

THE LEGITIMIZING TOOLKIT OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST ANTHEMS. IDEOLOGY AND LINGUISTIC IMAGINARY

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ABSTRACT. *The Legitimizing Toolkit of the Romanian Communist Anthems. Ideology and Linguistic Imaginary.* Anthems are associated with nationhood and are part of its legitimizing toolkit. Their complete interpretation usually goes through the analysis of the linguistic imaginary, namely of the *mythemes* of the age, of the unconscious representations of the community, identifiable in rhythmical patriotic verses. National myths, recycled in patriotic songs Romanians have created since the 19th century, have been coloured differently, according to the ideology of the era. However, during 1948-1989 a double orientation could be “read” in the three national anthems: the natural insinuation of the community’s unconscious projections on the one hand, and the evidence of ideological charge meant to change Romanians’ representations of national reality on the other. Thus, the anthems *Broken Shackles (Zdrobite cătușe)*, *We Glorify Thee, Romania (Te slăvim, Românie)*, and *Three colours (Trei culori)* mark different stages in the communist discourse, even if they seemingly reuse the same motifs specific to the imaginary of the time: *the country, the flag, the proletariat, the victorious past, the bright future and the “crushed” enemies.*

Keywords: *national imaginary, identity legitimation, mythemes, anthems, homeland, ritual, communism, wooden language*

REZUMAT. *Instrumentarul legitimator al imnurilor comuniste românești. Ideologie și imaginar lingvistic.* Imnurile se asociază cu națiunea și fac parte din instrumentarul ei legitimator. Interpretarea completă a acestor creații trece,

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de obicei, prin analiza imaginarului lingvistic, respectiv a *mitemelor* epocii, a reprezentărilor inconștiente ale comunității, identificabile în versurile patriotice ritmate. Miturile naționale, reciclate în cântecele patriotice pe care le-au creat românii începând cu secolul al XIX-lea, au fost colorate diferit, în funcție de ideologia epocii. În perioada 1948-1989, în cele trei imnuri naționale, poate fi „citită” însă o dublă orientare: insinuarea firească a proiecțiilor inconștiente ale comunității, pe de o parte, și evidența încărcăturii ideologice, menite să schimbe reprezentările românilor despre realitatea națională, pe de altă parte. Așadar, imnurile *Zdrobite cătușe*, *Te slăvim, Românie* și *Trei culori* marchează etape diferite ale discursului comunist, chiar dacă aparent reiau aceleași motive specifice imaginarului vremii: *patria*, *drapelul*, *proletariatul*, *trecutul victorios*, *viitorul luminos* și *dușmanii „zdrobiți”*. Explorarea imaginarului lingvistic pune în evidență modificările încărcăturii semantice și simbolice, de la un imn la altul.

Cuvinte-cheie: *imaginar național, legitimare identitară, miteme, imnuri, patrie, ritual, comunism, limbă de lemn*

1. Introduction

After more than six decades of constitutional monarchy, Romania enters, in 1947, a long communist period that would end with the 1989 Revolution. Together with the flag, the coat of arms and the updated history, the anthem becomes a strong legitimizing instrument for the new leadership and is changed three times under the totalitarian regime of the Romanian dictators Gheorghe Gheorghiu Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu. The first era promotes Russian internationalism, “unity” with the “liberating Soviet people” through the *Broken Shackles* and *We Glorify Thee, Romania* anthems, while the last one, *Three colours*, whose introduction is supervised by Ceaușescu himself, aims to be an aspirational symbol of “humane communism”.

Unlike the present anthem, the communist songs are only to a small extent an echo of the collective imaginary, establishing themselves more as forms of a controlled management of national symbols, a profitable endeavour for the socialist order. Although anthems have a dense mythological charge and they can become a socio-cultural key in deciphering the era they represent, they are under-theorised. Together with Kit Kelen, I assert that they deserve more attention from theoreticians, in order to explore the imaginary of national communities, even though, generally, they are aesthetically weak and put forward at best a mediocre literature, often compiled from many clichés and a clear kitsch (Kelen 2015, 39 and 123).

2. Methods

National anthems are not simply ideology put into verse and music, and they are not simply literature. They represent a complex reality – “anthem are a political/historical, sociological/linguistic, cultural/literary/musical phenomenon” (Kelen 2015, 11) – and deserve a multi-interpretational approach, from complementary angles. However, the present study does not have such exhaustive ambitions: it will insist only on the verses, understood as an identity mirror for Romanians, in a difficult historical stage.

In the analysis of identity images, I consider that the most profitable toolkit, from the point of view of inclusion, variety and dynamics, belongs to the analysis of the imaginary since it allows for the understanding of the mythological, cultural and semantic charge of anthem representations, in their temporal evolution, with occurrences used and received differently, according to the paradigm of the era. The method, as theorised by Gilbert Durand, focuses on identifying the archetypal collective subconscious, which emerges at the level of consciousness, in culturally conditioned expressions: “the primordial meta-language accommodates itself in the natural language of the social group” (my translation) (Durand 2004, 114)².

However, in understanding communist anthems, the imaginary is not sufficient to grasp the ideological dynamic and the mechanisms of mass manipulation. In accordance with Anderson’s *imagined communities*, I consider that on the one hand the imaginary dimension of the nation insinuates the communicated content, while on the other the manipulation of the images and symbols is just as evident (Anderson 1983, 4). The *cultural artefact* also obliges to the highlighting of the ideological charge, which is capable of perfidiously changing society’s representations of the national identity as a whole. Furthermore, the insistence on national identity makes the nationalism paradoxes theorised by the American professor to represent a useful and relevant grid in the reception of the mentioned communist anthems: “(1) The objective modernity of nations to the historians’ eyes vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists. (2) The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept [and] (3) the ‘political power of such nationalisms vs. their philosophical poverty and even incoherence.” (Anderson 1983, 5).

Last but not least, since the message is one that is created within the coherence of the communist regime, one cannot omit the understanding of the mechanisms of *newspeak*, as pointed out by Françoise Thom: a language that conceals reality, hides it in prefabricated formulae, changes the meaning of

² “metalimbajul primordial se acomodează în limba naturală a grupului social”

words, and creates “an automatic system of thinking, of words that hypnotise the spirit and paralyse reason” (my translation) (Thom 1987, 211)³. In the wake of the French author’s theories, Rodica Zafiu selects the avatars of *newspeak* in the Romanian space in her volume *Limba și politică (Language and politics – my translation)* and explains that, starting with the 50s, the communist discourse varies “from a more violent and Russian influenced language, in the stage of imposing the regime, to a conservative, ceremonious, euphoric one with mystical-nationalist accents, in the stage of stability” (my translation) (Zafiu 2007, 47)⁴.

Thus, the three mentioned anthems, each representing different stages of Romanian Communism, will be interpreted in what follows, through the grid of the imaginary, of the manipulating nationalism and of the ideologically charged language. Or, with a new summative concept, they will be explored with the instruments of the linguistic imaginary, “which could reveal, through linguistic data, something essential about human beings, about their thinking mechanisms, their way of representing the world and the manner in which these representations regulate their entire system of attitudes and behaviours” (my translation) (Platon 2020, 14)⁵.

3. Zdrobite cătușe – Broken Shackles (1948-1953)

After the end of World War II, the Red Army troops that had remained in Romania had a decisive role in changing the status of the country and of Romanian leadership. In 1945, the first step was the imposition of the puppet-government of Petru Groza, which was pro-soviet and dominated by communists. The next year, the general elections were falsified and the National Democratic Bloc, compiled of the Communist Party and its satellites, fraudulently won. In 1947, King Mihai I is forced to abdicate and Romania is proclaimed the People’s Republic. For 18 years, Gheorghe-Gheorghiu Dej is Romania’s communist leader, a leader without studies, known for his cruelty during the first years of the communist order: intellectual elites were incarcerated for the most part, land was taken away from peasants during the collectivization process, and the newly created manufacturing plants and factories determined the uprooting of many peasants, moved to the periphery of industrialized cities.

³ “système de pensée automatique, de parole machinale qui hypnotise l’esprit et paralyse la raison”.

⁴ “de la un limbaj mai violent și mai influențat de rusă, în faza de impunere a regimului, la unul conservator, ceremonios, euforic, cu accente mistic-naționaliste, în faza de stabilitate”.

⁵ “care poate releva, prin intermediul datelor lingvistice, ceva esențial despre ființa umană, despre mecanismele sale de gândire, despre felul în care își reprezintă lumea și despre modul în care aceste reprezentări îi reglează întreg sistemul de atitudini și de comportamente.”

Under the given conditions, national symbols receive a special importance, having to induce a feeling of solidarity in a society devastated by war and the violence of the institution of the new regime. The avant-garde playwright Aurel Baranga received the party task of creating the text for the new anthem. Then, musician Matei Socor composed the rhythmically-mobilizing line. Both creators were subsequently rewarded, for their political dedication, with important positions in the central communist structures.

<p>1. Zdrobite cătușe în urmă rămân În frunte-i mereu muncitorul, Prin lupte și jertfe o treaptă urcăm, Stăpân pe destin e poporul</p> <p>(<i>Refren</i>) Trăiască, trăiască Republica noastră, În marș de năvalnic șuvoi; Muncitori și țărani, cărturari și ostași Zidim România Republicii noi.</p> <p>2. În lături cu putredul vechi stăvilar E ceasul de sfântă'ncordare Unirea și pacea și munca-i stegar' Republicii noi populare.</p> <p>3. Spre țelul victoriei mari ne îndreptăm E ceas de izbânzi viitoare Credință în muncă și luptă jurăm Republicii noi populare.</p>	<p>1. Broken Shackles are left behind, The worker is always in front Through struggle and sacrifice a step we climb The people are masters of their destiny.</p> <p>(<i>Chorus</i>) Long live, long live our Republic! In a march of a tempestuous overflowed torrent We, workers and peasants, bookmen and soldiers, Are building the Romania of the new Republic.</p> <p>2. Eliminating the old putrid dam It is the hour of holy suspense Union and peace and work are carrying the flag Of the new People's Republic.</p> <p>3. By the great victory we are going, It is time for future triumphs. We swear that we will work closely and fight By the new Republic.⁶</p>
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The first Romanian communist anthem appears as an allegory of “the new world” and is built in a clear antithetic relation with the monarchy’s values, whose threat is still strongly felt. With a term used by Perreault *et alii* in classifying national anthems, the verses from *broken shackles* are addressed to the *endogroup*, meaning to the citizens of the country for which it is created, and not to the *exogroup*, namely other people, whether friend or foe (Perreault *et alii* 2018: 90). The inevitable antinomy from early proletcultist⁷ texts is between “us”, the people saved from the slavery of the former social organization, and the “others”, the defeated “exploiters” of the newly developed social classes, the

⁶ The non-literary English translation of the three communist Romanian anthems was taken from the website <https://lyricstranslate.com>.

⁷ The proletcultist texts represent a mirror of the proletcultism, a movement started in the U.S.S.R., in order to foster an art and a culture expressive of proletarian interests and activities.

workers and the peasantry. Here, the Manichaeian totalitarian vision simplistically reduces the enemy to the metaphor “the old putrid dam”, in order to bring together the opposing political group disgracefully, already defeated. During the height of an internationalism imposed by Moscow, the fight is not with outside enemies, but with the competing elitist monarchic system by blaming it (Boia 1999, 47).

The leitmotif of the three quatrains and of the chorus is *the new people's republic*, with four in-text occurrences, with the purpose of inducing solidarity around the new socio-political construct, through the almost hypnotic repetition of the etiquette. Romania and Bulgaria are the only countries from the communist bloc, built at the end of World War II, which introduced an anthem after the soviet model, in profound agreement with the new ideology. The theme and motifs follow the same *mythemes*. The following verses, from the USSR anthem (1944-1991), practically represent the canvas for the first Romanian anthem: “We raised our Army in battles,/And swept the vile invaders from the path!/In battles, we determine the fate of generations...”⁸. The concrete violence of the gestures, the fight with the enemies, the metaphor of the upward path, the new order as destiny are all found in the Romanian anthem as well.

The imaginary of the violence opens the poem through the “broken shackles” and is strengthened throughout thanks to the use of some phrases from the *necessary aggression* category: “struggle and sacrifice” (“lupte și jertfe”), “tempestuous overflow torrent” (“năvalnic șuvoi”), “holy suspense” (“sfântăncordare”). Most of the official and proletcultist texts, from the beginning of the 1950s, overuse the violence lexis, especially at the level of active verbs: “it’s either about a hit per se – *to hit, to slam, to cleave, to smash, to sever, to slay, to bite, to rip* –, or about an auditory aggression – *to cuss, to scold, to bark, to shriek, to scream* etc.” (my translation) (Zafiu 2007, 71)⁹. Beyond the involuntary projection of the image of a ruling category that is impulsive and bellicose, the verses intend to create an impetuous identity portrait of Romanian, which is meant to oppose the representations of a passive, resigned individual, as it appeared in the inter-war interpretation of national myths (Mircea Vulcănescu, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Lucian Blaga etc.). It is about offering motivation and, thus, cohesion to a society that did not yet have common values and ideals around which it could unite. Therefore, any identifiable image, even one of an aggressive citizen, with an implacable will, serves to create an imagined community, as proposed by Anderson.

⁸ State Anthem of the Soviet Union - Wikipedia.

⁹ “e vorba fie de o lovire propriu-zisă – *a lovi, a izbi, a despica, a zdrobi, a reteza, a răpune, a mușca, a smulge* –, fie de o agresiune sonoră – *a sudui, a ocârî, a lătra, a chiu, a zbiera* etc.”.

The new citizens escape the symbolic shackles through a violent gesture; they are left behind, in the impetuous march towards victory. It is a good occasion to introduce the communists' favourite metaphor, that of the *path*, always associated with *advancement*, *progress* and *ascent*, with the latter being necessarily seen as a *step* or as *flight* (Zafiu 2007, 59). As a matter of fact, the next occurrence of the *path* in the text is the ladder itself ("a step we climb"). In the series of advancement, other images cumulatively appear, with a military connotation: "...in front" ("În frunte-i..."), "in march" ("în marș"), "are carrying the flag" ("-i stegar"), "we are going" ("ne îndreptăm"). This preference for military lexis is not in the least foreign to the totalitarian ideological discourse, whether it is from the left or the right.

The deictics from the text – almost exclusively implying the first person plural – subliminally build a plural of solidarity: "we climb" ("urcăm"), "our Republic" ("Republica noastră"), "we are building" ("zidim"), "we are going" ("ne îndreptăm"), "we swear" ("jurăm"). The unifying virtue of the new republic comes with both gained freedoms and the restrictions and conditionings of a precise order ("În frunte-i mereu muncitorul" – "The worker is always in front", "Credință în muncă și luptă jurăm" – "We swear that we will work closely and fight"). Slowly, freedom will be eclipsed by the authoritarianism of the new elite, as is involuntarily announced by the new communist anthem. The utopian solution of socialist equality and fraternity is undermined from the inside. The seemingly equalising listing from the verse "We, workers and peasants, bookmen and soldiers," ("Muncitori și țărani, cărturari și ostași") implies, however, a hierarchy, and order of the importance of the categories invoked. The worker opens the series of amalgamated professional groups and has a central role, anticipated by the second verse, where they are placed "always in the front" ("în frunte mereu"). Then comes the second class in importance, the peasantry, and only on the third position does the "bookman" appear, respectively the intellectual, thus confirming the widely spread joke from the communist period, "We work, we don't think" ("Noi muncim, nu gândim"). In fact, intellectual virtues are not promoted by any anthem in the world, emotional values prevail in most national anthems (Pavcović and Kelen 2016, 27). Returning to the first order role of the worker, it must be mentioned that its promotion is just an ideological trick of the elites of the sole party, improperly named of the workers under the leadership of Gheorghiu Dej:

"The elite were pulverised, its members perishing in prisons, resigning themselves in exile or ending by mingling and losing themselves in the new social mould. The collectivization dismembered the peasantry, considered until 1944 as the fundamental class of the Romanian society, the

keeper of the national spirit and traditions. The massive industrialisation filled the city space with an uprooted and easily manipulated mass. The centre moved from village to city, an actual move, but especially a symbolic one. The workers became the most representative class, the so-called “ruling” class, but in fact the ideological alibi of the party aristocracy.” (my translation) (Boia 1997, 65)¹⁰

Before seeing how these symbols and roles metamorphoses in the second communist Romanian anthem, the presence of some words with sacred connotation still needs to be explained, in one of the identity communist texts, built against any idea of the presence of the sacred in the world: “It is the hour of *holy* suspense” (“E ceasul de *sfântă* ncredare”) and “We swear that we will work closely and fight” (“*Credință* în muncă și luptă jurăm”) (my emphasis). Even understood as metaphoric images of the new order, Baranga’s option for words with such a high meaning charge, which are impossible to re-semanticize, is still surprising. Even more so since the previous Romanian anthem, dedicated to the king and valid for six decades, abounds in marks of the presence of the divinity, invoked as a protection shield for the monarchy. Most likely, in outlining the national self-image, such words have the purpose of legitimizing the transfer of the sacrum towards a new type of myth, the socialist nation, with its derivatives – the revolution and Communism. Likewise, in his anthology of communist poetry, Eugen Negrici makes an inventory of the socialist cults: the holy martyrs (the Soviet soldier, the civilizing hero, the communist sacrificed for the happiness of his countrymen), the protecting church (the party), the apostles of the faith (Lenin, Stalin, Gheorghiu-Dej), the heavenly kingdom (Soviet Union) and the New Man (Negrici 1995, 350). Thus, a new religion appears “according to which humanity is formed (through divine will or natural disposition) from national entities, history fulfilling itself in its universality, through each of its nations, and the individual in turn can redeem themselves only within their own nation, as an insignificant part of a collective destiny” (my translation) (Boia 1999, 11)¹¹. In the next two anthems, such an

¹⁰ “Elita a fost pulverizată, membrii ei pierind în închisori, resemnându-se la exil sau sfârșind prin a se amesteca și a se pierde în noul aluat social. Colectivizarea a dezmembrat țărâtimea, considerată până la 1944 drept clasa fundamentală a societății românești, depozitara spiritului și tradițiilor naționale. Industrializarea masivă a umplut spațiul citadin cu o masa dezrădăcinată și ușor manevrabilă. Centrul s-a deplasat dinspre sat spre oraș, deplasare efectivă, dar mai ales simbolică. Muncitorimea a devenit clasa cea mai reprezentativă, clasa zisă „conducătoare”, de fapt alibiul ideologic al aristocrației de partid”.

¹¹ “potrivit căreia umanitatea este alcătuită (prin voință divină sau dispunere naturală) din entități naționale, istoria are să se împlinească, în universalitatea ei, prin fiecare națiune în parte, iar individul, la rândul-i, nu se poate mântui decât în interiorul propriei națiuni, ca parte infimă a unui destin colectiv.”

explicit change in paradigm no longer appears, but it will be substituted by *mythemes* of new mysticism, dedicated to the supreme leader.

4. *Te slăvim, Românie – We glorify thee, Romania (1953-1977)*

Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej was a long-lasting and strong communist dictator since, for many years, he did not change at all the communist repression line imposed by Moscow. Even the prison system in which former Romanian elites found their punishment or end was copied after the Russian system, at Stalin's suggestion. The moment the soviet leader died, Gheorghiu-Dej did not hesitate to distance himself from his drastic reforms and to discreetly move closer to the West. He however remained a leader with an ambivalent attitude. Beyond the discreet questioning of the cultural influence from Moscow, the freeing of multiple political prisoners, he continued the process of social purging through the sombre institution of the Securitate and the action of massive industrialization. Until the Soviets retreated from Romania, in 1958, his de-Stalinization gestures were rather secret. This is why, the second communist anthem, imposed in the year of Stalin's death, still maintains the line of submission before the Russians, who were still perceived as ideological brothers.

We glorify thee, Romania has other elements common to the previous anthem as well: the music belongs to the same composer loyal to the communist cause, Matei Socor, with a similar rhythm, and the structure of the support-poem is identical: three quatrains (albeit five verses each) and with a chorus inserted between them. This time, the authors of the verses are two, Eugen Frunză and Dan Deşliu, who, together with Mihai Beniuc, made up the triad of court poets of the Romanian Workers' Party, responsible for a consistent part of the Romanian proletcultist poetry. Since there are so many connections, why was it necessary to reinvent the national anthem after only five years? Pavcovic and Kelen explain, in their book about anthems and the creation of nations, that when the change of such a consistent national symbol takes place, there was either a historical trauma or the nation felt the need to change the identity image in the eyes of their own citizens or of other people, as it was the case of Romania in 1953: "sometimes the change is not a result of any trauma but instead it comes from a desire to change the image that the nation projects to itself and to outsiders" (Pavcović & Kelen 2016, 18).

1. Te slăvim, Românie, pământ părintesc Mândre plaiuri sub cerul tău paşnic rodesc E zdrobit al trecutului jug blestemat Nu zadarnic, străbunii eroi au luptat Astăzi noi împlinim visul lor minunat.	1. We glorify you, Romania, our Motherland Proud lands under your peaceful sky are yielding The cursed yoke of the past is smashed It was not in vain that our heroic ancestors fought; Today we're fulfilling their wonderful dream
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<p>(<i>Refren</i>) Puternică, liberă, Pe soartă stăpână Trăiască Republica Populară Română</p> <p>2. Înfrățiți fi-va veșnic al nostru popor Cu poporul sovietic eliberator. Leninismul ni-e far și tărie și avânt Noi urmăm cu credință Partidul ne-nfrânt, Făurim socialismul pe-al țării pământ.</p> <p>3. Noi uzine clădim, rodul holdei sporim Vrem în pace cu orice popor să trăim Dar dușmanii de-ar fi să ne calce în prag Îi vom frânge în numele a tot ce ni-e drag Înălța-vom spre glorie al patriei steag</p>	<p>(<i>Chorus</i>) Powerful, free, Master of your fate Long live the Romanian People's Republic!</p> <p>2. May our people be forever brothers With the liberator Soviet people Leninism is our lighthouse and force and momentum We're following with faith our invincible Party We're creating socialism on our country's land.</p> <p>3. We're building new factories, we're increasing the yield of the land We want to live in peace with all peoples But if our enemies come to trample us We will defeat them in the name of everything we love And we will rise to glorify our Motherland's flag.</p>
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As it can be noticed, part of the communist toolkit of the previous anthem is assumed here. The violence imaginary, legitimised by Lenin in his theses as a useful factor in class struggles, is not yet exiled from the official discourse, whether political or literary: “the old putrid dam” (“putredul vechi stăvilar”) becomes “the cursed yoke of the past is smashed” (“e zdrobit al trecutului jug blestemat”) in the new anthem. Moreover, the new expression is preceded by the lexeme that aggressively opens the first poem, which it is not used with an adorning meaning, but as a passive verb and, thus, as an already completed action. As a result, the third verse already closes the recent past, of the confrontation of the previous order. At the same time, it will open another gate towards revolutive eras that I will return to later. Still from the register of violence, the *defeat* of the enemies is recycled in the last quatrain. The following overlapping advances the idea of a controlled destiny: “the people are masters of their destiny” (“stăpân pe destin e poporul”) vs “master of your fate” (“pe soartă stăpână”), a symbol of the unrestrainable power of the reinvented nation. Last but not least, the metamorphosis of the building metaphor (“are building the Romania of the new Republic” – “zidim România Republicii noi”) is synonymously reinvented, through an action of construction: “we’re building new factories” (“noi uzine clădim”), in the attempt of emphasising the concrete, visible, and measurable progress of some aspirational abstractions. In fact, *construction* is one of the four metaphors venerated by the communists, together with *path*, *watering* and *blooming* (Zafiu 2007, 59-60).

However, there are also some clear differences between the collection of *mythemes* of the two anthems, and the meaning of the discrepancies

discreetly underline the change of the identity self-portrait: the direct address from the first verse (and, implicitly, from the title), the substitution of non-relational social categories with the family metaphor, the introduction of the spatial-temporal dimension and the removal of the class struggles from the equation, in order to build the *good-bad* polarization at the *exogroup* level, between Romanians and another potentially aggressive people.

The introduction of the second person, right from the title, changes the rhetoric of the discourse: the first person plural, of the need for social cohesion, no longer exclusively appears, but rather there is an initiation of a dialogue with three abstract, but contextually anthropomorphised, instances: *country*, *people* and *sole party*. In such a context, more useful than the andersonian analysis of imagined communities could be a gender exploration, as proposed by Lauenstein *et alii* in the study about family representations in national anthems. The constitutive categories of the nation are no longer simply joined together, as in *Broken shackles*, but relationally perceived in a family allegory: the forefathers fought, Romania is the mother who keeps watch (“our Motherland” – “pământ părintesc”) over her sons and is protected in turn, and the Romanian people fraternises with the Russian one, for freedom. The allegoric artifice will be felt as a useful instrument in inducing social coherence and will be taken up again in the third communist anthem, because it is richer in the organizing and manipulating factors of an awaited social order. This symbolic family brings major social benefits and serves the need for control of the communist elite “(1) providing a clear, hierarchical *structure*; (2) prescribing *social roles and responsibilities*; (3) being linked to *positive affective connotations*; and (4) *reifying social phenomena* as biologically determined.” (Lauenstein *et alii* 2015, 309).

As stated before, the second communist anthem introduces time and space in the identity discourse, as defining national dimensions. The world outlined in the other anthem seemed stuck in a present of action, a world invented out of nothingness and without a perspective on the future, preoccupied to change the present that is still troubled. However, *We glorify thee, Romania* institutes the idea of descending from heroic forefathers (how else could the forefathers of a special people be?) and prepares the perspective of a bright, eternal future of fraternising with the “liberating soviet people” (“poporul sovietic eliberator”). Neither the past nor the future is invoked through precise events or ideals. However, they are not necessary since reality is not the one pursued, but the feeling of belonging to a group, to common emotions, easy to guide towards the party’s interest: “Motivating citizens to pride in the arbitrary (right or wrong) facts of their collective situation is a trick of the ideological kind.” (Kelen 2015, 122). The space appears in the first and second quatrains, with a similar role:

“Proud lands under your peaceful sky are yielding” (“Mândre plaiuri sub cerul tău pașnic rodesc”) and “We’re building new factories, we’re increasing the yield of the land” (“Noi uzine clădim, rolul holdei sporim”). The epithet “peaceful” (“pașnic”) does not necessarily bring a spatial clue in the first quatrain, but rather a temporal one, the good news that the country has entered a period of balance, after the previous years, of fights and chaos, inevitable in the creation of a new world. The other spatial elements – *lands (plaiuri)*, *factories (uzine)*, *fields (holde)* – are a strengthening of the symbolic national representation for the proletariat, freshly updated through another national symbol, the coat of arms changed only a year prior (Fig 1.). Just like the graphic symbol, the natural spaces associated with the workers and the peasants have to be included in the communist imaginary.



Figure 1¹²

The last image updated in the anthem is that of the conflict with enemies, an image that any totalitarian regime needs in order to justify their rigidity and appeal to force. This time, they appeal to the *exogroup* since, in the newly created society, there can no longer be internal conflict once it has become “peaceful” and it wants to live “in peace”. As a result, tension is created from the encounter with the outside aggressor: “But if our enemies come to trample us/We will defeat them in the name of everything we love” (“Dar dușmanii de-ar fi să ne calce în prag/Îi vom frânge în numele a tot ce ni-e drag”). Despite the Leninism previously invoked, one can sense in the cited verses Romania’s evolution towards a distinct nationalism and the detachment from model of soviet internationalism, which envisioned imposing its political, social, and cultural model onto the entire Eastern-European bloc.

¹² Source for the image: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_Romania.

Right in the middle of the anthem a verse appears that seems to not be connected to the familial model previously outlined or with the fight for the emancipation from the Russian model: “We’re following with faith our invincible Party” (“Noi urmăm cu credință Partidul ne-nfrânt”). However, it represents the central point: all the toolkit unfolded before and after has the role of supporting the coagulation of Romanian society around the sole party, of inducing the saviour and guiding roles of the invoked political institution. Beyond the awkwardness of the introduction of the subject pronoun “we” (“noi”), unused in Romanian next to the conjugated verb, one can sense the manipulating image of Romanians’ destiny as a group, which can be fulfilled only through the subordinating relation towards the invoked “political lighthouse” (“farul politic”).

Before moving to the understanding of the last socialist anthem, it is worth underlining some dissonances of the communist newspeak, which give birth to images that are of a delicious involuntary comedy. An example is the image of the *land* yielding. The term land is part of the national mythology, first through the presence in the beginning of the most well-known Romanian ballad, *Miorița* (*The little ewe* – my translation) (“On a foothill...” (my translation) – “Pe-un picior de plai...”), and then through the dedicated philosophical exegeses. The communist poets take it on without discernment and associate it with the fruitful lands from their agricultural imaginary, without realising that it is a hill or mountain land, with meadows that are not in the least adapted to the dreamt fruitful fields. Another senseless verse is “Leninism is our lighthouse and force and momentum” (“Leninismul ni-e far și tărie și avânt”). If we transpose this abstraction in this concrete image, we can hardly imagine a concept that would offer, at the same time, guiding to those lost, energy and enthusiasm since there are states and emotions from different registers. However, the propensity of the communist discourse towards appeasing contraries was sufficient to generate and validate such senseless phrases.

5. *Trei culori* – Three colours (1977-1989)

In 1965, Gheorghiu-Dej dies and it is speculated that he was irradiated by the soviets after he tried to repair Romania’s relations with the United States. The same year, Nicolae Ceaușescu is elected secretary general of the Romanian (Workers’) Communist Party, and in 1974 he becomes the president of the Socialist Republic of Romania. Just like his predecessor, he was a leader with no formal education, a shoemakers’ apprentice, but with a rich activity within the communist party, from the time when it was still illegal. At the beginning, Ceaușescu’s distancing from Moscow created high hopes in a Romania that was already exhausted by Dej’s communist regime. The new leader’s popularity

increased greatly, both nationally and in the West, when, in 1968, he refused to participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia together with the troops of the Warsaw Pact. However, in 1971, the Romanian leader makes a visit to North Korea and China, becoming fascinated by the national transformation and cultural revolution implemented there. As a result, in the next two decades, he moves away from Dej's model, he contests the communism of the "obsessive decade", and creates for himself a pathological cult of personality, while the life of Romanians was becoming increasingly hard, having to deal with the lack of electricity, heat, and food.

As early as 1975, Ceaușescu sees the national anthem as dated, no longer representing the image of his Romania. He intends to introduce a 19th-century anthem, composed by Ciprian Porumbescu, but discovers in time that it had become the national anthem of Albania at the beginning of the century. The same forty-eight¹³ Romanian composer is the author of the music and verses of the *Tricolour* (my translation) (*Tricolorul*), inspired by the Revolution of 1848, and the Romanian dictator personally decides to adopt it as an anthem, with the condition that he supervised the change of the verses or even personally make changes (Vasile 2016, 58). Only the first verse was kept form the original, with all the others becoming carriers of Ceaușescu's ideology.

1. Trei culori cunosc pe lume, Amintind de-un brav popor, Ce-i viteaz, cu vechi renume, În luptă triumfător.	1. Three colours I know in this world, Reminding me of a brave people, Which is brave, with an old reputation, Triumphant in battle.
2. Multe secole luptară Străbunii noștri eroi, Să trăim stăpâni în țară, Ziditori ai lumii noi.	2. Many centuries have they fought Our heroic forefathers, For us to live as leaders on this land, Layers of the new world.
3. Roșu, galben și albastru Este-al nostru tricolor. Se înalță ca un astru Gloriosul meu popor.	3. Red, yellow and blue Is our tricoloured flag. Rising up as if a star My glorious people.
4. Suntem un popor în lume Strâns unit și muncitor, Liber, cu un nou renume Și un țel cutezător.	4. We are a people in the world Tied in unity and toil, Free, bearing a new rename And a stout goal.
5. Azi partidul ne unește Și pe plaiul românesc	5. Today the party unifies us And on the Romanian realm

¹³ Representative of the Wallachian Revolution of 1848.

THE LEGITIMIZING TOOLKIT OF THE ROMANIAN COMMUNIST ANTHEMS.
 IDEOLOGY AND LINGUISTIC IMAGINARY

Socialismul se clădește, Prin elan muncitoresc.	Socialism is being installed, Through working spirit.
6. Pentru-a patriei onoare, Vrăjmașii-n luptă-i zdrobim. Cu alte neamuri sub soare, Demn, în pace, să trăim.	6. For the country's honour, The rivals we crush in clash. Among other states under the sun, Rightfully, in peace, let us live.
7. Iar tu, Românie mândră, Tot mereu să dăinuiești Și în comunista eră Ca o stea să strălucești.	7. And you, proud Romania, For ever last And in the communist eon Such as a star blare.

With *Three colours*, the communist discourse fundamentally distances itself from the rough register of the first years, renouncing the strongly polarised metaphors and offers a ceremonious tone, almost neutral from an emotional point of view. However, this does not mean that the socio-political repression softened, rather that the state force took over the reins of power (Zafiu 2007:47), in place of the manifest anger of early communism. The official language became ceremonious, exhilarating at times, in presenting an identity that was more nationalist than national, but vague and modest in content, focusing on expressing some abstract concepts. In the terms of Françoise Thom, such a manifestation touches the perfect form of newspeak, a new type of communication without an explicit message.

The seven quatrains have an almost narrative evolution. More than the first communist anthems, *Three colours* insists on a reinvented glorious past: Romanians are “a brave people” (“un popor brav”), “triumphant in battles” (“triumfător în lupte”), with “Heroic forefathers” (“străbuni eroi”), who have fought over “many centuries” (“multe secole”). Since it had failed economically, and especially “in terms of materialising the illusions that were so seductively portrayed theoretically”¹⁴, communism had to stake on something else to justify itself, “in order to keep people tightly united around a project”¹⁵ (my translation) (Boia 199, 105-106). This project will prove to be the glorious past, which justifies the contemporary isolationism, the contesting of the pro-soviet attitude and the fuelling of a hard to match nationalism. In fact, this change in attitude will be made in the name of a better, “humane” communism, a phrase inspired by the human faced socialism promoted by the *Prague Spring*. Completed around

¹⁴ “în planul materializării iluziilor atât de seducător înfățișate teoretic”

¹⁵ “pentru a-i ține pe oameni strâns uniți în jurul unui proiect”

the protochronism¹⁶ of the 70s, the plan of rewriting Romanian history reaches alarming heights when, in 1980, a grandiose celebration of 2050 years from the founding of the Burebista's unitary and centralised Dacian state bizarrely took place (Boia 1997, 76). The project had the role to justify and legitimise the unity of Romanians around their supreme leader. Anderson's first paradox underlines this incongruence between the nation's objective modernity and the subjectivity of the ancient perception of one's own nation. Ceaușescu takes the recovery of the heroic to the extreme and often places himself, in the proletcultist art forms, in the centre of some series of historic personalities, whether they are graphic or literary representations.

The third, fourth, and fifth quatrains are dedicated to the present, but it is almost impossible to extract a coherent idea about the traits or values of the group that is being described, in the good tradition of *newspeak*, with its lack of content: a glorious people that "rising like a star" ("se înalță ca un astru"), is bound "in unity and toil" ("unit și muncitor"), and has "a stout goal" ("un țel cutezător") (which is never revealed). The outlined ordinary traits could fit just as well in any anthem, about any other people in the world. The reclaiming of the old and new reputation in the first and forth quatrains are only justifiable through vague clichés related to bravery and exceptionality, meaning values through which each European people proclaims its "uniqueness", as stated by Muñoz-Galiano *et alii*, after cataloguing all the anthems from the old continent (Muñoz-Galiano *et alii* 2022, 183). The only gesture that is more distinctly defined is the reaction from the old metaphor of smashing the enemies, which itself is undermined as well by the justification through a confused ideal, "for the country's honour" ("pentru-a patriei onoare").

The last quatrain is dedicated to the future, in the quasi-narrative order of the verses' evolution. The rhetoric of directly addressing hails to an anthropomorphised country is reiterated. Thus, it seems that it has not consumed all of its rhetorical valences in the previous anthem: "And you, proud Romania,/Forever last" ("Iar tu, Românie mândră,/Tot mereu să dăinuiești"). The association of the country with eternity subliminally builds a substitute for redemption, borrowed from the religious imaginary "because eternity is in remarkable contrast with the common experience of mortality of individual human beings it creates favourable conditions for identification with the acceptance of a promise for a kind of immortality, which earlier was provided solely by religion." (Csepeli and Örkeny 1998, 40). Thus, the individual is left only to suppress their personal impulses and to accept the supra-individual

¹⁶ A pejorative term describing the tendency to ascribe, largely relying on questionable data and subjective interpretation, an idealized past to the country as a whole.

destiny of building socialism, under the guidance of the party that, in turn, appears as an instrument of a salutary national(ist) force.

6. Conclusions

The three Romanian anthems, from the communist period, mark the three stages of totalitarian discourse. On the one hand, the support-poems reproduce the myths and recover the symbols from the era's imaginary, and are intentionally ideologically charged with sets of clichés that keep up with the authorities' carefully controlled transformation of the identity image of Romanians. From the violent register of the 48s-50s, reflected through simplistically polarized metaphors in *Broken shackles*, it goes on to the familial organization of the nation in *We glorify thee, Romania*, so as to communicate a quasi-abstract identity portrait, through the conservative tone of the Ceaușescu newspeak, almost without meaning in the third anthem. The control toolkit and the ideological manipulation are just as present in the interrogated anthems as the sets of identity images of the national unity around the values promoted by communist authorities.

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