

## HAND OVER HEART: NATIONAL IDENTITY AND RITUAL IN THE ROMANIAN ANTHEM

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**ABSTRACT.** *Hand over heart: National Identity and Ritual in the Romanian Anthem.* In the past 150 years Romania has had five anthems that appeared in different stages of the nation that they symbolically legitimized. The present anthem, *Deșteptă-te, române! (Awaken thee, Romanian!)*, based on the lyrics of a poem created during the 1848 revolution, is the product of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century romantic imaginary and thematizes important values for the moment of the creation/discovery of the ethnic-national solidarity, similar to the majority of European manifestos from that time. However, the former revolutionary song becomes an official national anthem in 1990, when the social projections and national values had long belonged to another paradigm, and it continues to dominate community rituals through unexpected structuring mechanisms.

**Keywords:** *national anthem, analysis of the imaginary, social ritual, nation, identity legitimization.*

**REZUMAT.** *Cu mâna pe inimă: identitate națională și ritual în imnul românesc.* În ultimii 150 de ani, România a avut cinci imnuri, apărute în etape diferite ale națiunii, pe care o legitimau simbolic. Imnul actual, *Deșteptă-te, române!*, pe versurile unui poem creat în timpul revoluției de la 1848, este produsul imaginarului romantic de secol XIX și tematizează valori importante pentru momentul creării/descoperirii solidarității etnic-naționale, ca majoritatea manifestelor europene ale aceluși moment. Totuși, fostul cântec revoluționar devine imn național oficial în 1990, când proiecțiile sociale și valorile naționale aparțineau de mult altei paradigme, și continuă să domine ritualurile comunitare prin mecanisme structurante neașteptate.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** *imn național, analiza imaginarului, ritual social, națiune, legitimare identitară.*

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## 1. Argument<sup>1</sup>

The modern history of Romania includes five official anthems, starting with *Marșul triumfal (The Triumphant March)* from 1862, followed two decades later by *Imnul regal (The Royal Anthem)*, then by three anthems from the communist period and at present we have *Deșteaptă-te, române! (Awaken thee, Romanian!)*. The latter is a post-Decembrist re-investiture of a patriotic song written in 1848, thus a loop return to the years of the founding of nations. With the present study we begin a series of three texts, an analysis of the imaginary of the national identity that has been essentialized in anthems. We will pause for the moment upon the present national song and will continue with the royal anthem, and then with the communist examples.

The relatively frequent change of the national song over a century and a half does not make Romania a distinctive country. The anthem is associated with the nation and is part of its legitimizing tools. Thus, most European countries have initiated for themselves an official musical-poetic representation during the same time, around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If there are states such as Belgium, Denmark, Albania or Greece that have maintained the same musical symbol for more than a century, others have changed a number of songs during the last decades, according to the local history and the circumstantial need for representation – Italy, Hungary, the states from former Yugoslavia or from Czechoslovakia.

What, in the end, makes a state choose another anthem at a certain point in its evolution? It could be related to associative connections blocked by an inadequacy stemmed from progress (Cerulo, 1995: 120) or to a historic trauma that demands another type of discourse about the self (Pavcović & Kelen, 2016: 18). In both situations, the imaginary of the era is plerarily manifested in anthemic texts. For this reason, although the music and the lyrics constitute a relevant unit, we have left aside the discussion on accords in favour of words, which are direct and faithful carriers of the imaginary of the era. We consider that poetry, thus the linguistic representation, can on its own give the exact picture of the national-identitarian projections, which have emerged out of an imaginary compelled to rapid and dramatic changes, during the 150 years of the Romanian nation.

## 2. Method

As announced in the introduction, in the investigation of identitarian images, it is considered that the most profitable tool, from the point of view of

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coverage, variety and dynamics belongs to the analysis of the imaginary. This results from the fact that, having been adapted to the object of the present study, it allows the understanding of the mythological, cultural and semantic charge of anthemic representations in their temporal evolution, with occurrences used and received differently, according to the historic paradigm. The method, as theorized by Gilbert Durand, concentrates on identifying the collective archetypal subconscious, which emerges at the consciousness level, in expressions that are culturally conditioned: “the primordial metalanguage accommodates itself in the natural language of the social group” (Durand, 2004, 114).

Since a nation is however an enterprise of an elite class or of a group that is socially or politically representative and rarely the spontaneous result of a community/society on the whole, the imaginary is not sufficient to capture the formation dynamics and mechanisms. In accordance with Anderson’s *imagined communities*, we consider that, on the one hand, the imaginary dimension of the new nations is incontestable and, on the other hand, the intentional character is just as evident (Anderson, 1983: 4). The *Cultural artefact* demands a two-way road in the interpretation of anthems, the reading of the era’s mythemes, which show through into poetry from the unconscious representations of the community, but also of the ideological charge, capable of treacherously changing the overall representations of the society about national reality. The best example for the second situation is the communist discourse, consistent with Romanians through the three anthems from 1948-1989.

A Canadian study that analyses 195 anthems, meaning all that include lyrics in the world, establishes a surprisingly limited inventory of the structuring themes: *the country, the flag, the history/past, the citizens and war* (Perreault *et alii*, 2018: 92). The values promoted are not diverse either: the attitudinal ones are generally courage, perseverance and solidarity, the emotional ones are love of country and hate/disdain for the enemies, while the relational values almost exclusively privilege possession rapports – unique heroes, myths or specific sceneries (Pavković & Kelen, 2016: 26-27). The Romanian anthem, again not unique in the slightest, entirely or partially includes the themes and the majority of the specific values mentioned. The expressions that are conditioned culturally, on the one hand, and ideologically on the other make, for instance, founding myths that are essential in outlining the historic imaginary to be formulated and reformulated according to the necessities of the national scenario of the moment, in which the reference group is comprised differently, ideologically and politically coloured.

Last but not least, the ethnolinguistics regulated theoretically by the Polish school from Lublin offers useful tools when reading identitarian texts. For instance, for the present analysis, of use are the keywords of a language, analysed

by Anna Wierbicka, as conceptual instruments that reflect the past experience of a society, its means of doing and thinking of things, as well as the manner in which they are kept (Wierzbicka, 1997, 5). In a recent article, Elena Platon systematizes and explains once more these tools of Ethnolinguistics, which should not be missed in the investigation of collective identities (Platon, 2019).

Beyond the banality of the thematic and axiological combinations, the anthem continues to be constantly present in the public life of countries, in political, diplomatic but also athletic or educational contexts. In fact, it coagulates more meaning of national and individual identity, but also more intense emotional reactions than other elements of national-identitarian representation, such as the flag, currency, uniforms or monuments. In opposition to these, the anthem presupposes performance and rhythm, thus an assisted process in a limited timeframe, outside normal order, similar to a religious ritual. Autochthonous political regimes, that have successively introduced new anthems, have fully known and exploited their liturgical potential. In what follows we will analyse the present anthem, mainly Andrei Mureșanu's poem, through the lens of the imaginary that generated it and of the linguistic expression, both of which are ideologically charged.

### **3. *Deșteaptă-te, române!* – a patriotic song. The national imaginary and identity in 1848.**

The poem written by Andrei Mureșanu was published on 21 June 1848 in no. 25 of the journal "Foaie pentru minte, inimă și literatură" (in manuscript, *Unu răsunetu*), and was quickly associated with Anton Pann's music. As a result, his work insinuates itself into patriotic manifestations at a moment when the romantic imaginary was fuelling both literary and political breadth, congruently oriented towards the independence and unification of the principalities in which Romanian was the dominant language: Moldavia, Muntenia, Dobruja, Transylvania. They were under the otherwise increasingly fragile influence of the Turks, Russians and Habsburgs, and the urgency of the two political ideals stems as well from the pressure of the competing neighbours, Hungarian or Slavic, with similar national projects (Boia, 1993: 20). The poem written by the Transylvanian Andrei Mureșanu is thus tributary to the romantic ideas of ethnic solidarity and to the new, Messianic ideal of building a nation.

Bellow we will reproduce and discuss the eleven stanzas of the poem-anthem, with the mention that only stanzas 1, 2, 4, and 11 are generally performed at festive occasions. It must be mentioned as well that the present anthem reproduces the original poem without any changes, even though it

involves a series of phonetic, syntactic or semantic elements that are incompatible with the present Romanian norms.

**1.** *Deșteaptă-te, Române, din somnul cel de moarte, În care te-adânciră barbarii de tirani!* **1.** *Awaken thee, Romanian, wake up from deadly slumber*  
*Acum ori niciodată croiește-ți altă soarte, The scourge of inauspicious barbarian tyrannies*  
*La care să se-nchine și cruzii tăi dușmani! And now or never to a bright horizon clamber*  
*That shall to shame put all your enemies.*

**2.** *Acum ori niciodată să dăm dovezi la lume Că-n aste mâni mai curge un sânge de roman,* **2.** *It's now or never that we prove to the world*  
*Și că-n a noastre piepturi păstrăm cu fală-un nume And in our hearts forever we glorify a name*  
*Triumfători în lupte, un nume de Traian! Triumphant in battles, the name of Trajan.*

**3.** *Înălță-ți lata frunte și caută-n giur de tine, Cum stau ca brazi în munte voinici sute de mii;* **3.** *Raise your strong brow and gaze around you*  
*Un glas ei mai așteaptă și sar ca lupi în stâne, thousand As trees stand in a forest, brave youths, a hundred*  
*Bătrâni, bărbați, juni, tineri, din munți și din An order they await, ready as wolves among the sheep*  
*câmpii! Old men, and young, from mountains high and*  
*open plains.*

**4.** *Priviți, mărețe umbre, Mihai, Ștefan, Corvine, Româna națiune, ai voștri strănepoți,* **4.** *Behold, imperial shadows, Michael, Stephen,*  
*Cu brațele armate, cu focul vostru-n vine, At the Romanian nation, your mighty progeny*  
*"Vieață-n libertate ori moarte!" strigă toți. With arms like steel and hearts of fire impetuous*  
*"Live in liberty, or die" that's what they all decree.*

**5.** *Pre voi vă nimiciră a pizmei răutate Și oarba neunire la Milcov și Carpați!* **5.** *You were vanquished by the evils of envy*  
*Dar noi, pătrunși la suflet de sfânta libertate, Carpathians By the blind disunity at the Milcov and*  
*Jurăm că vom da mâna, să fim pururea frați! But we, our Spirit touched by saintly Liberty,*  
*Swear allegiance, to be forever Brothers.*

**6.** *O mamă văduvită de la Mihai cel Mare Pretinde de la fii-și azi mână d-ajutori,* **6.** *A widowed mother from the time of Michael*  
*Și blastămă cu lacrimi în ochi pe orișicare, the Great Asks of her sons a helping hand today*  
*În astfel de pericol s-ar face vânzători! And curses, with tears in her eyes, whosoever*  
*In times of such great danger, proves to be a traitor.*

**7.** *De fulgere să piară, de trăsnet și pucioasă, Oricare s-ar retrage din gloriosul loc,* **7.** *May lightning bolts, thunder and brimstone kill*  
*Când patria sau mama, cu inima duioasă, Whoever retreats from the glorious battle*  
*Va cere ca să trecem prin sabie și foc! Will ask us to pass through sword and flame.*

**8.** *N-ajunse iataganul barbarei semilune, A cărui plăgi fatale și azi le mai simțim;* **8.** *Is not enough the yatagan of the barbaric*  
*Acum se vără cnuta în vetrele străbune, Whose fatal wounds we feel burning today;*  
*Dar martor ne e Domnul că vii nu o primim! Now, the knout intrudes on our ancestral lands,*  
*But with God as witness, we will fight it to the Death*

9. *N-ajunse despotismul cu-ntreaga lui orbie, 9. Is not enough the despotism and its unseeing eye  
Al cărui jug din seculi ca vitele-l purtăm; Which for centuries enslaved us, as cattle?  
Acum se-ncearcă cruzii, în oarba lor trufie, Now, attempt the cruel, in their blind haughtiness,  
Să ne răpească limba, dar morți numai o dăm! To steal our Language, but we will fight them to  
the Death*

10. *Români din patru unghiuri, acum ori niciodată 10. Romanians of the four corners, now or never,  
Uniți-vă în cuget, uniți-vă-n simțiri! Be United in your Thoughts, United in your Feelings  
Strigați în lumea largă că Dunărea-i furată Shout out to the world that the Danube is stolen  
Prin intriță și silă, viclene uneltiri! Through intrigue and coercion, malicious plots.*

11. *Preoți, cu crucea-n frunte! căci oastea e creștină, 11. Priests, raise the cross, as this army is Christian  
Deviza-i libertate și scopul ei preasânt. Give it liberty and it's sanctified scope  
Murim mai bine-n luptă, cu glorie deplină, We'd rather die in battle, with honorary glory  
Decât să fim sclavi iarăși în vechiul nost' pământ. Than live again enslaved on our ancestral land.<sup>2</sup>*

The beginning aims at captivating the reader through two strong techniques, classic paraenesis and the construction of the first stanza on strong antinomies, which romantically dramatize the access to the announced *narrative*. The awakening is more than an individual cognitive process, with the metonymy “Romanian” not leading towards the individual but the collective meaning of rationally building a national consciousness. Sorin Alexandrescu sees in the metaphor of the awakening an umbrella for the ritualistically symbolic action of taking possession of the consciously unionist projects: “a nation emerges by a slow process of “awakening”, a metaphor that is taken to mean that the nation under consideration becomes self-conscious of the distinctive features which mark it off in relation to other (surrounding) nations. The implication of this metaphor – which incidentally comes forth also in the national anthem of Romania is that the nation was previously “slumbering”, living on quietly without bothering itself about its identity.” (Alexandrescu, 2002: 138). Thus, the *awakening* goes beyond the local image and breaks the sleepiness of a Europe that is redefining and rebuilding itself from the ground up. The *awakening* is associated with the rationale and not with the romantic emotion, with a lucid consciousness and not with an excessive affective, as we would expect. The enlightened value is reinforced by the verb “to clamber”, implying the transformative individual action, almost contractual, just like with Rousseau’s citizen. However, the light and ascension are pessimistically counterbalanced, at a semantic and metaphoric level, by signs of the fall and darkness: *slumber, death, deepening, bowing*.

Returning to the antithetic, semantic and structural drama, there are no less than six oppositions in four lyrics, with their terms stated or merely

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<sup>2</sup> The source page of the present translation and of some alternatives is found here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De%C8%99teapt%C4%83-te,\\_rom%C3%A2ne!](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De%C8%99teapt%C4%83-te,_rom%C3%A2ne!)

suggested: *awakening/deadly slumber, civilization/barbarism, now/never, old fate/new fate, slave/master, Romanian/enemy*. Their excessive, extreme and ultimatum-like tone removes the message from the field of the rationale induced by the first verb in the imperative. The strongest opposition appears, through repetition, between the *Romanian* and the *barbaric tyrants*, and the *cruel enemies* respectively. The imbalance between the singular of the invoked receptor and the double plural of the opponents underline the will and courage of the powerless, who compensates through the nobility of their personal ideal. This is similar to how things are in biblical scenarios, where David defeats Goliath or the apostles defeat the rationality of the classical world through faith. The religious connotations will become denser in the poem, until the Christian army from the end, with which the transmitter identifies. Returning to the *cruel enemies*, their identity is ambiguous and general until the end, where the synecdoches *the barbaric crescent* and *knout* (the whip with metal tips) reveals that the oppressors were successively, without pause, the Ottomans and the Russians.

The second stanza resumes the antithesis *now or never*, establishing a syntactic coherence with the first stanza, but emphasizing as well the temporal dimension, from the entire string of outlined tensions. *Now* therefore becomes more than a historic moment, a time of the possible successful initiation, thus an escape from history's determinism, in favour of the ceremonial time that brings, in a spiral, a suitable element from the mythical past, the descendence from the Romans. Otherwise, the *narrative* of the stanza is simple – Roman blood flows through veins, and the name of emperor Trajan is taken to heart. Two observations are demanded. First of all, the ancestors are exclusively the Romans. Andrei Mureșanu did his studies in Blaj, where the influence of the Transylvanian School with its Latin purism was still very strong. Moreover, the Dacians have to wait longer to enter the romantic Romanian imaginary of autochthonous recovery, through the historiographical discourse of Hașdeu or Odobescu and through the poems of Eminescu (Grancea, 2006: 96). The next thing worthy of notice in the second stanza is the strong metaphor of the blood, which introduces in the patriotic scenario the type of narration that is stated, showed, not built after the French contractual model. The blood confirms the ethnic continuation of Romanians; it is a meta-symbol of the legitimization of the national existence. It is not built and it is not negotiated, it simply is and it only needs to be awakened from the imposed lethargy. Finally, the gestural ritual should not be overlooked here: the hand and the heart are mentioned. A long tradition of the solemn attitude in the ceremony of the anthem, with the hand taken to the heart, begins here.

*The proof* given to the world means the compulsory transmission of the historic continuity and of the victorious warrior's valour to the exterior, for an ignorant exo-group. As a result, the endo-group, the blood brothers, is aware of and takes upon itself the invoked merits. The narcissism of nations is frequently expressed in their official anthems, societies generally being nation-centric. Freud's opinion is memorable: the pathological behaviours stop being deviant if they are collectively practised and, additionally, have a therapeutic role: "The world of boastful, self-indulgent national identity consequently can help the individuals rid themselves of their surplus self-love and channel it to another object which still belongs to the self. This legitimate object would be the nation." (Csepeli & Örkeny, 1998: 44).

The third quatrain privileges the vertical symbols, semantically and morphologically expressed through ascensional elements, verbs (*raise, gaze, jump*) and nouns (*brow, fir trees, mountain*). They suggest ideals to reach, as in the majority of the patriotic poems of the time, just as the *strong brow* does not involve the frequent connotation of the wisdom or astuteness. Both symbols invoke, as a continuation of the initial *awakening*, raising one's gaze from the ground, the careful lucidity of consciousness, the rational awakening to take on and consciously maintain the freedom and unity acquired, for the time being, only at the level of their own consciousness. It is only in a second stage that it will be defended through battle, brute and wild force if needed, and the image of the *wolves among the sheep* has the precise role of changing the register from the rational to the brute and ferocious physical, necessary in protecting the acquired value.

If the second stanza involves the solidarity specific to anthems, expressed morphologically in the first person plural (*we prove, ours, we glorify*), in the fourth stanza we return to addressing a receiver that is no longer the generic Romanian, as it was in the beginning, but a group instance, formed from three leaders considered as a reference point in the history of each principality: Mihai Viteazul (Michael the Brave) in Muntenia, Ștefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) in Moldavia and Matei Corvin (Matthias Corvinus) in Transylvania. The force in the context of the first one stems not from the governing of the principality, but from his function as the first unifier of Romanians in 1600, a union that lasted less than a year. Once more, the romantic and nationalist historiography claims that the union was made on the basis of the national idea, while other historians and chroniclers of the time show that, in fact, the "union" was just an act of conquest. Ștefan cel Mare, through the longest rule and a few fights of resistance before the Ottomans, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, had already been transformed into a mythical figure for two centuries, according to the writings of the chroniclers. Matei Corvin, the son of Iancu de Hunedoara



(John Hunyadi), is placed symmetrically in the lyric to cover the glorious Romanian Transylvanian history, quasi-inexistent at that time, and not because he had an important role in the evolution of the Romanians in Transylvania. Hungarians also use the figure of Matyas in their national anthem, *Himnusz*, for his civilizing role as a prince of the Renaissance. Thus, the Hungarian king is brotherly divided into the pantheons of the neighbours who found themselves in conflict for many centuries.

This fourth stanza is also the only one that opens (slightly) the poem towards a possible glorious future. Generally, anthems project the nation they represent in a luminous, heavenly perspective. The Romanian anthem contains only one grammatical mark of the future – implying solidarity, *we will swear allegiance* – but here the gaze of the *imperial shadows* towards the great-grandchildren who choose freedom or death leaves a slight hope for continuity under fortunate auspices.

The dialogue with the voivode forefathers continues in the following quatrain, but the temporal axis is exchanged with the spatial organization of the new reality. Similar to the raising of the strong brow and the gaze that understands from the third stanza, here as well that the main cause of the failure of the Romanian union until that moment seems to be *blindness*, the lack of understanding one's own resources and status. The Milcov and the Carpathians, natural obstructing barriers, are integrated through the will of those who show allegiance. It goes without saying that neither of the three voivodes or any other leader up that point would have contemplated the problem of territorial reunion, in accordance with the forty-eighter values of the modern nation.

The sixth and seventh stanzas contain imprecations and curses, but not towards the oppressive enemies, rather towards the betrayers of their own people. The *country-mother* and *citizens-sons* probably represent the most frequent identitarian forty-either metaphors, ubiquitous in literature and other arts, in the political discourse or in historiography. The curse addressed to the betrayer sons, spread into violent images, condemns those who do not go through blade and fire out of love for the country to the most severe ordeals. The images, which are psycho-analysable within the collective imaginary, probably intended to amplify the emotional charge of the lyrics towards the cathartic end of the union *in thoughts and feelings*. To die for one's country is a supreme honour and national treason is seen as a crime and it is sanctioned with maximum severity by any legislation of the time: "breaking away from the nation is similar to exiting the Church in the Middle Ages, when the excommunicated one loses their quality and rights as a person." (Boia, 1999: 49).

The next to last stanzas (8, 9, and 10) return towards the difficult and oppressive past, coded in lamentable plastic images: the yatagan and knout have caused *fatal wounds*, despotism has enslaved Romanians in shackles that seemed eternal. It seems that the only anthems leaning towards tragedies, betrayals and an unfriendly destiny are the ones from Eastern Europe: "Less frequent is the version dwelling on the suffering and burden of the past which were to lead to the present celebrated moment of singing the song of the nation (...) Misfortune and betrayal are somewhat more emphasised in the texts of the Eastern European national anthems than in the Western counterparts." (Csepeli & Örkeny, 1998: 42).

The last stanza, the eleventh, reprises the message from the fourth quatrain – the inexistence of a solution other than freedom or death –, but promotes the motto not through heroic mythemes, but through elements from the religious imaginary: the army that fights for a Christian nation, led by priests. Beyond the impossible rendering in images of the lyric with the priests running in long and wide garments on the battlefield – because it would be of a savoury involuntary humour, that would go against the solemn-sombre tone of the text – the religious legitimization of a nation is one of the most frequent strategies for the mobilization of the masses. In a world that is still far from secularization, the novelty is not the appearance of the *Christian* reference but its isolated singularity. Yet, it is placed in a position of maximum impact, at the end of the text, in an apotheosis of identifying with the receiver, who is now involved in defending the nation, similar to the crusaders defending Christianity. The overlapping of these examples of eschatology is more evident in the *Royal Anthem*, composed three decades later by Alecsandri, an exemplary transfer of sanctity towards the newly installed monarchy.

A short re-evaluation of the values proposed by Andrei Mureșanu's poem reduces the inventory in regards to the lucid/visionary perspective, the heroic past, courage and valour, resolve in options, love for the country, and the sacrifice for the nation. They are not more than or different from those of other European peoples that are building their national symbols during this time as well. Of what then is the Romanian identitarian specificity comprised? The two theoreticians of the nationalism from the Balkans consider that it is not about authenticity and uniqueness in the affirmation of each new nation, but about a pure act of collective narcissism: "The aim is therefore obviously not identification or identity-construction of particular nations but instead a form of self-congratulation. The anthem thus allows the nation to laud its own praiseworthy qualities." (Pavković & Kelen, 2016: 27).

#### **4. *Deșteaptă-te, române!* – a national anthem since 1989. Some observations on the dated national imaginary.**

Up until this point, we have discussed Andrei Mureșanu's lyrics in the key of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century romantic imaginary exclusively, meaning by relation to the historic and cultural context that had generated it. The present Romanian anthem was officially legitimated in January of 1990, immediately after the December anti-communist revolution, and never before then. It is said that in 1987, the participants in the Anti-communist Revolt from Brașov also spontaneously started singing *Deșteaptă-te, române!* Several demonstrators were already singing it in the street on 22 December 89 and the Romanian television broadcasted it that evening, alternatively with the old anthem, *Trei culori* (*Three colours*). Thus, choosing a new national song seemed natural. But it was created a century and a half before, also close to a revolution for the founding of a new nation and it descended just as spontaneous in the street, without being anything more than a mobilizing patriotic song. It is difficult to say whether Romanians felt that, after Communism, what was being prepared was a national rebirth or a resetting of the values common to the society that had been dragged on for almost half of a red century. What is certain is that *Deșteaptă-te, române!* insinuated itself naturally and without obstacles into the rituals of the new world. This is a sign that the anthem included what Karen Cerulo – the most consistent theoretician of national symbols – calls associative symbols normal for the imaginary of the represented population and not deviant, while normality is an unbeatable predictor for the longevity of a given anthem (Cerulo, 1995: 120). In truth, 30 years later, the Romanian anthem has remained the same.

In the modern, demythologized paradigm, how much from the romantic imaginary poetically transferred by Mureșanu would find adequate receivers and would raise solidarity and patriotic breadth, just as it did 150 year ago? In fact, how many of the twenty million Romanians know the stanzas sung at ceremonies? Or at least the first stanza? There are certain serious impediments in retaining them: the long lyrics, the 12-14 syllable measurement, the vetust language, the imaginary of sacrifice and oppression that are difficult to articulate over the present ideals.

It is sufficient to return to the short inventory of values extracted from Mureșanu's poem at the end of the previous section, to discover that the majority are presently outdated or inadequate: a lucid/visionary perspective, heroic past, courage and valour in war, resolve in options, love for the country, and the sacrifice for the nation. The first four are no longer needed since their active role expired after World War II, while the latter is more than debatable.

On the other hand, the national sentiment continues to be neither contestable nor condemnable. It is just difficult for it to be validated by beliefs as the primordality of the nation before the individual or by the unconditional sacrifice for the country: "To die for the country has stopped being something that is that noble or intrinsic. Even more so since in the name of the Country (that never speaks), the political elite, one government or another, have engaged nations more than once in conflicts that proved to be ill-inspired." (Boia, 1999: 111). During the past thirty years competing principles have gradually insinuated themselves and have gained more consistent positions than the old national duties, first into the imaginary and then in the concrete social and political medium: individual rights, stating one's personal opinion, protecting the marginalized and their evolution towards their center.

In the past decade, several intellectual or political voices<sup>3</sup> have proposed replacing the anthem *Deșteaptă-te, române!* with one that is more adequate for the present society and more aligned with the present European and humanist values. Andrei Pleșu considers that it is no longer functional, that it no longer has a beneficial effect on those who sing it or listen to it, that "the text (...) is vetust, neurotic, self-denigrating, funerary." Adrian Cioroianu states that "it has put us in a deeper sleep in the past 20 years, rather than awaken us. It is simply inappropriate as an anthem." The academician Adrian Toader and the politician Alexandru Coita have demanded as well publicly the replacement of the anthem in 2017 and 2019, respectively. In these past few years there have been adaptations and substitutions of anthems in countries with a democratic tradition, such as Switzerland, which is sensitive to old religious references (2017), or Canada, which has replaced only on lyric due to the gender inequality present in the official variant (2018).

In Romania, neither of the political endeavours materialized in any change or at the very least in a project initiative. Moreover, the online petition<sup>4</sup> on the same subject raised only five signatures. In the 2014 election campaign, the winner was the candidate Iohannis who knew how to sing the first stanza of the anthem, unlike Ponta, who was better rated in polls but who confused the words *barbaric tyrants*.

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<sup>3</sup> Andrei Pleșu, "Psihologia imnului național", in *Dilema veche*, no. 397, 22-28 September 2011, <https://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/situatiunea/articol/psihologia-imnului-national>; Adrian Cioroianu, in *Imnul, între "trrebuie schimbat" și „cu el vreau să mor”*, [adevarul.ro/news/societate/imnul-trebuie-schimbat-cu-vreau-mor-1\\_50ad74bd7c42d5a663957ce4/index.html](http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/imnul-trebuie-schimbat-cu-vreau-mor-1_50ad74bd7c42d5a663957ce4/index.html); Adrian Toader in <https://www.mediafax.ro/social/un-academician-cere-comisii-speciale-de-schimbare-a-imnului-16170731>; Adrian Coita in <https://www.capital.ro/se-schimba-imnul-romaniei-anunt-major-pentru-toti-romanii.html>.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.petitiononline.com/schimbarea\\_imnului\\_national\\_al\\_romaniei](https://www.petitiononline.com/schimbarea_imnului_national_al_romaniei)

There are some possible explanations for the attachment towards the anachronic anthem. The first would be the necessary connection in identitarian order with a historic moment of the beginning of a nation, unconsumed until de end, due to the soft, but exterior intervention of the monarchy and, later, to the brutal installation of Communism. Another explanation resides in the need for a structuring and legitimizing ritual for the community. The secularization of the state, forced by the installation of the Communist regime, consumed the ceremonial pulsations in a socially unhealthy manner, through political solemnities and events dedicated to the party and its leader. As a result, the return of the church and of religious ceremonies after 1989 in the forefront of community life was additionally enhanced and credited by half a socialist century. At present, the diminishing trust in the Orthodox Church, which coagulated an 86,45% adherence among the population according to the 2011 census, has created a new free space on the scene of solemn-ritualistic Romanian performances, that national symbols, including the anthem, can recover among the experience of collective emotions, which have not been otherwise ritualistically exploited by the present social imaginary. Then, it is possible that in the three decades of ceremonial performance, the melodic line and the words to have been charged emotionally with important moments of updated national solidarity: athletic victories, decisive historic moments such as the inclusion in NATO or the EU, demonstrations of the civilian society etc. Finally, it would not be excluded for the lyrics themselves to still be carriers of symbols that are adequate for a part of the society, which continues to find an identitarian meaning in the constitutive images: the illusion of a glorious and legitimizing past, the revolt coagulated against an exterior enemy and the amalgam of right orientation of Christianity with nationalism.

## 5. Conclusions

The present Romanian anthem accurately responds to the values of the 1848 Revolution, whose romantic imaginary generated it. However, in the last three decades it has continued to legitimize political or apolitical ceremonies, to ritualistically organize and emotionally infuse a national solidarity that is still present. Although the present values of Romanians have changed, under the Western cultural and institutional influence, *Deșteaptă-te, române!* proves to be a persistent symbol in the coagulation of group identity. Where the present national identity takes from the exterior and adapts new secular values, the continuity of mythemes in the imaginary compensates and supports a solidarity, which is quasi-dated from a historic and socio-political point of view, but which is manifested as a need for ritual.

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