature in the European socialist context does not align with Moretti's or Casanova's models of world literature circulation but rather reflects a selection of “forms or models according to the internal needs of the system”⁵³. This phenomenon cannot be reduced merely to a defensive posture aimed at preserving the “purity” of art from political interference – a retreat into aesthetic autonomy that entirely rejects political engagement, as if art could ever be fully detached from ideology. Rather, a clear thematic convergence between Latin American and Romanian cultural spaces emerges, so pronounced that parallel developments – such as the use of magical realism or the dictator novel – are frequently mistaken for direct

⁵³ Alex Goldiș, “The Import of the Latin American Novel in Romania: « Meaningful Voids » and Selection Principles of a (Semi)peripheral National Market”, *Transylvanian Review*, Supl. no. 1, 2022, p. 102.

literary influence⁵⁴. A perfect example is the paradigmatic Romanian magical realist short stories volume, *Iarna bărbaților* by Ștefan Bănuțescu, published in 1965 – two years before the Spanish-language publication of *Cien años de soledad* and six years prior to its Romanian translation⁵⁵. A similar case is Al. Ivasiuc's novel *Racul* (1976), set in an indeterminate Latin American country under the rule of a brutal dictator, Don Athanasios. Until that time, the only Latin American dictator novel published in Romania was Miguel Ángel Asturias's *El Señor Presidente* (1960, reissued in 1964). *Racul* was thus contemporaneous with well-known dictator novels by Carpentier, García Márquez, and Roa Bastos, which appeared between 1974 and 1975. Even the case of Mircea Horia Simionescu can be mentioned, since he stated that his vision of the world as “a library” made up of books that do not exist, thus creating a reality and a double of the world in which we live, had been forged around 1945, long before he became acquainted with Borges' work⁵⁶. Latin American literature, therefore, responded effectively to local cultural needs and demands, fostering a productive synergy between Romanian authors and Hispanist translators who introduced works that resonated with their own artistic pursuits.

Acknowledgement: *This publication is part of the project I+D+i Escritores latinoamericanos en los países socialistas europeos durante la Guerra Fría. Fase II (PID2023-149252NB-I00), funded by MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and by FEDER, UE.*

⁵⁴ Elena Crașovan, “Magical Realism Avatar in the Romanian Novel”, *Dacoromania litteraria*, no. 7, 2020, p. 41.

⁵⁵ For a thorough analysis of Bănuțescu's magical realism, see also Viorica Bold, *Realismul magic. O incursiune teoretică*, Cluj-Napoca, Ed. Școala Ardeleană, 2023, p. 277–300.

⁵⁶ Marius Chivu, “Sînt contestatarul lucrurilor pe care nu mi le explic” – interviu cu Mircea Horia Simionescu, *Dilema Veche*, no. 742, 2018, p. 14.

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