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THE HEROIC CULT IN RADIO SHOWS IN ROMANIA

Case
study

Keywords

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Abstract

A people's cultural and historical past, represented as community's destiny, is memorized and sent down, from one generation to the next, through the many channels of popular orality: legends, ballads, popular poetry and also through those channels more specific to modern times, such as patriotic songs, cultivated poetry, fiction (especially historical novels), history, histories, films, etc. Through their educational purpose, but also through their emotional/affective packaging, all these do manage the collective past and determine the manner in which the historical time is perceived in a patrimonial and affective fashion, as national past.

The present study wishes to analyze the manner in which Romanian radio stations covered the events organized on the Heroes' Day in 2014, to identify the themes of the radio coverage and to assess whether the current radio shows are able to ensure a memory link or connection between generations.

INTRODUCTION

In the western civilization, the secular cult of war heroes – soldiers who died on the war field – is relatively new. The mercenary soldiers, enrolled in conflicts that involved the communities only in limited ways were regarded with contempt by the society. Once with the national states and the introduction of compulsory military service, the social status of the citizen-soldier radically changes. The country and its people glorify especially the heroes of military action, known or anonymous, in whose memory monuments are erected to their eternal glory. Many ceremonies and celebrations commemorate those events considered outstanding for the community, through organized actions, observing an established scenario; requiring and using a set of specific props, invested with a certain sacred historicity (such as the national day, the flags, the sanctuary places, coagulating gestures and attitudes, plates on the memorial houses, pantheonic cemeteries, museums etc.) and operating as memory connections (*lieux de mémoire*) between generations.

Through The Decree no. 1693 of May, 4, 1920, it has been established that the Heroes' Day should be celebrated each year the same day as the religious holyday "Înălțarea Domnului"/ "Ascension of Jesus". This way, România became the first country to commemorate the foreign and the Romanian heroes the same day.

Younger generations have perceived a sense of the great historical events of the 20th Century (the two World Wars, Holocaust, the revolutions of South-Eastern Europe, etc.) as a result of their exposure to the cultural industries products and, although, oral tradition and face to face interactions continue to play important parts in shaping our sense of the past, "they operate increasingly in conjunction with a process of understanding which draws its symbolic content from the products of the media industry" (J. B. Thompson, 2002, p. 37). The development of communication media and mass media created what John Thompson calls "the immediate historicity" (J. B. Thompson, 2002, p. 37), through which our perception on the past and on the ways past influences the present, "becomes increasingly dependent on an ever expanding reservoir of mediated symbolic forms" (J. B. Thompson, 2002, p. 37).

THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF REMEMBRANCE DAY

Remembrance Day is celebrated every year, in the same day as the Ascension of Christ which is celebrated on the sixth Thursday after Easter, 40 days after the Resurrection, when Jesus ascended to Heaven. As a token of gratitude for the supreme sacrifice made by the thousands of soldiers who

died on the battlefields of World War I, The Versailles Treaty signed by the former belligerent countries in 1919 provided, among other amendments, the maintenance of soldiers' graves as well as of the memorial monuments and works of art dedicated to them. This day was firstly celebrated in 1920 (according to the law-decree no. 1693, from May 1920; see: „Remembrance Day”, *Agerpres*, 21. 05. 2015, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2015/05/21/ziua-eroilor-07-54-49>, accessed on the 28. 09. 2015), Romania becoming the first country to celebrate the foreign heroes who died in the World War I as national heroes.

The „War Heroes' Grave” Society (founded in 1919), and transformed into the „Heroes' Cult” Society had an important role in the celebration of the fallen heroes. Through this society, that is under the patronage of Queen Maria, the Unknown Hero's Grave has been inaugurated and many commemorative boards and monuments have been placed in most of the country's towns during the interwar years.

As a consequence of the political constraints, Remembrance Day was established for the 9th of May through the no. 71/1948 Decree („Remembrance Day”, *Agerpres*, 21. 05. 2015, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2015/05/21/ziua-eroilor-07-54-49>, accessed on the 28. 09. 2015) after repealing the previous amendments. The no 117/1975 Decree („Remembrance Day”, *Agerpres*, 21. 05. 2015, <http://www.agerpres.ro/flux-documentare/2015/05/21/ziua-eroilor-07-54-49>, accessed on the 28. 09. 2015) regarding the regimen of graves and commemorative works of art maintained the regulation that stated that the 9th of May is to be considered Remembrance Day, being celebrated in the same day as the *National Independence Day and the Victory against Fascism Day*. After 1990, after the works of the Ministry of National Defence, Remembrance Day was no longer celebrated on the 9th of May but on the same day as the Ascension of Christ.

On the 2nd of May 1995 the Romanian Parliament adopted a law that stated that Ascension Day was declared Remembrance Day in order to render homage to the sacrifice made by the ones who died in battle for the freedom and independence of the Romanian people. The Ascension day was declared Remembrance day and national holiday through the decisions of The Romanian Orthodox Church's Holy Synod from 1999 and 2001. At the same time, the 2003 law regarding the war monuments and commemorative works of art declared the Ascension Day as national celebration of the Romanian people.

Unfortunately though, in the documents related to this celebration, the heroes who died during the

Communist Regimen or who suffered in the totalitarian's regimen prisons are forgotten. The Communism and Resistance Victims Memorial tries to bring the heroes from the time of the Communist Regimen to the deserved rank, to remember the fact that the martyrs from the Communist prisons who fought for freedom should not be forgotten. In this way, every year in the same day as Ascension Day and Remembrance Day, the Communism and Resistance Victims Memorial from Sighet (where there has been one of the harshest communist prisons) organizes Memory Day, a day for those who went through the Communist prisons and deportations or who fought in the resistance against the Communist regime. In Romania, there are more than 150.000 graves of the martyr heroes. Most of them that are anonymous belong to the soldiers who died during the Two World Wars but also to the victims of the Communist Regime.

THE COMMEMORATIVE RITUALS. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MASS-MEDIA AND THE HUMANITY CULTURAL MEMORY

Special cultural creations have been elaborated and in their scheme the sequential acts follow one another according to their own pre-established logic, the rits represent „a constituent dimensions of the social area”, as Claude Riviere states (1995, p. 10). Pascal Lardellier appreciates the fact that „the rit is a form of social relationship that gives <<the ensemble-being>> its whole dimension and substance. In a fundamental way, the rit allows individuals to be a part of the communities, institutions and societies that function according to logics that are related to class, to body, to elective affinities [...] it allows the individual to have a collective memory and traditions as well”.(Pascal Lardellier, 2003, p. 12).

The remembrance act is “either the link with the past or the manner to impose in the collective memory recent events” (Florica Iuhas, 2012, p. 41) and it is linked to a social act that marks the life of the individual or of the community. We emphasize here the pattern of the commemoration ceremonials that have the purpose of rethinking the national past. Maurice Halbwachs dismantles the mechanism that builds the collective memory and states that in order for the individual memory to keep its' repective community memories, the individual memories are not enough, „it is also required that it (the collective memory – n.n) had had similarities with our memories and that it has enough contact points so that the memory it awakens to be rebuilt on common ground. It is not enough to reconstruct a past event piece by piece to obtain a memory. It is necessary for this reconstruction to be done starting from common

data and notions that can be found in our mind as well as in the others' minds, because they are always sent to us and from us to the others, and this is only possible if we are part of the same society”. (Maurice Halbwachs, 2007, pp. 59-60).

The role to convey the cultural memory of humanity rests in the hands of the press as well. In her book „*Mass media, public space, commemoration: the symbolic reconstruction of post-communist new identities*”, Antonia Matei emphasizes the relationship between the commemorative rituals and the media. „The commemorative rituals are far from being new practicies that are specific to modern societies, but actually, the last few decades have brought a growth to this fenomenon and the commemorations became an usual element in the political, social and cultural practices. The commemoration of a person, of an event or of a moment more or less important takes place every day especially in the media, even if only through one simple statement. Lots of television channels, radio channels and papers present a daily calendar that mentions what happened throughout the years on that specific date (the birth or the death of a personality, important historical events, important discoveries, etc.). The commemorations are a manner of keeping the collective memory alive and of preserving the history. Mass-media has a very important role in the modern society and it could have not left its mark on commemoration rituals as well, having an important influence in building and in modeling the national identity” (Antonia Matei, 2014, p. 9). The author highlits the fact that in Romania „the influence of almost 50 years of communist dictatorship, the political, social and technological changes of the last few years have modified and stamped the society, the press, the commemoration fenomenon and also the concepts of national identity and collective memory” (Antonia Matei, 2014, pp. 9-10).

THE REFLECTION OF REMEMBRANCE DAY IN RADIO BROADCASTING

Every year, the Romanian radio channels have reported the double meaning of Remembrance Day, both the secular and the religious meaning. In order to analyze the way in which Remembrance Day is reflected in radio broadcasting, I selected 12 articles from 2013-2014. In terms of the publicist content, I noticed that there are, on the one hand, religious messages with a highly sacred and emotional meaning that are more appropriate for essays and on the other hand, with journalistic messages that are appropriate for the news.

„On his Ascension Day, Jesus Christ departs from the world of men in order to be more present amongst them. The paradox of this departure that becomes presence can only be understood at a

spiritual level. Jesus Christ ascends into Heaven but he tells his followers that he will always be with them. The Christians are experimenting this type of certainty that, even though he cannot be seen, God will always be present in the life of those who look for him faithfully. [...] The Ascension is a lesson about freedom. This is why us, the Romanian people remember the heroes on Ascension Day. They have tested the lesson on their own skin. They have sacrificed everything for the freedom and dignity of their people. Their sacrifice has an historic value because it has contributed at some point to the country's well being as well as a spiritual and everlasting value, the same as any noble act that comes from love. Ascension Day is, since 1923, the National Remembrance Day. After being interrupted during the communist regime, the heroes' celebration has been continuing after 1989. The Ascension Day has been chosen for this celebration for the connection between Jesus Christ's sacrifice and the heroes' sacrifice for their people, a sacrifice that enabled the ascension and the release from evil" (Remus Rădulescu, , „Înălțarea Domnului – Ziua Eroilor” / „Ascension Day – Remembrance Day”, *Radio România Actualități*, 29. 06. 2014, http://www.romania-actualitati.ro/inaltarea_domnului_ziua_eroilor-62359, accessed on the 10. 08. 2015). The National Remembrance Day is directly linked to God's Ascension to Heaven on Mount of Olives and Jesus's sacrifice is directly linked with the heroes' sacrifice. The piece is a combination between the religious message and the journalistic one, with emphasis on the religious side and it indicates the variety of linguistic styles that can be used to report an event.

Furthermore, another message connects two important Christian holidays: The Resurrection, The Ascension and Remembrance Day, a secular holiday that is seen as a fundamental ritual of passing through death: „The Orthodox and Greek-Catholic Christians are celebrating today Christ's Ascension into Heaven. This day is also dedicated to the remembrance of those who died in order to defend their country. Christ's Ascension and Heroes's Remembrance are linked through Christ's sacrifice on the cross. If the Resurrection is the result of Jesus's innocent death of the death that comes from love, the Ascension is nothing more than the last act of His Resurrection. Through his Ascension, Christ takes his permanent place in the Holy Trinity with his godly being and at the same time he places all of us there. This is why the heroes are remembered today, because they resembled Jesus in their love by dying for the others. This is why they have a place alongside Christ, in the core of godliness. The Christians will pray for the heroes in the city churches or in monasteries, at the requiem service after the Holy Liturgy that takes place in the morning. They will

ask God to rest them next to his saints...” (Cristian Curte, „Înălțarea Domnului – Ziua Eroilor” / „Ascension Day – Remembrance Day”, 13. 06. 2013, *Radio România Actualități*, http://www.romania-actualitati.ro/inaltarea_domnului_ziua_eroilor-51335, accessed on the 10. 08. 2015). The main idea that rests at the core of this message is the sacrifice. The Divine Sacrifice is linked to the human sacrifice through a common idea, the love for the others.

From our point of view, we are dealing, in the first two examples, with complex pieces that do not only give out information but also define the event from a biblical perspective. It is impossible not to emphasize the fact that, in terms of semantics, „the success of communication is owed to the social solidarity and to the arrangement of the linguistic uses, but there also is always an area of lack of communication depending on the speakers' competence” (Florentina Popa, 2009, p. 82).

The biblical text and the message it conveys has semantic symbols that are not decoded in the same way in the listeners' minds, and here we take into consideration the fact that not many people are reading the Bible in Romania. The initiatives to stimulate the interest towards the Bible have been reduced. For example, the campaigns such as „The year of the Bible” have only had a confessional impact (The Catholic and the Orthodox Church) or regional impact (The Bible Year from Oradea). The reading program is complicated and lacks attractiveness, though. Moreover, according to some statistics, the reality is that the Romanians do not read very much. And not only the Bible. More than one third of the Romanians do not buy books. Furthermore, 22% of the Romanians do not read any books and one person out of five only reads one book per year. However, for comparison purposes, 60% of the French adults read a few books per year” (Cristina Hermeziu, „Statistici despre citit: Franța - România” / „Reading statistics: France - Romania”, *Adevărul*, 23. 08. 2013, http://adevarul.ro/cultura/carti/statistici-despre-citit-franta-romania-1_52178622c7b855ff560800bc/index.html, viewed on 22. 05. 2015).

Another category of news is the *flash* news, for examples: “Remembrance Day has been celebrated today in a ceremony organized at the Heroes' Monument from the Pacea Cemetery. Flower crowns have been brought by authorities and public institutions' representatives. Furthermore, a Remembrance Service took place. Remembrance Day is celebrated in the same day as the Ascension of Christ. („Ziua Eroilor, marcată la Suceava” / “Remembrance Day celebrated in Suceava”, *Radio Top*, 29. 05. 2014, <http://www.radiotop.ro/ziua-eroilor-marcata-la-suceava/>, viewed on 22. 08. 2015; „Remembrance Day will be celebrated

tomorrow in Mehadia village through a manifestation organized by the local town hall and the local Technological High School „Nicolae Stoica of Hațeg”. On this occasion, a Te Deum service in the memory of the local heroes who fell during the two world wars will be held, the significance of this day will be remembered and the pupils will organize a program of patriotic songs and poetry” (Paul Sever Smadu, „Ziua Eroilor, marcată la Mehadia” / „Remembrance Day celebrated in Mehadia”, *Radio România Reșița*, 28.05.2014, <https://radioresita.ro/ziua-eroilor-marcata-la-mehadia/>, viewed on 20. 08. 2015). Even though the development plots may vary, (see: „Ziua Eroilor va fi sărbătorită mâine la Timișoara” / “Remembrance Day will be celebrated tomorrow in Timișoara”, *Westcity Radio*, 28. 08. 2014, <http://westcityradio.ro/ziua-eroilor-va-fi-sarbatorita-maine-la-timisoara/>, accessed in 11. 06. 2015; „Gorjenii sărbătoresc astăzi Înălțarea Domnului și Ziua Eroilor” / “The people from Gorj celebrate today Remembrance Day and the Ascension of Christ”, *Radio Omega*, 29 .08. 2014, <http://www.radioomega.ro/47215-gorjenii-sarbatoresc-astazi-inaltarea-domnului-si-ziua-eroilor.html>, viewed on 24. 05. 2015) the data given to the listeners in this kind of news is brief, they announce what is the occasion of the celebration, where and when it happens, what happened, who were the participants. In the soft news it is often used a lead that is based on what Irene Joanescu considers to be „the effect/cause succession” and that „even though we are used to hearing this expression the other way around – cause and effect – the news are rather an effect, an occurrence that gives the event the information value, and this is the first thing in the sequence (Irene Joanescu, 1999, p. 98): “*Flower Crowns have been deposited, throughout the county, at the monuments erected in the memory of the peoples’ heroes who died during their duty.* Today we also celebrate Remembrance Day, an important Christian holiday, that celebrates Jesus’s of Nazareth ascension into Heaven, 40 days after his Resurrection. In Târgu-Jiu, in the Prefecture Plaza, the authorities have organized manifestations that celebrate Remembrance Day. The County’s Council Vice-President, Ciprian Florescu, held a speech in front of the crowd from the Revolution Plaza about the importance of Remembrance Day and Jesus’s Ascension into Heaven” („Gorjenii sărbătoresc astăzi Înălțarea Domnului și Ziua Eroilor” / “The people from Gorj celebrate today Remembrance Day and the Ascension of Christ”, *Radio Omega*, 29.05.2014, <http://www.radioomega.ro/47215-gorjenii-sarbatoresc-astazi-inaltarea-domnului-si-ziua-eroilor.html>, viewed on 24. 08. 2015) but we can also have a lead constructed on the succession between cause and effect as in the next news: „On

Ascension Day we celebrate Remembrance Day in the memory of those who died throughout the centuries on the battlefields for faith, freedom, justice, our country’s, defence and for the unity of our people. On this occasion, on Thursday, the 29th of May manifestations have been organized in Satu Mare as well as in the entire country. The commemoration activities started on the 25th October Plaza at the commemoration monument and afterwards they continued with a small requiem and the placement of flower crowns at the Heroes’ Cemetery from the Colosca Avenue. Afterwards, the main manifestations took place at the Romanian’s Solider Monument from the Vasile Lucaciu Plaza. The local and county officials, the parties representatives, institutions, associations, schools and high schools from Satu Mare have participated. After singing the national anthem, there has been a requiem followed by discourses, the placement of flower crowns and the parade of the Honour Gard that was constituted especially for Remembrance Day” („Ziua Eroilor la Satu-Mare” / „Remembrance Day in Satu Mare”, *Radio Transilvania*, 30. 06. 2014, <http://radiotransilvania.ro/ziua-eroilor-la-satu-mare/>, viewed on 10. 08. 2015).

According to the cognitive psychology, the first phrase has the purpose of storing the information from a phonological point of view „ that is then followed by the association of the significant with the signifier. The speed for understanding the heard phrase depends on the basic lexicon of the listener. If the listener is accustomed with the information that is transmitted, the decoding speed will be higher”, on the contrary situation, he will need more time for understanding the message” (Florentina Popa, 2009, p. 120).

The news’ messages are usually general and brief, the language is on the edge of the journalistic cliché through the use of some fixed expressions. About the language used by the media, Rodica Zafiu says that it is „ permanently in the search of predefined formulas that give a strikingness to the most trivial combinations” (Rodica Zafiu, 2001, p. 62) so that „everything that can be said in many ways is reduced systematically to a pattern that communicates the new information in a format that is familiar to the reader” (Rodica Zafiu, 2001, p. 62) and that can be slide towards wooden language. Formulas such as „the heroes, the soliders and Romanian fighters from all times who sacrificed themselves for the defence of the country and of the ancestral faith, for the dignity and the freedom of the Romanian people will be mentioned” or „it has given along its existance its offering for the Mother Country” (Hardy Cvoica, „Ziua Eroilor marcată la Bocșa” / „Remembrance Day Celebrated in Bocsa”, *Radio România Reșița*, 27.05.2014, <https://radioresita.ro/ziua-eroilor-marcata-la-bocsa/>, viewed on 24. 08. 2015); „Eternal glory and

gratitude for the people's heroes from all places and all times who had fallen for the defence of the national being, of the independence and of the national integrity, for the martyr heroes who have fallen for democracy and freedom!" („Ziua Eroilor Neamului - sărbătorită și în Oltenița" / „Remembrance Day - celebrated in Oltenița", 30. 05. 2014, *Radio Oltenia*, <http://radio-oltenita.ro/ziua-eroilor-neamului-sarbatorita-si-in-oltenita/>, viewed on 24. 08. 2015) are „phrasing units with fixed expressions, with petrified clichés, with pre-established meanings fixed in the context of a certain <<authority>>, largely used in a stereotypical-dogmatic way [...] broadcasted through repetition, frequent use, in the diversity of the means of mass communication, oral and written, neutralizing the thinking of the receivers' mass" in opinion of Slama Cazacu (Mihaela-Cristina Crețu in *Philologica Jassyensia*, 2010, Year VI, No. 1(11), p. 28).

From the news themes' analysis it is concluded that Remembrance Day is dedicated to those who died for freedom and this includes also those who fought in the two world wars, the communism and the anticommunism resistance victims but also the heroes who were shot in the days of the Romanian Revolution from 1989. Remembrance Day at the Communism Victims and Resistance Memorial from Sighet has been marked today through a series of manifestations dedicated to the one hundred years anniversary of politician Corneliu Coposu. In the former political prison there has been a round table where several book launches took place and where many important civil society personalities, ex political prisoners and people of culture from the whole country have participated. In the Poor's Cemetery, at the border of Sighet, a service in the memory of all the martyrs who died in the Romanian political prisons has been officiated" (Adrian Marchiș, „Ziua Eroilor marcată la Sighet" / "Remembrance Day celebrated in Sighet", *Radio România Actualități*, 29. 06. 2014, http://www.romania-actualitati.ro/ziua_eroilor_marcata_la_sighet-62376, viewed on the 10. 08. 2015); w„Fighters', Injured and Descendants' of Heroes Association «Brașov – December 1989» organized today a religious ceremonial, placement of flower crowns at the central Brașov Cemetery in the memory of the Martyr Heroes fallen in the 1989 Romanian Revolution. The Brașov Garrison and the County's Prefect Institution organized a religious ritual at the Șprengi Cemetery of the Second World War. Other ceremonials have been organized at the Monuments of the First World War Heroes from Bod and Omenis" („Ziua Eroilor a fost marcată în tot județul Brașov" / „Remembrance Day celebrated in Brașov County", *Radio România Târgu Mureș*, 29.05.2014, http://www.radiomures.ro/stiri/ziua_eroilor_a_fost_

[marcata_in_tot_judeul_brasov.html](http://www.radiomures.ro/stiri/ziua_eroilor_a_fost_marcata_in_tot_judeul_brasov.html), viewed on 24. 08. 2015).

CONCLUSION

As we have shown at the beginning of the article, the Remembrance Day's celebration has its roots in the amendments of the Versailles Treaty signed by the ex - belligerent countries¹ in 1919 and represents a sign of gratitude for the sacrifice of hundreds of soldiers who fell during World War One. The treaty amended, amongst other things the maintenance of soldiers' graves as well as of the memorial monuments and works of art dedicated to them.

Our article meant to analyze – without expecting to be exhaustive – the reflection of Remembrance Day in the articles presented by the radio broadcasting between 2013 and 2014. In the summary of this analysis, we can conclude that the radio journalism is not a cultural landmark for future generations and it only has an informative purpose rather than an educational one. We did not find in the radio flow any intricate news to present information (neither historically nor culturally) that defines the context of the event.

Another observation is that the National Radio Channel, Radio România Actualități favors the essay-like messages written in a religious note, with a high symbolic substance but here we have to keep in mind the fact that the message needs to be structured using a common lexicon for all the listeners that are targeted by the transmitter. "The listener' competence is the one that establishes the relationship between the transmitter and the receptor during the interaction process. The transmitter invites the receptors to an interpretative cooperation, but the act takes place only if the speaker's communication capacities are congenial" says Florentina Popa (2009, p. 138), fact that makes us wonder about the social understanding of the message.

The common idea in all the articles is the sacrifice that is used as the central term in the structure of radio messages.

The flash news, preferred by local radios, only have elements that define the event and are not difficult to understand.

In a first, exploratory reading of the corpus units, we noticed that, among the 12 articles, six news pieces are not signed, which leads us to believe and assert that this type of information is part of the planned events, created upon a repetitive pattern, the same, year after year.

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