



# RETHINKING ROMANIAN LITERATURE COLLECTIVELY: THE INTER-IMPERIAL MODERN NOVEL

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**Abstract:** The present essay aims at discussing the recent volume *Creolizing the Modern: Transylvania across Empires* (2022) by Anca Parvulescu and Manuela Boatcă as a significant contribution to the recent attempts at rethinking Romanian literature. In this regard, the examination of the volume is constantly reckoned in dialogue with some of the previously undertaken projects. The dialogic approach highlights two significant aspects, related to both the volume and the context in which it is received. On the one hand, it shows that the theoretical and methodological framework deployed in the volume can constitute the ground for future studies. On the other hand, it draws attention to the fact the rethinking of Romanian literature has been a collective and gradual endeavor.

**Keywords:** inter-imperiality, Transylvania, modern/ modernity, world literature, Romanian literature.

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There is no longer any doubt that Romanian literature is a literature of the world. Recently, considerable scholarly efforts have been pursued to show this: the special issue of *Journal of World Literature* on "Romanian Literature in Today's World," edited by Delia Ungureanu and Thomas Pavel (2018), *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (2018), *Ruralism and Literature in Romania* (2019), *Beyond the Iron Curtain: Revisiting the Literary System of Communist Romania* (2021), *Theory in the 'Post' Era* (2022), or *Translations and Semi-Peripheral Cultures* (2022).<sup>1</sup> Alongside those English language volumes, one could think of other local works that reframe Romanian literature in a transnational context, especially the recent collective work coordinated by Adriana Babeți, *Dictionarul romanului central-european din secolul XX* [The Dictionary of the Central European Novel in the 20th Century].<sup>2</sup> These efforts presuppose not only a process of remapping this literature but also of rethinking it anew. Using a wide range of methodological tools (world-system analysis, polysystem theory, distant reading, etc.), recent studies lay out the fact that Romanian literature is itself

part of a world-system and that it represents this system at the textual level. In this context, the recent publication of the volume *Creolizing the Modern: Transylvania across Empires* (2022)<sup>3</sup> by Anca Parvulescu and Manuela Boatcă is unmistakably an event that sheds new light on reading semiperipheral literatures. In what follows, I consider their work in dialogue with some of the previously undertaken attempts, highlighting both the junctures and disjunctures between them.

The volume's introduction begins with the image of Xenia, the daughter of Ion Boldijer, who was the model for the main character in Liviu Rebreanu's *Ion* (1920). She is holding the novel in her hand, but she has never read it. Her main concern is related to the land problem in Transylvania. Later on, we find out that this novel is the only literary work scrutinized in the volume. This thorough analysis regards both the textual and contextual level. More specifically, "this perceived tragedy against the history of land in Transylvania and the economic, political, religious and cultural struggles that have marked it"<sup>4</sup> are constantly put in dialogue

with the novel. But the relationality does not stop here. The various struggles are further “position[ed] within a global inter-imperial predicament whose entanglements have shaped our understanding of modernity, rurality, migration, and patterns of racialized and gendered inequality.”<sup>5</sup> The seven chapters explore at length all these issues: the land question, the racialization of the Jewish and Roma populations, the capitalist integration, the gendered violence, women’s education, and the ethnicization of religion.

The first observation concerns the units of analysis: a novel and a region. A few remarks are needed here. The authors do not choose just any novel but the first modern *Romanian* novel. The action of the novel is set in Transylvania at the turn of the twentieth century and Rebreanu began writing the novel in 1913, when he was not yet living in Bucharest. At that time, Transylvania belonged to the Hungarian side of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The uncritical reading<sup>6</sup> of Rebreanu’s *Ion* as a Romanian novel is therefore challenged in this volume. By focusing on Transylvania and its shifting inter-imperial as well as semiperipheral position, Parvulescu and Boatcă move beyond country comparisons. The concept of inter-imperiality – which is central to the volume – points out to the contradictions inherent in a national-oriented approach. As for Doyle, for Parvulescu and Boatcă, Transylvania’s inter-imperial position is “a condition of aesthetic production and an object of literary representation.”<sup>7</sup> But unlike Doyle, who proposes a “Dimock’s model” of inter-imperiality, the two authors offer a “Wallerstein” model, as shown by Bâlici in his contribution to this issue.<sup>8</sup> Although related or (co) related – to use Boatcă’s term – with Romania’s inter-imperial history as well as with the colonial or inter-imperial histories in other parts of the world,<sup>9</sup> the social, political, economic and cultural struggles depicted in the novel have particularities and hierarchies specific to a geohistorical context. Thus, the Romanian origin of the novel is questioned.

The second observation refers to the conceptual framework. Each concept is understood critically and relationally, modernity and modernism included.<sup>10</sup> I would like to return to *Ion*, which is considered to be the first *modern* Romanian novel. The novel’s literary modernity has been a pivotal topic in critical studies since its publication. In the interwar period, critics praised the novel for its modernist literary techniques, and sought to set aside rurality in an attempt to point to the synchronicity of Romanian literature with European literature. Drawing on recent works in the field of modernist studies, Parvulescu and Boatcă understand the modernism at work in Rebreanu’s novel as one among many other modernisms of the modern world-system. Moreover, the inter-imperial framework sheds light on a multiplicity of hierarchies, leading the authors to abandon concepts such as *hybridity* in favor of

*creolization*, which accounts for the existence of unequal elements.<sup>11</sup>

However, we should not forget the entire project of the present volume which is, as the authors put it, “to creolize the modern in both modernism and the modern world-system.”<sup>12</sup> This statement calls for a brief discussion about the methodology. Several methodological and theoretical frameworks are employed in this volume: Latin American literature on decoloniality, world-systems analysis, inter-imperiality, world literature, and world history. The great relevance of these methodological lenses lies in the way they are employed – i.e., to analyze Transylvania’s inter-imperial predicament and to read *Ion* as both a product and an object of literary representation. By focusing on only one region and one work, the authors successfully achieve their goal: to develop the exemplarity of a region and, I would add, a work as a method. The influence of such a rereading can be traced to some of the authors’ earlier articles, now included in the volume. For instance, Parvulescu and Boatcă’s scholarly work on Transylvania’s inter-imperiality constitutes the starting point for Ovio Olaru’s article “From Capitalist Aspirations to the National Project. The Inter-imperial Transylvanian Compromise,”<sup>13</sup> in which he aims to read two novelistic productions as stages of imperial collapse.

Nevertheless, the use of inter-imperial method brings forth several questions: how can we read larger geohistorical and literary units using this methodological lens? What happens when the unit of analysis is not reduced to a single geohistorical area but encompasses multiple regions with different inter-imperial legacies? In what follows, I attempt to answer these questions by 1) placing this scholarly work in dialogue with other projects and 2) using the coauthorship of the volume to offer a possible solution to the above challenge.

What we can notice in seminal research works such as the collective volumes *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (2018) and *Ruralism and Literature in Romania* (2019) as well as the thematic issue “Romanian Literature in Today’s World” of *Journal of World Literature* (2018), is the persistence of the national label. Of course, “the national” itself is revalued here. The articles move beyond methodological nationalism by understanding Romanian literature as a literature in and of the world. One way they do this is by foregrounding a reading of “its object’s [Romanian literature] worldedness, its intersectional position in the network-world.”<sup>14</sup> Another way is by choosing to “examine the tensions of cultural exchange in Romanian literature during the past three decades from a sociological perspective”<sup>15</sup>. Their endeavor is complex and diverse, which means, among other things, that the articles focus either on various geographical configurations and temporalities or on contemporary literature<sup>16</sup>. While geohistorical diversity requires a common denominator, contemporary



literature is produced in a unified Romania. In the context of the previously mentioned scholarly works, Parvulescu and Boatcă's volume therefore foregrounds a more denationalized reading of literature.

It is no exaggeration to say that the volume's greatest merits lie in its coauthorship. Unlike works that usually bring together authors from the same or similar sub-fields, *Creolizing the Modern* (2022) is written by a literary critic and a sociologist. The novelty and particular relevance of the volume reside in its interdisciplinarity but this statement needs further explanation. As the authors argue, the main problem today is not overcoming the divide between hard and soft sciences but between the social sciences and the humanities: "Social scientists tend to be skeptical of the idea that the world is a flow of information and culture. Humanists, in contrast, are skeptical of the oneness of the world-system, which they see as being tainted by Eurocentrism."<sup>17</sup> Warwick Research Collective and Doyle's work are the two attempts at dialogue mentioned by Parvulescu and Boatcă. It is not by chance that I insist on pointing out these two attempts. The great influence and visibility of distant reading in Romanian literary scholarship<sup>18</sup> has been followed recently by scholarly works that take up the research undergone by Warwick Research Collective. I refer here to Mihnea Bălici's article "World-Literature and the Bessarabian Literary System. Combined and Uneven Development in the Semiperiphery,"<sup>19</sup> in which the object of analysis is represented by the interperipheral relations between two unequal Romanian-language literary systems. In the light of the method proposed by Parvulescu and Boatcă, I would like to add that the unevenness between these two systems may raise the question of how the inter-imperial legacies of these two regions contributed to the shaping of the hierarchical relation.

The impact of distant reading should not be neglected. The use of computational methods to investigate Romanian literature has more in common with this volume than it might seem at a first glance. The main similarity lies in the digital corpus, which privileges the novel. The focus on the novel as a genre is not accidental. As Emanuel Modoc explains, it stems from the fact that this genre is relevant not only for the development of Romanian literary modernity but also for the broader, socio-cultural sphere.<sup>20</sup> I will give just one example in this regard. In the article "Precaritate și cosmopolitism în romanul românesc (1845-1947): Muncă, hrană, sănătate, îmbrăcăminte, mondenitate" [Precarity and Cosmopolitanism in the Romanian Novel (1845-1947): Work, Food, Health, Clothing, Fashion], Rădescu et al. depart from the archive *Muzeul Digital al Romanului Românesc: 1933-1947* [The Digital Museum of the Romanian Novel: 1933-1947] and address the social aspects of daily life as represented in the novelistic production. Throughout the article they offer an intersectional analysis of all

these aspects (i.e., they understand the differences in terms of class, gender, race/ethnicity). Their premise is that although not all the novels may be images of a combined and uneven reality – which translates here into a cosmopolitan literary modernization in a poor space –, most of them do in fact bear witness of the ideological struggles of the time.<sup>21</sup> The reference to Warwick Research Collective work is, of course, obvious. But there is also another important observation. Simply put, the main difference between the volume and this article lies in the works selected: the canon vs. "the great unread." While the former focuses on the first modern novel, the latter draws examples from non-canonical novels. I would like to think of these two projects as complementary, in the sense that if the volume offers an updated *rereading* of a canonical novel, the article dwells into an updated *reading* of the unread novelistic production.

As for the interdisciplinary approach conducted by a literary critic and a sociologist, we can note that it manages to additionally highlight the inaccuracies between Transylvania's inter-imperiality at the turn of the century and its representation in *Ion*. The reading of the novel is, to say the least, thorough and critical at the same time. For instance, Parvulescu and Boatcă argue that the lack of institutional education for the female characters is an authorial choice, a choice that, as the authors go on to show, contrasts with educational opportunities available to women in Transylvania at that time.

I have shown so far that there have been several complementary works that set out to reread Romanian literature and that the greatest merits of *Creolizing the Modern* rests in its coauthorship. In my view, any attempt to read Romanian literature inter- and trans-imperially should start from such a collaborative work. Following Parvulescu and Boatcă, I would say that once the boundaries between hard and soft sciences have been overcome in Romanian literary scholarship as well, it is time now for the social sciences and humanities to contribute further and actively to our understanding of what Romanian literature is. Thus, an inter-imperial reading of a larger area and corpus of texts is a collaborative effort, where collaborative stands for both collective and interdisciplinary.

In addition to their methodological and collaborative relevance, the seven chapters shed new light on Transylvania's inter-imperial entanglements and their representation in the first modern Romanian novel. All seven chapters offer a multilayered reading of Rebreanu's novel. Although each of the chapters focuses on a specific issue, there are many crisscrosses between them. In other words, what seems to be a detail (or additional information) in one chapter is brought to the forefront in another. In what follows, I will provide a brief description of each chapter of the volume.

Chapter 1 deals in detail with the land question. Ion's determination to own land is inscribed within the history of landownership in Transylvania and in the inter-imperial background. As a member of a class of Transylvanian Romanian peasants who had been constantly deprived of land, Ion's desire to own it is prompted not only by his poverty but also by his position in the social hierarchy of the village. His pathological desire drives him to pursue this conquest at any costs. Thus, through marriage, Ion acquires the overly cherished land and along with it a higher social status. Ownership, however, the authors emphasize, has a dual form in the novel. In addition to this individual ownership, the chapter also explores the subplot concerned with the collective use of the commons, a subplot that is "crucial to an understanding of the land problem, since the balance between agrarian land and the commons is tilted toward the latter in Transylvania."<sup>22</sup> The last significant issue tackled in this first chapter is rurality. The authors draw on world-systems analysis and decoloniality, to consider Ion's desire for and in relationship to Transylvanian land within the larger framework of the world-system.

Chapter 2 addresses the issue of Transylvania's economic integration into the modern world-system. Parvulescu and Boatcă argue that, despite appearances, the agrarian economy at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the action of the novel is set, is fully integrated in the capitalist world-economy. Yet for this region, situated at the crossroads of several imperial formations, integration meant peripheralization, a process uncovered through four modalities of integration (trade, finance, bureaucracy and mobility of goods, people and information). Their argument is once again predicated on the notion of inter-imperiality, which "highlights that the agent of capitalist integration is not some generic state but a series of imperial and state formations, alongside a variety of other heterogenous actors."<sup>23</sup> In this inter-imperial milieu, antisemitism is enlisted as a form of resistance to capitalist integration-as-peripheralization. On the literary side, the authors unravel the racialized terms under which Avrum, the Jewish pub owner, is represented in Rebreanu's novel.

Racialization is revisited in the third chapter, which focuses on *the longue durée* of enslavement and how its remnants are visible in the case of the unpaid labor of Roma musicians in the opening scene of Rebreanu's *Ion*. The racialization of this marginalized people is positioned within Transylvania's inter-imperiality, thus pointing to the social stratification of the multiple ethnic groups in the region. The scene can be easily overlooked, even though a lot of significance lies in its very minoriness: "This scene constitutes a minor plot involving three minor characters, but we argue that it is crucial to the construction of the novel's narrative arc and, more broadly, to a particular configuration of Transylvanian Romanian nationalism in an inter-

imperial framework."<sup>24</sup> The presumed superiority of the Romanian peasants that is deployed throughout the novel is predicated on their whiteness, which in turn is underscored by a constant racialization of the internal Other (i.e., the Roma). Viewed through this lens, the anti-imperial nationalism of the Transylvanian Romanians also reveals a racist component.

Chapter 4 relates the polyglottism of the comparative literature journal *Acta Comparationis Literaturarum Universarum (ACLU)*, edited by Sámuel Brassai and Hugó Meltzl, with the interglottism in Rebreanu's novel. As throughout this volume, Parvulescu and Boatcă do not take any idea for granted. The notion of inter-imperiality underpins all the interrogations addressed in the chapter. First, *ACLU* is constantly referred to as one origin story of comparative literature.<sup>25</sup> Second, the publication of *ACLU* (from 1877 to 1888) is analyzed in the context of Transylvania's inter-imperiality. Parvulescu and Boatcă go beyond the presumed idea of multilingualism in the region and show that the linguistic hierarchies point instead to interglottism. The need for a concept – other than polyglottism, which implies the equality of the languages spoken in the region – stems from the acknowledgement that these languages are in fact hierarchically distributed. Third, this contextual – and, more importantly, inter-imperial positioning – underscores the fact that Meltzl's polyglottism depends on the political and linguistic hierarchies and hence it is inter-imperial and interglot. Fourth, they refer to the linguistic entanglements in Rebreanu's *Ion* as interglottism, an assumption that emerges from a close reading of the novel which shows that "unlike a polycentric mix of multiple but equal languages, the polyglottism at work in text mirrors inter-imperial conflicts, inequalities, and hierarchies."<sup>26</sup>

Chapter 5 links the struggle over land with the gender power dynamics. Besides the analysis of the dowry plot as a gendered transaction, Parvulescu and Boatcă offer an intersectional account of gender dynamics: gendered violence (which takes multiple forms, from domestic to sexual) is discussed in relation to inter-imperial nationalisms, religion, and class. Moreover, the discussion is positioned within a global framework and a literary tradition. The portrayal of Ana, a peasant woman and the main female character in Rebreanu's novel, is set against the emancipatory movements that occurred in Europe at the turn of the century. As the authors put it, "the portrait of the novel's main female character constitutes a symptom of an inter-imperial predicament that sidelines projects of gender emancipation in the service of prioritizing anti-imperial struggles."<sup>27</sup> Starting from this statement, I want to emphasize that the sidelining of gender emancipation is explored in a similar vein in Chapter 6. On the one hand, the feminist inclinations that make Laura – a lower-middle class female character in Rebreanu's novel – resemble with the figure of the





New Woman are only transitory. They are rejected by the mature Laura who becomes a mother and supports her husband in the nationalist cause, which is a particular nationalism (i.e., Romanian). On the other hand, women's education, the issue at stake in this chapter, is approached not only literary but also contextually. The authors shed light on the connection between three competing women's nationalist movements in the inter-imperial Transylvania. Before moving on to the final chapter, I want to mention that Parvulescu and Boatcă's reading of the novel is encountered with postcolonial feminism.<sup>28</sup> Drawing on this scholarly literature, they argue that nationalist feminist movements emerged in colonial and semicolonial situations as well as in inter-imperial regions, such as Transylvania. From another study, one in which larger units of analysis are used (Romania and Romanian literature), we can learn that Romanian feminist movements from the first half of the twentieth century adhered to the Anglo-American feminism while in the terrain of literary import French was still predominant.<sup>29</sup> What I want to point out is that seeing together all these findings – the structural similarities between postcolonial and Transylvanian feminist movements, the influence of Anglo-American feminism and the French literary import – help us acknowledge the complex relationship of Romanian culture and society with the world. At the same time, it offers a bird's-eye-view of the challenges that an inter-imperial approach would pose when applied to larger units of analysis.

The final chapter of the volume complements the preceding ones. More specifically, it follows closely the ways in which religion played a role in all the issues previously discussed, from the land problem to the gender dynamics. But religion is not only the common component that brings together the well-rounded analysis of Transylvania's inter-imperiality and its representation in Rebreanu's novel. It also undergirds the main project of the volume (i.e., to creolize the modern). The inter-imperial framework and the anti-imperial nationalisms that it engenders contribute

to the ethnicization of religion, which in turn serves the national cause and is involved in the practices of othering. In other words, Parvulescu and Boatcă argue that the intertwining of religion and inter-imperiality translates into the creolization of the modern.

In a 2015 article, Andrei Terian argued that “in order to become a literature *for* the world, Romanian literature should first learn to see itself as a literature *of* the world.”<sup>30</sup> I began this essay by stating that much has been done in this regard in recent years. This task has been accomplished gradually and differently, as I tried to show in the previous pages. It moved from an intersectional reading of Romanian literature, one that employs a revised understanding of the national literature by acknowledging the cultural interferences that shape it to a deployment of the sociology of literature. Along the way, it incorporated new methods and approaches, among which distant reading stands out. In my view, it is in this context and in dialogue with these research works that Anca Parvulescu and Manuela Boatcă's volume, *Creolizing the Modern: Transylvania across Empires* (2022), should be received and discussed by literary scholars. Two concluding remarks can be foregrounded. The first one refers to the volume's key position in the archive of works that aim at rethinking Romanian literature. Besides the junctures with previous works, this volume proposes a new way of approaching literature. I reckon the method proposed by the two authors as overly significant in discussing for instance the literary (and, by extension, cultural) production in regions which now belong to different states but that once belonged to the same imperial formation(s). However, given the fact that in this volume the inter-imperial method is deployed on a single region and a single text, it becomes necessary to interrogate its effectiveness when dealing with larger units of analysis and temporalities. The second remark refers to the collaborative work. Parvulescu and Boatcă's volume teaches us how to work across disciplines. In this way, they enrich our understanding of collaboration and the way it can be used in what already is a collective attempt to rethink Romanian literature.

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#### Notes:

1. See Mircea Martin, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian, eds., *Romanian Literature as World Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018); Ștefan Baghiu, Vlad Pojoga, and Maria Sass, eds., *Ruralism and Literature in Romania* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2019); Ștefan Baghiu, Ovio Olaru, and Andrei Terian, eds., *Beyond the Iron Curtain: Revisiting the Literary System of Communist Romania* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021); Alexandru Matei, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian, eds., *Theory in the 'Post' Era: A Vocabulary for the 21st-Century Conceptual Commons* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2022); Alex Goldiș and Ștefan Baghiu, eds., *Translations and Semi-Peripheral Literatures: Worlding the Romanian Novel in the Modern Literary System* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2022).
2. Adriana Babeți, ed., *Dicționarul romanului central-european din secolul XX* (Iași: Polirom, 2022).
3. Anca Parvulescu and Manuela Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern: Transylvania across Empires* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2022).
4. Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern*, 2.
5. *Ibid.*

6. This uncritical reading needs to be understood contextually. The nation and the national literature respectively have constituted the basic units of analysis for a long time. To put it differently, in the first half of the twentieth century – when the novel was published – literary historiography served the national project. For an account of the role played by the literary historiography in the nation-building, see, for instance, Alex Goldiș, “Beyond Nation Building: Literary History as Transnational Geolocation”, in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, ed. Mircea Martin, Christian, Christian Moraru, and Andrei Terian (New York & London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 95–114.
7. Laura Doyle quoted in Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern*, 11.
8. See Mihnea Bălici, “Conceptul de inter-imperialitate în periferie: Modelul Wallerstein și cazul romanului *Adam și Eva* de Liviu Rebreanu,” *Transilvania*, no. 10 (2022): 70–77.
9. See Manuela Boatcă, *Laboratoare ale modernității: Europa de Est și America Latină în (co)relație* (Cluj-Napoca: Idea Design & Print, 2019). I refer to the Romanian edition because on the one hand, it includes a series of articles (published also in English) that tackle this idea and on the other hand, because the very concept of (co)relation is made explicit in the title of the volume.
10. On the need to rethink modernity, see also Manuela Boatcă, “The Eastern Margins of the Empire: Coloniality in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romania,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (2007): 368–384.
11. Closer to the understanding of WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015).
12. Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern*, 13.
13. See Ovio Olaru, “From Capitalist Aspirations to the National Project: The Inter-imperial Transylvanian Compromise,” *Metacritic Journal for Comparative Studies and Theory* 8, no. 1 (2022): 137–150. The two articles by Parvulescu and Boatcă that constitute the starting point are mentioned in the very beginning of Olaru’s essay.
14. Christian Moraru and Andrei Terian, “Introduction: The Worlds of Romanian Literature and the Geopolitics of Reading,” in *Romanian Literature as World Literature*, 3.
15. Delia Ungureanu and Thomas Pavel, “Romanian Literature in Today’s World: Introduction,” *Journal of World Literature*, no. 3 (2018): 4.
16. In comparison to the issue of *Journal of World Literature*, the collective volumes *Romanian Literature as World Literature* and *Ruralism and Literature in Romania* consist of essays that tackle various periods of Romanian literature.
17. Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing*, 16.
18. On a brief survey of distant reading in Romanian literary studies, see Emanuel Modoc, “The Digital Curation of the Romanian Interwar Novel (1920–1940),” *Metacritic Journal of Comparative Studies and Theory* 4, no. 1 (2018): 126–136.
19. See Mihnea Bălici, “World-Literature and the Bessarabian Literary System. Combined and Uneven Development in the Semiperiphery,” *Metacritic Journal* 8, no. 1 (2022): 84–104.
20. See Modoc, *The Digital Curation*, 127.
21. Cătălina Rădescu et al. “Precaritate și cosmopolitism în romanul românesc (1845–1947): Muncă, hrană, sănătate, îmbrăcăminte, mondenitate [Precarity and Cosmopolitanism in the Romanian Novel (1845–1947): Work, Food, Health, Clothing, Fashion],” *Transilvania*, no. 9 (2021): 2. The aforementioned archive *Muzeul Digital* [The Digital Museum] constitutes the starting point for a multilayered distant reading of modern Romanian literature. The issues of *Transilvania* dedicated to the three archives of the Romanian novel consist of three series of articles that discuss the representation of a variety of issues – from internal geography and temporality to identity diversity, education, living and space – in the Romanian novelistic production.
22. Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern*, 40. For a detailed analysis of the “national plot” in rural fiction also see Cosmin Borza, Daiana Gârdan, and Emanuel Modoc, “The Peasant and the Nation Plot: A Distant Reading of the Romanian Rural Novel from the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Rural History* (2022): 1–17.
23. Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern*, 50.
24. *Ibid.* See also page 85: “Embedded in the narrative as minor details but echoing this historical background, the scenes that spotlight Romani characters in Rebreanu’s novel (village dance, middle-class ball, marriage, church inauguration) provide a much-neglected but consequential arc for a narrative concerned with the staging of freedom.”
25. On an alternative origin story of comparative literature, see Anca Parvulescu, “Istanbul, Capital of Comparative Literature,” *MLN* 135, no. 5 (2020): 1232–1257. Parvulescu discusses about the birth of the Comparative Literature in 1930’s Istanbul using Doyle’s inter-imperial framework of reference. This approach leads her to ask important questions regarding the emergence of the discipline not in any city, but “in a post-imperial city, suffused with end-of-empire melancholy” (1233). See also Levente T. Szabó, “International Exhibitions, Literary Capitalism, and the Emergence of Comparative Literature,” *Journal of World Literature* 7, no. 3 (2022): 332–347. Levente T. Szabó, “Negotiating the Borders of Hungarian National Literature The Beginnings of the Acta Comparationis Litterarum Universarum and the Rise of Hungarian Studies (Hungarologie),” *Transylvanian Review* 22 (2013): 47–61.
26. Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern*, 92–3.
27. Parvulescu and Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern*, 115.
28. A detailed analysis on the connections between postcolonial theory and the inter-imperial methodology can be found in Maria Chiorean, “Adapting to Survive: Postcolonial Studies Today and the Emergence of the Inter-imperial Reading Method,” *Transilvania*, no. 10 (2022): 1–14. For a detailed analysis of Rebreanu’s novel in contrast to the “first feminist Romanian novel,” Sofia Nădejde’s 1903 *Patimi* [Passions], see Ștefan Baghiu, “Liviu Rebreanu și Sofia Nădejde ca *world literature*: geopolitică,



- interimperialitate și descoperirea lumii în romanul modern,” *Transilvania*, no. 10 (2022): 46–54.
29. Daiana Gârdan, “The Great (Female) Unread. Romanian Women Novelists in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Metacritic Journal* 4, no. 1 (2018): 14, <https://doi.org/10.24193/mjst.2018.5.07>.
30. Andrei Terian, “Romanian literature for the world: a matter of property,” *World Literary Studies* 2.7 (2015): 11.

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