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René Wellek 2023: Monograph

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Anca Parvulescu and Manuela Boatcă, *Creolizing the Modern: Transylvania across Empires*

Parvulescu and Boatcă's intellectually compelling and beautifully written work defines its effort as "to both analyze Transylvania's inter-imperial condition and develop the Transylvanian perspective as a method" (3). Their *Creolizing the Modern* impressively accomplishes both goals – analyzing Transylvania as a part of the East European semiperiphery, as multiethnic, multilingual, multiconfessional, and as historically positioned at the intersection of multiple empires (Habsburg, Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, Russian) and proposing a richly suggestive method from that analysis.

From and beyond the disciplines of comparative literary studies and sociology, and drawing widely and insightfully from a range of work (Immanuel Wallerstein, Laura Doyle, Stuart Hall, Edouard Glissant, Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih), the critical work of *Creolizing the Modern* is framed by coloniality and inter-imperiality in the world-system and is underscored by Romania's first modern novel, Liviu Rebreanu's 1920 *Ion*. With the revelatory challenges in and contradictions of *Ion* as a touchstone then, Parvulescu and Boatcă's richly suggestive and theoretically informed analysis traverses the critical terrain of peasants and the land question; the world system and antisemitism; Romani music; the language question and Transylvanian interglottism; nationalism, women's labor and violence against women; women's education; and the ethnicization religion. *Creolizing the Modern* ends its own last chapter, "God is the New Church: The Ethnicization of Religion," pointing to the refusal that ends Rebreanu's *Ion*.

At the end of the first modern Romanian novel, as a prefiguration of the future, Pripas gets a new church, a pulpit for the new nationalism and a refusal of its creolized history (180).

Parvulescu and Boatcă, though, have stunningly and persistently reinvigorated that creolized history in their collaborative work here. Their study of Transylvania's position on a global economic, political, and cultural stage works with their analysis of Rebreanu's novel to reveal and retell Transylvania's creolized history to be sure. And simultaneously, *Creolizing the Modern* formulates a rich methodological exemplar of looking again and differently at "small places" -- and even perhaps at not-so-small places with the small places always in sight – to understand global movements – cultural, political, economic.

It is with great pleasure and even greater admiration for its powerful accomplishments that we unanimously award the ACLA René Wellek Prize for an outstanding book in the discipline of comparative literature to Anca Parvulescu and Manuela Boatcă's *Creolizing the Modern: Transylvania across Empires*.