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## **INTERCULTURAL ISSUES WITHIN JUNIMEA**

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## **Introduction**

This thesis aims to analyze how issues of interculturality are reflected in the journalism, literature, criticism, and politics of the Junimea society, and to highlight the modernity of the

Junimist model through its openness to European socio-cultural influences, examined using concepts drawn from contemporary postcolonial studies. The main questions guiding this research are closely linked to these objectives: 1. What were the attitudes of the Junimea members toward the issue of interculturality in their era? 2. What kind of relationship existed between the Junimist period and European cultural, political, and literary models? 3. What can the beginnings of modernity in that era teach us about our contemporary world, and how can contemporary conceptual frameworks help us understand it better?

Interest in the issue of interculturality within Junimea emerged, on the one hand, from observing the contemporary world, which tends toward globalization and the unification of socio-cultural spaces globally, and, on the other hand, from my personal experience as a university professor, which allowed me to observe how contemporary educational systems adapt to the challenges of interculturality. In this context, the first part of the thesis problematizes the concept of interculturality, establishing the theoretical and conceptual landmarks of the proposed approach. The identity and cultural aspects of interculturality are discussed in depth and linked to ethnicity and nationalism. Subsequently, the thesis reviews the complex interactions with modernity, while also examining how interculturality has reshaped educational practices worldwide today.

It is considered relevant to contextualize the concept of interculturality in the mid-19th century to identify the understanding of the era, illustrated through some of its most prominent representatives: Titu Maiorescu, Mihai Eminescu, Ion Luca Caragiale, and Ioan Slavici. Naturally, the study of interculturality in the Junimist period is polyhedral, and for this reason, the thesis combines quantitative research methods with qualitative ones. Qualitative research methods, such as phenomenological analysis and ideological analysis, will help identify the crystallization of the notion of interculturality during the Junimist era. The phenomenological method will be based on the analysis of memoirs and personal texts to study how Junimea members perceived reality and the meaning they attributed to life experiences.

The ethnographic method is also appropriate for this research, aiming to describe and analyze the cultural practices and beliefs specific to the Junimist period. Using this method, the thesis will identify customs, attitudes, interaction styles, and other features of Romanian culture in the second half of the 19th century, in order to analyze the intercultural component of society. The case study approach opens new and multiple perspectives for research, while leaving space for further investigations, focusing on literary texts, journals, memoirs, journalism, and correspondence of the Junimea members.

Starting from the identity aspects present in publicistic and parliamentary debates, as well as in literary works and memoiristic documents, the thesis seeks to investigate issues of interculturality during the Junimist period. It will outline the demographic structure of the young Romanian state (which had become a refuge for many foreigners) and discuss legislative regulations, especially the debates surrounding the famous Article 7 of the 1866 Constitution, which governed the conditions for obtaining Romanian citizenship and property rights over agricultural land. This article became a matter of European negotiation and pressure following the recognition of Romania's independence after 1877. While the politician Maiorescu was more flexible and understood the European alignment imperative, the journalist Eminescu was profoundly outraged by "the horror not addressed by the Berlin Treaty," which led to accusations of antisemitism.

Special attention will also be paid to the debates surrounding the integration of Dobruja – a deeply intercultural, multiethnic, and multireligious region – into Romanian territory. Eminescu's repeated positions reveal a profound and nuanced understanding of the situation of Dobruja's populations, reflecting an authentic intercultural sensitivity that partially absolves him from accusations of xenophobia.

Finally, the thesis will focus on the most striking mirror of interculturality: literature, which reflects this phenomenon in all its facets. Defining for the mindset specific to the era are Maiorescu's critical studies, a significant portion of Caragiale's work, Slavici's novel *Mara*, and his memoiristic work, particularly *The World I Passed Through*. Caragiale and Slavici, through their ideas, mentality, intellectual formation, and biographical background, are complex personalities with remarkable intercultural sensitivity, making them privileged case studies for exploring Junimea's engagement with the challenges of interculturality.

Without claiming to exhaust the subject, this thesis aims to trace some of the main lines of the interculturality issue in the era and to open new questions that could serve as starting points for future research.

## Chapter 1 – *Interculturality: Some Theoretical Landmarks*

This chapter is dedicated to the theoretical foundations of interculturality, offering a comprehensive analysis of the concepts of culture, ethnicity, nation, multiculturalism, and identity, examined in their historical and contemporary contexts. The discussion emphasizes

the dynamic, relational, and constructive nature of these notions, which are essential for understanding today's globalized world.

Culture, as the foundation of interculturality, occupies a central place in this analysis. Culture is defined not as an abstraction, but as a concrete reality of human existence, embedded in daily life and closely linked to social, economic, and political structures. UNESCO's definition is used as a key reference, highlighting the complex nature of culture, which encompasses values, traditions, beliefs, lifestyles, and symbolic expressions. From an intercultural perspective, culture performs an essential identity function, providing individuals with a sense of belonging to a community.

The essentialist and constructivist paradigms of culture are examined: the former is criticized for rigidity, while the latter is valued for its ability to explain cultural transformations generated by globalization, mobility, and interaction. Classical theoretical models, such as the "cultural iceberg," are discussed critically, being considered insufficient to capture the complexity and dynamism of cultural phenomena. Contributions from thinkers such as Herder, Spengler, Mead, Malinowski, and Kilani illustrate the evolution of the concept of culture from a static, nationalistic vision to a relational, adaptive, and openness-oriented approach toward otherness.

Ethnicity, nation, and nationalism are analyzed in relation to national culture and to classical and contemporary theories of nationalism. Anthony D. Smith is presented as a central figure through his ethno-symbolist theory, according to which modern nations are built upon a premodern ethnic core consisting of myths, symbols, traditions, and collective memory. The distinction between nation and state is clarified: the state is a political construct, while the nation has a cultural and symbolic foundation. Smith's theory is contrasted with the modernist perspectives of Ernest Gellner, who explains the nation through industrialization and mass education, and Benedict Anderson, who defines nations as "imagined communities" arising through the diffusion of print culture. Additionally, John Hutchinson's contributions are analyzed, particularly his distinction between cultural and political nationalism, emphasizing their complementarity. Multiple forms of nationalism are identified—homogenizing, diasporic, minority-driven for stateness, and transnational—demonstrating the complexity of the phenomenon in historical and geopolitical contexts.

Multiculturalism and interculturality are addressed as distinct responses to contemporary cultural diversity. Multiculturalism is analyzed in its dimensions as demographic reality, ideology, public philosophy, and state policy, illustrated with examples from North America and Europe. Differences between political discourse and institutional practices are

highlighted, as well as critiques of multiculturalism in the context of new global social movements. Recent alternatives, such as civic integration and “muscular liberalism,” are presented as policies emphasizing the adaptation of immigrants to majority values. In contrast, interculturality is proposed as a model oriented toward dialogue, interaction, and cultural negotiation, avoiding community segregation. Will Kymlicka’s contributions underscore the internationalization of multiculturalism and the role of international organizations in promoting minority and indigenous rights, while also noting the limitations in recognition afforded to recent immigrants.

Identity, as a central element of interculturality, is analyzed as a dynamic, plural, and contextual process. Identity is not reduced to cultural belonging, but understood as the outcome of negotiation among multiple dimensions: cultural, social, political, gender, or class. Concepts such as multiple identities, self-identification, and external identification are discussed, highlighting tensions between individual autonomy and social expectations. Ethnic identity is addressed as a particular form of belonging, defined through shared memory and cultural practices, but characterized by flexibility and situationality. Postcolonial perspectives (Homi K. Bhabha) and philosophical reflections (Charles Taylor) complement the analysis, emphasizing the role of discourse, narrative, and moral values in identity formation. Philology and cultural studies are presented as essential fields for investigating these processes, as they examine the symbolic and narrative strategies through which identities are constructed and contested.

The chapter argues that interculturality is not merely a theoretical concept, but an indispensable practice for contemporary societies, providing a framework for critical understanding of diversity, overcoming stereotypes, and fostering democratic coexistence in a world marked by mobility, pluralism, and cultural interdependence.

## Chapter 2 – *Interculturality and Modernity: Exploring Complex Interactions*

The second chapter analyzes the complex relationship between interculturality and modernity, highlighting how these two concepts mutually influence each other and generate profound transformations in contemporary society. The theoretical approach is interdisciplinary, situated at the intersection of sociology, philology, and cultural studies, and emphasizes the continuity of an intellectual tradition inaugurated by the Junimea circle in the



19th century, adapted to the modern, globalized context. Modernity is approached not only as a historical reality but also as a discursive process, in which language and communication play a constitutive role in shaping social and cultural realities.

Drawing on Anthony Giddens' theory, modernity is defined as an ambivalent phenomenon, characterized by reflexivity, the separation of time and space, globalization, and the culture of risk. Modern reflexivity entails a constant evaluation of social practices based on ever-renewed information, which destabilizes certainties and pluralizes discourses. The separation of time from space abstracts social relationships and allows for the transnational circulation of ideas and cultural narratives, while globalization is also understood as a discursive process, supported by mass media and new technologies. The culture of risk, typical of modern societies, is reflected in the language of crisis, uncertainty, and instability, present both in political discourse and contemporary literature. From a philological perspective, modernity thus appears as an open narrative, continuously subject to symbolic renegotiation.

In the context of modernity, interculturality produces ambivalent effects on contemporary society. On the one hand, it generates social tensions manifested through forced assimilation, intolerance, discrimination, or identity conflicts; on the other hand, it creates opportunities for cultural enrichment through processes of hybridization, innovation, and the emergence of new forms of artistic, discursive, and identity expression. Education is identified as a privileged space for intercultural negotiation, capable of promoting tolerance, critical thinking, and dialogue between cultures. From a philological perspective, education is understood as a formative discourse, in which language and educational narratives transmit values related to pluralism and coexistence.

Technological transformations and globalization profoundly reconfigure the forms of communication and cultural circulation. The internet and social networks facilitate unprecedented intercultural interactions, yet simultaneously foster discursive uniformity, cultural falsification, and the fragility of identity representations. International travel and tourism become ambivalent intercultural experiences, oscillating between authenticity and commercial simulacra, while diaspora and migration generate processes of cultural hybridization, often accompanied by identity conflicts. In all these contexts, language plays a central role, functioning as a space for adaptation, resistance, and negotiation of identity.

Traditional media and new digital platforms decisively influence how cultural diversity is perceived and valued. Media representations can stimulate inclusion and intercultural dialogue, but they can also perpetuate stereotypes, marginalization, and polarization. Social networks create both communities of solidarity and mechanisms of disinformation and

propaganda, highlighting the performative character of media discourses. From a philological perspective, the media is a discursive space in which cultural meanings are constructed, negotiated, and contested, and the development of critical interpretive skills becomes essential for a balanced understanding of otherness.

Intercultural dialogue is analyzed as a fundamental practice of modernity, manifested in urban spaces, professional environments, art, education, and cultural diplomacy. Urbanization generates plural communities, but also risks of segregation and marginalization, while the globalization of labor requires advanced intercultural competencies. Art and culture are presented as privileged instruments of dialogue, capable of transcending linguistic barriers and contributing to social transformation. In this context, intercultural dialogue is defined as a process of negotiating difference, in which the “intercultural speaker” emerges as a reflexive mediator, open to otherness and able to manage symbolic and identity conflicts.

In the analysis of social identity, Richard Jenkins’ perspective is central, redefining identity as a discursive and performative process rather than a fixed essence. Identity is constructed and legitimized through language, interaction, and representation, with each discursive act becoming a strategy of self-representation. Language has an ideological function, participating in the consolidation or contestation of social hierarchies and in the distribution of symbolic power. Thus, critical discourse analysis becomes indispensable for understanding the mechanisms through which identities are produced and negotiated in modernity.

Finally, the social self is conceived as the result of a continuous discursive performance, adapted to context, audience, and power relations. In digital modernity, identity becomes fluid, multivocal, and dependent on individuals’ ability to adjust their discourses in order to remain credible and legitimate. From a philological perspective, this theoretical framework confirms the central role of language in identity construction and highlights interculturality as an indispensable practice for an inclusive, reflexive, and democratic modernity.

### Chapter 3 – *Interculturality in Contemporary Education*

The third chapter analyzes interculturality in contemporary education from an interdisciplinary perspective, relevant both for philology and the educational sciences, highlighting education as a fundamental response to the complex challenges of today’s world. The acceleration of socio-political, economic, and technological changes has transformed

education into a universal and continuous project that transcends the institutional framework of schools and extends over the entire life of the individual. Education is thus redefined as a permanent, dynamic, and open-ended process, indispensable for adaptation to global realities. In the current era, the focus shifts toward lifelong learning, self-education, and global education. Education no longer entails merely the extensive accumulation of information but emphasizes the development of cognitive, attitudinal, and adaptive competencies, supported through active-participatory methods and modern educational technologies. Lifelong learning reconfigures the relationship between education and self-education and transforms schools into continuous formation processes, integrated within social dynamics. Within this framework, diversity is recognized as a constitutive reality of the contemporary world, refuting the idea of pure and impermeable cultures and becoming a fundamental premise for intercultural dialogue. The so-called “new educations” respond to the need for adapting individuals and communities to cultural plurality and to the global challenges of the 21st century.

Contemporary education is no longer conceived exclusively as a tool for knowledge transmission but as a multidimensional and interdisciplinary process, integrated into the major challenges of today’s world. From a philological perspective, education becomes a discursive space in which values, identities, and cultural diversity are constructed and negotiated, contributing to the configuration of a new global humanism. In this sense, intercultural education is promoted at the European and international levels as a methodological approach aimed at valuing diversity and supporting democratic coexistence.

The theoretical foundations of intercultural education are provided by contributions from the social sciences and humanities, including social psychology, sociology, intercultural psychology, cultural anthropology, and ethnology, which offer analytical tools to understand stereotypes, acculturation processes, social conflicts, and the relationships between individuals, groups, and culture. UNESCO reports and the International Commission on Education in the 21st century integrate intercultural education into the framework of the four pillars of education, emphasizing intercultural dialogue as a respectful and free exchange aimed at reducing discrimination and promoting global solidarity. Identity is understood as the result of relating to otherness, and overcoming ethnocentrism becomes an essential condition for intercultural coexistence.

An important conceptual distinction is made between multiculturalism and interculturality. The former denotes the parallel coexistence of cultural groups, while the latter implies interaction, exchange, and symbolic negotiation. Interculturality is thus associated with the dynamism of cultural relations and reciprocal recognition, avoiding the risk of cultural

isolation. From an applied perspective, intercultural education seeks to develop intercultural competence, grounded in the awareness of one's own cultural identity and openness to otherness, as an antidote to ethnocentrism, racism, and xenophobia. Although European and national legislative frameworks support this approach, practical implementation remains limited in certain contexts, including Romania.

Intercultural education is also analyzed as a social process extending beyond the school environment, influenced by media, art, sports, and culture. Media emerges as a major informal educational vector, significantly impacting the formation of perceptions about otherness. Sports and music are presented as privileged spaces for intercultural dialogue, capable of building bridges between cultures and promoting values such as peace and solidarity. Intercultural activities proposed for formal and non-formal education contribute to reducing cultural distances and fostering mutual acceptance, strengthening the communal dimension of education.

Theoretically, interculturalism is defined as a dynamic process of cultural negotiation, in which culture is conceived both as a symbolic heritage and as a process of creation and transformation. Art and literature are valued as anticipatory forms of social and cultural reflection, capable of shaping the collective imagination and supporting the idea of a fraternity that transcends national borders. From a philological perspective, language and discourse are central to the construction of identity and otherness, and intercultural competence involves not only language knowledge but also the ability to interpret, relate, and reflect critically on cultural differences.

Comparative analyses of the development of intercultural education in different educational systems highlight how educational policies have evolved in response to intensified migration and the diversification of social structures. The examined models demonstrate that integrating diversity requires flexible educational strategies adapted to national contexts and that valuing differences is more effective than denying them. In all these contexts, language functions as an essential instrument of inclusion or exclusion, and intercultural education emerges as a socio-discursive process in which politics, culture, and communication interact to construct models of democratic coexistence.

Overall, the chapter emphasizes intercultural education as an interdisciplinary and polymorphic endeavor, articulated between school, community, and the wider cultural space. From a philological perspective, it confirms the fundamental role of language and discourse in negotiating identities and promoting intercultural dialogue, supporting the necessity of

developing intercultural competence capable of valuing diversity and ensuring peaceful coexistence in contemporary societies.

#### Chapter 4 – *The Problem of Interculturality in Junimea*

This chapter analyzes the issue of interculturality within the context of Junimea, highlighting how the nineteenth century represented a decisive moment for Romanian culture in terms of modernization and alignment with European values, while also being a period of intense identity tensions. In a cultural space previously marked by the affirmation of Latinity through the Transylvanian School and the 1848 generation, Junimea assumed the role of mediator between tradition and modernity, proposing a form of critical synchronization with the West. Educated at European universities, the members of Junimea promoted the professionalization of literature, critical dialogue, and the rejection of sterile imitation, summarized by Titu Maiorescu in the theory of “forms without content,” which advocates for organic modernization adapted to Romanian realities.

Junimea decisively contributed to redefining the literary canon and integrating Romanian literature into the European value circuit, without denying Western influences, but adapting them critically. Romanian cultural identity thus formed under a constant tension between the claimed Latinity and the often rejected or marginalized Balkanism. As Maria Todorova points out, Romanians exhibit a cultural narcissism oriented toward the West, even though works such as those of I.L. Caragiale reveal an experienced and artistically embraced Balkan reality. This ambivalence is reflected both in literary production and in the personal lives of Junimea members, whose intercultural openness is visible even at the biographical level.

The intercultural dimension is also strongly manifested in the political debates of the time, particularly around Article 7 of the 1866 Constitution and the Jewish question. Its revision, imposed by the Congress of Berlin, generated a discursive conflict between European pressures for emancipation and internal fears regarding sovereignty and national identity. From a philological perspective, the speeches of Titu Maiorescu and Mihai Eminescu illustrate two paradigms of Romanian modernity: one moderate, oriented toward dialogue and European integration, and the other radical-nationalist, perceived as a defensive reaction to external interventions. The issue of minorities thus became not only a legal matter but also a field of symbolic negotiation between tradition and modernity.

The involvement of Junimea members in political life reinforced this intercultural and European profile. Their affiliation with the Conservative Party did not imply rigid conservatism but a moderate, Anglo-Saxon-inspired approach, based on pragmatism, civic sense, and respect for institutions. Western models – British, German, or Spanish – were critically assumed, and the Junimea ideology constituted a synthesis of stability and reform. Figures such as Titu Maiorescu and P.P. Carp promoted an anti-utopian political discourse, oriented toward social responsibility, individual autonomy, and the public good, contributing to the modernization of Romanian political life.

Stereotypes played an important role in shaping the intercultural relationships of the era, analyzed as cognitive and discursive mechanisms for simplifying social reality. Drawing on Thomas's Law and Lippmann's theories, the chapter shows that stereotypes function both as tools of integration and as means of exclusion. Examples from Eminescu's correspondence or from Maiorescu's writings and experiences illustrate how ethnic and cultural stereotypes regulate in-group/out-group relations, reflecting personal frustrations, symbolic hierarchies, and identity tensions. These are not mere clichés but discursive structures with real impact on the perception of otherness.

Overall, the chapter demonstrates that Junimea represents a fundamental moment in the history of Romanian interculturality, articulating a complex cultural identity situated between Europeanization and local specificity. Through literature, criticism, politics, and public discourse, Junimea members contributed to defining a reflective Romanian modernity, in which interculturality functions as a continuous negotiation between identity and otherness, between tradition and European synchronization.

## Chapter 5 – *Titu Maiorescu, Spiritus Rector of Junimea*

This chapter highlights the central figure of Junimea: one of the main founders of modern Romanian culture. Formed in the context of the establishment of the Romanian state, he benefited from a solid European education, studying in Vienna, Berlin, Giessen, and the Sorbonne, acquiring humanistic competencies in philosophy, letters, and law. This education provided him with a broad cultural openness and a profoundly European spirit, oriented toward the values of German and English classics, whom he considered benchmarks for reorienting Romanian culture.

Returning to the United Principalities, Maiorescu brought with him a modern mentality situated at the intersection of Eastern tradition and the Western spirit of modernity. His

Germanophile orientation, confirmed in his personal writings, placed him within a cultural model perceived as authentic and compatible with Romanian specificity. In this sense, Nichifor Crainic, during the interwar period, reinforced this perspective, asserting the superiority of German influence, associated with depth and organicity, in contrast to the French model, considered superficial and alienating.

Through his education and ideological positioning, Maiorescu became a cultural mediator between the Romanian and European spaces, decisively contributing to defining a modern identity for national culture. The critic rejected the grounding of politics on instincts, resentments, and class hatred, advocating for a culture of civic responsibility based on self-determination and rational balance. This position aligns with the effort to articulate a flexible social identity, negotiated between tradition and modernity, through constant reference to European values.

The publication of his parliamentary speeches in 1897 marked not only a synthesis of the Romanian state's evolution but also a self-portrait of Junimea's engagement in cultural and political life. Although Junimea initially refused political involvement, under the influence of historical context, they adopted a moderate conservative position, integrating culture and education at the center of their program. Examples such as support for Romanian schools in Transylvania or criticism of preferential funding for foreign theaters demonstrate Maiorescu's attachment to identity values and the role of cultural institutions as centers of national unity. Analyzed in light of Richard Jenkins' theory of social identity, these speeches gain additional relevance. Jenkins defines identity as a dynamic process of negotiation, maintained through discourses, symbols, and shared practices. This perspective is evident in Maiorescu's interventions, promoting a responsible discursive model designed to conserve traditional values while revitalizing them through reference to European reality. In this sense, Maiorescu understood social identity as a balance between self-protection and openness, between preserving cultural specificity and adapting to change.

Thus, Maiorescu's conception anticipates modern theories of social identity: the nation is a living organism in a continuous process of reconfirmation, in which culture and education function as central pillars of social cohesion and European integration.

The analysis consistently expresses a dual orientation: intercultural awareness and a European spirit. From adolescence, his cultural formation plans, recorded in his journal, aimed to integrate Romanian literature into the European cultural circuit, a direction that remained fundamental for his entire critical activity. In *Critical Research* (1867), Maiorescu illustrates the comparative method, analyzing Romanian literature in relation to classical and modern

European models, while also explaining the difficulties arising from the late emergence of cultivated Romanian culture.

In *On Our Folk Poetry* (1868), the critic recognizes in Vasile Alecsandri's collection not only a literary document but also an act of identity, legitimizing Romanian culture in a European context. Folk poetry is valued for its authenticity of expression, naturalness of feeling, and function as a "visiting card" of Romanian specificity in a Romantic Europe interested in ethnic diversity.

A turning point is the essay *Against the Current in Romanian Culture* (1868), where Maiorescu formulates the famous theory of "forms without content." The critic denounces the servile imitation of Western models and the lack of an authentic social and cultural foundation to support modern institutions. This vision, anticipating contemporary postcolonial perspectives, highlights the risk of superficial modernization, reduced to appearances and empty forms, which compromises the very idea of progress. From this standpoint, Maiorescu maintains a critical stance toward the 1848 liberalism and advocates consolidating the national "content" before adopting foreign "forms."

In relation to current theories on globalization (John Tomlinson), Maiorescu's perspective gains additional relevance: his critique of forms without content equates to a rejection of globalized, ahistorical, and "memory-less" culture in favor of a modernity anchored in national identity. The "kitsch man," brilliantly illustrated by Caragiale, becomes the expression of this pseudo-modernity based on imitation.

Yet, Maiorescu does not reject the universality of European values. In *The New Direction in Romanian Poetry and Prose* (1872), he welcomes the emergence of authentic lyricism, exemplified by Alecsandri and especially Eminescu, demonstrating that Romanian literature can become European by emphasizing its national specificity. Subsequent developments confirm this insight: in *Poets and Critics* (1886), the critic notes the consolidation of the new direction and the maturation of Romanian literature.

Studies dedicated to Caragiale and Eminescu mark the peaks of Maiorescu's critical thought. The playwright is praised for the originality of social typologies and the caricatural satirization of forms without content, while Eminescu becomes the exemplary figure of universal genius, whose destiny would have been identical regardless of context. This universalism aligns with Junimea's program of Europeanizing Romanian literature, evident also in the German reception of translations (Alecsandri, Eminescu, Slavici, Negruzzi), as Maiorescu records in *Romanian Literature and Foreign Countries* (1882).



Thus, Maiorescu's criticism functions as an intercultural discourse par excellence: it values national tradition as the foundation for modernization, rejects sterile imitation, and legitimizes Romanian literature within the European horizon by emphasizing its specificity. In this way, Maiorescu establishes a lasting paradigm for the relationship between Romanian cultural identity and European universality.

## Chapter 6 – *Problematizations of Interculturality in Eminescu's Journalism*

This chapter analyzes Mihai Eminescu's journalism as a central field for studying interculturality and identity construction during the Junimea era. His journalistic texts cover diverse areas—domestic and foreign politics, culture, education, economy, history, and religion—and are remarkable for their elaborate literary style, which transcends the mere requirements of journalism. Eminescu employs literary tropes, metaphors, and complex rhetorical structures, combining cultivated language with popular speech. This stylistic mixture creates a “polarized compositional alloy,” putting Romanian oral tradition in dialogue with European culture—a procedure of interculturality par excellence. In his articles, the reader is actively involved, becoming a “reader-character” who observes, reflects, and judges the unfolding events—a strategy that transforms journalism into a critical and subversive “discursive spectacle.”

A central pillar of Eminescu's analysis is the critique of “forms without content,” a concept initiated by Titu Maiorescu. Eminescu denounces the mechanical imitation of institutions and Western models without adapting them to Romania's historical and social realities. In articles such as the one from December 11, 1877, written in the context of the War of Independence, he uses the architectural metaphor of “the old stone house versus the French paper palace” to illustrate the conflict between durable structures and superficial imports. His critique also targets the gap between elites and the people: cosmopolitan pseudo-elites, parasitic and disconnected from the vitality of the authentic populace, are contrasted with the popular masses, presented as carriers of authentic, uncorrupted vitality. This perspective reflects Eminescu's concern for organic modernization, in which progress is built on tradition and social experience rather than superficial imitation.

Eminescu's journalism valorizes Romania's geographical and political position as a marginal, liminal space at the confluence of Western, Slavic, and Eastern civilizations. This marginality is presented not as a deficit but as an opportunity to construct a counter-narrative of resistance, aimed at protecting cultural identity and promoting intercultural dialogue. In

articles dedicated to Dobrogea (1878), Eminescu advocates for competent administration tolerant of the ethnic and religious diversity of new populations (Turks, Tatars, Greeks, Armenians, Jews), calling for respect for democratic principles and the valorization of alterity. This approach demonstrates the poet-journalist's awareness of the necessity of intercultural integration and positive hybridization in constructing the Romanian state.

The symbolic construction of the nation in Eminescu's journalism occurs through a dual narrative: national martyrdom and the culpabilization of political elites. In the article *Dorobanții* (December 30, 1877), Eminescu captures the miserable condition of Romanian soldiers—hungry, sick, and lacking equipment—violently contrasted with the heroic image propagated by the liberal press. His critique targets the incompetence of rulers and the cynicism of the elite, describing the “upper mob” as a foreign body lacking patriotic sense and valorizing the people as Romania's only positive force. Comparisons with the Venetian Republic, the Netherlands, or Russia highlight the organicist vision of the nation: culture, labor, and morality are the durable foundation of the state, in opposition to the superficial “coating” of imported institutions.

From the perspective of postcolonial theories and Homi K. Bhabha's studies, Eminescu's journalism can be read as an analysis of marginality and otherness. Romania, situated at the intersection of the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires, becomes a liminal space where journalistic discourse contests external domination and reaffirms cultural and political sovereignty. Eminescu emerges as a “pioneer of postcolonial studies” through his critique of Austrian and Russian expansionism and his advocacy for preserving cultural identity. Marginality becomes both a tool for the nation's self-preservation and a terrain for developing intercultural dialogue.

While opposing “rushed civilization” and cultural mimicry, Eminescu's journalism simultaneously incorporates tolerance and respect for ethnic and religious diversity. This generates an early intercultural model, based on balance, integration, and beneficial cultural hybridization, especially evident in his commentary on Dobrogea. At the same time, his radical critiques of the elite and superficial modernization emphasize the need for organic state and cultural construction, in opposition to unadapted imported models.

Therefore, Eminescu's journalism sits at the intersection of literature and journalism, social criticism and identity construction, Romanian tradition and European culture. It combines political and geopolitical analysis with moral and critical reflection, transforming historical and social events into a symbolic construction of the nation. Eminescu uses Romania's geopolitical marginality to construct a counter-narrative of resistance, promoting interculturality and

dialogue among diverse ethnic groups while respecting the principles of tolerance and integration. He is thus not only the poet of the nation but also a visionary of intercultural relations, and his journalism represents an early example of critical, postcolonial, and identity-oriented reporting.

## Chapter 7 – I.L. Caragiale: *An Authentic Intercultural Sensibility*

The work and biography of I.L. Caragiale provide an example of profound intercultural sensibility, shaped by his foreign (Greek-Albanian) origin and the experience of a multilingual and multicultural environment in nineteenth-century Bucharest. This origin is not merely a biographical imprint but proves to be the critical engine of his work, shaping a vision capable of analyzing Romanian society both from within and from outside, mediating between different cultural matrices. Caragiale thus develops a dual perspective: oriented toward the West, through aspiration to “European civilization,” and toward the East, through familiarity with the Balkan-Phanariot universe, enabling him to formulate realistic satire with clear ethical structure and remarkable social depth.

A central aspect of this sensibility is how Caragiale addresses the theme of minorities and intercultural relations. In *A Lost Letter*, through the character Cațavencu, he ridicules the discriminatory logic that blamed Jews for the failures of Romanian modernization. The reflex of exclusion is satirically inverted: if all bankrupts are “Jews,” then Romanians should claim the right to fail. This ironic inversion demonstrates his lucidity regarding ethnic stereotypes and his capacity to critically analyze social mechanisms of marginalization. The Constanța Conference (1898), as reported by Petru Vulcan, ridicules café political mania, anti-Semitic slogans, and the self-indulgence of the majority, highlighting self-irony as a tool of social self-regulation and critical analysis.

In the novella *An Easter Torch* (1889), Caragiale highlights institutional failure and the psychology of minority fear through the character Leiba Zibal. The corrupt sub-prefect accepts bribes and mocks the victim, who is placed in a realistic context: the abolition of the death penalty, rising criminality, and isolated inns. The victim, though apparently passive, becomes an active agent of violence, complicating the scheme of guilt and providing a socio-historical explanation for behavior, replacing prejudices with contextual analysis. Caragiale alternates, with self-irony, between out-group and in-group perspectives, constructing an egalitarian ethic: no people are inherently superior or inferior, and justice and morality must be universal.

The Balkan environment of his childhood and Greek-Albanian origin are complemented by his marriage to Alexandrina Burelly, of French lineage, adding a Western, urban, and Romanized dimension to his cultural universe. This combination of matrices makes Caragiale an observer of nineteenth-century social typologies: he frequents political, literary, bourgeois, and provincial spaces, transforming his “hunger for experience” into material for realistic and emblematic satirical literature. Within Junimea, Creangă represents popular archaic, Eminescu—the mythical romantic, and Caragiale—the classicizing realist who documents and disciplines social material through lucidity and formal refinement.

Caragiale’s relationship with Junimea evolved from support to critical divergence: he denounces the social inferiority of the artist, institutional sabotage blocking his appointment at the National Theatre, and the authorities’ hesitations in implementing reforms. His departure to Berlin (1904/1905) responds to this frustration, seeking a European “civilizing” experience: order, discipline, cleanliness. Berlin refines his aesthetic taste and confers a European aura but also produces loneliness, diminishing his direct social relevance. Intensive correspondence with Zarifopol, Urechia, and Gherea transcribes his longing for the country and highlights the ethics of “European” discourse, maintaining assumed Romanian identity and constructing the epistolary as a major literary genre with reflections on the condition of intellectual labor and social responsibility of the writer.

Caragiale exhibits a dual intercultural openness. Toward the West, he aspires to prestigious literary and political models: Shakespeare, Molière, Machiavelli, Dante. Machiavelli, in particular, becomes a tool for social and political analysis, illustrating strategies of power, corruption, and manipulation—from Trahanache and Dandanache to Zoe, transposed as a figure of calculated power. Italy represents a constant thread, visible in Machiavellian reinterpretations (*Kir Ianulea* ↔ *Belfagor*), in wedding travels, European tours, and musical-cultural interest; Italian literary references (Dante, Machiavelli, Alexander Borgia) combine with local realism. Toward the East, his sensibility derives from the Bucharest slum and Phanariot traditions, allowing critical analysis of duplicity, hypocrisy, and Balkan social typologies. This duality produces layered dramaturgy, with texts operating on multiple reception levels—surface and deep messages for different audiences.

Literary Balkanism is valorized through typologies such as Mitică, the “Parisian of the Orient,” omnipresent, loquacious, and reductive in critical spirit, a product of Bucharest’s bourgeoisie. *Moft* becomes the conceptual base of satire: expression of appearances, substitution of values through rituals and Western attire, and superficial management of modernization. Compared with Aleko Konstantinov and the Bai Ganiu typology, Caragiale

captures the universal phenomenon of social and institutional appearance masquerade. Cafés, beer halls, and salons become semi-public spaces for social observation and civic spectacle, where politics, press, and social games unfold performatively, documented by literature with precision and humor.

The volume *New Sketches* (1910) consolidates Caragiale's intercultural vocation. *Kir Ianulea* combines the Phanariot era, analysis of prejudices, and character studies, integrating social realism with historical and folkloric elements. *Calul dracului* adds a fabulous and initiatory dimension, while *Pastramă trufandă* explores the shock of otherness in the judicial space, using Turkishisms and linguistic localization. *Abu-Hassan* addresses identity and substitution games between periphery and center. Berlinian exile does not produce mimicry but critical distance and lucidity. Multiple cultural matrices are integrated into a poetics of transposition: models are seeded in Romanian soil, and resulting types maintain universality precisely through localization.

Caragiale creatively filters cultural sources: Western models are honored but reinterpreted, and Balkan-Oriental elements are transposed into a critical and playful literary register. Satire, *moft*, and attention to social detail become instruments of civic hygiene and exposure of imposture. *New Sketches* can be read as a manual of intercultural sensibility: East and West coexist critically, playfully, and morally; his typologies remain relevant, revealing mechanisms by which appearance imposes itself as norm and how literature can protect civic consciousness. Caragiale thus becomes a classic author of peripheral modernity, mediating between Western canon and Eastern-Balkan imagination, preserving Romanian identity through idiom and European sensibility through structure, ambition, and the creative filter of his aesthetic vision.

## Chapter 8 – Ioan Slavici: A Complex Cultural Identity

Chapter 8 examines Ioan Slavici's complex cultural identity, approaching his work from a postcolonial perspective. The author emphasizes that Romanian literature recognized

art not only as an aesthetic form but also as an instrument of identity construction and as a space of hybridity. Hybridity manifests as a mix of cultural practices and signs arising from asymmetrical contacts between centers of power and peripheries, reflecting the interdependence of dominant and marginal cultures. The case study of Slavici is representative: raised in a multiethnic and multi-confessional Transylvanian environment, he internalizes an ethic of openness, according to Anatole France's principle, "superior people have an open heart." Biographical experience transforms aesthetically in his prose, reproducing the complexity and tensions of the Transylvanian cultural milieu.

In the novel *Mara*, the concept of hybridity acquires multiple dimensions—sociological, psychological, and axiological. The novel investigates polymorphic otherness—ethnic, religious, and class-based—and how it shapes character identities. Love serves as a narrative mechanism for testing the relationship with the Other, allowing a modern, imagological reading of the text. The character Mara evidences tension between adaptation and resistance: although living in a cosmopolitan environment, she anchors her identity in her faith, revealing the potentially oppressive aspect of cultural assimilation. Hybridity is also linguistic, with cross-developments and borrowings of German and Hungarian origin densifying the prose's stylistic texture. Slavici's intellectual profile—familiar with Central European and Western literatures and philosophies, multilingual—completes the image of an author with multiple, open identities.

The analysis conceptualizes Transylvania as a space of transition, contact, and negotiation between West and East. The idea of a "bridge" functions as both an identity metaphor and a model for balancing cultural, political, and confessional differences. Applied to Slavici's work, the notion operates on two levels: contextual-historical, where Austro-Hungarian Transylvania is a multiethnic, multilingual, multi-confessional framework; and aesthetic-discursive, where Slavici's prose configures a topography of otherness between native values and external influences. Even if the term *Mitteleuropa* is not explicitly used, themes such as tensions between conservatism and change, community ethics and economic imperatives, homogenization and difference, reproduce the logic of a Central European space. Filologically, this "hybrid centrality" manifests through discourse stratification, regionalisms, lexical interferences, and symbols of passage or negotiation (borders, markets, bridges, itinerancy). Language thus becomes a marker of coexistence and identity fragmentation, anchoring the social space in a recognizable Mitteleuropean context.

*Mara* enacts this model: Transylvania is not merely a setting but the parameter within which identity is constituted. The plot of economic, familial, and confessional negotiations

reflects a European East–West interface model, where modernization passes through local filters, and identity is relationally constructed. Mara, as a female entrepreneur, uses capital for social mobility and public recognition while simultaneously negotiating the image of a devoted mother and preserving economic interests. Religious identity becomes an additional plane of testing: Mara’s reaction to her nephew’s Catholic baptism reveals the close link between confessional identity and ethnic belonging, while characters such as Persida navigate multiple norms, reconciling differences through life experience and the morality of suffering. Multiple identities coexist and are validated contextually, with subjective coherence resulting from the management of competing meanings.

The novel’s stylistic plane supports the theme: alternating focus between community perspective and interior perspective reflects Mitteleuropean mimesis, where institutions and social idioms mediate the circulation of meanings between East and West. Descriptive and lyrical realism, economic details, and community rituals not only document differences but mediate them. The novel’s ending does not propose a idyll of homogeneity but the possibility of coexistence: characters retain their identity core while learning to operate at the interface, where community rules meet individual desires. Modernization appears as an interlocutory process, and interculturality as a structural principle.

In the autobiographical volume *The World I Passed Through*, Slavici provides a cartography of identity formation in a multiethnic Central European space. Identity is not given but results from negotiation between multiple affiliations, institutions, and historical contexts. The triad of home–school–church ensures cohesion, while proximity to other confessions and languages requires self-definition and critical refinement. Through the pedagogy of empathy and contact, childhood and youth become laboratories for intercultural competencies: addressing the Other in their language, respecting difference, hospitality, and solidarity become norms of coexistence. An Edward T. Hall reading reveals a polychronic space where relationships precede rules, time is elastic, and meanings circulate implicitly.

Slavici’s memoirs demystify stereotypes and function as an “ethics of contact.” Ethnic, linguistic, or confessional prejudices are countered through family pedagogy, linguistic competence, and constant exposure to diversity. Cities such as Arad and Timișoara serve as social laboratories where stereotypes are reexamined, and identity is built between self-identification and hetero-identification, loyalty to the community and openness to the Other. Difference is not denied but integrated, becoming a resource for knowledge and coexistence. Overall, the chapter shows that Slavici’s work and memoirs offer a model of multiple, hybrid, and negotiated identity. Literature becomes a tool of cultural mediation and identity

construction capable of operating at the interface between tradition and modernity, ethnic and cultural, collective codes and individual experience. Transylvania thus becomes an ideal Mitteleuropean space for understanding the complexity of intercultural coexistence: a space where difference is the norm, and literature is the medium through which this ethics of coexistence is transmitted, remembered, and validated.

## **Conclusions**

The Junimea era constitutes a fundamental moment in defining the cultural, social, and political modernity of 19th-century Romania, highlighting a deeply intercultural society, in which ethnic, linguistic, and confessional diversity is not limited to mere demographic observation, but becomes a catalyst for identity transformation, social dialogue, and cultural



affirmation. Romania of those years, shaped by the annexation of Dobrogea, by the significant presence of the Jewish community, by Western settlers, and by various foreign influences, emerges as a space of cultural convergence, in which interactions with alterity generate simultaneously tensions and opportunities for development, compelling the community to constantly negotiate collective identity and to redefine traditional values in relation to external models. This process of interculturality is not a passive phenomenon, but an active one, in which literature, journalism, education, and civic engagement become essential instruments for building a society capable of transforming difference into a creative and identity-affirming resource.

Culture, in this context, proves to be a dynamic process, not a static set of norms or traditions, being constantly subjected to reinterpretation, negotiation, and adaptation through social interaction and intercultural exchange. The Junimea members perceived the importance of this balance between tradition and modernity, between indigenous values and Western influences, proposing a critical, rational, and balanced modernization, which allows the integration of progress without compromising national identity. In this sense, Junimea functioned as a true intercultural laboratory, where literature, criticism, education, and civic engagement intersect to construct a society capable of negotiating differences, valuing diversity, and building a model of modernity anchored in Romania's social and cultural reality. Identity, in the Junimea vision, is not seen as an immutable given, but as a continuous process of construction, shaped through social interaction, public discourse, and cultural narrative. This performativity of identity reflects both the concerns of modern theorists and the concrete practice of the era's intellectuals, who showed that collective identity is affirmed through education, culture, and discourse, but also through the capacity to negotiate contact with alterity. Titu Maiorescu becomes, in this sense, a central point of Romanian critical modernity. Through his famous critique of "forms without content," he warns of the danger of superficially imitating Western models, promoting an organic modernization, attentive to Romanian specificity and oriented toward the construction of a coherent social and cultural identity. His literary, journalistic, and civic activity offers a model of flexible, rational, and European identity, which manages to integrate external influences without allowing them to dilute Romania's cultural specificity.

Mihai Eminescu, through his journalism, continues and deepens these concerns, elaborating a national and ethnic narrative that valorizes marginality, alterity, and cultural hybridity as resources for affirming collective identity. His journalistic texts demonstrate how narrative can be an instrument for the symbolic edification of the nation, but also a means of

critical analysis of Romania's relationship with external pressures or Western models. The critique of "forms without content," resumed and amplified by Eminescu, highlights both the dynamics of interculturality and the necessity of a balanced modernization, which does not limit itself to imitation but involves understanding, critical selection, and adaptation to the Romanian social and cultural context.

I.L. Caragiale illustrates how intercultural sensitivity can be transformed into a complex and realist-satirical literary practice. His Balkan-alogen origin and European education confer a dual openness: toward Western values, through appreciation of major literary and dramatic models, and toward Eastern, Balkan traditions, of childhood and the cultural environment in which he was formed. This dual orientation is reflected in his works, which operate on multiple levels of reading, capable of capturing everyday reality and its cultural foundations. Through the typology of Mitică and the satirical analysis of Bucharest society, Caragiale demonstrates that local culture can critically dialogue with European models, constructing a coherent but non-uniform literary and social identity, capable of reflecting the complexity and ambivalence of a society in transition.

Ioan Slavici provides another eloquent example of the influence of interculturality on identity construction. His formation in a multiethnic and multiconfessional Transylvanian environment is reflected in his works, especially in the novel *Mara*, where alterity becomes an instrument for testing the self and the relationship with the Other. His memoir, *Lumea prin care am trecut*, demonstrates that identity is built through interaction, negotiation, and understanding, and that stereotypes and prejudices can be overcome through education and dialogue, transforming diversity into a resource for constructing a complex, flexible identity capable of functioning in multicultural spaces.

Intercultural education thus emerges as a central element in consolidating a modern and harmonious society. It surpasses the framework of traditional schooling, integrating multiple influences, from mass media to arts, sports, and culture, and constitutes a mechanism through which the values of intercultural dialogue and democratic coexistence are transmitted to new generations. The Junimea experience can be considered an early model of intercultural education, applied at the cultural, literary, and civic levels, demonstrating that the formation of a society capable of negotiating differences and valuing diversity begins through education and awareness of the importance of dialogue with alterity.

Overall, the Junimea era reveals that 19th-century Romania was not an isolated space, but a fertile ground for intercultural dialogue, cultural hybridity, and the affirmation of critical modernity. Through literature, journalism, education, and political engagement, the Junimea

members mediated Western and Balkan influences, negotiated national identity, and contributed to the formation of a European culture with strong local roots. Interculturality thus became not only a social fact but also an instrument of identity affirmation, a resource through which diversity was transformed into value, and marginality into a space for reflection, resistance, and critical elaboration. The models proposed by Junimea remain relevant today, offering solid benchmarks for the analysis of contemporary culture, literature, and education, and demonstrating that a society capable of negotiating differences and valuing diversity can achieve a balance between identity and openness, between tradition and modernity, and between national specificity and universal European values.