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Call for Papers
The International Conference for the Study of the Novel
Third Edition:
Ideologies of Popular Fiction in Romania and Beyond: Cultural Functions,
Global Circulations
17-18 October 2025, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Confirmed keynote speakers:

Clive Bloom (Middlesex University London)

Matthieu Letourneux (Université Paris Nanterre)

The third edition of the *International Conference for the Study of the Novel* continues the line of inquiry pursued in the previous editions of the conference, with respect to the new methods and analytical tools promoted in contemporary literary studies after the transnational and digital turns. The 2025 edition conference is organized within the framework of the research project *Ideological Functions of Popular Literature in Postcommunist Romania* (IDEOLIT). This project is coordinated by Mihai Iovănel at Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania, and analyzes how popular and consumer literature captured and engaged with the ideologies of the transition from a communist system to a market-based one. It aims to explore the cultural, political, and economic implications of popular literature – often referred to as “paraliterature” – in both national and transnational contexts, but with a focus on peripheral markets of literary consumption.

In the last two decades, scholarly inquiry into popular genres – including science fiction, fantasy, crime fiction, romance, spy novels, children’s literature, and comics – has intensified, contributing to a reconsideration of cultural hierarchies and the blurred lines between “high” and “low” literature. These forms, once relegated to the margins of cultural legitimacy, are now recognized for their complex ideological roles and their ability to reshape literary canons, market dynamics, and cultural identities. This shift reflects broader postmodern debates on the hierarchy of cultural production, as well as the economic rationalities that dominate the neoliberal age, where artistic value is often conflated with market performance.

As Clive Bloom argues in *Best-Sellers: Popular Fiction Since 1900* (2002) and *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts* (2010), popular literature serves not only as entertainment but also as a political and sociological artifact, reflecting and refracting the ideologies of its time. Likewise, Matthieu Letourneux’s *Fictions à la chaîne. Littératures sérielles et culture médiatique* (2017) provides a framework for understanding the seriality, industrial logic, and cultural legitimacy of popular narratives, especially within the Francophone and European traditions.

Popular novel is not only a cultural phenomenon but also a site of economic circulation, institutional negotiation, political representation, epistemic imagination, sociographic reflection, and transnational exchange. The asymmetrical flow of cultural goods – typically



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from the Anglo-American “centre” to semi-peripheral or peripheral markets – raises important questions about cultural dependency, resistance, and hybridization. Yet exceptions to this flow, such as the recent global popularity of Nordic noir (see *Crime Fiction as World Literature*), signal the potential for alternative models of circulation and influence.

We invite proposals that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

1. The competition between subgenres and the transformation of the literary canon.
2. The cultural economy of popular literature and its market dynamics.
3. Institutional imaginaries and their literary representations (e.g., the police, gendered labour).
4. Political dimensions of popular novel: feminism, racial diversity, and ideology in genre fiction.
5. The epistemic function of speculative genres in relation to science, technology, and futurism.
6. Class representation and sociographic mapping in popular fiction.
7. Transnational circulations: literary imports and exports, cultural asymmetries, and translation flows.
8. Romanian popular novel in comparative, regional, or global frameworks.

We welcome proposals from scholars working in literary studies, cultural studies, media studies, sociology, translation studies, and related fields. Contributions focused on the Romanian context, especially in dialogue with global perspectives, are particularly encouraged.

The 2025 edition of the *International Conference for the Study of the Novel* continues the initiative launched in the first edition, and welcomes workshops meant to share the preliminary or final results achieved within research team grants concerned with the formal, thematic, systemic, transnational, quantitative, or digital study of the novel.

Further reading:

- Baghiu, Stefan, and Anca Simina Martin. 2024. “The Transmedial Triangulation of Dracula: How Cinema Turned the Gothic Bloodsucker into a Gothicized Serial Killer.” *Nature Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 11, no. 1015, online: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-024-03531-2>.
- Berberich, Christine, ed. 2014. *The Bloomsbury Introduction to Popular Fiction*. London–New Delhi–New York–Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Bloom, Clive. 2021. *Bestsellers: Popular Fiction Since 1900*, 3rd ed. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bloom, Clive. 2010. *Violent London: 2000 Years of Riots, Rebels and Revolts*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Boltanski, Luc. 2014. *Mysteries and Conspiracies. Detective Stories, Spy Novels and the Making of Modern Societies*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bordwell, David. 2023. *Perplexing Plots: Popular Storytelling and the Poetics of Murder*. New York: Columbia University Press.



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- Edwards, Martin. 2022. *The Life of Crime. Detecting the History of Mysteries and their Creators*. London: HarperCollins UK.
- Frantz, Sarah S.G., and Eric Murphy Selinger. 2012. *New Approaches to Popular Romance Fiction*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc.
- Iovănel, Mihai. 2021. *Istoria literaturii române contemporane: 1990–2020*. Iași: Polirom.
- Leith, Sam. 2024. *The Haunted Wood: A History of Childhood Reading*. Toronto: Sutherland House Books.
- Letourneux, Matthieu. 2017. *Fictions à la chaîne. Littératures sérielles et culture médiatique*. Paris: Seuil.
- Levine, Caroline. 2015. *Forms. Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchies, Networks*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Moraru, Christian. 2024. *Flat Aesthetics: Twenty-First-Century American Fiction and the Making of the Contemporary*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Moretti, Franco. 2013. *Distant Reading*. London: Verso.
- Nilsson, Louise, David Damrosch, Theo D’haen, eds. 2017. *Crime Fiction as World Literature*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.
- Roberts, Adam. 2025. *Fantasy: A Short History*, London–New York–Oxford–New Delhi–Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Terian, Andrei. 2019. “Istoria literară și analiza cantitativă. Un studiu al pieței de carte actuale din România.” In *Exploring the Digital Turn*, edited by Anca-Diana Bibiri, Camelia Grădinaru, Emanuel Grosu, Andreea Mironescu, Roxana Patraș, pp. 33–43. Iași: Editura Universității “Al. I. Cuza.”
- Wachtel, Andrew Baruch. 2006. *Remaining Relevant after Communism. The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press Books.

Organizers: Sextil Pușcariu Institute of Linguistics and Literary History, Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca Branch; Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts (PN-IV-P2-2.1-TE-2023-1275, within PNCDI IV: <https://grants.ulbsibiu.ro/ideolit/about/>).

Location: Sextil Pușcariu Institute of Linguistics and Literary History, 21 Emil Racoviță St., Cluj-Napoca, Romania

The working languages of the conference: English, French, and Romanian.

Submission address and guidelines: icsn.proposals@gmail.com

Please send an abstract of 300–400 words, along with a short biographical note (maximum 150 words)

Contact information: Mihai Iovănel, mihai.iovanel@gmail.com; Ștefan Baghiu, stefan.baghiu@ulbsibiu.ro

Registration fees:

50 Euros (regular registration)

30 Euros (PhD students and early-career researchers under 26)

Important dates:



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Proposal submission: 31 July 2025

Notice of acceptance: 2 September 2025

We look forward to welcoming you to Cluj-Napoca for what promises to be a stimulating and timely discussion.