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Art and Resistance in Moldova: Bessarabia’s Politically Troubled Emergence Towards National Identity Reflected in the Story of Musicians Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovici

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Art and Resistance in Moldova: Bessarabia’s Politically Troubled Emergence Towards National Identity Reflected in the Story of Musicians Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovici

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by
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Acknowledgements

This project is dedicated to my grandparents, Mama Nata, Policka, Bunelu Pavel, Bunica Iulia, and Bunelu Leona,
For your love, strength, and guidance.

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**Introduction: Awakening Voices of A Cultural Revolution**

In the early hours of October 30th, 1992, a car heading toward Chisinau, Moldova, crashed into a tree near the town of Cosereni, 49 kilometers northeast of the Romanian capital of Bucharest. The two passengers sitting in the backseat were killed. Five days later, a crowd of hundreds of thousands gathered in Chisinau’s central square, the Piata Marii Adunari Nationale (National Grand Plaza), to attend their funeral. The assembly compared in size only to the celebration of Moldova’s independence from the Soviet Union the previous year, on August 27th, 1991. Indeed, the two gatherings were related. The deceased couple, Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovici, were beloved by the Moldovan public as musicians and cultural heroes of the revolution. More than any others, their songs and voices were the celebratory music of independence. Since 1992, Moldovan news outlets commemorate the anniversary of their death, venerating the musicians as “the first to sing, amidst the political and social confusion after the 1989 revolution, about the Romanian language, about our brothers beyond the Prut¹, and about Eminescu.”² Their songs embodied patriotism for Moldova’s ethnic and cultural Romanian roots and opposition to Soviet and Russian subjugation.

Marking the 20th anniversary of the couple’s death, the Moldovan Parliament named 2012 the “International Year of Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovici.”

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¹ The Prut is the river that creating the border between Moldovan and Romania

Born in what is the present-day Moldovan region of Romania, Mihai Eminescu is the most prominent Romanian literary figure, and is claimed as a cultural icon by both Romania and Moldova. He will be discussed further.
of social, artistic and literary events related to their story resurfaced around this time and continues to this day. Although nostalgic sentiment is part of their appeal, their reemergence in the spotlight renewed questions - to this day unanswered - about Moldova’s national, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic identity. The Aldea-Teodorovicis’ message of national unity with Romania, of reverence for Romanian values and ties, still resonates in the ongoing political struggles of Moldova’s tenuous position between Russian and Western interests.

Author Aureliu Perdeleanu titled his book, written also in 2012, “Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovic: Martyrs of National Identity.” The term “martyr” is a reference to Ion and Doina’s premature deaths at the ages of 38 and 34, respectively. It also calls into question the nature of the accident in which they lost their lives. The driver and front seat passenger were unharmed, and the accident was not properly or fully investigated as a possible crime. The front of the car was undamaged, while the back was severely mangled. These suspicious circumstances led to speculation of assassination and so-called martyrdom. Furthermore, Doina’s mother, Eugenia Marin, claimed she was warned not to seek more information or ask for an investigation on threat to the life of the couple’s then 10-year-old son, Cristofor, whose guardian she had become.

In the early 1990s, the couple sang for the reunification of Moldova with Romania. In 2015, their music once again played from the speakers in the Piata Mare as large rallies protested government corruption and the theft of $1.5 billion dollars from the Moldovan National Bank. While the notion of reunification persists in the complex arena

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3 Figure 1.
of Moldovan politics today, their music now carries a broader message; one of political and personal integrity. In this way, Ion and Doina continue to spin the thread of Moldovan patriotism in Moldova – the meaning of which will in part be explored in this paper. As the prospect of reunification with Romania becomes less viable with the passing of time, the specifics of their message become compartmentalized in different factions. With time, their various impacts become more easily distinguishable from each other. Doina and Ion are in some ways now symbols of a distinctly Moldovan identity and held by pan-Romanian nationalists as the voice of the people of present-day Moldova. Within this process, they have also become somewhat politically neutralized. The way they are talked about today reflects the transformation of the pan-Romanian cultural movement, which they torched in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This conversation is also emblematic of broader discourse about the role of culture – including art, music, and literature – in Moldovan society. The perceptions Moldovans seem to have on the interrelationship of art and politics reflects, parallels, and affects the historically-entrenched ambiguity of their political identity.
Chapter 1: The Biographies of Doina and Ion Aldea-Teodorovici

Ion Aldea-Teodorovici was born on April 7th, 1954, in the town of Leova, Moldova. His father, Cristofor, was a voice teacher and priest, but left the church during the Soviet occupation, and passed away when Ion was 10 years old. Nevertheless, his father was likely the source of the sacred music that can be heard in many of Ion’s compositions. In an interview that took place the same year he died, Ion stated, “if I am to thank anyone for my passion for song, for my love for truth and justice, then it is none other than my father. It was also [my father] that planted in my soul the love for Romanian folklore and for our common patriotism/motherland, Romania.” Ion’s father would say to him, “Son, this shall be your creed: we have a single mother, and that is Romania.”

In response to a question about why his television fame came so late in his career, Ion said that his music had been banned. “Somewhere, the Russian censors were right! My work is rooted in Romanian folklore, as well as in sacred music. If we added to this mix a hint of nationalism, then we have the full motivation behind my [suppression].”

Ion was the youngest of three boys. He began playing the piano and violin at the age of five. In 1961, he began studying the clarinet in Chisinau and later graduated from the school of music in the nearby city of Tiraspol in 1973, where he also studied saxophone. That same year, Ion was drafted into the Soviet army and sent to the city of Zaparojie, Ukraine. Most professional musicians would be delegated to “fanfare” service, but Ion was stationed in artillery. This, he said, was a result of discrimination based on

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6 Ibid., 61.
his Moldovan ethnicity. “Because I opposed the barbarian procedures of the destruction of the individual’s personality, especially of that of Moldovans, I was brutally beat.” He was hospitalized for two weeks as a result. Afterwards, Ion was deployed to Murmansk, in the Arctic region, four times. In 1974, his commanding general, a 38-year-old Ukrainian who liked music, approached Ion and asked him to start a jazz band. The general had heard Ion’s music on the radio – a song he had composed in his last year of school called “Believe Me, My Love, Believe Me.” And so, Ion was spared from further military functions and abuse. “From that moment on, I was saved both from ‘Katiusa’ and from the terrible military maneuvers” To have military personnel dedicated to musical bands was not unusual, but to have songs that were not of a political nature, as the song “Katiusa” is, was more unusual. It was also noteworthy that Ion led a jazz band, a genre of music whose American origins would ostensibly represent direct opposition to Soviet communist ideology. The long history of jazz in the USSR speaks to the infiltrative force and tacit traversability of music across geopolitical boundaries and spheres.

After leaving the army the following year, in 1975, Ion joined the musical group “Contemporanul” (The Contemporary) as a soloist, an instrumentalist, and a composer. He worked with the group until 1981, when he entered the conservatory of music in

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7 Ibid., 62.
9 “Katyusha” is a well-known Russian song with music by Matvey Blanter and lyrics by Mihail Isakovsky. Written in 1938, it became extremely popular with soldiers and the public at large as it carried wartime themes.
10 Ibid., 63.
Chisinau to major in composition and pedagogy. During this time, Ion married Doina Marin, whom he had known for five years. Together, that year, they traveled to the United States with the youth group, the “Messengers of Peace,” whose goal it was to create friendly relations between Soviet and American youth. The 34-member group was comprised mostly of KGB members, according to Ion, and four artists: himself and Doina, the conductor of a renowned folk music orchestra (“Lautarii”), and Anastasia Lazariuc, another well-known Moldovan singer. “It’s hard to say that they didn’t like it,” Ion recalled. “Maybe we shouldn’t have played Katiusa.”

Ion’s conservatory years, between 1981 and 1987, were financially difficult for the couple. Their primary source of income was Doina’s modest salary as a professor of world literature at the State University in Chisinau. Ion again made an effort to perform on state television in Chisinau, but to no avail. He approached his friend and renowned Moldovan poet, Grigore Vieru, who wrote the lyrics to many of the Aldea-Teodorovici’s most revered songs. Ion recalls Vieru’s words: “The Russian censorship and Mafia are too strong, Ion. There is nothing left to do but one thing. Take your guitar and go play in the villages of Moldova, so that the people begin to know who you are.” In this way, the couple became “renowned and treasured throughout Bessarabia.” Ion was a prolific composer; in addition to his politically and non-politically oriented songs, he wrote orchestral works, chamber music works, film scores, songs for children, and music for the theatre. His canon totals about 60 works, and the couple’s son recently discovered a

10 Perdeleanu, Ion si Doina Aldea Teodorovici, 63.
11 Ibid., 64.
12 Ibid.
considerable number of scores that were never performed. In the period before their death, Ion and Doina had been planning a musical theatre group in Bucharest called Carabus.

Doina was born in Chisinau on November 15th, 1958. Her father was a writer and journalist, and her mother was a professor of Romanian language and literature and an adjunct school director. Before she began school, Doina dubbed Russian films in Romanian at the studio “Moldova-Film.” Around the same time, she began dancing with the ensemble “Moldoveneasca,” touring the Soviet republics and various other countries and continents. In 1975, Doina graduated from high school and began her studies at the State University of Chisinau. She received a degree in philology, specializing in linguistics and Romanian literature. Later that year, she began a professorship at the same university in world literature. Since her marriage to Ion in 1981, she collaborated with him in musical performances and events throughout Moldova and Romania. In 1991, the duo won the press prize at the “National Festival of Light Music – Mamaia, 91” in Romania. It was at this festival that Doina said, “I come here directly from the Great National Assembly Plaza in Chisinau to bring you the salute of our liberty.”

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14 TV7”’Lumea Sandei’ Invitatul ediției – muzicianul, Cristofor Aldea-Teodorovici.”
Chapter 2: History of Moldova

“History has [...] bequeathed an extraordinary legacy of confusion as to the political identity of the territory of present day Moldova. Should the territory return to Romania? If not, can it sustain itself against Russia? In either case, where do northern Bukovina and southern Bessarabia, the territories ‘lost’ to Ukraine after World War II, belong? If an independent Moldova is to be built, could it not also lay claim to western Moldova, now in Romania, as part of its historic heritage? Should it seek to keep hold of Transnistria, or let it break away? Merely posing these reveals the tenuousness and utter impracticality of any historically-based project of state-building”\textsuperscript{17}

These questions, posed by Judy Batt, Mohammed Ishaq and Paul Hare, as well as those of many other scholars studying present day Moldova, highlight the region’s status as that of a classic European borderland. The consistent battles, border-making, and shifts of the land explain the region’s rich ethnic variety.\textsuperscript{18} A brief overview of the geographic region’s main historical events will follow.

“Moldovan nationalist mythology,” as Stuart J. Kaufman describes it, “remains divided into these two distinct versions: the mythology of ‘Moldovans as a distinct people’ versus the concept of ‘Moldovans as part of the Romanian nation.’”\textsuperscript{19} In both versions, in any case, Moldovans think of themselves as descendants of the ancient Dacians. A distinct political entity called the Principality of Moldova did exist in the mid-

\textsuperscript{17} Hare, P. G., Judy Batt, and Mohammed Ishaq. “The Political Economy of State-Building in Moldova.” In Reconstituting the market : the political economy of microeconomic transformation, edited by Hare, P.G. Judy Batt and Sault Estrin. (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 1999), 362.


\textsuperscript{19} Kaufman, Stuart J. Modern hatreds : the symbolic politics of ethnic war. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 133.
fourteenth century.\textsuperscript{20} During 1457-1504, the prince Stefan cel Mare successfully guarded Moldova’s independence against Poland and the Ottoman Empire. He is perhaps the most well-known figure in medieval Moldovan history; a statue of him is a centerpiece in Chisinau’s central square.

A century later, the region fell under Ottoman suzerainty but still maintain autonomy for the following two centuries. This area “extended roughly from the Carpathian Mountains to the Dniester River and the Black Sea, embracing much of what is now northern Romania and pieces of modern-day Ukraine, in addition to all of the territory of the current Republic of Moldova except Transnistria.”\textsuperscript{21} In 1538, the south-eastern section, between the Dniester and the Danube, was swept up by the Ottoman empire.\textsuperscript{22} Today it still goes by its Turkish name of Budjak. The Ottoman Empire weakened, and in 1775 “the Habsburg Empire annexed [the Principality’s] north-western tip which became the Austrian province of Bukovina” – now in the modern day Moldovan region of Romania.

In 1812 the Russian empire defeated the Ottoman empire, and the “eastern half of the Principality between the rivers Prut and Dniester” was annexed. This area was “rejoined […] with Budjak, which [the Russian empire] had [also] acquired […] Thus was created the Russian province of Bessarabia, on much – but not all – of which present day Moldova stands,” Batt, Ishaq, and Hare write.\textsuperscript{23} It was during this time that the Turkic Gagauz and Bulgarian populations settled the Budjak area, where they presently reside. The Principality of Moldavia, now “much-reduced […] remained as a separate

\textsuperscript{20} Hare, Batt, and Ishaq. “The Political Economy of State-Building in Moldova,” 361.
\textsuperscript{21} Kaufman, Modern hatreds: the symbolic politics of ethnic war, 133.
\textsuperscript{22} Hare, Batt, and Ishaq. “The Political Economy of State-Building in Moldova,” 361.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
political identity west of the Prut” with a “close alliance with its Romanian sister, the Principality of Wallachia,” and thus “[won] independence from both Ottoman and Russian domination in the course of the nineteenth century.”

This area is part of present-day Romania. Then, “in 1859, the election by the two principalities [Moldova and Wallachia] of a common prince, Alexandru Ion Cuza, brought about de facto union which marked the birth of the modern Romanian national state,” write Batt et. all. The Prut river was formed the Russian-Romanian border until 1918. Kaufman writes, “thus while Wallachians and southern Moldovans were forming a Romanian national identity for the first time, the Bessarabs, living in a very different cultural milieu, developed a distinct if inchoate Moldovan regional identity,”

Batt et. All write, “This new state then laid claim to all ‘Romanian lands’ still languishing under alien rule, including Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania. These territories were all eventually acquired by Romania after the collapse of the Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires at the end of the First World War […]” Kaufman describes the process such: wanting to declare autonomy within Russia, the “provisional Bessarabian parliament, the Sfatul Tarii,” was influenced to dissolve itself and unite with Romania conditionally in a midnight vote.”

“But,” Batt et all write, “the Soviet Union never accepted the incorporation of Bessarabia into Romania, and part of its long-term strategy to regain it was the establishment of a Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) on a strip of land on the left (east) bank of the Dniester, on Ukrainian

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24 Ibid., 362.
25 Kaufman, Modern hatreds: the symbolic politics of ethnic war, 131.
26 Ibid., 132.
territory, where a small population of Moldovans lived (30.1 per cent of the population in the 1926 census) alongside many Ukrainians and Russians.” They continue:

“Some left-wing Moldovan émigrés from inter-war Romania played key roles in setting up and manning the MASSR […]. The Soviet Union succeeded in regaining Bessarabia and northern Bukovina as a result of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in June 1940, but they lost both again in 1941, and by 1942, Romania, with Axis support, had invaded a large area of Ukraine east of the Dniester including, but extending far beyond, the territory of the MASSR, to which it gave the name ‘Transnistria’. This area across the Dniester had never before been included in the definition of the ‘Romanian lands’, and at the end of the war this returned to Soviet control along with the whole of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina […] The Moldovan Socialist Republic was originally formed in August 1940. Its borders were defined by an act of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet of November 1940, which substantially reshaped the territory. Northern Bukovina and much of Budjak in the south were again cut off from Bessarabia and transferred to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Soviet Moldova thus consisted of the rump of Bessarabia with the addition of the strip of territory across the Dniester which had formed part of the former MASSR. 27

Chapter 3: Cultural Policy in the MASSR and MSSR and The Language Issue

Key evidence of the scale of the turbulence that the issue of language has cultivated is found in the contested interpretations of the declaration of independence. This document proved to be an important feature in the making of a post-Soviet Moldovan national identity. In his book “Basarabia e Romania,” (“Is Bessarabia Romania?”), Dan Dungaciu writes that the declaration, signed on August 27, 1991, “revealed the confusion that was present on the playing field regarding the subsequent destiny of the Republic of Moldova.” The vote seemed unanimous, with 276 votes, zero abstains and zero no-votes. According to Dungaciu, the declaration makes no ambiguous assertions or reference to the union of Bessarabia with Romania in March 1918. It does, significantly, explicitly address the language as “Romanian,” as opposed to Moldovan. Drawing on this point, Andrei Panici writes, “Although nothing in the declaration specifically mentioned Romania or the Romanian identity of Moldova’s ethnic majority, the issue would become the main fault line within the new political system.”

Indeed, the issue of language takes a complicated and polarizing precedence in Moldova. King argues that the intricacies of identity politics are familiar in post-Soviet studies, but that “what stands out about the Moldovan case [...] is the unsettled nature of

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29 Dungaciu, Dan. "Basarabia e România?": dileme identitare și (geo)politice în Republica Moldova, 341
the essentials of nationality.”  

In other words, the Moldova of 2001 (when King wrote his book) was still struggling to reach a consensus on the terms with which to define its nationhood. This is conspicuously evidenced by the longstanding presence of two different nomenclatures for the state language. As stated above, the declaration of independence signed in August 1991 defines the official state language to be “Romanian.” However, the Constitution erected three years later in July 1994 describes it as “Moldovan.” This contradiction would remain contested in Moldovan politics until December 2013 when the Moldovan Constitutional Court ruled Romanian as the official language. Even with this closure in politics, disputes in everyday life have not lessened.

Interestingly, international politics also reflects the unsettled nature of this issue: Western sources such as the CIA World Factbook and the Constitution and Citizenship Law Handbook for Moldova have “Moldovan” listed as the official language of the state, with an explanation that it is “virtually the same as the Romanian language.”

King writes, “Moldovan nationalism proved to be a rather strange beast: a nationalism that succeeded in gaining an independent state but seemed to fail in making an independent nation.” His point is reflected in the chasm between the direct political message of the Teodorovics and their relative political neutralization 25 years later. Their songs embody an appraisal of Romanian cultural luminaries and thereby make an implicit statement about territories and borderlands. Their message and activity thus exemplifies the inevitable link between folklore and nationalism.

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33 King, Charles. The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture, 3.
Today, however, discussions surrounding the Teodorovicis’ politics in relation to the current political climate (which produce the same questions that existed when they were alive) appear to rarely delve beyond memorializations of them in the activity they bore at their time - as leaders of the national cultural revolution, martyrs that fought for the country’s freedom. They are described as “two hearts that beat in unison, that loved and suffered in the name of historic truth, of the liberty and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.” Their political engagement has, to some degree, been crystallized in time. Nevertheless, their content remains relevant to issues underlying Moldovan politics.

Indeed, the issue of their legacy is still not clear-cut. Aureliu Perdeleanu displays a strong faith in the lasting power of the Teodorovicis’ message, while Cristofor expresses a bleak view of the level of current activity on the subject. In his introduction to “Martyrs of National Identity,” Perdeleanu writes, “as the years go by, paradoxically, they become more and more present in our consciousness. Through song and poetry, they managed to light the sacred fire of the love for the Homeland and the thirst for the Romanian Language, that is the Last Supper of our Carpathians, the living water of our Romanian people.” The language Perdeleanu uses clearly evokes religious dogmatism. When Perdeleanu interviewed their son, Cristofor revealed a different view. He expressed his disappointment in what he considers to be a lack of civic engagement and political awareness in Moldovans today. “Are there people who continue their fight for reunification, for Romanianism?” Perdeleanu asks him. Cristofor replies: “No, there aren’t. If we are talking about artists, they are decreasing, little by little. If we were a little bit more ambitious, more stubborn like the Kazakhs are with the Russians, I think we would have a greater chance of success. The last big flame that burned for Romanianism
was represented by my parents. Perhaps even the fact that they even gave their lives for this ideal - this is the way in which I see their disappearance [...].”

Judging by the content of scholarship, language appeared to be of vital importance as an indicator on cultural policy of the Soviet Union. King writes, “Soviet ethnographers [...] saw language as the fundamental criterion for defining and delineating nations. Hence, much more than ethnography or historiography, language policy and linguistics were central to Soviet nationalities policy in all the republics of the USSR.” It was language and the field of linguistics that would form a Moldovan identity and thus impact the area’s culture. Language was a key component in the equation of Moldovanization that took place beginning in the 1920s. “The first step in making a Moldovan nation was to define who precisely the Moldovans were and to formalize the elements of their national culture, especially their language,” King writes.

First, in the 1920s, “[p]rofessional disputes among linguists and historians and a genuine belief among many that they were helping to liberate the Moldovans from the oppression of Bucharest landlord-capitalism played a role in shaping the ideology of national distinctiveness in the 1920s.” Shortly afterwards, however, cultural policies would take drastic turns and reversals. In the 1930s, the “Soviet center first denounced its own line on Moldovan separateness as a fiction created by ‘wreckers’ of Soviet cultural

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36 King, The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture, 63.
policy, and then later changed tack again by returning to a version of the previous notion of the Moldovans as an independent nation.”

Although the language issue was of primary concern, other measures were also used in Moldovanization, such as efforts to implicate and educate peasants in political life, the mass literacy campaigns, productions in national publishing, and addressing the high levels of illiteracy and religious attitudes of Moldovan women.

Views on the rationale behind the use of language as a tool in creating a Moldovan culture and nation were in flux. The reversals in cultural policies from the 1920s throughout the 1930s and the impracticality of implementing such policies eventually resulted in an end to Moldovanization. A “fundamental tenet of Moldovan cultural construction” would be “brought under critique.” This tenet decreed that “since Moldovans had never had their own national culture, other goals in the republic must be subordinated to the basic aims of building and promoting a distinctly Moldovan cultural and political identity.” In Moldova, Ukraine, and the rest of the Soviet Union, the cultural elites “that had engineered korenizatsiia after 1923” faced attacks - these included “writers, academics, and political figures.” King argues that this was on account of “personal and professional rivalries,” as well as a deep-rooted hesitancy and fear that Moldovan culture-building would threaten the aims of the Soviet “center.” Those in positions of culture-building had been “pressed to build a Moldovan culture in part to

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37 Ibid., 64.
38 Ibid., 74.
39 Ibid., 70.
40 Ibid.
serve the interests of Soviet strategists,” only to be later “criticized when the culture they built failed to give due weight to the guiding influence of the Russians.”

These reversals also had the effect of bequeathing subsequent confusion in terms of linguistic identity. As a tool for justifications of nation-building projects, language would become controversial. King writes, “what had in the 1920s been an attempt by local nation-builders to forge a distinct national culture based on the indigenous cultural practices of Transnistrians and Bessarabians had become a decade later little more than the whim of Soviet central planners. The history of both these decades, including the debates over the boundaries of national identity, would leave an indelible mark on the Moldovan republic even after the territorial changes of the Second World War.”

King emphasizes: “The practical difficulties of building a Moldovan culture, as well as changes in the political ends that they newly constructed culture was supposed to serve, would eventually bring an end to radical moldovanization.” As King argues, it was, ultimately “the complete volte face in cultural policy [...] in 1932 [...] that brought to a definitive end the effort to build a wholly separate Moldovan nation.”

The “plurality of opinion” regarding cultural policy that was present before the early 1930s was no longer accepted. King argues that the major policy reversal that came in 1938 came from outside the MASSR. The result was denunciations, arrestations and executions of those at the center of Moldovan cultural and political life.”

King writes, “after 1938, the ‘Moldovan language’ and eventually most of Moldovan high culture would come to be little more

41 Ibid., 80.
42 Ibid., 64.
43 Ibid., 79.
44 Ibid., 81.
than Romanian in disguise." This statement forms the heart of King’s overall argument in his comprehensive book, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*. What he describes marks the beginning of fertile grounds for the national movement that would come in the 1980s and that allowed figures such as Ion and Doina to become the cultural luminaries they were.

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46 Ibid., 88.
Chapter 4: National Identity and the Ethnic Element

“Language and history pose complicated questions for Moldovans and for the new Moldovan state. Does the fact that Moldovans speak Romanian mean that they are really Romanians, and therefore that their ultimate destiny is to re-unite with Romania? Is the idea of a separate Moldovan political identity to be dismissed as a ‘deformation’ of the Soviet period, or has their history shaped the Moldovans into a distinctive national group who now see their interests as best served by building a state of their own?”

The question of national identity encompasses the myriad of complexities in Moldovan language, culture, ethnic, and border politics. These debates on Moldovan identity have been ongoing both during and after the Soviet period. In an article documenting her ethnographic research on folklore music in Moldova, Jennifer Cash accentuates the prominence of the national identity issue and identifies its key components. Similarly to Batt, Ishaw, and Hare above, explains:

The most significant legacy of Soviet rule in Moldova relates to the question of national identity. In fact, at least five overlapping questions regarding the ideal connections between culture and politics continue to dominate political discussions both locally and internationally. 1) Should Moldova exist as an independent country? 2) Should Moldova unite with Romania? 3) Is the majority of the population “Romanian”? 4) Is there a “Moldovan” identity that is not simply “Romanian”? 5) Should the state’s boundaries and/or local structures of governance be changed to better represent ethnic, regional, or other interests? On the one hand, these questions represent the general dilemmas faced by any nationalizing state (Brubaker 1996). The debate over the distinctiveness of “Moldovan” identity, however, is rooted in divergent interpretations of key historical and demographic facts (Cash 62).

These facts include the tumultuous history of the region’s border-making as it connected to Romanian territories and then to Russian and Soviet occupation. Along with King and Cash, other scholars studying the politics of Moldovan society have similar variations of

48 King, The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture, 5.
the same questions. In the chapter “The Political Economy of State-Building in Moldova,” Judy Batt, Mohammed Ishaq and Paul Hare write:

Language and history pose complicated questions for Moldovans and for the new Moldovan state. Does the fact that Moldovans speak Romanian mean that they are really Romanians, and therefore that their ultimate destiny is to re-unite with Romanian? Is the idea of a separate Moldovan political identity to be dismissed as a ‘deformation’ of the Soviet period, or has their history shaped the Moldovans into a distinctive national group who now see their interests as best served by building a state of their own?”

As Cash does, the authors also point to the issue of Moldova’s ethnic demographics. Moldovans make up 64.5 percent of the population, with minorities comprising the significant remainder: Ukrainians make up 14 percent, Russians 13 percent, as well as “smaller but regionally concentrated minorities of Gagauzi (3.5 per cent) and Bulgarians (2 per cent), along with a Jewish population (1.5 per cent), drastically reduced by the holocaust of the Second World War and subsequent emigration.” Batt, Ishaq, and Hare write that the issue of ethnic diversity is widespread among most of the new states formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. The repeating characteristic was a “national cultural revival of the majority and the achievement of separate statehood” that “alienated the minorities.” In the case of Moldova, “backlash took the form of outright secessionist challenges posed by two separatist ‘republics’, set up by the Gagauz minority in the south and by the Russian-speaking elite on the left (east) bank of the Dniestr.” Charles King gives an account of process by which this backlash happened. He, Kaufman, Hare, Batt, Estrin, and other scholars argue that the Popular National Front erred in thinking that non-inclusionary rhetoric would not have an impact on the

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 360.
movement’s aims for political and cultural restructuring. This point will be elucidated in the next chapter.

On a broader scale, Batt, Ishaq and Hare write that “coming to terms with the reality of ethnic pluralism is hard for any new state founded on the claim of its majority population to ‘national self-determination.’” Furthermore, they write,

Recognizing the equal right of minorities to ‘self-determination’ is difficult not only because it is at odds with the nationalists’ inherently unitary concept of the nation-state, but also because federalism is readily - and, in the light of Moldovan experience, understandably - seen as a threat to the territorial integrity of the new state, and even to the very existence of that state as an independent entity.”

The language issue was the first one to result in ethnic conflict. Kaufmann explores the relationship between the personal and the political in this context. He writes,

“The hostile perceptions resulted from personal experience, not propaganda: Moldovan students often could get an education only in Russian; would-be managers found their career paths blocked by Russophones; and intellectuals confronted the ‘degraded’ state of the Moldovan language. Nationalist organizations, therefore, did not need massive propaganda efforts to gather support. Nor could they mount any: before they came to power, the nationalists controlled only a few publications, such as the literary weekly Literatura si arta; most of the official media remained conservative until after nationalist leaders came to power in late 1989”

On the question of language and history making up national identity, Batt, Ishaq, and Hare write the following:

Language and history turned out to be less decisive than predicted in answering the question of Moldovan national political identity. Not only is the past open to a variety of possible interpretations, it does not stop at any given point. When, in apparent defiance of history, the Moldovans found themselves in possession of a

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52 Ibid.
53 Kaufman, Modern hatreds: the symbolic politics of ethnic war, 138.
state, a new historical fact was created around which a separate Moldovan national identity rapidly began to crystallize."

The Teodorovicis began to become visible during the context that Batt, Ishaq, Hare, and Kaufman describe above. The couple’s accident and the question of interethnic tension is at the crux of the discussion of their political impact and their relevance in Moldovan socio-politics today. Kaufman argues that “While the groups were hostile to each other’s political aspirations, they did not feel hostile to individuals of the other group.” If we are to understand the widespread appeal of Ion and Doina’s music and their popularity as celebrities in this context, we wonder how their fatal car accident fits in. Following Kaufman’s argument, we could surmise that although they stood on one end of the Romania-Russia spectrum, they were embraced by all; and although their politics were controversial, they were not. A study into the investigation of their accident is beyond the scope of this project, but the three-pronged fact that the incident was never investigated; that it is still regarded as suspicious and troublesome to many Moldovans; and that it is still discussed by media in both Moldova and Romania, demonstrates that even when the personal and political are distinct from one another, the political will still affect the personal in ways that in turn impact the political. An accident in which two pan-Romanian nationalists lose their lives under mysterious circumstances coinciding with heightened interethnic conflict by no means signals causation. However, the death of a mobilizing, emotive powerhouse in the form of musical figures does inevitably impact the tenuous interethnic relationships that are based on fears of political power.

55 Kaufman, Modern hatreds: the symbolic politics of ethnic war, 138.
Chapter 5: Political Dissidence in the MSSR and the Pan-Romanian “National Revival” Movement

In the MSSR, “secret societies” began cropping up in the 1950s. The National Patriotic Front (Frontul Național Patriotic din Basarabia și Nordul Bucovinei) was a clandestine political group made up of over 100 members. It ran from 1969-1971 and was founded by Alexandru Soltoianu, Alexandru Ustiuc-Bulgar, Valeriu Graur, and Gheorghe Ghimpu. After being ousted to KGB chief Yuri Andropov “by Romanian’s Communist Securitate chief Ion Stanescu,” the young intellectuals were arrested and “sentenced to long prison terms.”

Other resistors during the MSSR became victims of oppressive psychiatry. In 1986, Gheorghe David was arrested and institutionalized in a psychiatric hospital after voicing anti-soviet remarks. In recent years, Mihai Andronic and Vasile Munteanu have also come forth as having been institutionalized as a result of speaking out against the regime.

Under the freedoms afforded by glasnost in the late 1980s, “informal discussion groups” sprouted. Kaufman describes the rise of the movement for national rebirth and cultural revolution as a “classic example of mass-led political mobilization.” The first of these “informal” groups was the so-called Alexei Mateevici Literary-Musical Circle, in which the poet Grigore Vieru was an active member. The term “informal” referred to

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56 King, The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture.
59 Kaufman, Modern hatres: the symbolic politics of ethnic war, 139.
their not being recognized by the government while simultaneously being allowed by authorities to exist.

On January 15, 1988, Eminescu’s birthday, a group of students gathered at the bust of Eminescu at the “Alley of the Classics,” a pathway lined with busts of other Moldovan and Romanian authors in Chisinau’s central park. They gathered initially to sing and to recite verses. The group was led by a doctor named Anatol Salaru. “When it came time to leave,” Salaru recalls in an interview, “everyone had the feeling that, somehow, we were losing something [in leaving].” He proposed gathering on Sundays at the same spot “to discuss, to sing, to recite from the works of our classics.” At first, only seven or eight youth showed up, but as time progressed, more people joined the gatherings, until one week the alley was completely filled. At one point, there were so many people gathered that the authorities turned on the water fountain. Fearing this gathering, the authorities brought in a fanfare band in an effort to create so much sound that the group would not be able to hear themselves speaking. Salaru recalls the authorities asking them not to gather in public any longer, and instead to find “a basement somewhere so that the public would forget about us.” One day in February of 1989, a group of thirty thousand people began marching towards the University of Sciences and back, blocking the city for the first time. “This was the moment when the authorities became fearful. They realized that it was a movement that could not be stopped. This was when the people felt that they were a force.”

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60 TVR. “Interview cu Anatol Salaru, fondatorul cenaclului care a aprins flacara demnitatii in Basarabia”. Published [August 2016]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcYzwE6NJP1.
They were marching for a non-farcical history, for the Romanian language, and for the Latin script. Salaru proclaims: “It’s important for a nation to know its history, to know its roots, its language. At that point when people know who they are, where they come from, they begin to understand where they need to head towards.” He says, “Back then, people were diverged: we didn’t have access to our history, we were completely de-naturalized and denationalized, people were led to believe untruths, they were victims of Soviet propaganda.” The group then gathered hundreds of thousands of signatures, had hundreds of meetings, met with people wherever they could, including in the fields. The distributed recordings of meetings and pamphlets they had made. “At that time, people were thirsty for information, for truth,” Salaru says, “and we weren’t afraid.” According to Salaru, during all of this, the youths were often arrested, detained in the night by the police and militia, sentenced to court. “We were lucky in that we never got sent to court because by that time, most judges realized that this regime was on its last legs.”

Along with other, smaller “informal” groups, The Mateevici Circle and the Democratic Movement in Support of Perestroika, which was “an independent but pro-Gorbachev political organization.”61 formed the Popular Front of Moldova in May 1989.62 Describing this process, Kaufman writes:

Spreading through networks of contacts in cultural organizations and even local Communist Party cells, the Democratic Movement could muster over 300 support groups throughout the country by early 1989. Too big to be suppressed, it then changed its name to the Moldovan Popular Front and became an opposition movement: in August 1989 it mobilized a crowd of at least 100,000 people – some estimate 300,000 or more – at a “Grand National Assembly” to demand that Moldovan be made the state language of Moldova. Already feeling the pressure of smaller rallies, the previously rubber-stamp Moldovan parliament had a month earlier elected Mircea Snegur, a Moldovan Politburo member newly reborn as a

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61 Kaufman, Modern hatreds: the symbolic politics of ethnic war, 139.  
62 King, The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture, 138.
moderate Moldovan nationalist, to be its chairman. In September 1989, the parliament passed a pair of laws enshrining Moldovan as the state language and defining the state language’s functions. Throughout this process, emotive national symbols played a critical role. The first big protest demonstration organized by the Democratic Movement, on March 2, 1989, focused on the symbolism of language, promoting the slogan “language, Script.”

These historical moments are where the music of the Teodorovicis took traction. Their symbolism for the Romanian language and for cultural ties to Romania took charge. The beauty of village life and of the landscape traversed the poetry arising at the time, to which songs were set.

Not only the symbolism of their works, but also Ion’s class position was part of the social tendencies of immigration at the time. King writes that “genuine strength of the national movement lay in urban centers, where Moldovans [as opposed to Russians and Ukrainians already residing there] recently arrived from the villages were well aware of the advantages of official status for their ancestral language.” Ion fit in line perfectly in this model. “In terms of their rhetoric,” King writes, “leaders of the Popular Front looked to the countryside as the locus of those qualities of hard work, respect for tradition, and self-sufficiency that would pull the republic out of the economic and social malaise into which it had sunk [...] However, it was in the cities - with first-generation, Moldovan urbanites competing with ethnic Russians and Ukrainians - where the message of language reform had its greatest impact.” New language laws were adopted by parliament on August 31, with “Moldovan” as the official language, and on the basis of the Latin script.

63 Kaufman, Modern hatreds: the symbolic politics of ethnic war, 139.
64 King, The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture, 138.
65 Ibid., 140.
66 Ibid., 130.
For King, it was the events leading up to the Marea Adunare Nationala that indicated “Moldova’s first experiments in democracy,” and that “marked the beginning of the transition to a more transparent and responsive form of politics.”

This was the result of public debates on the language issue - the “open solicitation of public views on the language question in 1988 and 1989 by the Supreme Soviet’s interdepartmental commission and the ‘war of letters’ that it spawned in the republican press.”

King praises this activity as an example of “politicians acting politically - that is, taking firm and public positions on questions of republic-wide importance, attempting to communicate those positions to the public at large, and treating the republic’s inhabitants as real constituents whose opinions on proposed legislation actually mattered in the political process. This interdepartmental commission was made up of members of the Moldovan Movement and the Mateevici Club, who had “Defeated members of the CPM Politburo, the chair of the republican KGB, and several raion secretaries.”

King writes, “a total of ten seats went to members and supporters of the informals and thrust intellectuals and activists such as Nicolae Dabija (editor of Literatura si Arta), Ion Druta (Moldova’s most prominent writer), and Grigore Vieru (the republic’s premier poet) into the political spotlight.”

King continues that in winning 10 out of the 16 positions they were allowed to run for, the informals showed that “they had become a formidable threat to CPM hegemony.” Also, King writes, “The victories [...] provided the groups with a union-wide platform from which to issue calls for fundamental change. It was these

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67 Ibid., 128.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 127.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
deputies, in fact, who along with their colleagues from the Baltic republics would lead the Congress toward officially condemning the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in December 1989, thus raising serious questions about the legality of the four republics’ place inside the Soviet federation.

Charles King opens up a broader discussion on the way things ran at this point in time. He writes:

“The events of the late Soviet period, culminating in the new language laws in 1989 and the declaration of independence in 1991, have generally been portrayed as a crusade for rectifying and reappropriating the Moldovans’ ‘genuine’ national identity after a half-century of Soviet rule. The story, though, is rather more complicated than that. There was more to the national movement than simply a desire to seek historical truth. As became clear after 1991, the national movement included a variety of different political actors, all of whom were briefly united under the banner of national rebirth and political restructuring. They supported cultural - and eventually political - change for reasons that often had less to do with national sentiment than with securing their own positions in the tumultuous politics of the Gorbachev era. The success of the national movement of the late 1980s rested less on the mobilizing power of true and timeless identity, and more on the political uses of cultural questions to key social groups in the republic. It was these groups that would form the basis of new political parties once the collapse of the Soviet system produced a fully independent Moldovan state” 72

“Moldova’s path out of the Soviet Union began with public discussion of the most esoteric questions of grammar and alphabet, subjects that major political figures as well as average Moldovans spent a great deal of time debating. More than in any other Soviet republic at the time, language was central to the national movement. But this issue came to the fore because of a unique convergence of political and social interests within the MSSR. Three major groups were able to find important political capital in the language question and to use it for their own ends. What might have looked to observers like a vast movement of national reawakening was in fact a political coalition of vested interests,

72 Ibid., 121.
one that for a time united distinct social groups but that proved to be remarkably fragile once their disparate goals were revealed after 1989.”

Many politicians and elite intellectuals spoke at the national assemblies in 1989 and 1991. Poems were read by Ion Vatmanu, Leonida Lari, and Grigore Vieru. Ion and Doina sang. Grigore Vieru declared: “An individual needs four things in order to become happy: Bread and salt on the table; political and economic liberty; religious and spiritual freedom; […] and first and foremost, linguistic freedom.” Vieru continued that “bread and salt on the table” was secured. He also expressed confidence also in the “relighting of the candle in the souls of youth” in terms of their dedication to inclination for religious consciousness.

Salaru of the “Alexei Mateevici Literary Club” also spoke. He declared:

“Sovereignty as according to international rights, millennial rights, autodetermination.”

Salaru speaks of the period from 1917 until then as a period of humiliating slavery. “Everything that is done in Moldova is done to rid itself from the grip of this humiliating slavery. Our populace doesn’t fight against someone in particular, but fights rather for the re-finding of its millennial, legitimate, and natural rights.” He proceeds to define sovereignty as total independence at all levels and under all aspects. “A sovereign state can’t enter under the subjugation of another state, as according to the international right. [This is a] notion invented by communists.” He proclaims: “I don’t say these things to ask for an out from the Soviet Union, but rather to bring to your attention the tragedy of

73 Ibid., 131.
the situation in which we find ourselves today. No one except the populace has the right to determine the fate of the Republic.”

Here, he is essentially speaking of democracy. He then goes on to address the people, to make clear the stringent need for civic political engagement and attention. He proclaims: “What are some of the problems that the populace needs to solve at this stage? First of all, the populace needs to elect a legitimate government…” Salaru’s message calls on the people to participate civically.

On the outcome and effects of the movement, King writes the following: “For all the efforts at portraying the national movement as a response by all Moldova’s ethnic groups to the problems engendered by decades of Soviet rule, the purely ethnic implications of the movement for language reform were inescapable.” He continues:

For all their achievements in 1988 and 1989, the early Moldovan informals and the Popular Front made one great strategic error. As the national movement gained momentum, with more and more radical demands being put forward after the adoption of the new language laws, the leaders of the Front increasingly misread the reasons for their success. They saw a great wave of public demonstrations in 1988 and 1989 as evidence of a national, pan-Romanian awakening, a view that was perpetuated and encouraged by the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in Bucharest in December 1989. Once the Front leaders began to stress only the exclusionary aspects of the movement for political reform - by seeing the language question as the first step in a mass-movement for the integration of the Romanian nation and the rejection of the Russian yoke - the multiethnic coalition in support of restructuring was inevitably the first casualty.”

In other words, multiethnic support collapsed because the Popular Front failed to incorporate inclusive measures within their demands and ideas for restructuring. King concludes that the engagement with culture “[...] served as an important mobilization resource for a short time,” but ultimately “proved incapable of keeping the unity of the

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76 furculita. “Marea Adunare Nationala din Chisinau 27 august 1989 2/4”.
77 King, The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture, 140.
78 Ibid., 142.
republic’s various interest groups once other ethnic/communal-based interest structures emerged.” He explains:

Already in mid-1989, the Transnistrians and Gagauz had defected from the once-unified movement for reform, the former incensed at the rise of Bessarabian elites as the patrons of the Popular Front and the latter convinced that they new language laws would lead to their forced assimilation to Romanian culture. Other fault lines began to appear among Moldovans themselves, as the most radical members of the Popular Front pushed for the destruction of the Soviet empire and pan-Romanian union, while more moderate groups seemed satisfied with local control over cultural and economic resources within a refashioned Soviet federation. The very issue that was able to bring together these disparate groups for a brief period in the twilight of Soviet socialism - Moldovan identity - became one of the primary areas of contestation among them in independent Moldova”

In this historical context, political relations between Moldova and Romania opened up to “allow a kind of mutual rediscovery among Romanians and Moldovans, both among politicians and the public at large […] “Romanian newspapers began to publish poems and other works by Moldovan writers such as Grigore Vieru and Leonida Lari,” who had been banned in Romania and were central figures of the “cultural movement of the late 1980s.” On May 6, 1990, a protest event called the “Bridge of Flowers” (Podul de Flori) took place “during which Moldovans and Romanians crossed what many described as a watery Berlin wall to see family members long separated by the international border.”

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 149.
Chapter 6: Musical Culture in Moldova during the MSSR and National Revival:

Aldea-Teodorovici and Estrada Music

In terms of musical tradition, Moldova’s is almost identical to that of the Romanian region of Moldova. There are significant Greek and Byzantine influences. Moldovan folk music, like that of other Eastern European traditions, is characterized by “swift, complex rhythms […], musical improvisation, syncopation, and much melodic ornamentation.”\(^{81}\) The Miorita, the Doina, the batuta (rhythmic dance) the colinda (carol-singing) the hora (circular dance), and the calusari (“goat dance”) make up several important song and dance traditions of Moldova.\(^{82}\) The miorita is an “ancient ballad that is an important part of Moldovan folk culture,” and the “free-form, semi-improvised” Doina is based on “poetic texts of grief, bitterness, separation and longing,” described by some as “the Romanian blues.”\(^{83}\) Other themes include nature, love, and sorrow.” Its various names are: “long song,” “song of the forest,” and “song of sadness.”\(^{84}\)

Traditional instruments of Moldova include the cimbalom (hammer dulcimer), tambura (lute), dal (drum), gaida (bagpipes), bratsch (three-stringed viola), kavyl (flute), and nai – a multi-piped wooden, small, hand-held wind instrument. Lautari is the name for ‘fiddlers’ that often play at weddings and other celebrations. Lautari are strongly represented by Romani musicians.\(^{85}\) In the Continuum Encyclopedia of Popular Music of the World, Dave Laing describes the Soviet tradition as it took place in Moldova: He

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\(^{83}\) Broughton and Ellingham, World music: the rough guide, 72.

\(^{84}\) Bruno Nettl et al., The Garland encyclopedia of world music (New York: Garland, 1998), 873.

writes, “From the 1920s, the Soviet system of academic training for folk musicians was imposed on the lautari, the best of whom were recruited for state-sponsored touring folk ensembles. The tradition of song and collecting and teaching traditional music in music conservatoires was maintained after 1989 by figures like Dimitri Gagauz and his group Fisiu.” In tandem with the long tradition of jazz in the Soviet Union, the jazz scene in Moldova was also in bloom, particularly in the 1960s. In addition to the folk elements, this jazz tradition can also be found in Ion’s music.

The combination of these musical influences comprises Ion’s compositional style, which can be categorized as Estrada music. On the topic of Soviet Estrada, the scholar Ewa Mazierska discusses the definition of the genre. She responds to Russian popular music scholar, David MacFadyen, who argues that Estrada, derived from the French and meaning “small stage” to describe everything that was not on the “big classical stage.” Mazierska adds, “however, in the popular understanding of the Soviet people, the term Estrada was interchangeably associated with the term ‘popular music’ or ‘pop music.’” Mazierska defines Estrada in the Soviet context to be “Soviet (light) music culture” that “was not always dance music but could also be performed in seated concert halls and take the form of a romantic song or ballad.” This all described the performance style of Ion and Aldea-teodorovici. Estrada generally signified ‘light’ entertainment in contrast to ‘serious’ folk music, but the lines were often blurred. As Mazierska argues, “orchestrated folk songs were in the repertoire of pop music performers, who often switched groups

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86 Ibid., 57.
87 Ewa Mazierska, Popular music in Eastern Europe: breaking the Cold War paradigm (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 73.
88 Mazierska, Popular music in Eastern Europe: breaking the Cold War paradigm, 73.
and styles between ‘serious’ and ‘light’ genres.” This, too, was the case for Ion’s music. Although the sum of his works represent a homogenous compositional technique, a vast array of elements from folk music and jazz, rock, and classical traditions can be heard in his music. Grigore Vieru, the poet with whom the Aldea-Teodorovicis had a close personal and professional relationship, said in an interview, “In terms of the varied Estrada music, the songs of Ion Aldea Teodorovici is, I believe, a golden feather. First of all, because of the melodicity of his music. And for the organic connection with our folkloric music tradition.”

A further element of the Estrada tradition that invites and suggests the inclusion of Ion’s music to the genre is its fluidity. “Estrada,” Mazierska writes, “as a broad Soviet pop music genre, was sometimes very ironic; while some artists were deadly serious, some songs were extremely Shlager-like, others included elements of rock music. This fluidity is emblematic of the canon of Estrada music that was allowed to be produced and disseminated. Mazierska points out that “In the Soviet Union there was only one record company – Melodia […] which released a chaotic multitude of different styles of music and whose policy (as well as output) remains a mystery even today. The reason for the distinctive nature of Soviet music was its political and educational mission – controlled by several state institutions – to propagate socialist values.” The debate on what exactly constituted “proper ‘music for the masses,’” she adds, persisted throughout the entirety of the Soviet Union.

89 Ibid., 71.
91 Mazierska, Popular music in Eastern Europe: breaking the Cold War paradigm, 72.
These points work to consolidate Mazierska’s argument that Soviet *Estrada* music is a case representing the “‘deeper paradox of the socialist system’” wherein the “top-down control state of institutions” meant neither that “Soviet music was entirely controlled and manipulated by the state” nor that “individual and state interests were in conflict.” Mazierska agrees with scholars that argue against the oft-found “black and white portrayal of Soviet life” that “Soviet citizens lived a double life where public and private spheres were strictly separated.” The everyday socialist culture was much more complex than this argument suggest, she argues. She writes, “Yurchak’s reading of Soviet internationalism demonstrates its ambivalence between the concepts of ‘bad’ and ‘good’ culture: ‘Ultimately, this means that one did not have to think of ‘socialist’ and ‘bourgeois’ cultural forms as inherently incompatible because their meaning could shift depending on how and where these forms were used.”

Indeed, an example of this point exists in the ardent reversals of language policies throughout the 1920s and 1930s in the MASSR described in the chapter above. At one moment the language of the peasant, intended as a tool for *moldovanization*, was revered for its “simplicity” and “uncomplicated-ness” but was later condemned for its same “simplicity.” “Basing literary moldovan on the language of the village would merely lead to its ‘stupidification,’” went the argument. In light of this volte-face change in political opinion, the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced. The brief Latinization period of the 1920s had been swiftly turned over. King writes, “the recyrillication campaign was only one component of the broader crackdown on ‘bourgeois nationalist’ intellectuals in the Soviet

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92 Ibid.  
93 Ibid.  
94 Ibid.  
95 King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture*, 86.
republics” (86). These were the intellectuals, though, that had been designated as the cultural architects of the society. Policies were instated and rescinded based on how well they seemed to fit as means to an end for the manifestation of Soviet ideology. The notion of how well they seemed to fit, in turn, was an evidently volatile one.

In terms of the musical context, Mazierska writes that Yurchak uses the jazz genre as an example of the fluidity and complexity of the Soviet music tradition. He writes, “it was considered as the protest music of the African Americans as well as a ‘bourgeois’ decadent music.” Mazierska concludes, “A similar ambivalence existed across all spheres of life, especially culture.”

What Mazierska characterizes as ambivalence may in part be the result of what King describes as a “bizarre” and ineffective efforts at building a distinct Moldovan identity. The Teodorovici’s strong adherence to the pan-Romanianist camp in Moldovan politics can be understood as an example of a stark abnegation of the farcical nature of Soviet culture-building. It is the ambivalence of culture building that allowed his musical style to flourish and for him to have access to music conservatories and composition instruction that would enable his potential as a composer – indeed there was a great emphasis on music education, however complex the discussion on “music for the masses” was. It was the absurdity of moldovanization efforts, which were, as King argues, in reality Romanianisms under the guise of “Moldovanness” that in fact spurred the flame and fostered Ion’s voice for Romanianism.

96 Mazierska, Popular music in Eastern Europe: breaking the Cold War paradigm, 72.
Chapter 7: Songs and Commentary

The early songs of the Aldea-Teodorovicis were more veiled in terms of their political message, while songs written at a later date became more open and politically daring.\(^{97}\) As borders between Romania opened, their collaborations with Romanian writers and artists increased. Grigore Vieru, Ion Hadarca, and Dumitru Matcovschi were among the most frequent poets with whom the couple collaborated, while the Romanian poet Adrian Pauanimateds came later. Ion and Doina have many other songs that are not overtly political. These songs are about family life; about appreciating life; about parents, grandparents, and childhood, and also convey values that resonate with much of Moldovan and Romanian society.

The English translations are by the author.

Poem by Grigore Vieru

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eminescu</th>
<th>Eminescu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When the sun was created</td>
<td>La zidirea soarelui se știe,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The sky worked an eternity</td>
<td>Cerul a muncit o veșnicie,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And we who worked as hard</td>
<td>Noi, muncim întocmai, ne-am ales cu,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received lord Eminescu.</td>
<td>Ne-am ales cu domnul Eminescu,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lord of the majestic bird(^{98})</td>
<td>Domnul cel de pasăre măiastră,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The eternal lord</td>
<td>Domnul cel de nemurire a noastră</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{98}\)pasarea măiastra – phoenix-like symbolic/allegoric bird of Romanian mythology
Eminescu.

In word and in all else
We are a flower of Latinity
Under a sky of southern stars.
Whether we are right or not,
Whether we are right or not,
Eminescu shall be our judge.

At last I too have my part in this world
I can embrace your masterful book,
I know you are my brother and also my father,
Now no one can deceive me.
Welcome to our home,
My people, you, my blue flower -
Eminescu.

Eminescu.

Suntem în cuvânt și-n toate
Floare de latinitate
Sub un cer cu stele sudice.
De avem sau nu dreptate,
De avem sau nu dreptate,
Eminescu să ne judece.

Mi-l furără, Doamne, adineauri
Pe înaltul domn cu tot cu lauri,
Mă uscam de dor, în piept cu plânsul
Nu știam că dor mi-era de ănsul,
Nu știam că doina mi-o furară
Cu străvechea și frumoasa țară -
Eminescu.

Acum am și eu pe lume parte:
Pot îmbrățișa maiistra-ți carte,
Știu că frate-mi ești și mi-ești părinte,
Acum nimeni nu mă poate minte.
Bine ai venit în casa noastră,
Neamule, tu floarea mea albastră
Eminescu.
In word and in all else
We are a flower of Latinity
Under a sky of southern stars.
Whether we are right or not,
Whether we are right or not,
Eminescu should judge us.

**Eminescu** was one of the couple’s most well-known and revered songs. Born in the Moldovan region of present-day Romania, Mihai Eminescu is a seminal figure in Moldovan and Romanian literary culture. Not only is the use of him as such symbolically important to pan-Romanian efforts, but Eminescu himself was ensconced in political debate. As one writer states,

There has existed some controversy over the exact national affiliation of Eminescu, which has highlighted the historical animosity between **Romania** and **Moldova**. Moldova’s often complicated relationship with Romania features a history of conflict, despite a shared culture and nearly identical languages. This has prompted questions of nationality amongst some of the two countries’ most prominent citizens, including Mihai Eminescu. The complex land and political disagreements which exist between the two countries have led to various discrepancies over Eminescu’s nationality. Moldova has erected a statue of Eminescu in Chisinau as well as naming their most prominent theatre the **Mihai Eminescu National Theatre**. Although such national divergences

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exist, Eminescu remains one of the region’s most celebrated and luminous literary presences, both in Romania and Moldova.\textsuperscript{100}

Eminescu is the Pushkin of Romania and is evoked in contrast to the latter.

During the Soviet era, Eminescu was not studied in state education. In academia, Romanian history and literature was massively repressed. This is a revival of the national Romanian luminaries. Pushkin was not criticized, but rather Eminescu revered. To “judge” in this context means to be looked up to; to be led by. Of course, there is also the religious implication to the phrase “judge,” as his status is heightened to that of (a) “lord.” In the words of a pupil of Soviet education in Moldova, the song is a message that “we need Eminescu to “judge” us – to be our torch – not Pushkin or Lenin, [or anyone else that] the streets and parks were named after. In a constructive way, Ion and Doina counteracted Russian values.”\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{100} Culture Trip, "Recent articles by Lindsay Parnell on Culture Trip," Culture Trip, , accessed December 02, 2017, https://theculturetrip.com/authors/lindsay-parnell/.

Poem by: Grigore Vieru

Rise Up (Arise)

My dear, I long to sing to you,
Star-hailed script.
Yearningly I kiss
Each letter of yours
As if it were my mother’s eyes.

Rejoice, Latin script,
You have not come as a stranger
On your bittersweet journey,
You have come to your own country
And to your own brothers.

Rise up, rise up, rise up
Like the green wheat,
Like the tear.
Rise up, rise up, rise up,
Don’t stray away again,
My love.

Rasai

Dragu-mii a te cânta,
Scriule venit din stele.
Orice literă a ta
Ca pe ochii maicii mele
Dornic o sărut.

Bucură-te, scris latin,
Că pe valea dulce-amară
N-ai venit ca un strain,
Ai venit la tine-n țară
Și la frații tăi.

Răsai, răsai, răsai
Ca grâul cel verde,
Ca lacrima
Răsai, răsai, răsai
Și nu te mai pierde,
Iubirea mea.

Răsai, răsai, răsai
Ca grâul cel verde,
Ca lacrima
Răsai, răsai, răsai
Și nu te mai pierde,
Iubirea mea.
Purpled apples adorned our trees,
Valleys filled with golden wheatear
And still how poor we were
Not having had you,
Oh dear script.

Rejoice, Latin script,
You have not come as a stranger
On your bittersweet journey,
You have come to your own country
And to your own brothers.

Rise up, rise up, rise up
Like the green wheat,
Like the tear.
Rise up, rise up, rise up
Don’t stray away again,
My love.

Rise up, rise up, rise up
Like the green wheat,
Like the tear.
Rise up, rise up, rise up
Don’t stray away again,
My love.

Script of such luck
Let’s laugh and weep
We’re again in the same place
Let’s embrace
And to die (ourselves). Si sa ne murim.\textsuperscript{102}

This song is also accompanied by a music video and primarily featuring Doina. As with many of their other songs, this one is deeply symbolic. Images that relate to Romanian culture are conjured both in the poem as well as the video. I have chosen to translate “rasai” as “rise up” because of the sense of agency that the phrase “rise up” connotes – an element that I believe characterizes the emotional milieu surrounding the song. The music video begins with a very short strumming introduction set to a still shot of a field of crops in the background and a kind of traditional bread loaf in the foreground. The camera then switches to Doina singing on a backdrop of trees, the open nature. She is wearing a long headscarf, which is also a symbol of tradition, particularly Romanian Orthodox tradition, wherein women are allowed to enter a church only if they wear a headscarf. Images of schoolchildren learning Romanian with Latin script are then shown. The song speaks directly to their most emblematic cause: the proliferation and resurrection – literally, from “arise” – of the Romanian language. It is a tender address, an amorphization of the language. It clearly shows the significance of the language issue from an emphatically personal level.

The line \textit{purpled apples adorned our trees / Valleys filled with golden wheatear} refers to the agricultural tradition and industries of Moldova, which provided for a proportionally significant amount of the Soviet Union. Still, the author argues, intellectualism and culture was missing. This is a call of their importance.

Poem by: Ion Hadarca, 1990

**Sovereignty**

I wonder, is the black pearl from the crown
Not the wrinkled tear of the peasant?
Clod of drought and famine
Resting in villages, you orphaned tear

May you frozen empires feel a lump in your throat
On the day of your dissolution
They have stepped over thorns with malice
The Lord has raised them to Stephen’s side

Our spirit, our guardian angel
Give us the ray that protects us all,
The suffering of our people and the suffering of
Christ -
Sovereignty

Another two signs from our crown
Protect the sovereign Moldova
The sword in the stone, the unwavering hearth
The cross ploughs truths in the skies

At Putna (Monastery) lies the voice of the Heavens
Twinned with the struggle of Transylvania,
The Bessarabian heart of the Romanian
Rustles in the groves of the Cosmin (Forest)

If only foreigners gave us advice
Crowded at the gates of Tighina,
Placed attorneys and armies

**Suveranitate**

Oare perla neagră din Coroană
Nu-i zgârcita lacrimă ţărană
Bulgăre de secetă și foame,
Cotilit în satele orfane

Să le steie ocnelor imperii
Nod în gât în ziua destrămării
Zbirii l-au călcat în hăinie,
Domnul l-a-nălţat în Ștefânie

Spirite al nostru, îngere de pază
Dă-ne nouă raza, ce veghează-n toate,
Azima poporului, și-a Mântuitorului,
Suveranitatea.

Alte două semne sub Coroană
Ocrotesc Moldova suverană,
Spada-n piatră, neclintită-i vatra,
Crucea-n ceruri ară adevăruri

Că la Putna-i glasul idealului
Înfrățit cu buciumul Ardealului
Basarabă inima românului
Freamătă-n dumbrăvile Cosminului.

Sfaturi multe de ne-or da străinii
Buluciți la poțile Tighinii,
Să ne puie procurori și oaste
Și-autonomiile sub coaste.
And autonomies between our ribs
We are not welcomed by those who give advice
They are tired of bad luck
Dignity is the bread of the resurrection (of Christ)
One is the country, one is the Sfatul Tarii
Our spirit, our guardian angel
Give us the ray that protects all,
The suffering of our people and the suffering of Christ -
Sovereignty

N-avem loc la sfaturile cui
Cu noroc amar ne țin sătui
Demnitatea-i pâinea învierii
Una-i țara, unu-i Sfatul Țării
Spirite al nostru, îngere de pază
Dă-ne nouă raza, ce veghează-n toate,
Azima poporului, și-a Mântuitorului,
Suveranitatea.  

This song is an interesting echo to the ambiguousness of the Moldovan identity question. Sovereignty for Moldova is the subject of this song, but the individuals singing about it are also advocates for reunification with Romania. The conundrum is emblematic of the relationship between Romanian and Moldova held by pan-Romanian nationalists. The song “sovereignty,” written by Ion Hadarca, references Sfatul Tarii, the national council that formally linked Bessarabia and Romania in 1918 for several decades. The same stanza makes a concrete decree about the singleness of one country. But the word “sovereignty” also denotes independence against something else - in this case a “disunion” from the “frozen empires.” This could be a reference both to the Russian tsarist imperialism of the 19th century as well as the Soviet rule. The song opens the

discussion on how cultural engineering does or do not make national boundaries. As King writes, “it is impossible to give a linear account of Moldovan nation-hood, for whether they even constitute a nation in a cultural sense is highly dubious”\(^{104}\) and “in no post-Soviet republic except Moldova have inhabitants continued to argue about the existence of the nation itself.”\(^{105}\)

\(^{104}\) King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture*, 7.

\(^{105}\) Ibid., 5.
Poem by Grigore Vieru

**For Her (Sake)**

For Her the bell from Putna rings  
For Her I fear sin  
For Her the sky is bluest  
For the language, for our language.  
When God first cried,  
From among the stars,  
He cried over our country  
With the tears of our language.

For Her falls the snow from skies,  
For Her the Carpathians stay strong  
For Her the hearth at home keeps warm  
For the language, for our mother’s language.

When God first cried,  
From among the stars,  
He cried over our country  
With the tears of our language.

For Her we whitewash our walls  
For Her poets are wounded  
For Her blossom the flowers of our dreams  
For the language, for the language of our country.  
When God first cried,  
From among the stars,  
He cried over our country

**Pentru Ea**

Pentru Ea la putna clopot bate  
Pentru Ea mi-i teama de pacate,  
Pentru Ea e bolta mai albastra -  
Pentru limba noastra.  
Dumnezeu prima oara  
Când a plâns printre astre,  
El a plâns peste tara  
Cu lacrima limbii noastre.

Pentru ea ninsori se cern din spatiu  
Pentru ea puternici sunt Carpatii  
Pentru ea e calda vatra poamei -  
Pentru limba mamei.

Dumnezeu prima oara  
Când a plâns printre astre,  
El a plâns peste tara  
Cu lacrima limbii noastre.

Pentru ea noi varuim peretii,  
Pentru ea mai sunt raniti poetii,  
Pentru ea cresc florile visarii -  
Pentru limba tarii.  
Dumnezeu prima oara  
Când a plâns printre astre,  
El a plâns peste tara
With the tears of our language. Cu lacrima limbii noastre.106

According to Flacara TV, a platform devoted to the pan-Romanian cause, “Pentru Ea” was considered “like a prayer” in the context of the Movement for National Revival.107 A video was made to go along with the song by the Moldovan National Television most likely in 1991, according to Flacara TV, and would have aired during this time. The symbolism is stark. The opening begins with shots of Moldovan countryside landscape and includes the monumental domes of a Romanian orthodox church in the distance. The camera then pans over to a small river, possibly a section of the Prut. With the lyrics “for her sake the dome is bluest,” the camera holds over a shot of the roof of the dome of a church. The first line of the poem, “for her sake ring the bells at Putna,” weightily introduces the heft of the religious connection and metaphor. The Putna is a Romanian Orthodox monastery built by Stephen the Great, and an extremely important cultural, religious, and artistic center of medieval Moldova.108 The language in question is the Romanian language, made into the image of the tears of the Divine


Creator, as sung in the refrain: *When God first wept / From among the stars / He wept over our country / With the tears of our language*. The strophe “for Her sake poets are hurt” refers likely to another literary leader of the Movement for National Liberation, Dumitru Matcovschi.

References to nature also abound – the strength of the Carpathian Mountains exists “for the sake” of the language. There is a link of inextricability being made between the Romanian language as a product and means of relation with the Divine, and nature’s loyal resolve to stand by this relationship of unity. With references to the home – the whitewashing of walls and the warmth of the hearth – nationalism takes the form of nature imagery, of connotations of Moldovan country life. National revival is also religious revival. The video pans over shots of horses and birds, landscapes, and the unveiling of the monument of Stephen the Great. In this spirit of nationalism, monasteries are highly symbolic. The symbols used to evoke this spirit of nationalism are nature, national poets, the church, language, which is presented as a holy thing, and country lifestyle (wine, the whitewashing of walls). The christening scene in the video stands as both a metaphor for the rebirth of the country and also demonstrates the relegation of the language to a holy status. For Vieru, the Aldea-Teodorovicis, Matcovschi, Mateevici, Druta, and other figures of the pan-Romanian Moldovan intellectual elite, the language signifies the most crucial block of national emancipation.
Poem by: Adrian Paunescu

**Banks of the Prut**

In between us runs the river weeping  
He is burdened, just like we are  
One wave of water for every three of blood  
Oh forloren Prut, forgotten by God  

People perish and people are born,  
Wire is barbed between brothers  
We too will have a day of Easter  
Come on, Romanians, rise from your graves  

**Maluri de Prut**

Curge Prutul între noi și plîinge,  
Că ni-i greu și lui la fel i-i greu,  
La un val de apă, trei de sânge,  
Bietul Prut uitat de Dumnezeu.  

Lumea se mai stinge, se mai naște,  
E ghimpată sîrma dintre frați,  
Vom avea și noi o zi de Paște,  
Hai români din moarte înviatăi!  

**Brother over the Prut**

Lift your eyes and look into mine  
We will do it all, step by step  
If I still want it and you still want it  

**Dar de peste Prut ridică frate**  
Ochii tăi de-a dreptu-n ochii mei,  
Le vom face rînd pe rînd pe toate  
Dacă eu mai vreau și tu mai vrei.  

**Banks of the Prut, water garrote**  
Banks of the Prut, water garrote  

**Maluri de Prut, apă în ștreang...**  
Maluri de Prut, apă în ștreang...  

**Nothing will be left of the water**  
That ached and hurt us  
Another land will remain to inhabit  
The Prut, like the edge of a knife  

**Nu va fi nici urmă dintr-o apă**  
Care ne-a durut și ne-a rănit,  
Va rămîne alt pămînt să-ncapă  
Prutul ca o muchie de cuțit.  

**In between Romanian countries runs the Prut**  
Its cry is heard all over the Carpathians  
Olt and Mures are joining in its tears  
Jiu and Dniștru, why do you wait?  

**Curge Prutul între țări române,**  
I se-aude plîngerea-n Carpați,  
Olt și Mureș sar ca să-l îngîne,  
Jiu și Nistru, voi ce așteptați?
And from above, all this space looks Like a Heaven bloodied at the waist. Come, brother, and let us finally tie together The banks of the tragic river.

Banks of the Prut, water garrote…
Banks of the Prut, water garrote…

This is one of the songs that was actualized when the national revival movement was already in swing. “Water garrote” signifies the suffocative borderline between Moldova and Romania that takes the form of the river Prut. “If I still want it and you still want it” beautifully represents the innate agency of these peoples in the context of a history where their will and voice were hardly considered.

Poem by Grigore Vieru

Two Twin Tears

Bucharest, you city of beauty,
I would walk to you on foot
I would walk to see and hear you
However long the road would take.

Chisinau, you city of flowers,
I kiss you on your three colors,
I kiss your heart –
Which is just like mine.

Two twin tears,
Two twin tears –
Chisinau and Bucharest,
Two matching joys,
Two matching joys –
On beloved Romanian shores.

Bucharest, you holy day,
We have nothing to divide
We have only to gather -
The Wheat, the Doina, the Tradition.

Chisinau, you wounded dream,
By strangers, and estranged,
Healed by linden flowers,
And by your sorrowed serenaders.

Doua Lacrimi Gemene

București, oraș frumos,
Merge-aș la tine pe jos,
Să te văd și să te-ascult,
Cât n-ar fi să merg de mult.

Chișinău, oraș de flori,
Te sărut pe trei culori,
Îți sărut și inima –
Care este ca și-a mea.

Două lacrimi gemene,
Două lacrimi gemene –
Chișinău și București,
Bucurii asemene,
Bucurii asemene-
Pe dragi plaiuri românești.

București, preasfintă zi,
Noi n-avem ce împarți,
Avem numai ce-aduna -
Graiul, Doina, Datina.

Chișinău, tu vis rănit,
De străini, și-nstrăinit,
Vindecat cu flori de tei,
Și de triști rapsozii tăi.
Bucharest, I will always sing
Of your splendor
As long as my tears will flow,
And as long as my heart will beat.

Chisinau, you sublime city,
We have loved each other eternally,
Although we are brothers and kin,
How late we’ve seen each other!

Bucharest, with wetted eyes,
Tell me, do you hear me?
Bucharest, with wetted eyes,
Tell me, do you hear me…

In this song, the “three colors” in the second stanza refers to the independent country’s new flag. Along with language, the flag was a symbol of national identity (Kaufman). No longer the Soviet flag, Moldova’s new flag was identical to Romania’s – blue, yellow, and red – with the exception of the addition of Moldova’s coat of arms in the center: an eagle holding a cross in its beak, an olive branch in one claw, and a scepter in the other. The eagle also bears a shield that has an image of an aurochs.

The stanza Chisinau, you wounded dream / By strangers, and estranged / Healed by linden flowers / And by your sorrowed serenaders no doubt refers to the Soviet

occupiers – the “strangers” which have “estranged” the city. “Strangers” refers to everything that was Russian and imposed on Moldovan society. Writers, Politicians, Scientists, Academics; everything was impregnated with Russian values. People of my mother’s generation are not very familiar with Romanian studies. Romanian art and Romanian studies was very limited in schooling. There was a heavy political emphasis in school. Moldovan history, of course, was taught from the Soviet perspective. The history was that Moldova was “liberated” by Russian against the Ottomans. (Mama interview) The line could very well be relevant today, as the contentiousness of the language issue in has risen in recent years. As long as simple daily activities such as ordering a taxi or making a dinner reservation in Romanian, as opposed to Russian, are not possible, cohabiters may well feel estranged. In any case, although not hostile, the word choice certainly sends a message of voiced discomfort from having been forced to be estranged from one’s own history – or at least part of it – the Romanian part.

The coming together of the two capital cities is a clear and direct message of desire for unity. The last stanza, Bucharest, with wetted eyes / Tell me, do you hear me? is a direct message to the Romanians – a cry to a long-lost sibling. “Healed by your sorrow serenaders” – Romanian musicians.
Three Colors

Appetites of strangers
Kidnapped our sweet vines, our lands
Yet no one has succeeded
To tear the Tricolor from our chest.
The times were too severe
We burned from longing
So long that today we gather under the Tricolor flag
Even to wed and to baptize.

Three colors and one Romanian
Love
Three colors and one Romanian
Tongue
Three colors and one Romanian
Faith
Three colors and one Romanian
Being

So splendidly it glistens,
One would believe that, in the blue skies,
Christ fastened it from rainbows,
And handed it to our Romanian kin.
It is warm underneath it, like underneath a wound
Suffered by Christ

I altered the chorus significantly in terms of translation because in Romanian the word “Romanian” comes as a description after the noun.
It is warm in the country of Stephen,  
Warm from the Tricolor.

Three colors and one Romanian Love  
Three colors and one Romanian Tongue  
Three colors and one Romanian Faith  
Three colors and one Romanian Being

The appetites of strangers kidnapped  
Our sweet vine and our land  
But no one has succeeded  
To tear the Tricolor from our chest.

Under its cloth with justice  
Our people shall unite more tightly  
Rise, rise higher than all else - Latinity,  
Rise, hearts and the Tricolor.

Three colors and one Romanian Love  
Three colors and one Romanian Tongue  
Three colors and one Romanian Faith
Three colors and one Romanian Being Românească!\textsuperscript{112}

“Trei Culori” is similar to “Doua Lacrimi Gemene” in that it deals with the direct relationship between Moldova and Romania. The chorus is significant in its explicit clarifications of what it is Moldovans and Romanians are united in, what they share in common. One love comes from the affinity of ethnic relations and the emotionality that it breeds. One single language refers evidently to the shared language. The faith refers to the Romanian Christian Orthodox tradition, and the single being refers to the inherent naturalness, or essentiality, of the claim.

Come, come,
The big hora is spinning
And in the middle, this sparkles:
The flower of the house
The flower that is called
The flower that is called
The Romanian language.

The speech of heaven,
The speech of the branch,
The speech of the wheat,
The speech of our people

Come, come
The holy Doina plays
And in the middle, this sparkles:
The flower of the house
The flower that is called
The flower that is called
The Romanian language.

The speech of heaven,
The speech of the branch,
The speech of the wheat,
The speech of our people

Come, come,
The sky spins with stars,
And in the middle, this sparkles: Iar la mijloc straluceste
The flower of the house. Floarea stapana.
The flower that is called Floarea ceea se numeste,
The flower that is called Floarea ceea se numeste
The Romanian language. Limba romana.113

The “hora” is a dance from the Balkans and other regions. It is ubiquitous in Moldova and Romania and is similar to its equivalent in Greek, Bulgarian, Jewish, Turkish, and Macedonian traditions.114 In a circle, participants hold hands, slightly raised, moving to the left and right. The “hora” is a staple at weddings and other celebratory gatherings in Romanian and Moldova. In the line, “Doina sfanta se doineste,” the Doina is made into a verb, so that the act of singing is rendered specific to the kind of singing being done. That this traditional centerpiece has been made into a verb speaks to its salience and significance. Additionally, “se doineste” is a reflexive verb, so that an added element of agency imbues its symbolism. To have a traditional hora group encircling the “flower in the middle” that is the Romanian language speaks to the sense of care and specialness renegaded to the language. The “flower of the house” refers to the language that the hora embraces. “The language” is the hostess of house - the one that has brought the community together and the one being celebrated.

Poem by Grigore Vieru

Relight the Candle

Relight the candle in the cottage
Next to the eternal basil
Frostbitten at the hands and at the feet
God is returning home.

God, He from the Christian glory
What sins could you have committed
To have been sent there, too
Into the Siberian abyss?

You forgive all, God from above, with great tenderness
Even those who sent you to iced Siberia

The cold snows and the emptiness rains
Frostbitten is my heart.
God, we weren’t well either
Without your guidance and Your light.

God, come join me in my cell
And together, wounded and frozen,
Let us warm ourselves with joy
One next to the other, like two brothers.

Reaprindeți Candela

Reaprindeți candela-n căscioară
Lângă busuiocul cel mereu --
Degerat la mâini si la picioare
Se întoarce acasă Dumnezeu.

Doamne, Cel din slăvile creștine
Ce păcate oare-ai săvârșit
Că te-au dus acolo și pe Tine
În Siberii fără de sfârșit?

Toate le ierți, Doamne de sus, cu blândețe măreață,
Chiar și pe cei care te-au dus în Siberii de gheață...

Frigul ninge și pustiul plouă,
Degerată-mi este inima.
Doamne, bine nu ne-a fost nici nouă
Fără sfatul și lumina Ta.

Doamne, intră și-n a mea chilie
Și-amândoi, răniți și înghețați
Să ne încălzim cu bucurie
Unul lângă altul ca doi frați.115

Here, an imagery of warmth and homecoming is evoked. These lines are symptomatic of the “awakening” as from “Awaken, Romanian” (“Desteapta-te, Romane!”), the Romanian national anthem written in 1848-9. This poem is of a more somber mood than the others, with referenced to the egregious deportations in Sibera.
Chapter 8: Legacy: Symbols, Values, and the Social Role of Artists in Moldova

Immediately after their passing, Ion and Doina were lauded by politicians, artists, and intellectuals for their significant influence on the politics of ethno-national identity. Raisa Vieru, wife of Grigore Vieru, wrote, “They were the bards that sang the right songs at the right time and the right moment. It was through their pieces about the Tricolor (flag), of Latin script, of the Romanian language that Ion and Doina sang on Grigore Vieru’s text, we were able to obtain our liberty.”\textsuperscript{116} The first president of the Republic of Moldova, Mircea Snegur, who held office from 1990 to 1996, wrote, “Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovici were personalities that dedicated themselves to the country, that contributed through their creation to the national rebirth and liberation. It is a shame that they left us so soon; we would have needed their efforts, their intelligence, their insights in order to finish what we started in the years 1989 – 1991.”\textsuperscript{117} Their symbolic status in the thread of Moldovan life is also echoed in state memorialization practices. Schools and streets bear their name today, as well as a monument dedicated in their honor in Chisinau and Cosereni. Several postage stamps also depict the image of the singers.\textsuperscript{118}

In June 2014, the documentary “Te Iubesc, Ion și Doina” (With Love, Ion and Doina) premiered at the documentary film festival “Cronograf” in Chisinau. It was presented as “an homage to their lifelong dedication to national values.”\textsuperscript{119} In an

\textsuperscript{116} Perdeleanu, Aureliu. \textit{Ion și Doina Aldea-Teodorovici: martirii identității naționale.} Buzău, 92.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 93.
\textsuperscript{118} Figure 2.
interview with Radio Chisinau, director Leontina Vatamanu voiced the opinion that, two decades after the couple’s passing, Bessarabians are still searching for their path. Vatamanu said, “This film, alongside the fact that it tells the story of Doina and Ion, is a film about our values, about the dignity that we must have…The last section of the film is about the period of National Rebirth. It presents several archived frames, wherein one can see how many of us there were, united and in solidarity. For me, it is a film from the soul and an homage to those who fought for our liberty: Doina and Ion, as well as Ion Vatamanu.”

In a separate interview, Leontina Vatamanu remarks the following:

“Doina and Ion are a permanence. They are a presence today through their songs, through their creation, through the memory that they left. They are creators that somehow transcended our quotidian, and they managed to do things that we can be proud of today. They are a part of this people, and I want for them to be recognized under this aspect, as people who were born on this earth, who created also for these people. Probably their life, and perhaps their death, transformed them into legendary heroes, into a legend, an icon of that period. The best people who knew them were the ones who knew them when they were alive. Ion and Doina were two people who knew how to love. They loved each other, they loved what they created, and they loved their people. This love of theirs was very fertile.”

This emphasized view that they stood for ideal notions of love is part of the neutralization of their song, and is indicative of the normalization of family values in everyday life.


120 Documentarul Te iubesc, Ion și Doina, la Strasbourg de Ziua Culturii Naționale." Radio Chișinău.
Ion Vatamanu, the father of Leontina Vatamanu, was an important literary and political figure of the national revival.
121 TVR Iasi. “Identitate Basarabia - Leontina Vatamanu”. Published [January 2016].
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diJTT9dF_WA.
Vatamanu dedicates her film to spectators in Moldova as well as those in Romania, “where the public probably loved them just as much.” They made many journeys in cities in Romania, “wishing to reach the audiences there and wishing somehow to build bridges between us.” She hopes to repeat the tours of Ion and Doina through the Romanian landmarks, and expressed curiosity in the emotions that this film would bring out from Romanian audiences. In this sense, the desires of Doina and Ion are, as King writes, fervently present in those who wish to seek closer ties on all accounts with Romania.

In relation to the spiritualist aspect of the couple’s songs, contemporary Moldovan society places an emphasis on continuing an awareness of and dedication to “national values.” At one Moldovan school, there is a ceremony of observance where their story is reviewed, and moments of silence are held. One teacher speaks about the commemoration of Ion and Doina during school hours. She says, “We may not be as developed as other European countries, but if we don’t recognize our own history, that’s the biggest tragedy, and we never will reach that level [of said European countries] if we don’t have some national values.”

There is a generational difference in how these issues are handled. The older generations perceive an ignorance in the younger generation in regards to the language, and “what it means to be a good patriot.” One person interviewing Leontina Vatamanu says that “maybe it’s because [the younger generations] don’t have, on their backs, the events that we lived through.” It is important to Vatamanu to cultivate in the idea that it

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matters to speak the language well, that “it’s important to have a good vocabulary, that this land has a history, that here people open a book, that they want to make films, [and an idea] that they want to organize cultural events, that they have dignity, and that they know where they’re going.” In Vatamanu’s words, one can see the remnant desire to make sense of one’s socio-political identity. Behind her words is an implicit commentary on the interrelationship of art and politics. Somehow making art and being culturally proactive is tantamount to being socio-politically engaged and aware.

This ostensibly elusive association between art, culture, and politics appears to be at the heart of many Moldovan artists’ relationship to their work. Separate interviews with actors Anatol Durbala and Doriana Talmazan on the show “Identitatea Basarabia” (“Bessarabian Identity”) further reveal opinions of artists on this relationship. The actor Anatol Durbala proclaims, “an artist must have a civic position.” These actors express a similar view that artists are inherently involved in civil society, and that they should be civically aware. Moldovans seem to agree “politics” is for “politicians.” The question becomes partly one of defining “politics.” Beyond their songs, Ion and Doina did were not heavily involved in “politics.” But the act of performing their songs did render them involved politically. Perhaps they were not necessarily perceived as such, but they were political because of the politics of their activity.

The anthropologist Jennifer Cash looks into the art-culture-politics paradigm in her ethnographic research on Moldovan folkloric performance. In a study called Reviving

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Cash looks at the “linking [of] performance media to questions of power.”

“When folklorists, ethnographers, and performers in Moldova claim to be apolitical, and even anti-political, they point to broader changes in the roles of art and culture, and of artists and intellectuals, in post-Socialist Eastern Europe. The claims my informants make regarding the apolitical nature of ‘authentic’ folklore can best be understood by remembering that intellectuals and artists—producers of culture—were assigned a special role in the development of socialist societies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. At a minimum, artistic work was supposed to convey the socialist values articulated by the Communist Party to the masses. As an educational and ideological tool of the party, art and artists were subject to censorship by political authorities. By the same token, culture producers were assumed to command political authority, attention, and power.”

Cash carries on to ask an important question: “Have Moldova’s ‘authentic’ folkloric ensembles really succeeded in breaking the connection between performance and politics,” when they claim to do so, as her study reveals? “We must ask,” she argues, whether the performer’s intent really matters in assigning political and social significance to performances of folkloric music and dance.”

In terms of the specificities of current state influence over folkloric music, Cash points out that the state had little definitive ideological control. She states, “the [state lacks definitions and other criteria with which to control folklore, except as a generalized performance genre,” Interestingly, she writes, “For students of the Soviet Union, the lack of overt politics and ideology in Moldova’s performing arts may come as a surprise. In fact this factor supports the argument advanced by local specialists that the ‘folkloric

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127 Ibid., 66.
128 Ibid., 67.
movement’ of the 1980s, and the recent creation of *folkloric* and *etno-folcloric* ensembles, has effectively de-ideologized folklore.”

In April 2015, talk-show host Sanda Filat interviewed the couple’s son. Cristofor, in his mid thirties at the time of the interview, talking about his mother’s personality says, “There was an everyday drama with her. In the years closer to the accident, she would cry nights about the Romanian cause, for the cause of the language, for the cause of reunification with Romania. She would try to encourage her husband and Grigore Vieru to realize their ideas in a short amount of time. He says, “[…] you realize how much they did in two years since the opening of the borders [between Romanian and Moldova] - it was only two years - and how quickly they were able to become known in Romania and how quickly they were able to motivate people to want a nearness with Moldova.” He also says, as others seem also express: “Maybe if they had survived, they might have been able to move something more. And I don’t mean an implicit nearness, I mean a spiritual nearness.”

Cristofor grew up with influences of Romanian ideals and aspirations towards literature and music. “I’m calm,” he says, “but I’m also restless, as [my parents] were, because I can’t find my inner peace because I’m trying to move people’s hearts - our people and others in the world - Moldovans and Romanians in the world. This activity consumes a lot [of energy]. I always try to change something, as long as I’m on this earth, I want to bring people inner joy and maybe more aspirations.” In this regard, he shares a generational view that Leontina also holds. He says, “I want people to have the aspirations that they had in the 70s and 80s, when they were a bit more motivated. They

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129 Ibid., 67.
read a book, they went to shows […]” In terms of his wishes for music and art, Cristofor says: “I’d like [for there to be] an accessible complexity” - it’s a bit of an oxymoron, - like my father’s music, it’s of a unique orchestral complexity, harmonically speaking, and on the other side - it’s accessible: as Tudor Chiriac said, it’s as if you have heard this melody before.” Cristofor is working his father’s unfinished scores, one of which is a piece set to a poem by Eminescu – “O Ramai” – that Ion wrote when he was 18, and translated in Russian. Today, Cristofor sings it in the original Romanian.

When asked about how he handled their death, he responded that he had an attitude of accepting his destiny, since he was a child. He was helped also by his faith. He is self-proclaimed pious and relatively devout ever since he was a child, because that’s how he was raised. He hopes to change something on the level of musical aesthetics of Moldovans through the fame that his parents gave him. “Folk music, the music that [my] parents wrote – [I think that it] makes people better, it’s like a prayer.” He considers himself a kind of guardian of their music. “I’m ready for new visions, but I’m not ready to make two-penny products from their music [...] I don’t want it to be played if it’s not played in a musical light that’s near to Ion and Doina.” 130 This keen protectiveness in maintaining the integrity of his parents’ music suggests a somewhat conservative ideology.


In recent years, a Romanian television segment called “Acces Direct” brought together several people relevant to the Aldea-Teodorovicis in a conversation on the circumstances of their accident. Andrei Paunescu was one of the participants. Son of the renowned Romanian poet Adrian Paunescu who collaborated with the musicians, Andrei was the last person to see off Ion and Doina in Bucharest before they departed for Chisinau on the night of October 29th. One of the other participant was Anastasia Lazariuc, who was a musical contemporary of the Aldea-Teodorovicis. When the moderator asked about her initial reaction to the news of the couples’ death and whether or not she believed it was an accident, she gave an answer that shone light to nature of socio-political situation in Moldova that existed both then and persists today. She responded that, having been in a car accident herself, it was not difficult to have initially taken the news at face value. At the same time, she also pointed to the differences in their political and musical careers in light of the handful of mystifying factors surrounding the couple’s accident. Lazariuc remarked, “I can’t say that I am any less of a patriot – I love my country, and my soul is there and here [in Romania], but maybe I sang less directly about certain things [...] In any case [their accident] was a national drama.”

Lazariuc sang some of the same songs that the couple sang, and was a working partner of theirs, with Ion having written a few songs for her. But the bulk of the songs she performed were indeed intended to be of a politically neutral nature. She sang in the Soviet Union and beginning in 1990, also in Romania, where she would continue to develop close musical professional relationships. Her official biography reveals a clear allegiance to the same faction of politics of which Doina and Ion made part, but much
less actively than the couple. Her attitude was that she “believed in destiny,” and could not say if she surmised any political foul play. Another discussant in the group pointed out that an intergovernmental commission was established to investigate the cause of the accident. Shortly thereafter, however, the commission’s work was suspended. He commented that the KGB was still functioning at that time in Bessarabia.

A third individual opened the discussion with a question - what would have been the motive of the KGB or another structure to have killed them? Sorin Ovidiu Balan as a journalist who happened to be at work when his office got a call that there had been an accident. He says, “The thing that they advocated for, namely the Latin script, etc., had already been achieved.” Adrian stepped in to say that the motives (in political life), were there, but that there had still been a long way to go until things would be realized - the work had not yet been achieved. Lazariuc then interjected to say, “they were doing nothing but art, they [only] sang,” at which point both Adrian and Balan interjected on top of that statement. Evidently, not only is the particular case of their accident being discussed, but also the role of art in politics is contested. There are three sides in this debate: Lazariuc, who essentially argues art and politics are divisible; Paunescu, who argues that their work and their accident was certainly linked to the side of politics for which they stood at that period, and Balan who argues that there would not have been much motivation for someone opposing their political views to have killed them because what they fought for had already been achieved - their politics weren’t that controversial anymore - the issues for which they stood had been resolved. “What they wanted to realize had already happened,” Balan says, with Adrian shooting back to say, in fact, to this day it has not been realized. The moderator adds in: “the great union, in the first
place,” (marea unire). Although Balan’s statement does contain a certain element of truth - the official language of Romanian in Latin script had indeed been adopted by parliament the previous year, in 1991 - but his argument is too simplistic to reflect the complex reality of the political situation at that time. Paunescu’s commentary in response to Balan is a more accurate reflection of the complexity of the situation.

A third point is also important to consider, and it is one that their son Cristofo brings up in an interview. Doina and Ion’s message and goal was to bring about a more spiritual nearing of Moldovans to Romanians and vice versa, Cristofo emphasizes. It is true that they sang and advocated for political measures, but they also sang in tones of deep spiritualism. Ion and Doina were part of the faction that fought for independence (from the Soviet Union), for the Latin script, for union with Romania. They were pan-Romanian nationalists. But in the songs they sang also made references to religion, to Romanian cultural luminaries, literature, and literary figures. And, indeed, they were devoted to their art, perhaps first and foremost. They did not necessarily need to be exceedingly and explicitly politically advocative in order to be targeted for their politics. The act of singing the content of their songs was enough to make them politically relevant figures, and thus targeted.

Also related to this point is the question of their influence and fame as it regards their political tone. The Aldea-Teodorovicis were as widely regarded as they were not only because their music was good, but also because they had a message that people wanted to hear. Some members of their audience would even go so far as to say that they
were one ahead – that they overtly showed the population, through their song, the state of their oppression and instilled in them a desire to break free.\textsuperscript{131}

Another element to this discussion is the history of fatal accidents of controversial political and literary figures to varying ranges of controversy. Dumitru Matcovschi, who wrote the lyrics to Moldova’s present-day national anthem called “Our Language” (“Limba Noastra”), as well as several of Ion’s songs, and was heavily involved in the politics of the National Revival, was also severely injured in a car accident in 1989 that rendered him comatose for 5 months. This was the case with Grigore Vieru in 2009, and Gheorghe Ghimpu in 2000. Ghimpu was a dissident in Soviet Moldova and political prisoner who was involved in the political restructuring of the late 1980s to mid 1990s period. It is true that the roads in Moldova are not good, but a slew of traffic incidents to socio-politically and culturally relevant figures is a particularly troubling phenomenon.

Conclusion: Moldovan Perceptions of Art and Politics and the Discussion on Ethnic Minority, Linguistic, and Cultural Rights

On the 15th of January 2017, several members of the Alexei Mateevici Literary Circle gathered again at the bust of Eminescu. They recalled memories from the national rebirth period and “mentioned that today’s society also needs a forum for free national ideas.”

The cultural project called “The Flame Circle” (Cenaclul Flacara) is an example of what King describes as and predicts to be an imminent tie that Moldova will have with Romania. A message on their website reads, “‘Vom infaptui ce-am inceput in 1989’ - ‘We will carry out what we started in 1989.’” “So long as Moldovan schoolchildren and university students continue to study literary Romanian,” King writes, “to take advantage of Romanian scholarships, and to learn of Soviet-inspired denationalization, the question of national identity will not go away” (King 230). He points to the perils that forming a closer relationship might bring – a genuine concern of the situation. “Of course, greater familiarity with Romania may breed contempt,” King writes, “since Moldovans sometimes encounter the same patronizing attitudes from Romanians that estranged the Bessarabians in Greater Romania.” This is an interesting relationship that is resembling that half-or step-siblings might stereotypically have. In light of the use of the term “brothers beyond the Prut,” in songs and literature, this is perhaps a fitting analogy. The issue certainly colors conversations across borders. “Still,” King argues, “just as the rise of new intellectual elite after the 960s helped bring about the disintegration of Soviet conceptions of Moldovan identity, the growth of new generation of young Moldovans,

educated in the spirit of pan-Romanianism, my portend equally monumental changes to come.”

King provides a lucid and enlightened take on how a cultural project built present-day Moldova. He writes:

“The Moldovan story is fundamentally about the troubled relationship between political elites and the people they claim to represent, between nation-builders and the nations they aim to build. In the past, a deep chasm separated these groups. Cultural engineers, whether Russian, Romanian, or Soviet, went about their task with little regard for the existing cultural practices or political will of their target populations. ‘The people’ have been both the source and the object of the competing visions of the nation promoted over the past two centuries, but what the people themselves desired rarely figured into the various schemes devised for their enlightenment. In the late 1980s, though, this gap began to close. For the first time in the region’s history, the peoples of Bessarabia and Transnistria have been allowed a say in their own political, economic, and cultural future. It should not be surprising that they speak with many voices.”

It could be argued that the work of cultural luminaries in Moldova such as Grigore Vieru, Ion Vatamanu, Leonida Lari, and Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovici, represented the voice of the people. Simultaneously, perhaps, was a hue of inscribed prescription. If it is the case that the self-identity of the Moldovans was at times also amorphous on an individual level, the works of poets and artists such as those perhaps worked to solidify heritage ties and ameliorate identity anxieties. The relative political neutralization of the Aldea-Teodorovicis and the commemoration-oriented rhetoric of their contemporaries in Moldovan media today hint at the presence of such a process.

In other words, questions of identity still permeate Moldovan society. It is to be expected that the activity and lives of the Teodorovicis be read differently as the political context in which they are viewed also changes. Even during their peak years, they were

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133 King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the politics of culture*, 230.
134 Ibid.
seen as having strong political affiliations and received backlash from authorities. But their status as celebrities can be argued to have transcended ethnic lines and tensions. Credit for this was perhaps not all due to their work: there was a high rate of inter-ethnic marriages, and Moldova’s policies on citizenship when it became independent were the most inclusive among the former Soviet republics. Furthermore, as Cash’s studies, as well as several interviews with Moldovan artists seem to reveal, the dynamics of the relationship Moldovans appear to have between art and politics is such that a perceived ideological distinction between art and politics is present, or perhaps made, in the minds of Moldovans. Whether such a distinction reflects in practice as it exists in the minds of Moldovans is the subject of Cash’s research. Indeed, it is an important question to consider, particularly because precisely because of the change of the Teodorovici’s reception over time shows that politics and art share a mutually impacting relationship.

Whether or not they were killed because of their political views is unknown. It is possible, but certainly not provable at this stage (with as much public information that is given). What can be argued is that the Aldea-Teodorovicis transcended ethnic lines, and are memorialized in part because of their shocking death, in part because of the fact that their music is good (and has always been valued as such), and in part because they provide a voice for the Moldovan people today - because they are politically needed, and relevant.

The mobilizing impact of their artistic engagement with the public carved their symbolic status and made them threatening as such. The argument that their son Cristofor and others make that the Romanian movement would have had more potential to move forward had they not died and continued their aims is plausible. But the pan-Romanian
movement, as King, Bollerup, Christensen, Batt, Ishaq, Hare, and other scholars argue, was not without problems that created backlash.

Lucan Way argues that the political situation in Moldova can be explained as “pluralism by default” - everyone disagreeing with the other provides a mechanism of checks. He writes,

[...] Moldova's weak state, tenuous elite networks, and polarized politics have provided key sources of democracy in the post-Soviet period. In the face of a weak civil society, severe economic decline, civil war, low income per capita, and an absence of a democratic history, Moldovan democracy in the 1990s was stronger than in any other non-Baltic, post-Soviet republic. The country is best understood not as a struggling or unconsolidated democracy but instead as a case of failed authoritarianism or “pluralism by default.” In cases of pluralism by default, democratic political competition endures not because civil society is strong or leaders democratic but because politicians are too polarized and the state too feeble to enforce authoritarian rule in a liberal international context. In such cases, the same factors that promote pluralism may also undermine governance and state viability.\(^\text{135}\)

King argues that all of the right ingredients were there in making Moldova a nation, and that still the population remained divided when it came to questions of a common identity. Before and after Bessarabia had been annexed, the area was populated by illiterate persons; they were separated politically from the “closest co-ethnic group - the Romanians - for the past two centuries or more, and had been absent from all the historical turning points in the formation of Romanian national consciousness.”\(^\text{136}\)

Additionally, King writes, “they had been the subjects of a variety of contradictory cultural policies: russification in the Russian empire, romanization in interwar Romania, fitful moldovanization in the Moldovan autonomous and union republics,and

\(^{135}\text{Lucan A. Way, Pluralism by default: challenges of authoritarian state-building in Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 2003), Abstract.}\)

\(^{136}\text{King, 225.}\)
sovietization in the entire Soviet period.” A further element that would proft the
making of a Moldovan nation was the fact of “broader processes of urbanization and
industrialization” working to link the “rhetoric of national identity [...] with other
powerful themes of enlightenment and modernity. All the while, the population adopted
the nomenclature “Moldovan” before the period of the Soviet Union, and had also
functioned under “an authoritarian political system that put a premium on ethnonational
affiliation.”¹³⁷

Nonetheless, the question of identity embodied a three-pronged split, at least,
King and others point out. King writes that, for some Moldovans, “they were simply
Romanians who, because of the treachery of the Soviets, had not been allowed to say so.
For others, they were an independent historical nation, related to but distinct from the
Romanians to the west. For still others, they were something in between, part of a general
Romanian cultural space but existing as a discrete and sovereign people with its own
traditions, aspirations, and communal identity.”¹³⁸

An interesting question that arises from these socio-cultural-political
differentiations relates to the degree of self-identity among the Moldovan population. Of
particular salience is the faction of Moldovan society that is representative of the cultural
sphere: educators, authors, poets, and musicians. King writes that “how one imagines the
Moldovans has never been a straightforward issue,” and that “in most periods, in fact, the
various projects for cultivating a sense of nationhood among them have turned out rather
differently from how their designers had planned.”¹³⁹ He continues:

¹³⁷ Ibid., 225.
¹³⁸ Ibid.
¹³⁹ Ibid.
“Most unusual of all was the fact that the Soviet project of building a distinct Moldovan nation yielded a rather ambiguous result. Local political leaders in other national republics came to power in the late 1980s by defending an independent historical and cultural identity, but those in Moldova succeeded by denying theirs. An independent Moldovan state emerged with the breakup of the Soviet federation, but the ideal of an independent Moldovan nation seemed to fade with Soviet-style contentious question of the ‘true’ national identity of the Moldovans have remained topics at the center of political life.”

What constitutes “political life” is also a curious question because Moldovans seem intrigued to question the role of non-politicians in political life, and the idea of politics in everyday life. Of particular relevance seems to be the question of the role of artists and music in politics - as political messengers and messages.

King argues that political elites tried to produce a distinct nation with a defined identity but failed to do so. The Soviets failed because they instigated “bizarre” and ineffective cultural engineering. In the twilight of independence, pan-Romanian nationalists for their part, as manifested by the Popular Front, failed because were not consolidated enough and did not take ample consideration of the position of ethnic minority groups or to advocates of Moldovan sovereignty (as opposed to union with Romania).

Batt, Ishaq, and Hare write that “[t]he borders which define it today are Soviet borders, and accepting them also requires coming to terms in some respects with the legacy of the Soviet period – in particular, with the inherited multi-national population” (362). This is something that Moldovan politicians today could do well to digest and thereby move forward with. “Torn between the rival external claims of Romania and Russia,” they write, “and the rival internal claims of the Moldovan majority population

140 Ibid.
141 Ibid., 228.
and the non-Moldovan minorities, Moldovan statehood can be sustained only through a precarious balancing act, which presupposes a wholly new definition of Moldova identity itself.” The authors make a daring but much needed proposition. They implicitly support King’s argument and offer solutions for reconciling with the past and reconceiving a notion for the future.

An interesting point in regards to the discussion on language issues is a slight controversy with Cristofor. His desire to protect the integrity of his parents’ music recently took on a more political hue. When asked by a Russophone band, Carla’s Dreams, to sing Ion’s song called “Focul din Vatra” – the Fire from the Hearth – in Russian, Cristofor declined. Cristofor’s statements in one interview on dealing with “the Russians” more combatively seems to be, on a personal level, more defensive than inclusive. Perhaps it is true that the language issue would be less contentious if officializing the Romanian language had been more enforced. Although not official, Russian works as a de-facto second language of the Moldovan state. Cristofor’s frustrations are understandable. His thoughts for creating solutions, however, appear perhaps to reflect the same kind of exclusionary rhetoric that prevented the efforts of the Popular National Front during the movement of national revival from taking place. Still, a lot was accomplished in terms of reclaiming Romanian national and cultural values and ideals during that period. But avoiding polarizations on ethnic and linguistic lines was not one of these things.

Ion and Doina ultimately poured their efforts into creating an art that was about reclaiming suppressed cultural values. They sang about the Romanian language and about

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142 Ibid., 363.
Romanian literary figures and themes. These had all been muted and repressed under the Soviet regime in the effort to politically detach Moldova from its Romanian roots. They were artists singing about art that was inherently political. They did not engage overtly in political discussion about reunification with Romania, but created a pathway on which Moldovans could unite for shared aesthetic values. Through their music, they appealed to the tastes of individuals with a spectrum of political views: one did not need to be emphatically pro-Romanian in order to like and listen to their songs, but if one was of such a political orientation, their songs provided emotional backing – they were, indeed, a “torch” that could be followed. Their wide appeal then provides an understanding of their relative political neutralization today, when political talks are not about reunification with Romania, but discussion on language rights are still ongoing. In the capital of Chisinau, the divide between Russian and Romanian speakers seems to be increasing. In a public sphere, one is just as likely, and quite possibly more likely, to walk into a public sphere and be greeted by a Russian speaker than a Romanian speaker. The simple refusal for Russian speakers to speak Romanian in daily transactions is ample cause for frustration, and a curious experience for Romanian visitors from the country of Romania, who do not speak Russian. Russian speakers find their language unofficially represented by the government, while it is a de-facto language of the state. The contention is clear.

Nevertheless, as Kaufman explains, interethnic relations, at large, are not hostile. Intermarriage rates, for example, are high in Moldova. Batt, Ishaq and Hare praise Moldova for its “unusually creative approach to finding a ‘political settlement’” (384). The backlash from Transnistrians to the national revival movement proved to be useful for constructing a “quasi-federal compromise.” Batt, Ishaq, and Hare write, “The fact that
in Moldova, the political elite […] shifted towards the acceptance of a quasi-federal compromise, has much to do both with the strength of the opposition it faced in the TMR, and the unformed nature of Moldovan national identity which allowed room for flexibility.”143 In terms of the state of Moldova’s political integrity, the authors write, “In the face of their multiple internal and external challenges, the Moldovans have concluded not only that their best interests are served by remaining independent from Romania, but also that their own independence cannot be sustained without accommodation and respect for the equal rights of the other national groups with whom they now recognize they must share the territory and the state.”144 A “Law on Special Status for Gagauzia (Gagauz Yeri)” was passed in December 1994 and “defined Gagauzia as ‘an autonomous territorial unit’ consisting ‘a component part of the Republic of Moldova’. but with the right to ‘full self-determination’ (i.e., secession) in the even of a change in Moldova’s ‘international status’ (i.e., reunification with Romania). Gagauzia would have three official languages – Gagauz, Moldova, and Russian – and would have the right to display its own flag and symbol alongside those of the Moldovan Republic.”145 The rights of ethnic minorities in Moldova, it seems, are not at stake so much as cultural and linguistic rights.

143 Batt, Ishaq, Hare, 383.
144 Batt, Ishaq, Hare, 384.
145 Ibid., 373.
List of Contemporaries

Others politically-orientated songs not written by Ion Aldea-Teodorovici:

“Libertate” (Liberty); “Limba Noastra” (Our Language) –Moldova’s national anthem –;
“Basarabia Nu Plänge” (Don’t Cry, Bessarabia); “Cante de Unire” (Song of
Reunification); “Indemn la Unire” (Urge For Reunification); “Balada Pentru Basarabia”
(Ballad for Bessarabia); “Cat Traim Pe Acest Pamant” (As Long as we are on this Earth);
“Desteapta-te, Romane” (Awaken, Romanian); “Basarabia”; “Balada Pentru Basarabia”;
“Dorul Basarabiei” (Bessarabia’s Longing) – this particular music video depicts the
history of Moldova’s annexation, and features a story of separated lovers –; “Nu Te Opri”
(Don’t Stop); “Masa Tacerii” (The Table of Silence); and “In Aceasi Limba” (In the
Same Language), among others.

Other musical contemporaries:

Anatol Dumitras, Petre Teodorovici, Olga Ciolacu, Anastasia Lazariuc, Anatol Mirzenco,
Nicolae Josan/ “Apropos” ensemble, Iurie Sadovnic, L. Chiriac, Nicolae Sulac, Mihai
Dolgan, Nicolae Botgros/Orchestra “Lautari” , Tudor Gheorghe (Romanian, politically
active and anti-communist in Romania) Constantin Rusnac, among others.

Other contemporaries and important literary and political figures:

Grigore Vieru, Gheorghe Urschi, Dumitru Matcovschi, Lidia Istrati, Ion Vatamanu, Ion
Hadarcha, Leonida Lari, Gheorghe Ghimpu (Moldovan political dissident, sent to gulags
as political prisoner, also died in car accident in 2000), Eugen Doga, Adrian Paunescu,
Figures


Figure 2.
Postmarks featuring the couple. Figure 2b. is a picture of the couple singing at the Mare Adunare Nationala in 1991. INconstantIN, Doina și Ion Aldea-Teodorovici. Flickr. (Accessed April 15, 2017.)

a.  
b.
Figure 3. The couple singing at the National Assembly in 1991. INconstantIN, Doina si Ion Aldea-Teodorovici. Flickr. (Accessed April 15, 2017.)

Figure 4. a. Album cover for their political songs reading “The Bell of Resurrection” b. Album cover for their non-political songs reading “Two Lives and One Love” INconstantIN, Doina si Ion Aldea-Teodorovici. Flickr. (Accessed April 15, 2017.)
Figure 4a. Funeral Procession in front of the statue of Stefan cel Mare in Chisinau’s central square

Figure 4b. Ion and Doina’s Funeral in Chisinau’s Central Square
INconstantIN, Doina si Ion Aldea-Teodorovici. Flickr. (Accessed April 15, 2017.)
Figure 5. From Right: Ion Aldea-Teodorovici, Grigore Vieru, and Adrian Paunescu. INconstantIN, Doina si Ion Aldea-Teodorovici. Flickr. (Accessed April 15, 2017.)

Figure 6. The couple singing in Transnistria during the civil war of 1992. INconstantIN, Doina si Ion Aldea-Teodorovici. Flickr. (Accessed April 15, 2017.)
Figure 7. Doina and Ion singing at Putna and Ipotesti, where Eminescu’s house is located, during “Eminescu Days”

Figure 8. Statue in Chisinau

Figure 9. Poster reading “In Memoriam, Ion and Doina Aldea Teodorovici, 29-30 October 1992, Black Night for All Romanians – On this night, the apostles from Besarabia, Ion and Doina Aldea-Teodorovici, passed away in a car accident. It is our duty to continue their fight!”
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