

The Origins of Avram Iancu's High Brow "Heroization": Iosif Vulcan and the Journal "Familia" (1867–1872)

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Abstract: The present article relies on two papers by the two different authors. The former paper was a talk given in Alba Iulia, at the National Congress of Romanian Historians, in September 2022, by Floarea Pop, the latter was a speech held during the Cluj Academic Days, in October 2022 by Ioan Bolovan. In our opinion, Avram Iancu's "heroization" was initiated by the Romanian intellectual milieu of the second half of the nineteenth century. Iosif Vulcan and the journal *Familia* greatly contributed to the creation of the revolutionary leader's image as a National Hero.

Keywords: Avram Iancu, national hero, Iosif Vulcan, *Familia* journal

Rezumat: Acest articol se bazează pe două lucrări ale celor doi autori diferiți. Prima lucrare a fost o intervenție susținută la Alba Iulia, la Congresul Național al Istoricilor din România, în septembrie 2022, de Floarea Pop, cea din urmă a fost o intervenție în cadrul Zilelor Academice ale Clujului, în octombrie 2022 de Ioan Bolovan. În opinia noastră,

„eroizarea” lui Avram Iancu a fost inițiată de mediile intelectuale românești din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea. Iosif Vulcan și revista Familia au contribuit foarte mult la crearea imaginii liderului revoluționar de Erou Național.

Cuvinte-cheie: Avram Iancu, erou național, Iosif Vulcan, revista Familia

Introduction

Despite the growing evidence that history, as a national pedagogy, is in decline, today, most Romanians would not dispute the idea that Avram Iancu is a National Hero. He has been represented as such by historians and writers who, over the past century and a half, have published articles, tracts, and eulogistic studies about the leader of the 1848 Revolution. Various opinion leaders in Transylvania have indelibly connected his name to the celebrations of the Revolution, pilgrimages to Țebea have been organized,¹ and school curricula have unquestionably legitimized his heroic status. It should be noted that, in keeping with the notion that school education can “create and shape memory,” it was compulsory, as early as the 1890s, for primary and secondary school curricula in the Old Kingdom to include topics about the 1848 Revolution in Transylvania and about its leader, Avram Iancu.² After the Great Union, school was undoubtedly the most important channel for cultivating Iancu’s image as a National Hero, and the centennial of his birth in 1924 was marked by an avalanche of books, tracts, and articles, by festivities, etc.

The spring of 1848: hero and saviour

Popular tradition – fuelled, ever since the Revolution and the ensuing decades, by those who had encountered Iancu during the turmoil of the revolutionary events – was of particular importance in granting

¹ Petre Grădișteanu, chairman of the Cultural League for the Unity of All Romanians, who attended the General Assembly of ASTRA in Sibiu on 18-19 June 1905, when the Museum of History and Ethnography was inaugurated, urged the participants in this national celebration to go to Țebea and lay flowers by Avram Iancu’s grave and Horea’s Oak Tree. In this respect, see Liviu Maior, *Asociaționism și naționalism la românii din Transilvania* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2022), 53. Regarding the means of legitimizing Iancu’s image as a National Hero, there are many similarities with the Old Kingdom cult of Stephen the Great, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, etc. See the excellent paper authored by Andi Mihalache, *Mănuși albe, mănuși negre. Cultul eroilor în vremea dinastiei Hohenzollern* (Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2007).

² Mihai Chiper, *Memorie și uitare în România celei de-a doua jumătăți a secolului XIX* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2015), 281 sqq.

consistency to a persistent heroic image with which Avram Iancu became associated in the minds of future generations.³ For instance, the inquiry conducted in the Apuseni Mountains by Governmental Councilor Kozma Pál in June–July 1848, when Iancu had barely begun to be perceived as the undisputed national leader, provides sufficient examples in this regard.⁴ The image of the saviour represents a fundamental mythological unit that collective consciousness has repeatedly tapped into in times of crisis throughout history. During the Revolution of 1848, the Saviour was not just an individual (politician, prophet, poet, etc.), but could also be a collective entity (the elite, the people, etc.).⁵ Both of these facets of the Saviour prevailed in the social imaginary during the 1848 Revolution in Transylvania. As is well known, the political myth of the Saviour tends to be defined by a major function with which the hero is provisionally invested, in response to something that he is expected to accomplish, to certain demands or ideals.⁶ Thus, the image of the Saviour varies in time and space, hinging on the missions the masses expect him to fulfil. The first months of the Romanian revolution in Transylvania witnessed a great range of behavioural attitudes among the elites and the population at large. The expectations of the people were great, and their patience was nearly exhausted. A direct consequence of this was the way in which the image of the Saviour was projected, in certain regions, unto real individuals, some of whom were later validated as unquestionable leaders of the revolution: Avram Iancu, Alexandru Papiu-Ilarian, Ioan Buteanu, Simion Balint and others.⁷

An emblematic figure of the Romanian revolution in Transylvania, Avram Iancu achieved, as American historian Keith Hitchins subtly notes, a remarkable “synthesis of intelligence and idealism, coupled with the harsh force of the outraged masses.”⁸ Avram Iancu’s role in organizing and leading the people of the Western Carpathians (“Apuseni” Mountains) – traditionally referred to as “moți”

³ For more information, see Romulus Felea, *Avram Iancu în tradiția orală a moșilor: la 120 de ani de la moartea eroului*, a volume edited by Ioan Felea and Virgiliu Florea, Foreword by Acad. Ștefan Pascu (Cluj-Napoca: s.n., 1992), 10 sqq.

⁴ For a broader overview, see Gelu Neamțu, Ioan Bolovan (eds.), *Revoluția de la 1848 în Transilvania. Ancheta Kozma din Munții Apuseni* (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 1998).

⁵ Simona Nicoară, Toader Nicoară, *Mentalități colective și imaginar social. Istoria și noile paradigme ale cunoașterii* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană - Mesagerul, 1996), 181.

⁶ Raoul Girardet, *Mituri și mitologii politice* (Iași: Institutul European, 1997), 63.

⁷ Liviu Maior, *1848-1849. Români și unguri în revoluție* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1998), 214.

⁸ Keith Hitchins, “Avram Iancu și revoluția europeană de la 1848,” in Hitchins, *Conștiință națională și acțiune politică la românii din Transilvania (1700-1868)* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1987), 154.

(German: Motzen) – as early as the spring of 1848, increased after the bloodshed in Mihalț from the beginning of June.⁹ The statements given by several witnesses in the Kozma inquiry outlined the image of Iancu as a saviour in whom the people placed their entire trust. For instance, witness 158, Miheț Gheorghe from Sohodol, stated that Avram Iancu was “so eagerly obeyed by the people, almost as eagerly as they would obey Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ His very gestures and deeds served as incentives for the masses to believe that Iancu was a providential leader, the saviour that history had brought forth to fulfil their dreams. According to the statement of witness 31 in the Kozma inquiry, the pub keeper Szántó Krisztina, a customer had said that during a popular assembly held in Câmpeni, in mid-June 1848, Avram Iancu had “persuaded the people that he had a big gold cross on his chest.”¹¹ The reference to the Christian symbol was not fortuitous; the cross was supposed to reinforce the saviour’s power to eradicate evil, to be a symbol of light overcoming darkness, to enhance his image as a Hero!

The Pantheon of Iosif Vulcan

Avram Iancu’s commitment to defending the ideals of the Romanian nation in Transylvania marked an important moment and can be viewed as an example of heroism. Iancu played a key role in the struggle for the rights of the Motzen, both during the revolution and afterwards, epitomizing the battle for maintaining national identity and rights in the collective mind-set. That is why he transformed from a protector of the Motzen into a guiding beacon for the entire Romanian nation. He made a major contribution to the 1848–1849 Revolution in Transylvania, yet it is equally significant that he came to be considered a national hero and one of the most illustrious figures in Romanian history. Without a doubt, this revolution shaped the the National Pantheon to a great extent. Moreover, some of the revolutionaries became “subjects of historical mythologization.”¹² Avram Iancu could not avoid undergoing such a

⁹ Hitchins, “Avram Iancu,” 155; Neamțu, “Evenimentele de la Mihalț din vara anului 1848,” in *Istoria României. Pagini transilvane*, Dan Berindei (ed.) (Cluj-Napoca: Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 1994), 281.

¹⁰ Neamțu, Bolovan (eds.), *Revoluția de la 1848*; moreover, in the findings of the inquiry, there is a reference to Avram Iancu as a potential king of the Romanians. See Gelu Neamțu, “Aspirații daco-române reflectate în documentele unei anchete din Munții Apuseni la 1848,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Historia* 33, no. 1 (1988): 82.

¹¹ Neamțu, Bolovan (eds.), *Revoluția de la 1848*.

¹² Cătălina Mihalache, “Eroii,” in *Enciclopedia imaginariilor din România*, general ed. Corin Braga, vol. III, *Imaginar istoric*, ed. Sorin Mitu (Iași: Polirom, 2020), 259. See also Ioan Stanomir, *Așteptând revoluția. Pașoptismul și vocile sale* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2019), especially the second part of the book.

transformation, and as a result, his figure became emblematic for all Romanians, because the leader of the Motzen "symbolizes an implacable historical destiny, as well as the power to endure through difficult times. This is the destiny of a betrayed, subjugated, deceived nation, which nonetheless bravely faces the future out of a belief that justice will never perish. That is why Avram Iancu is the luminous beacon enabling our history to overcome its frailties, stepping through the great gate of consecration" (our translation)¹³.

Iosif Vulcan authored the first hagiographic material focused entirely on Avram Iancu: the article published on the front page of the journal *Familia*, issue no. 6 (1867), and included, two years later, in the work entitled *Panteonul român* [The Romanian Pantheon]. In the latter, expanded text, Vulcan presented a short biography of Iancu and his role in the crucial events of 1848–1849. To the best of our knowledge, he was the first to use the epithets "Hero" and "king of the highlands" for the leader of the Motzen:

"I have placed the hero of 1848, the king of the highlands, an outspoken patriot, the purest Romanian at the forefront of this journal. Look at his forehead, which was once so serene, how it crumbles under the burden of suffering; look at his heart, broken not by his own sorrows but by the sorrows of his nation. The only thing he ever loved his entire life was his nation!" (our translation)¹⁴

The context in which the article about Avram Iancu appeared in February 1867 was not a haphazard one, for it was clearly associated with the political debates in Hungary and Transylvania, which foretold the establishment of Austro-Hungarian dualism. Iosif Vulcan, who resided in the capital of Hungary at that time, was kept abreast of those developments and fully realized what the union of Transylvania with Hungary would entail for all the Romanians. Who else but Avram Iancu could best express, in symbolical terms, the Romanians' opposition to the upcoming revocation of Transylvania's autonomy and its union with Hungary? That is why the article published by Iosif Vulcan, foregrounding Avram Iancu as a National Hero, had profound anti-dualist political implications. We strongly believe that Vulcan's article had a tremendous impact on the Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania and drew the elite's attention to the situation of the Hero. We would also like to advance the

¹³ See Mircea Popa, *Avram Iancu făuritor de istorie națională* (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2022), 293.

¹⁴ See *Familia*, no. 6 (5/17 February 1867): 61 sqq.

idea that Iosif Vulcan's public extolment of Avram Iancu had consequences for Iancu himself, who was thus "avenged" for his fifteen-year marginalization in the public sphere. He was personally convinced that this political moment for his return to public life was an auspicious one. He may also have been encouraged to do so by his friends in the Romanian county of Zarand, where he had spent most of his time during those years. This is attested by the fact that only several weeks after Vulcan's article came out in *Familia*, Iancu wrote a letter to Emperor Francis Joseph, requesting financial aid to cope with material hardships. The letter, drafted on and dated 24 March 1867 in Hălmagiu, was never sent to the emperor, as one of the foremost specialists on the modern history of Transylvania has shown, but "reflects the tragic destiny of its author."¹⁵ Our assumption that he may have been compelled to re-enter public life at the behest of a Romanian leader from Hălmagiu is supported by the fact that the next article about Iancu (published in the journal *Familia*, in 1871) was related to the presence of an important Romanian intellectual from Arad (Dionisie Pășcuțiu)¹⁶ in that village from Zarand, in the autumn of that year. Therefore, it is quite possible that one of the people who cared about Iancu, a local leader who probably lived in Hălmagiu, persuaded our Hero to draft that letter to the emperor. Staying true to his beliefs that the monarch would do nothing for the rights of the Motzen, he did not desire personal gains before his nation secured the rights for which he had fought in the revolution, which is why he did not send the letter. Nevertheless, he provided contentment to those who had expressed compassion for the state it was in.

Let us see what "heroism" truly meant, in the context in which Iosif Vulcan published his 1867 article about Avram Iancu. A very handy source is the dictionary compiled just a few years afterwards by August Treboniu Laurian and Ioan C. Massimu, who were entrusted with this task by the Romanian Academy and who succeeded in creating the very first complete dictionary of the Romanian language. The aforementioned dictionary's definition of "hero will help us gain a clearer understanding of the attributes Iosif Vulcan ascribed to the revolutionary leader: "HERO, m. n.: a strong, powerful man, willing to face terrible dangers in order to

¹⁵ Liviu Maior, *Avram Iancu. Scrisori* (Cluj: Dacia, 1972), 118 sqq.

¹⁶ Dionisie Pășcuțiu (1825–1902) was a complex, yet contradictory personality, with a broad intellectual horizon. A professor in Beiuș and Oradea, a priest, and a lawyer, Pășcuțiu was a distinguished philologist, linguist and ethnologist who was held in high regard by his contemporaries. Using scientific arguments, he upheld the thesis of the Romanians' continuity and of Romanian as a Neo-Latin language, see Dumitru Tomoni, "Dionisie Pășcuțiu (1825-1902). Contribuții la cunoașterea lui," *Arca* [Arad], no. 1-3 (2017): 131-138 and Octavian Lupaș, "Dionisie Pășcuțiu – omul și opera," *Hotarul* [Arad], 1, no. 3-4 (July-August, 1933): 10.

reach a higher goal; a great, illustrious man; the protagonist of a poem, a historical event or a piece of fiction; ancient heroes were demigods; the most famous among the ancient heroes was Hercules; not all heroes can match up to Hercules" (our translation)¹⁷. Given this definition, we can acquire a better understanding Avram Iancu's heroic features, as Iosif Vulcan highlighted them both in this first article and in the subsequent press "campaign" to glorify the leader of the Motzen, particularly after his death on 11 September 1872.

The journal *Familia*: disseminating the myth of Avram Iancu

In what follows, we will provide a detailed account of the articles on the National Hero published in *Familia* from 1867 to 1872. Two of these were written by the founder of the journal (Iosif Vulcan) and two by Dionisie Pășcuțiu in 1871. Analysing the articles authored by Iosif Vulcan, we have noticed a certain evolution in the way in which Avram Iancu was presented over the course of the five years under scrutiny here. In the article published in issue no. 6 of the journal *Familia* in 1867, which was included two years later in *Panteonul român* [The Romanian Pantheon], Iosif Vulcan provided a brief biography of Iancu, emphasizing his role in the crucial events of 1848. In the second article Vulcan published at the time of Avram Iancu's death, the author insisted on the moral duty his contemporaries and future generations had towards a man who was "a national treasure and a sublime martyr."¹⁸ The third article we have analysed, published in issue no. 38 of 17/29 September 1872 (not signed but, considering its style, definitely written by Vulcan), is a short account of Avram Iancu's burial and is infused with admiration for the leader of the Motzen and for what he meant for posterity. In the work *Panteonul român*, the author moves from the general to the particular, employing the concept of "great man" and investing it with moral value - respect (the idea of respect and admiration for these great men). After this methodological introduction, the argument proceeds with a particularization/individualization of this concept by outlining the

¹⁷ See *Dictionariulu Limbei Romane, dupo insarcinarea data de Societatea Academica Romana*, compiled by A.T. Laurian and J.C. Massimu (Bucharest, 1871). A quick look at the meaning of this term will show that it has not changed much over the course of a century and a half: "HERO, heroes, m. n. 1. A person of exceptional bravery and courage in battle, displaying selflessness in challenging circumstances or in the line of duty. ♦ A soldier who dies on the battlefield. 2. The protagonist of a literary work. ♦ The main character of an event; a person who, in particular circumstances, becomes particularly notable. 3. (In Greek and Roman mythology) A demigod, a person who is the offspring a deity and a mortal, endowed with superhuman powers, or who has become famous for certain outstanding feats. - From the Fr. *héros*, Lat. *heros*." See *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* (second edition, revised and expanded) (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 2009).

¹⁸ *Familia*, no. 37 (10/22 September 1872): 440.

example of Avram Iancu. The article focuses on Iancu's biography, on his actions in 1848, and on the Motzen leader's state of mind during the final years of his life. Besides including the text of 1867 in *Panteonul român*, Vulcan added a few sentences at the end of the chapter in which he lamented the hero's state in those years. *Panteonul român* definitively and profoundly shaped Iancu's place in the history of the Transylvanian Romanians up until the Union, and he remained entrenched in the memory of future generations as "the hero of 1848, an outspoken patriot, the purest Romanian." In Iosif Vulcan's view, "Iancu lives on, and his memory will last forever in the hearts of Romanians. The plains and mountains of Transylvania will forever echo with the songs sung to glorify his deeds, and the tradition of speaking with admiration about the highland Hero of 1848 will be passed down from generation to generation, to our great grandchildren."¹⁹

Published upon Iancu's death, the text that appeared in issue no. 37 of *Familia* on 10/22 September 1872 amounted to a manifesto, or an impassioned plea to preserve the image of Iancu, who was dubbed "a true martyr," in living memory. Entitled "The Burial of Avram Iancu," the article featured in issue 38 of 17/29 September 1872 made a similar argument. Vulcan's rhetoric is similar in the two texts, although we must note that the article announcing Iancu's death presses much more emphatically for maintaining his image alive, as "the expression of a high idea, of an age-old desire, which will never be abandoned by his nation." Moreover, the author's admission that his hand was shaking as he wrote about this sad news speaks volumes about the impact that learning about the death of "the faultless hero of 1848, king of the highlands" had on him.²⁰ This shows the author's strong affective engagement with this idea, as he urged and implored all Romanians to mobilize themselves and build an imposing monument for the National Hero. What is also very important, in our view, is Vulcan's appeal to his compatriots to make annual pilgrimages to Iancu's grave: "Let this grave be a place of pilgrimage for us, Romanians, where we should all come, from every corner of the world, year after year, to bring homage to the spirit of he who is sleeping his eternal sleep here, and let us swear by the cross of his headstone to love our mother tongue and our homeland."²¹ Fortunately, Vulcan's appeal was heeded without fail by his contemporaries and by succeeding generations, particularly considering that, up until 1918, the pilgrimages to Țebea had profound national and anti-dualist implications.

¹⁹ Iosif Vulcan, *Panteonul român. Portretele și biografiile celebrităților române*, modernized and annotated edition by Cristian Bădiliță (ed.), *Foreword* by Bishop Virgil Bercea, *Afterword* and *Timeline* by Ioan F. Pop (Bucharest: Vremea, 2021), 101.

²⁰ *Familia*, no. 37 (10/22 September 1872): 440.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Most of the annual festivities dedicated to the Revolution included a pilgrimage to Țebea. Naturally, the fact that large numbers of Romanians went to lay flowers by Iancu's grave and Horea's oak tree was not to the liking of the Hungarian authorities, which

"were on the alert every time and year after year. The official press tarnished the image of the revolutionary leader. This had no effect whatsoever on the Romanians. Their attachment to the memory of the revolutionary leader never subsided. Quite the contrary, the number of those who attended his 'commemoration' steadily increased despite the punitive measures taken against them."²²

The most notorious episode in which the authorities of the dualist state punished the pilgrims to Țebea occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. On 31 December 1899, three young students from the University of Cluj (Coriolan Steer, George Novacovici, and Ioan Scurtu) placed a wreath of laurels with the Romanian tricolour and the inscription "Rest in peace! We are watching! The Romanian youths of Avram Iancu." They sang Romanian patriotic songs, together with the hundreds of Motzen who attended service in the church there. The Hungarian authorities intervened before long. Less than two weeks later, an inquiry began, after which a lawsuit was brought against the three students, who were thus expelled from university and thrown in jail after years of interrogations.²³ As was to be expected, the news of the trial, intensely discussed in *Tribuna* and other Romanian newspapers at the beginning of 1900, spurred a wave of outrage and discontent throughout the Land of Zarand. The pious reverence with which the memory of Iancu's deeds was preserved in the area was clearly evinced by the people's belief that Iancu's spirit lived on among them, as they whispered:

"Well, now! And who could stop us from taking wreaths of flowers to our dearly departed!? Do those who live off our backs really not know that our people believe Iancu to be alive and to return from his grave from time to time?"²⁴

²² Maior, "Avram Iancu în 'Panteonul' românesc," Foreword to Silviu Dragomir, *Avram Iancu. O viață de erou*, introductory study and editorial note by Ioan Bolovan and Sorin Șipoș (eds.) (Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2022), 11 sqq.

²³ For further details, see Neamțu, "Procesul pentru cununa de pe mormântul lui Avram Iancu, 1900-1902," *Sargetia*, 9 (1972): 149-168.

²⁴ Ioachim Lazăr, Nicolae Marcel Morar, *Avram Iancu în memoria posterității* (Deva: EMIA, 2008), 39.

The documents we have consulted for this paper suggest that Vulcan intended to present Avram Iancu as a role model and as a great man. Describing his moral qualities and physical stature, this portrait emphasised his aspirations, his love and care for the Romanian nation and his anguish over having failed to accomplish these goals. In *Panteonul...*, Avram Iancu is presented by the author as a man of action and “an outspoken patriot, the purest Romanian.” As seen by Iosif Vulcan, the portrait that emerges is that of Iancu as a great man, whose heart was broken not by his own sorrows, but by the sorrows of his nation. This is the image we may encounter in the article included in issue 38 of the journal *Familia*, published on 17/29 September 1872, which begins with Iosif Vulcan invoking “The great and unfortunate Avram Iancu.” The word *unfortunate* is resumed in the following lines, which depict Iancu’s noble soul. The text implies that he continuously strived to promote the goals of the Romanian nation, placing those goals above all else.²⁵ The sufferings of the Romanian people kept him in a state of perpetual agitation and unrest, a sentiment also acknowledged by his contemporaries. Some of them held him in very high regard and consistently attempted to alleviate the situation of the Hero.²⁶

Iosif Vulcan painted a physical and moral portrait of Iancu: a young man with a pleasant countenance, fair haired, with a russet-gold moustache and beard, with a kind and generous heart, a noble spirit, a yearning for freedom and for the independence of his country and nation, with vast knowledge and genuine talent, which meant that he was liked by everyone. This utterly positive image continues in the following pages, which outline the profile of a warrior who fought “to deliver the Romanian nation from the feudal yoke.” Of course, Iancu had to take part in the national unrest of 1848 and to be among those who led the Romanian nation. He was very popular among the Motzen and was well known all across the country for his inspiring ideas. He is depicted as a model to be followed by his people, and he taught his people about freedom and equality based on national principles. Because he protested against the union of Transylvania with Hungary and supported the cause of the Romanians, Iancu was very much loved by his people.²⁷ Iosif Vulcan resumed the reference to Iancu’s unconditional commitment to the cause of his nation at the end of the article “The Burial of Iancu,” published in issue 38 of *Familia*, on 17/29 September 1872. In this text, he

²⁵ Vulcan, *Panteonul român*, 101.

²⁶ Iosif Sterca Şuluţiu, *Biografia lui Avram Iancu* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1897), 4.

²⁷ Vulcan, *Panteonul român*, 101.

stated that "He has taught us how to love our nation, without interest in any material gains, without aspiring to laurels, and without any other desire than to ensure its happiness."²⁸ In the previous article, in issue 37 of *Familia*, on 10/22 September 1872, in which Vulcan announced the death of the Hero, Iancu was actually seen as more than a hero, because his name could turn into a "political goal, the goal of the Romanian nation this side of the Carpathians, the flag that will rally together all true Romanians with an authentic sense of self-sacrifice, a national cult that will be revered and esteemed by all future generations."²⁹ The idea of a one-of-a-kind model was espoused in *Panteonul*, and was resumed with even greater clarity and depth in the following passage in this article: "The Romanian nation has had just one Iancu, not more. Of course, we love him, of course we worship his memory!" This is the image of a unique national hero, and perhaps there would be more if every "son of our motherland had nourished in their chest this love of language, freedom and country." This passage ends with the following reflection: "If we had more untainted figures like Iancu, then the state of the nation would not be so deplorable." However, Iancu was the only one and, inevitably, he sank into dismay. Even though he lived for a few more years, he suffered like a "true martyr" for the sins and wrongdoings of others. He was insulted several times but did not hold a grudge against his maligners. His flute was his solace throughout this time, and he played it to those he loved. Vulcan considered that this unique souvenir of "our sublime martyr" should be preserved in perpetuity in a national museum. As previously established, the value of heroism resides, first and foremost, in one's capacity for self-sacrifice, in one's selfless potential to commit wholeheartedly to the cause for which they are fighting. Naturally, we should also take into account the "existence of a *heroic mystique*, fuelled by faith in God, outside of which the absolute is unlikely to exist. It alone grants heroism undeniable moral value. Thanks to this mystique, heroism and holiness overlap to such an extent that it becomes impossible to tell where heroism ends and holiness begins, where selflessness lies and where love of God resides."³⁰

Iosif Vulcan went on to urge Romanians everywhere to promptly erect a beautiful funeral monument at the site where Iancu's remains laid to rest, so that this monument could "let the world know that the love and admiration for Iancu will never vanish from the Romanians hearts!" That tombstone was to become a place of pilgrimage for all Romanians

²⁸ *Familia*, no. 38 (17/29 September 1872): 452.

²⁹ *Familia*, no. 37 (10/22 September 1872): 440.

³⁰ Ioan Opriș, "Eroi și sfinți," *Revista Teologică*, 31, no. 11-12 (1941), 510.

across the world. They were to go there, year after year, to pay homage to him and pledge, by his grave, that they would forever cherish their language and their country. Iancu is presented as a model of love for language and country, he epitomizes love for one's nation, he is a beacon for all Romanians. The article ends with an imperative message: "Let us forever worship the memory of this great martyr amongst our martyrs!"³¹

Besides the article written by Iosif Vulcan in 1867 and the two articles about Iancu's death that were published in September 1872, there was another important moment related to the national hero in the journal *Familia*, in the autumn of 1871, when two articles about the leader of the Motzen were published. In issues no. 36 of 5/17 September 1871 and 37 of 12/24 September 1871, the journal included, starting on the second page of each issue, a text written by Dionisie Pășcuțiu, entitled "Avram Iancu. His State Now and His Visions." A noteworthy scholar from Arad, Pășcuțiu described to the readers his chance encounter with Avram Iancu. The first instalment of the text focused on the author's meeting with the Hero in Hălmagiu, on 2 September 1871, and reproduced their conversations. Although he did not fully understand Iancu, Dionisie Pășcuțiu had the merit of bringing Iancu back into the attention of the Romanian public, four years after the eulogistic article Iosif Vulcan published in *Familia* and two years after *Panteonul...* was printed. The second instalment called for all those who identified as Romanians to organize a public fundraising in Transylvania in order to buy a house for Iancu and to make sure that he was well taken care of. The author expressed his foreboding that the hero's life expectancy was not too long: "Gentlemen and brothers! Let us take note that this rogue and beggar of the Romanian nation is bound to perish sooner than later. And won't we have qualms of conscience that we have rewarded his self-sacrifice to the nation by forsaking him and treating him with disdain?"³² Unfortunately, a mere one year after this honest and impassioned plea, the National Hero passed away without any public campaign to protect and support him having been organized.

Conclusions

In conclusion, since our research is still in its early stages, we will outline a few preliminary findings. The texts about Avram Iancu written by Iosif Vulcan and published in the journal *Familia* from 1867 to 1872, are similar with respect to their discourse, and certain terms or phrases are reiterated

³¹ *Familia*, no. 37 (10/22 September 1872): 440.

³² *Familia*, no. 37 (12/24 September 1871): 435.

or resumed through a series of synonyms. For instance, the work *Panteonul...* outlines the image of Iancu as a great, unsullied model to be followed: "a man of action," "an outspoken patriot," "the purest Romanian," "the highland Hero of 1848." The same image is featured in the article published in issue 37 of 1872: "the faultless hero of 1848, king of the highlands," "a great genius, an untarnished man, with an admirable character," "the illustrious," "untarnished character." The word *great* is also used in the article from issue 38/1872 of the journal *Familia*, in the following phrases: "The great and unfortunate Avram Iancu," "the glorious," "His noble soul." Every article is concerned with promoting the national cause. *Panteonul...* depicts the image of Iancu as a man who was always devoted to his people and "whose heart was broken not by his own sorrows but by the sorrows of his nation." He "yearned for freedom and wanted to achieve independence for his country and his nation," striving to "deliver his nation from the feudal yoke." In the articles that came out in 1872, Avram Iancu is seen as a martyr of the national cause: "one of our dearest martyrs," "a true martyr," "our sublime martyr," "a great martyr" (no. 37/1872); "the glorious martyr," "the true martyr of the Romanian cause," "our never-to-be-forgotten martyr" (no. 38). This article also includes the syntagm "sublime apostle of the Romanian cause."

Among those who wrote about Iancu's demise in the autumn of 1872, alongside George Barițiu, Iosif Vulcan penned some of the most inspired thoughts.³³ Evincing great literary talent, Vulcan promoted a cult for the National Hero. After Iancu's death, Romanian memoirists and historians started regularly publishing texts about his role in the revolution, consecrating his place in the National Pantheon.³⁴ In this first attempt to elaborate on how Iosif Vulcan and the journal he launched contributed to validating Avram Iancu's image as a National Hero in the pan-Romanian public space, we propose the thesis that the illustrious scholar from Oradea was the first to start a genuine hagiographic project in the Transylvanian press, with a major impact on generations to come. In the weeks that followed, the journal *Familia* launched a campaign to eulogize the National Hero through articles written by Iosif Vulcan and other contributors. Issue no. 39 began with a poem entitled "Horea's Oak Tree" by Iosif Vulcan, most likely in order to lay the groundwork for issue no. 40, where Ion Tripa published the poem "At Iancu's Grave."

³³ Pompiliu Teodor, *Avram Iancu în memorialistică* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1972), 23.

³⁴ Maior, *Asociaționism și naționalism*, 57; see also Teodor, *Avram Iancu în memorialistică*, and especially *Memorialistica revoluției de la 1848 în Transilvania*, introductory study, notes, and glossary by Nicolae Bocșan and Valeriu Leu (eds.) (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1988), 74.

Issue 41 of 8/20 October 1872 reproduced, on the front page, the article "Iancu's Battles" that Aron Crainic (a self-proclaimed brother in arms of Iancu's) had initially published in the Bucharest newspaper *Românul*, as well as Alexandru Papiu Ilarian's reply to that material. The first instalment of a text entitled "Avram Iancu and the Gathering on Thomas Sunday and That of 3/15 May 1848" was printed on the third page of issue no. 42 of 15/27 October 1872. The following instalments appeared in issues 43, 45 and 47, which reproduced entire excerpts from the second volume of Alexandru Papiu Ilarian's *Istoria românilor din Dacia Superioară* [The History of Romanians in Dacia Superior]. Despite the fact that these texts in the journal *Familia* did not focus exclusively on Iancu, given that they described the revolutionary events of the months of March-May 1848, the Hero was presented in the context of several such episodes. The text included in issue 49 of 3/15 December 1872 comprised a few lines about the memorial service for the repose of Avram Iancu, held underneath Horea's oak tree in Tebea, by the Hero's grave. It is not our intention to analyse the articles that appeared in the autumn of 1872, after Iancu's death, or those that were printed in 1873 or in the subsequent years, until the journal ceased publication. We do believe, however, that Iosif Vulcan and the journal he founded and led until 1906 held a privileged place among the cultural actors that launched and cultivated the image of the National Hero.