

# REWORKING THE INTERWAR PAST: NEO-LEGIONARY SYMBOLISM AND MEMORY IN ROMANIAN UNDERGROUND HIP-HOP

*“Yeah, music creates monsters  
And messes with your kids  
All these idiots blaring through the speakers  
They don't know that music creates monsters”  
- Dragonu AKA 47<sup>1</sup>*

## *Introduction*

Music possesses a remarkable capacity to evoke emotion, amplify communication, and shape individual and collective identities. As a carrier of tradition, music keeps the past alive, preserving images and symbols that influence the ways in which we perceive reality.<sup>2</sup> Throughout history, music has transcended social and educational boundaries, bringing together groups otherwise separated by profound differences, from peasants with little formal education to cultural elites. It has commemorated events through ballads and hymns, strengthening communal bonds “through the remembrance of oppression or of better times,”<sup>3</sup> while simultaneously becoming part of the propaganda apparatus of totalitarian regimes, particularly through marches and military bands.<sup>4</sup>

Although the political potential of music had already been recognized in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century marked a distinct new phase in its deliberate deployment in pursuit of specific political objectives.<sup>5</sup> Leaders on both the far right and the far left “believed in the power of music over personal and political life.”<sup>6</sup> Self-proclaimed music lovers, Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin did not merely appropriate established repertoires and prominent artists; they also supported the creation of new musical works intended to serve state ideology. In Romania, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, leader of the Legionary Movement, “considered the battle song essential to achieving victory,”<sup>7</sup> while the national-communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu subjected artistic production to stringent ideological control, emphasizing the homeland, the Party, and the leader.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dragonu AKA 47, “Muzica naște monștrii”, *Dragoș V'o Dă*, 2012, audio track.

<sup>2</sup> Ron Eyerman, Andre Jamison, *Music and Social Movements. Mobilising Traditions in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p.45.

<sup>3</sup> Valentina Sandu-Dediu, *Muzici în tonuri naționaliste*, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2026, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Leon Botstein, “Art and the State: The Case of Music”, in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 4, 2005, p. 491.

<sup>6</sup> V. Sandu-Dediu, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup> Ion Mânzatu, *Cum am compus cântecele legionare*, Colecția EUROPA München, Munich, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> This instrumentalization of music was reflected internationally in a number of well-known official repertoires. In Nazi Germany, “Horst-Wessel-Lied” and “Erika” functioned as sonic emblems of the regime; in Fascist Italy, “Giovinezza” played an analogous role; while in the Soviet Union, “The Sacred War” served to mobilize the population in the face of external aggression. In Romania, both the Legionary Movement, through hymns such as “Sfântă tinerețe legionară,” and the communist regime, through propagandistic songs such as “Partidul, Ceaușescu, România!”, harnessed music as a vehicle for disseminating official ideology.

Within the Legionary Movement, however, music far exceeded the function of a propaganda instrument. It became a central element of the movement's identity, forging communal bonds and recruiting followers. Historian Oliver Jens Schmitt observes that “neither before nor since has Romanian society been mobilized politically through song as powerfully as it was during the heyday of the Legionary Movement.”<sup>9</sup> For the Legionaries, song was not simply a means of conveying ideology; it was an expression of spiritual and political belonging. The Legionary repertoire integrated themes including ultranationalism, Orthodox Mysticism, the cult of Zelea Codreanu, the sacralization of the past, the glorification of self-sacrifice, and the creation of the “new man.”<sup>10</sup> Songs accompanied public rituals (marches, student gatherings, religious ceremonies) but also permeated private and everyday spaces, including workshops and train carriages, generating an intense experience of collective participation.<sup>11</sup> During the period in which the Movement exercised political power (September 1940 - January 1941), party music acquired a compulsory character, with members required to possess collections of Legionary songs.<sup>12</sup> The collapse of the Legionary regime and, subsequently, the establishment of communist dictatorship did not lead to the complete eradication of this sonic memory. Instead, it survived clandestinely within political exile communities and in communist prisons.<sup>13</sup>

At the European level, the second half of the twentieth century witnessed a renewed politicization of music as a vehicle of right-wing radicalism, crystallizing under the designation of *White Power Music*. Encompassing strands of rock, punk, folk, and rap, this musical current emerged from transformations within the British skinhead movement. During the 1960s, the skinhead subculture was largely multicultural. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, against the backdrop of economic crisis and growing tensions surrounding immigration, a segment of the skinhead turned to music as a means of advancing far-right politics. From the mid-1980s onward, the movement spread across continental Europe, diversifying its musical forms and becoming an important component of radical-right mobilization.<sup>14</sup>

Although rap music in Western Europe has often positioned itself in opposition to the far right, partly because of the genre's African American origins,<sup>15</sup> this antagonistic relationship has

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<sup>9</sup> Oliver Jens Schmitt, „Sfântă tinerețe legionară. Cântecele ca mijloc și esență a mobilizării politice de extremă dreaptă în România interbelică, in *Archiva Moldaviae*, Vol. III., 2011, p. 164.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 167- 173.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Clark, “Collective Singing in Romanian Fascism, Cultural and Social History”, in *Cultural and Social History*, Vol. 10, Issue 2, 2013, p. 265.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Jamie R. Noulty, “Eyes Full of Rage and A Heart Full of Hate: ‘White Power’ the Soundtrack of the White Revolution”, in Marc-André Argentino, Amarnath Amarasingam (eds.), *Contemporary Far-Right Culture: The Art, Music and Everyday Practices of Violent Extremism*, Routledge, New York, 2026, pp. 274-276. See also Ron Eyerman, “Music in Movement: Cultural Politics and Old and New Social Movements”, in *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 2002, pp. 443-458.

<sup>15</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov, “European Far-Right Music and Its Enemies”, in Ruth Wodak, John E. Richardson (eds.), *Analysing Fascist Discourse. European Fascism in Talk and Text*, Routledge, New York, 2013, p. 279. In this context, the author provides examples from France and Ukraine. In France, members of the National Front criticized hip-hop, associating it with the promotion of messages perceived as anti-French. In Ukraine, members of the Svoboda party called for the cancellation of a concert by the American group Pnyx and for its members to be deported.

not precluded the emergence of far-right associated music.<sup>16</sup> In Romania, however, the relationship between rap music and the far right has taken a distinctive form, with certain segments of the genre becoming vehicles for the circulation of themes associated with the far-right. Emerging in the United States in the late 1970s, rap helped African American youth articulate their experiences and grievances. Its oral and rhythmic character made it an accessible mode of expression, capable of translating ideas into direct messages articulated in free, colloquial, and often harsh language.<sup>17</sup> Hip-hop reached Romania in the 1990s, amid the political and cultural transformations that followed the collapse of the communist regime.<sup>18</sup> While the earliest manifestations, represented by groups such as B.U.G. Mafia<sup>19</sup> and Paraziții,<sup>20</sup> focused primarily on marginalized neighbourhoods, social inequality, and political corruption, by around 2012 some Romanian underground artists had begun incorporating neo-Legionary motifs into their lyrics,<sup>21</sup> drawing heavily on Orthodox Christianity and nationalism.<sup>22</sup> These elements should not be understood as mere historical imitations. Rather, they result from processes of reworking and rewriting,<sup>23</sup> as well as recontextualization,<sup>24</sup> through which historical materials and narratives are reinterpreted within

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<sup>16</sup> For examples of the association between rap music and the far right in other national contexts, see Anna Oravcová, Jan Charvát, “Czech Rap Music and Right-Wing Attitudes”, in *Central European Journal of Politics*, Vol. 8, 2018, pp. 80-105; Benjamin R. Teitelbaum, “The Study of Far-Right Music”, in *Music Research Annual*, Vol. 2, 2021, pp. 1-20; Nancy S. Love, *Trendy fascism: white power music and the future of democracy*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2016; Piotr Żuk, Paweł Żuk, “Nation against the system: nationalist rap as the voice of marginalized classes and losers from the neoliberal transformation in Poland”, in *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2021, pp. 1-21.

<sup>17</sup> R. Eyerman and A. Jamison, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>18</sup> On the Romanian underground scene, see Anda Georgiana Becuț, “Between popular and underground culture. An analysis of Bucharest urban culture,” in Andy Bennett, Paula Guerra (eds.), *DIY cultures and underground music scenes*, Routledge, New York, 2019, pp. 41-50.

<sup>19</sup> B.U.G. Mafia is a Romanian hip-hop group founded in 1993 and consisting of the artists “Tata Vlad,” “Caddillac,” and “Uzzi.”

<sup>20</sup> Paraziții is a Romanian hip-hop group founded in 1994 by the artist Cheloo. The group currently consists of “Cheloo,” “Ombladon,” and “Freakadadisk”

<sup>21</sup> Cecilie Endresen defines neo-Legionaryism as a contemporary politico-religious ideology and discourse that claims the legacy of the interwar Legionary Movement and combines elements of mysticism, Orthodox Christianity, Romanian folklore, fascism, ethnic nationalism, and antisemitism. Neo-Legionaries express a positive attitude toward interwar Legionary ideology and symbolism and assert the continuity of the “Legionary spirit” beyond the communist period. See Cecilie Endresen, “‘The Legionaries rise!’ The neo-Legionary movement in post-Communist Romania,” in *Südost-Forschungen*, No. 69/70, 2010, pp. 284-285.

<sup>22</sup> Oana Alexandra Chirilă and Cassandra D. Chaney, “Hip Hop, Religion and the Youth of Romania: A Preliminary Study”, in *Journal of Hip Hop Studies*, Special Issue “Hip Hop and Religion,” Vol. 5, Issue 1, Summer 2018, p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> These processes involve the re-examination, adaptation, and reconstruction of historical material, traumatic events, symbols, or narratives about the past in response to the identity-based, political, or moral needs of the present. See Constance de Saint-Laurent and Sandra Obradović, “Uses of the Past: History as a Resource for the Present,” in *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 2019, pp. 1-2.; Peter Baldwin (ed.), *Reworking the past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1990.

<sup>24</sup> This refers to the process through which monuments, texts, images or collective memories are removed from their original historical, spatial or social contexts and placed within new frameworks, thereby

new discursive frameworks. To these elements can be added references to the communist period, particularly political prisoners and the so-called „Prison Saints” who have been transformed into martyrological figures by artists associated with Orthodox religious milieus.<sup>25</sup>

Against this background, the article examines how motifs and references associated with the Legionary Movement are recontextualized within Romanian hip-hop and incorporated into contemporary discourse on national identity, Orthodoxy, anti-communism, and the contestation of prevailing socio-political order.

### ***Methodology***

This study adopts a qualitative approach, combining content and discourse analysis of a corpus comprising song lyrics, music videos, and public statements, including podcast appearances, by Romanian underground hip-hop artists. The corpus consisted of approximately 500 songs by artists identified through preliminary screening based on nationalist, religious or radical themes. From this corpus, 110 songs were selected based on explicit references to the Legionary Movement, Zelea Codreanu, associated figures, references to communist repression, the so-called „Prison Saints,” and other themes associated with the far right. The analysis focused on nationalism, anti-communism, Orthodoxy, antisemitism, homophobia, Euroscepticism, and conspirational discourse, as well as processes of recontextualization and reworking/rewriting through which historical symbols, figures, and narratives are selectively appropriated, interpreted, and incorporated into contemporary discourses. The study does not assume that the mere use of Legionary references necessarily indicates ideological adherence; rather, it examines their context, frequency, recurrence, and discursive function. The repertoire of Cedry2k (Stelian Crăciun), known for his nationalist and religious discourse, constitutes the principal case study and is examined in relation to the broader patterns identified across the corpus.

### ***Analysis***

In recent years, references drawn from the Romanian underground rap scene have become increasingly visible in the discourse and public interventions of political actors associated with the far right. A telling example occurred in December 2025, when an Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) member of parliament,<sup>26</sup> during parliamentary debates over the so-called

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acquiring substantially different meanings. See Harald Welzer, “Re-narrations: How pasts change in conversational remembering”, in *Memory Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2010, p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> In the case of Romanian rap, certain songs may be associated with far-right discourse without necessarily being classified as White Power Music, a category specifically characterized by its advocacy of white supremacy. In the corpus examined here, radicalism is articulated instead through a locally specific discourse centered on nationalism, Orthodox Christianity and the memory of the Legionary Movement.

<sup>26</sup> The parliamentarian in question is Bogdan Velcescu. AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians – Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor) is a Romanian political party associated with the populist radical right and characterized by a political discourse combining populism, nationalism and anti-establishment rhetoric. For an analysis of the party's rise, see Oana I. Armeanu, “The Fast Rise of Populist Radical Right Parties: Evidence from the Alliance for the Union of Romanians”, in *Government and Opposition*, Vol. 60, No. 3, 2025, p. 583.

“Vexler Law”<sup>27</sup> concerning the fight against extremism, played a rap song from his mobile phone at the parliamentary podium.<sup>28</sup> The song evoked wartime experience and the resistance of anti-communist partisans in the mountains, thereby invoking a narrative of national sacrifice and resistance to political domination.<sup>29</sup>

A comparable episode took place in November 2025. Amid a controversy over the interpretation of verses attributed to the Legionary poet Radu Gyr,<sup>30</sup> inside the National Cathedral, the same parliamentarian used the Chamber of Deputies' microphone to play a song commemorating the victims of the communist regime.<sup>31</sup> The song centres on the memory of the so-called “Prison Saints,” some of whom were associated with the Legionary Movement:

*“Gafencu, Naidim, Ianolide, Maxim,  
Fathers Calciu, Papacioc and Iscu Gherasim  
Fathers Lăcătușu and Daniil of Rarău”<sup>32</sup>  
[...]  
The saints departed humbly into eternity  
[...]  
The regime has changed; the tyrants remain the same”<sup>33</sup>*

The appeal of the underground scene extends beyond parliamentary interventions and reaches the highest echelons of the political milieu associated with the radical right. George Simion, the leader of AUR, has repeatedly expressed an affinity for rap and its nationalist themes. As early as 2009, when he was still a civic activist leading the “Uniți sub tricolor” platform, which advocated the unification of the Republic of Moldova with Romania, Simion organized public

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<sup>27</sup> “Vexler Law” is the designation commonly used in the Romanian public sphere for the legislation initiated by Silviu Vexler, a member of parliament representing Romania’s Jewish minority, amending the legal framework concerning the combating of fascism, Legionaryism, racism, xenophobia, and antisemitism. See Oana Despa, “Miza scandalului adoptării Legii Vexler pentru combaterea extremismului”, *Europa Liberă*, 19 December 2025.

<sup>28</sup> Cristian Matei, “Circ în Parlament, la Legea privind combaterea extremismului. Un deputat AUR a pus muzică rap la microfon: «Să vă fie rușine»”, *ȘtirileProTV*, 17 December 2025.

<sup>29</sup> The lyrics played were: “*My grandfather saw hell in Odessa, / He buried his comrades one by one, only to/ Hide from the Securitate because he had fought against the Russians./ [...] Partisans in the mountains who refused to submit to the rule of the pagans - SDST, „Îngeri deasupra României”, Mecanismul de Modificare a Minții Umane*, 2007, audio track.

<sup>30</sup> Radu Gyr (Radu Demetrescu) was a Romanian poet and journalist, a member of the Legionary Movement and one of its most prominent literary figures.

<sup>31</sup> The episode was made public through the parliamentarian's social-media accounts, including TikTok and Facebook.

<sup>32</sup> Valeriu Gafencu, Ioan Ianolide, Virgil Maxim and Marin Naidim were political prisoners who had connections to the Legionary Movement. Gafencu and Ianolide were members of the Blood Brotherhoods (Frățiile de Cruce), the Legionary youth organizations, while Maxim and Naidim were active in Legionary circles. The remaining figures were members of the clergy who were imprisoned for political reasons or became victims of communist repression and were subsequently incorporated into the religious memory of the “the Prison Saints”: Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, Arsenie Papacioc, Gherasim Iscu, Ilie Lăcătușu and Daniil of Rarău. Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa, Arsenie Papacioc and Ilie Lăcătușu also had Legionary backgrounds.

<sup>33</sup> Cedry2k, “Sfinții Închisorilor”, *Sfinții Închisorilor*, 2014, audio track.

events combining nationalist rhetoric with underground rap concerts.<sup>34</sup> This connection has also found its way into other aspects of his public persona. In his 2019 autobiographical book,<sup>35</sup> Simion chose as opening chapter's title a line from the repertoire of rapper Nimeni Altu' (Adrian Voicu)<sup>36</sup>: "These are our plains, and the mountains are ours as well."<sup>37</sup> In November 2024, Simion posted a video on social media in which he listened to another song by the same artist, "Lăutarul din beci," whose lyrics criticize the music industry, apparently drawing an analogy with the political sphere.<sup>38</sup>

Beyond these forms of political appropriation, the messages conveyed by rap artists such as Cedry2k, Dragonu AKA 47 (Dragoș Tudorache),<sup>39</sup> Sișu Tudor,<sup>40</sup> and Underman<sup>41</sup> intersect with themes associated with the radical right. Their music combines references to the Legionary Movement with a cult of national heroes, the memory of "the Prison Saints," nationalism, and Orthodox mysticism. Several thematic strands recur throughout their repertoires. One such strand is the direct appropriation of songs and poems associated with Legionaryism. Rap artists Underman and Aforic use, as the chorus of "Nici un pas înapoi,"<sup>42</sup> lyrics taken from the Legionary song "Șoim român."<sup>43</sup> Similar appropriations appear in Cedry2k's repertoire. In addition to performing Radu Gyr's poem „Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane,”<sup>44</sup> Cedry2k performs "Unde-s nebunii,"<sup>45</sup> based on the work of Demostene Andronescu,<sup>46</sup> a former member of the Blood

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<sup>34</sup> See the interview in which Simion discusses his activities with the "Marpha Hip Hop" channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qn6ie7vEas>.

<sup>35</sup> George Simion, *Cum i-am cunoscut pe Klaus Johannis, Dan Barna, Traian Băsescu și Ion Iliescu*, Letras, 2019, p. 5.

<sup>36</sup> Nimeni Altu' makes considerably fewer references to nationalist themes than the other artists examined in this study. Over the past decade, his repertoire has focused predominantly on personal life and experience. Nevertheless, he continues to enjoy recognition in certain nationalist milieus.

<sup>37</sup> Nimeni Altu', „Fii ai bravilor soldați”, *Nopți prea lungi*, 2008, audio track.

<sup>38</sup> The lyrics quoted by Simion were: "When I choose to do it for my own people, I represent no neighbourhood/ And so many shitty rappers don't like me, they want to silence me/ While the industry wants to take me for a ride like a shot of liquor/ I'm too stressed, branded persona non grata/ I can feel myself becoming, little by little, as angry as my father/ Enough! You can't get to me; money doesn't sway me/ So many of you are more like talent agents than Popescu and Becali." - Nimeni Altu', „Lăutarul din beci”, *Nopți prea lungi*, 2008.

<sup>39</sup> Dragonu AKA 47 is a Romanian rapper known for his work with the group Specii and for collaborations with artists such as Cedry2k. His repertoire addresses themes of religion, spirituality, and social criticism, while also incorporating radical discourses.

<sup>40</sup> Sișu Tudor is a Romanian rapper best known as a member of the group *La Familia*. He is relevant to the present analysis because his music includes nationalist, religious, and radical themes.

<sup>41</sup> Some sources identify him as Gabriel Nicolae, although this has not been officially confirmed. Performing under the stage name "Underman," he became known for the nationalist themes of his music. Over the past decade, his presence in the public and musical sphere has declined considerably, with his latest album released in 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Underman feat. AFO, "Nici un pas înapoi", *Muzică Ascunsă*, 2014, audio track.

<sup>43</sup> „Șoim român” was a song appropriated by the Legionary Movement and became one of the emblematic pieces in the Legionary musical repertoire.

<sup>44</sup> Cedry2k, "Ridică-te, Gheorghe, ridică-te, Ioane!", *Sfinții Închisorilor*, 2014, audio track. The poem is one of Radu Gyr's most famous works. Considered subversive by the communist authorities, the poem contributed to his death sentence in 1958, a sentence later commuted to life imprisonment.

<sup>45</sup> Cedry2k, "Unde-s nebunii", *Școala veche*, 2018, audio track.

<sup>46</sup> Demostene Andronescu was a Romanian poet and political prisoner who was imprisoned because of his involvement in the Blood Brotherhood (Frăția de Cruce).

Brotherhoods (Frățiile de Cruce), and “Strigăt,”<sup>47</sup> based on the work of Constantin Oprișan,<sup>48</sup> a member of the Legionary Movement.

Rap songs also contain direct references to Codreanu, who is presented not merely as a historical figure but as a symbol of moral purity and resistance to the system. Some artists explicitly position themselves as heirs to Codreanu or portray him as a martyr.

*“We are the children of Saint Andrew, Neagoe Basarab, Antim Ivireanul, Stephan the Great, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, Paisie Olaru, and Arsenie Boca!”<sup>49</sup>*

*“Haarp Cord<sup>50</sup> is Stephan the Great, Codreanu and Radu Gyr;  
Or Haarp Cord is Brâncoveanu, Gafencu, and other martyrs.”<sup>51</sup>*

The myth of „the Prison Saints” and the anti-communist partisans is intertwined with Orthodox mysticism, transforming political prisoners associated with the Legionary Movement, such as Valeriu Gafencu, George Manu<sup>52</sup> and Iustin Pîrvu,<sup>53</sup> into sacred heroes. From the perspective of collective memory, this process operates through selective omission,<sup>54</sup> whereby their Legionary affiliations and the movement's role in interwar political violence are downplayed, while their martyrdom under communist repression and their anti-communist resistance are amplified:

*“The Pitești experiment, Romanian figures of worth condemned as criminals.  
Irrationally, priests and intellectuals who perished at the Canal.”<sup>55</sup>*

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<sup>47</sup> Cedry2k, “Strigăt (după Constantin Oprișan)”, *Vremuri Ciudate*, 2022, audio track.

<sup>48</sup> Constantin Oprișan was a Romanian political prisoner and former member of the Legionary Movement. He was one of the victims of the Pitești re-education experiment.

<sup>49</sup> Dragonu AKA 47 & Flou Rege, “Ardem!”, *Adio 47 Omul Vechi*, 2011, audio track.

<sup>50</sup> Haarp Cord was an underground hip-hop group whose members included artists such as Dragonu AKA 47 and Sișu Tudor, alongside other collaborators.

<sup>51</sup> Stres feat. Eufonic, Dragoș Miron, Sișu Tudor and Tecko Starr, “Simte HaarpCord”, *Tot Răul Spre Bine*, 2016, audio track.

<sup>52</sup> George Manu was a Romanian physicist and political prisoner who was sentenced because of his connections with Legionary circles. He is mentioned alongside Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in the song “Marș militar,” performed by Sișu Tudor, D-Throne and Puya: “*And all the outlaws who made out nation proud/ George Manu and the captain.*” - Sișu Tudor, Puya and D-Throne, “Marș militar”, *Symphonia*, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> Iustin Pîrvu was an Orthodox hieromonk and one of the best-known former prisoners of the communist regime. He was arrested and sentenced for Legionary activity and later became an important figure within Romanian Orthodox monasticism. In the song “Vremuri Ciudate”, Cedry2k invokes Iustin Pîrvu: “*And it is clear why Saint Iustin, may his icon be honoured, / Told us to wake up, for persecution is coming.*” – Cedry2k and La Familia, “Vremuri Ciudate”, *Vremuri Ciudate*, 2022, audio track.

<sup>54</sup> “Selective omission” refers to a mechanism through which collective memory is distorted by omitting, minimizing or excluding facts, events or aspects that are unfavourable to a group's self-image. By removing compromising elements, group memory comes to privilege positive experiences and representations, thereby constructing a favourable collective image of the group. See Roy F. Baumeister and Stephen Hastings, “Distortions of Collective Memory: How Groups Flatter and Deceive Themselves, in James W. Pennebaker, Dario Paez, Bernard Rimé (eds.), *Collective memory of political events: social psychological perspectives*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New Jersey, 1997, p. 280.

<sup>55</sup> Haarp Cord feat. Rashid, “Flori de mucigai”, *Vremurile din urmă*, 2012, audio track.

*"The blood shed by martyrs and saints is not forgotten with time;  
[...]  
Valeriu Gafencu, a model and an example."*<sup>56</sup>

Another recurring strand is the use of conspirational and antisemitic themes, which construct a symbolic opposition between "us" and "them" and identify various enemies, from "Zionists"<sup>57</sup> and alleged Jewish control of financial networks<sup>58</sup> to the "Protocols of Zion"<sup>59</sup> and the "New World Order." These themes are reworked and recontextualized around contemporary concerns, including opposition to the European Union, LGBT rights, sex education, alleged threats to national identity and foreign powers.<sup>60</sup> In „Lacunele istoriei,”<sup>61</sup> Dragonu, as part of Haarp Cord, brings these elements together by associating the European Union, "Zionists," the United Nations, and the "New World Order", while other songs extend this conspirational framework to global control, transnational elites, and technological manipulation.<sup>62</sup>

The artists' engagement with the Romanian Orthodox Church constitutes another important pathway through which nationalist themes are adopted and a source of their popularity. Several performers' trajectories have been shaped by the convergence of religiosity, nationalism and anti-communism. Reflecting on his own association with far-right radicalism, Dragonu AKA 47 pointed to the risks faced by a young man who "gets off drugs and goes into the church": "So, there's this whole Legionary mess within Orthodoxy (...) Orthodoxists are among the most dangerous kinds of people I've ever seen, and there are plenty of them in the Church. That is what they are called, 'Orthodoxists,' because they are ideologically affiliated with Legionaryism. It comes together with everything connected to nationalism."<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Haarp Cord, "Un singur gând", *Vremurile din urmă*, 2012, audio track. The artist also posted on social media a photograph of himself wearing a T-shirt bearing an image of Valeriu Gafencu, accompanied by the final line quoted above: "*Valeriu Gafencu, a model and an example.*" See Adrian Anton, "Cedry2k și Dragonu AKA 47, doi rapperi cu discurs antisemit, anti-UE și antivaccin, considerați «reper pentru adolescenți» într-un manual de religie de clasa a VIII-a", în *Libertatea*, 13 June 2025.

<sup>57</sup> In the song "Identitate," Cedry2k labels those who accuse him of conspiracism as Zionists: "You lecture me, just a basil summer hustle/ 'You're a conspiracy theorist' - it's just patriotism/ But you play it like a Zionist." - Cedry2k, "Identitate", *Identitate*, 2012, audio track.

<sup>58</sup> In "La Cimpanzei", Chimie (Mihai Călin Adamescu) and Dragonu declare: "*From Raiffeisen Bank, Transilvania, BCR/ All run from the shadows by Jews,*" - Chimie, gAZAh feat. Dragonu AKA 47, "La Cimpanzei", *De La Zei la Cimpanzei*, 2013, audio track.

<sup>59</sup> Cedry2k, Stres și Dragonu, "Noile Ordine Mondiale", *Identitate*, 2012, audio track.

<sup>60</sup> The theme of colonization and the "sale" or "theft" of the country recurs frequently: For example, in the song "Legea pierdută", Underman states: "*This is not democracy, everyone knows it/ (...) You can smell a colony.*" - Underman, "Legea pierdută", *Muzică ascunsă*, 2014, audio track.

<sup>61</sup> The relevant lyrics are: "*It's the European Union, American, New Age/ Communist, nihilist and Nazi, it is very sad/ The situation says resist, a time of crisis with a creed/ Activist, Zionist, let's review it/ (...) Scientifically, I defend the civic, patriotic sense/ They call me Dragonu', and I have no love for the U.N.*" - Haarp Cord, "Lacunele istoriei", *Vremurile din urmă*, 2012, audio track.

<sup>62</sup> The chorus of "În surdină," performed by Nimeni Altu' and Ortega, captures these themes: "*Quietly, companies are preparing what is to come/ Hail falls from the sky, caused by a machine/ Machines of control attack minds through waves/ And they want to implant a chip even in a cricket.*" - Ortega and Nimeni Altu', "În surdină", *În surdină*, 2013, audio track.

<sup>63</sup> Dragonu AKA 47, interview in the podcast "Aproximativ Discuții cu Gojira", published 22 August 2022.

Despite such moments of critical self-awareness, their artistic output frequently fuses religious mysticism with identity-based imperatives. Their lyrics contain numerous references to faith and repeatedly invoke an ideal of the traditional family, often articulated through homophobic messages<sup>64</sup> and rejection of diversity:

*“The Church Fathers, mystical monks,  
Speaking of eternal life.”*<sup>65</sup>

*„I have no intention of agreeing with progressive ideas tinged with paganism  
I am Romanian”*<sup>66</sup>

An important feature of this ideological alignment is that it rarely comes with an explicit embrace of the label “far right.” Instead, the artists tend to distance themselves from such a classification, either by rejecting any direct connection to historical fascism or by recasting nationalism and Legionary ideas as forms of moral purification and spiritual salvation rather than extremist political doctrines. This produces several internal contradictions. Although Dragonu has criticized the excesses of nationalism and Legionaryism in some interviews, and Cedry2k has at times attempted more nuanced positions, their lyrical worlds repeatedly return to the defining themes of the radical right.

### **Cedry2k**

Among the artists examined, Cedry2k offers one of the clearest examples of the intersection between Orthodoxy, nationalism, anti-communism and references to the memory of the Legionary Movement. His significance is also reflected in his reception within religious circles. In a survey conducted by researcher Oana Alexandra Chirilă, Cedry2k and Dragonu AKA 47 were most frequently identified by respondents as sources of religious influence within Romanian hip-hop.<sup>67</sup> Cedry2k has participated in events organized by Orthodox institutions, as well as by other organizations, including the “Pitești Experiment” summer school organized by Pitești Prison Memorial,<sup>68</sup> and the “Models and Anti-Models” conference organized by the Archdiocese of

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<sup>64</sup> In the song “Azi,” Cedry2k states: “Today nobody believes anymore, out of pride or fear; some are so stubborn that not even Christ could convince them/ Today I am in no mood for joking because I see gay parades getting too much publicity; I want to bend the bar on them.” – Cedry2k, Sișu Tudor, Stres and Angeles, “Azi”, *România Furată*, 2015, audio track.

<sup>65</sup> The song opens with a fragment from a speech by an Orthodox cleric, Father Amfilohie: “All of Europe has seen itself under a single dictatorship, democracy, which no longer produces suffering. It came with a great deception: ‘Do whatever you want, do whatever you like, take me with you, I will work.’ There is nothing like that anywhere in the Scripture, nor will there ever be. What does this do? It destroys the human being in terms of his likeness to God. Where is initiative? Where are the missionaries? Where are the intellectuals? Where is the song? Where is victory? We are called to hide our eyes. This, under these circumstances, for intellectuals, teachers, monks, Christians, and hierarchs, is the greatest crime against us – you can get education and keep the canon all you want. This is what our mission currently rests upon.” – Haarp Cord, “Bucurie în replica”, *Dragoste sau frică*, 2011, audio track.

<sup>66</sup> Sișu Tudor and Anastasia, “Un drum lung”, *Symphonia*, 2016, audio track.

<sup>67</sup> O. A. Chirilă, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>68</sup> \*\*\*, “Încep înscrierile pentru Școala de Vară «Fenomenul Pitești»”, *Radio România Cultural*, 15 June 2017.

Buzău and Vrancea.<sup>69</sup> At another event, “Cedry2k – the Rapper Who Discovered God,”<sup>70</sup> the artist was presented by A.S.C.O.R.<sup>71</sup> Alba Iulia in partnership with the Faculty of Orthodox Theology. Moreover, Cedry2k and Dragonu AKA 47 were featured in an eighth-grade religious education textbook as “role models for adolescents.”<sup>72</sup> Sociologist Ciprian Voicilă<sup>73</sup> likewise devotes a chapter to Cedry2k in *Sfinții de lângă noi*, describing his lyrics as “open windows to the Church” and presenting his music as a means of bringing younger audiences closer to Orthodox discourse.<sup>74</sup>

The central theme through which Cedry2k's engagement with the memory of the Legionary Movement becomes most apparent is „the Prison Saints.” The artist devoted an album to this theme, *Sfinții Închisorilor*, whose title track – which has reached 6.6 million views – lists figures associated with political imprisonment: “*Honor the memory of the Prison Saints/ The suffering and courage of the Confessors*,”<sup>75</sup> followed by “*Captain Codreanu, Bordeianu, George Manu/ Traian Trifan, Oprișan, Ogoranu*,”<sup>76</sup> alongside Radu Gyr, Iustin Pîrvu and other clergy and political prisoners. The album cover depicts the artist in prison clothing against photographs of those persecuted in prison.

The Legionary affiliation of these figures, as well as the movement's role in interwar political violence, is absent from these representations. Instead, emphasis is placed on their victimhood, martyrdom and anti-communist resistance. In “Inconvenabil,” imprisonment is described through explicitly religious imagery: “*They suffered unimaginably at the Canal, Aiud, Jilava/ (...) Washing away their passions, making room for the Holy Spirit/ To fill them from within, deepening their thoughts*.”<sup>77</sup> In “Vipere,” political prisoners are portrayed as “confessors” who “defended their people,” while the Pitești experience is transposed into the present: “*Torturing their own people when the enemy tells them to/ The beasts remind me of Eugen Țurcanu/ That this century you are looking at is a Pitești experiment*.”<sup>78</sup>

The memory of political imprisonment also intersects with conspirational and antisemitic discourse. In “Același joc,”<sup>79</sup> Cedry2k refers to “Jewish lackeys,” “Soros's fools,” and “Masonic temples,” while “Paznic Carpatic”<sup>80</sup> includes references to “predatory Zionists.” In

<sup>69</sup> \*\*\*, “Conferința pentru tineri: «MODELE ȘI ANTIMODELE», *Doxologia.ro*, 13 March 2014,

<sup>70</sup> \*\*\*, “Cedry2k cântă și vorbește cu tinerii din Alba Iulia”, *Radio Cartier România*, 11 July 2022.

<sup>71</sup> ASCOR (Asociația Studenților Creștini Ortodocși Români) is a Romanian student organization that brings together young people interested in Orthodox Christian spirituality.

<sup>72</sup> Adrian Anton, “Cedry2k și Dragonu AKA 47, doi rapperi cu discurs antisemit, anti-UE și antivaccin, considerați «reper pentru adolescenți» într-un manual de religie de clasa a VIII-a”, *Libertatea*, 13 June 2025.

<sup>73</sup> Ciprian Voicilă is a sociologist and the author of several books and public interventions promoting a conservative discourse strongly rooted in Orthodox Christianity.

<sup>74</sup> Ciprian Voicilă, *Sfinții de lângă noi. Între portrete și icoane*, Arcopag, București, 2014, pp. 159-164.

<sup>75</sup> Cedry2k, “Sfinții Închisorilor”, *Sfinții Închisorilor*, 2014, audio track.

<sup>76</sup> The lyrics evoke Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, leader of the Legionary Movement; Ioan Bordeianu, George Manu, Traian Trifan, and Constantin Oprișan, former members or sympathizers of the movement who subsequently became political prisoners under the communist regime; as well as Ion Gavrilă Ogoranu, a member of the Blood Brotherhoods (Frățiile de Cruce) and one of the best-known figures of the armed anti-communist resistance in the Făgăraș Mountains.

<sup>77</sup> Cedry2k, “Inconvenabil”, *România Furată*, 2015, audio track.

<sup>78</sup> Cedry2k, “Vipere”, *Sfinții Închisorilor*, 2014, audio track.

<sup>79</sup> Cedry2k, “Același joc”, *Școala veche*, 2018, audio track.

<sup>80</sup> Cedry2k and DJ Grigo, “Paznic Carpatic”, *România Furată*, 2015, audio track.

“Colaborasionism,”<sup>81</sup> he claims that Romania is “under the heel of the Jews”; in “Conspirasionism,”<sup>82</sup> he links public debate about the Holocaust to alleged hidden interests; and in “Apocalipsa Verbală,” he states, “*I do not believe in a draw, I do not believe Elie Wiesel.*”<sup>83</sup> In “Noile ordine mondiale”<sup>84</sup> invokes the “Illuminati,” the “Bilderberg Group,” the IMF, and an alleged “world government.” This discourse is also articulated publicly. Appearing on the podcast *Aproximativ Discuții* Cedry2k declared: “*We know very well that global control over humanity is being pursued. (...) I know that I am a conspiracy theorist (...) Most of the conspiracies I have believed in have eventually proved true.*”<sup>85</sup> This is accompanied by opposition to liberalism, democracy, and Western institutions. In “România furată,”<sup>86</sup> the European Union is associated with “gay propaganda,” while in “Prometeu” he rails against complaints filed against him: “*They reported me to the Europeans for hate-speeches,*” followed by an invective directed at NGOs: “*But I couldn’t give a damn / About those fucking NGOs / Filthy mouthed as they are, dirtier than public toilets!*”<sup>87</sup>

These themes also circulate beyond music. Cedry2k has been associated with clothing produced by the LegendeVii Brand, which marketed T-shirts featuring figures such as Radu Gyr, Mircea Vulcănescu<sup>88</sup> and Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa.<sup>89</sup> The artist has appeared at concerts and in music videos wearing such shirts.<sup>90</sup> His association with Eugen Sechila can be situated within the same context. Sechila coordinates the “Gogu Puiu and the Dobruja Partisans” association, dedicated to the memory of former Legionary Gogu Puiu and to the armed anti-communist resistance in Dobruja. Cedry2k has publicly promoted some of the association's activities.<sup>91</sup>

At the same time, important contradictions emerge. In “Cuvintecevindecă,” Cedry2k explicitly states: “*I disapprove of acts of racism, Nazism/ or any other form of extremism.*”<sup>92</sup> Yet in a podcast, when asked whether he was aware that he could be perceived as a representative of the far right, the artist responded: “*Well, I am. I have convictions,*”<sup>93</sup> before relativizing the existence of a contemporary political right in Romania and framing his association with the far right as opposition to “neo-Marxism”: “*I haven’t seen the far right. I haven’t seen the right. There*

<sup>81</sup> Cedry2k, “Colaborasionism”, *Vremuri ciudate*, 2022, audio track.

<sup>82</sup> Cedry2k, “Conspirasionism”, *Vremuri ciudate*, 2022, audio track.

<sup>83</sup> Cedry2k, “Apocalipsa Verbală”, *Sfinții Închisorilor*, 2014, audio track.

<sup>84</sup> Cedry2k, Stres și Dragonu, “Noile Ordine Mondiale”, *Identitate*, 2012, audio track.

<sup>85</sup> Cedry2k, interview on the podcast “Aproximativ Discuții cu Gojira”, published on 20 December 2021.

<sup>86</sup> Cedry2k, “România furată”, *România furată*, 2015, audio track.

<sup>87</sup> Cedry2k, “Prometeu”, *Școala veche*, 2018, audio track.

<sup>88</sup> Mircea Vulcănescu was a Romanian intellectual and politician associated with the far right and known for nationalist, xenophobic and antisemitic views. He served in the Antonescu regime and was later convicted of war crimes.

<sup>89</sup> Adrian Nicolae, “Administratorul magazinului care vinde produse cu portretele lui Gheorghe Calciu sau Mircea Vulcănescu este urmărit penal la sesizarea Institutului Elie Wiesel. Riscă 3 ani de închisoare”, *Active News*, 25 February 2016.

<sup>90</sup> In the video for the song “Același joc,” for example, Cedry2k appears wearing a T-shirt produced by the LegendeVii brand featuring a portrait of Iustin Pîrveu.

<sup>91</sup> Adrian Anton, “Cedry2k și Dragonu AKA47, doi rapperi cu discurs antisemit..”, *Libertatea*, 13 June 2025.

<sup>92</sup> Cedry2k, “Cuvintecevindecă”, *Cuvintecevindecă*, 2010, audio track. His earlier song, “Extreme,” similarly warns against radical behaviour - Cedry2k, “Extreme”, *Identitate*, 2012, audio track.

<sup>93</sup> Cedry2k, interview on the podcast *Aproximativ Discuții cu Gojira*, published 20 December 2021.

*is no political right in Romania now. (...) In short, we have all had enough of neo-Marxism. (...) Europe is neo-Marxist. That is something that can make people think that it is a far-right perception.”*<sup>94</sup>

### **Conclusions**

The analysis demonstrates that underground rap can function not only as artistic expression but also as a space in which political ideas are reinterpreted and legitimized. The recurrence of themes such as nationalism, Orthodoxy, anti-communism, the cult of “martyrs” and „the Prison Saints,” together with references to the Legionary Movement, constructs an imaginary in which religion, the nation, and the memory of repression become central markers of identity and resistance. The discourse selectively foregrounds figures and symbols associated with the Legionary Movement, emphasizing their status as victims and martyrs while largely effacing their political affiliations and responsibility for interwar violence. The case of Cedry2k illustrates this mechanism: anti-communism and Orthodoxy become the principal lenses through which the past and perceived present threats are interpreted. “Globalism,” the West, “neo-Marxism,” and other groups are constructed as forces allegedly threatening national identity, while Orthodoxy functions as a political idiom of sovereigntist resistance to external influences.

The political character of music derives not only from explicitly political themes but also from the ways in which they are repeatedly articulated and connected. Recurring oppositions such as nation/foreigner, faith/secularism, sovereignty/globalism, or victim/perpetrator contribute to a broader interpretive framework through which reality is understood. Music thus becomes a means of negotiating collective memory and circulating political messages within the contemporary public sphere.

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<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

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