From frontier Orientalism to transnational communities: Images of the Tatars
in modern Romanian literature

Frontier Orientalism. Tatars – literary images. Romanian literature. Transnational communities. Ethnic minorities.

This article is both an analysis of the image of Tatars in modern Romanian literature (c. 1830–1948) and a theoretical reflection on the manner in which, in some Central and Eastern European literatures, such as the Romanian one, “frontier Orientalism” (Andre Gingrich) contributed to the creation of transnational communities. Thus, although the Tatars are not very frequently depicted in Romanian literature, they have acquired a pivotal function here. In contrast to the image of Oriental Muslims in the Western area of Central and Eastern Europe, which tends to polarize along the ethical axis of good vs. evil (e. g., the Bosnian vs. the Turks), Tatars have an ambiguous function in modern Romanian literature, caused both by their Orientalization as a Muslim Other and by the discovery of various ethnic similarities with the Romanians, generated by their common status of “small(er) nations”.

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