

The Metaphor of Female Icon Identity in Musical Culture. Case Study: Symbolism, Myth, and Ritual in the Construction of Irina Rimes' Image

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyze the construction of Irina Rimes' cultural identity,¹ exploring how the cultural signifier becomes a complex, hybrid creation, and, more than that, a mosaic-like one – a blend of myths and rituals borrowed from various cultures, being updated, modified, or reconditioned. In this process, traditional symbols are transformed into new forms, subject to change. Given that identity "is expressed through symbols," the construction of Irina Rimes' identity is shaped by how she presents herself in public and in the media, the messages she conveys, her creative works or performances that incorporate rituals and myths, influences from her relationships, as well as through the rhetoric of fashion.*

Keywords: *Irina Rimes; cultural identity; symbolism; myths; ritual;*

Symbolism, Myth, and Ritual in the Construction of the Icon

According to researchers Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant, the symbol is charged with emotional and dynamic energy (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993). It influences mental structures because the symbol takes us beyond mere meaning (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993). It is also seen as a tool of knowledge (Eliade, 2013, 9) because through symbols, we can recognize or understand certain realities of the world we live in. In our case, through symbols, we will pursue a deeper understanding and recognition of the rituals or myths in the artist's songs, which will help us more comprehensively grasp the ideas and emotions she seeks to convey through her artistic content, whether consciously

¹ Irina Rimes is a singer from the Republic of Moldova who began her career, according to *Ziarul Național* from the Republic of Moldova, by participating in the talent reality show *Fabrica de staruri*. Currently, she is followed by a large number of users on social media. On Instagram, she has over 865,000 followers, and on Facebook, she has over 579,000 followers. With her origins in the Republic of Moldova and already possessing a certain artistic and cultural identity in Romania, the artist creates a common front for her music, which is thus listened to in both countries, while being simultaneously validated on a large scale. From the very beginning of her music career, the artist has had a perspective aimed at penetrating external environments and cultures beyond her native country. Recently, she has been seeking to expand her artistic performance space into Western countries such as France. Instagram page: <https://www.instagram.com/irinarimes/> (accessed on 08.06.2024). Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/IrinaRimesOfficial> (accessed on 08.06.2024).

or unconsciously. Mircea Eliade notes that symbolism acts as a "language" that explains the social, historical, and psychological condition of the individual. He identifies a symbolic logic that is confirmed not only in magical-religious symbolism but also in the symbolism expressed by the subconscious and transconscious activity of human beings (Eliade, 2013, 455). In this sense, Luc Benoist explains that a vital and organic symbolism will always express spiritual truths more effectively than others (Benoist, 1995, 8). Thus, we can recognize the importance of symbols in religion, traditions, and customs. The cultural symbol transforms into a trans-symbol, surpassing the artist's notoriety, with the icon becoming a source of inspiration or challenge for the audience that follows it.

According to Barthes, the myth is a "legend", a symbolic story about the human condition, like a figurative theater where the internal and external struggles of a person unfold on the path to evolution (Barthes, 1997, 13). According to Mircea Eliade, the role of myth is to recount a sacred event, or a primordial event that occurred at the beginning of "Time" (Eliade, 2019, 73). He believes that through myth, one can easily discover how something came to be, thus returning to its origins. Myth reveals realities about true events, which fully manifested at one point in the past (Eliade, 2019, 73). Moreover, myth manages to concentrate several similar situations into a single narrative. It offers us the possibility to discover patterns or structures (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, 28) that have been created and deeply rooted both in human interaction and in other environments of manifestation. The importance of myth also lies in what it reveals about the structure of time (Eliade, 2013, 62). In this sense, one can say that myth is the bridge connecting those past moments, in which events with profound religious, spiritual, or gnostic significance took place, to the present, supporting the processes of understanding and evolution for people who relate to myths. Myths are, in a sense, scenarios of archetypes, presenting symbols or overarching compositions, including epics, narratives, genesis stories, cosmogonies, theogonies, and battles of giants (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, 27). They aim to explain "the beginning of a process of rationalization" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, 27).

The cosmogonic myth represents a story about the creation of the world, rich in symbols, serving as a model and justification for all human actions, and is included in the ideas of restoration, new beginning, and renewal (Eliade, 2013, 417). All cultures are based on a story of how this universe was created. From a certain perspective, we can consider the "myth of renewal", as presented by Mircea Eliade in *The History of Religious Ideas* (Eliade, 2013, 277-332), as the mystical-transcendental expression of the "natural" cycle of life. This manifestation of renewal is deeply directed toward the "primordial

source" and not as a repetitive, ordinary process that occurs only on a horizontal plane.

The myth of the hero's journey, also known as the "monomyth," describes a common narrative pattern in heroic stories worldwide. Joseph Campbell identified a basic structure that repeats in myths, legends, and folklore across various cultures. Campbell asserts that a hero is a man who has managed to achieve humility by himself (Campbell, 2014, 20). A key feature of the myth, in his view, is that the troubles and solutions it presents are valid for all of humanity (Campbell, 2014, 23), not just for a single person. All of these are synthesized and generalized into a unique structure, an archetype, in which multiple beings can be embodied. Thus, the hero archetype can be represented by either a man or a woman who has been able to transcend personal and local historical limits, reaching universally valid human forms (Campbell, 2014, 24).

Dumitru Constantin-Dulcan defines rituals as "codes through which blessings, help, strength, harmony, and goodwill are obtained," and that they "represent the key to open the gates of the 'heavenly city,' the means to connect with the source of cosmic energy" (Dulcan, 2021, 311). The connection between symbol, myth, and ritual is very close and practically inevitable because "the functional coexistence of myth and ritual is mediated by symbol" (Stănciulescu, 2005, 63). Ritual, we could say, represents an ensemble or, more precisely, a succession of symbols that give remarkable complexity to this ritual manifestation, enabling a connection with primordial, archetypal aspects. In this context, the importance of the repetition of various gestures that make up the ritual can be mentioned for its formation. Thus, by evoking various rites of Romanian tradition in the visual content of art, artists gradually construct an identity specific to the Romanian cultural space, while also being appreciated and popularized as such.

The musical icon, as a symbolic sign, emblem, or brand, transcends the status of an artist, entirely becoming a cultural symbol with a strong impact (Horsburgh 2019). Peirce defines the icon as a sign that represents something based on its resemblance to it and argues that icons substitute their subjects to such an extent that they can hardly be distinguished from them (Peirce, 1990, 282). When contemplating an icon, such as a representation of the Virgin Mary with the baby Jesus, or perhaps a painting, an identification with the characters in that artwork occurs, and there is a moment when our consciousness no longer distinguishes between the graphic-artistic representation of the signs and reality, precisely because this representation is so identical to the real character or landscape. Peirce explains this phenomenon as the disappearance of the distinction between reality and copy, stating that for a moment it is similar to a dream, not denoting a particular existence but neither being

something general, and he considers that at that moment the contemplation of the icon occurs (Peirce, 1990, 282).

An icon can be a sign that represents an object primarily through its similarity to it, regardless of its mode of existence (Peirce, 1990, 286). An important characteristic of the icon is that, through direct observation, other truths about its object can be discovered, beyond those sufficient to determine its construction (Peirce, 1990, 288). However, some artists from the Republic of Moldova who sell their art in Romania seem to have gradually established themselves as icons, maintaining their authenticity, defining personality traits, spontaneity, and principles, while simultaneously narrowing the gap between the icons they have created and the person themselves in all their reality.

Charles S. Peirce tells us that at the origins of communication there was likely a great deal of mimicry, which was later replaced by conventional sound signs that can only be explained through the use of icons (Peirce, 1990, 287). He considers that the icon plays an important role in the communication process, whether direct or indirect. Peirce asserts that the only way to directly communicate an idea is through an icon, and any indirect method of communicating an idea depends on the use of an icon (Peirce, 1990, 287).

Cultural Identity

The forms of identity are numerous, manifesting as gender, age, racial or ethnic identity, religious, social class, national or regional identity, etc. (Coroban 2020, 49). Cultural identity does not exist on its own but is constructed (Baudrillard qtd. in Coroban, 2020, 49) through the rhetoric of discourse, musical and fashion style, and through the sum of experiences and influences gained through interactions with other cultural models from various spaces. Cultural identity takes shape as an imagined order, shared by the members of a society, based on common elements of heritage, tradition, acquired through symbols, shared values, and norms (Paleczny, Zieliński, 2008, 354). In the modern era, identity becomes increasingly mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and renewal (Kellner, 2001, 275). A. Giddens argues that identity is not found in behaviors or in the reactions of others but is the ability to maintain a particular narrative direction (Giddens qtd. in Scârneci, 2009, 35). Considering that identity is expressed through symbols and myths, we can trace the construction of an artist's identity through how they present themselves in the public space and media, by the message conveyed through their creations or performances, by their fashion style, and by the rhetoric of promoting national symbols.

The cultural identity of Irina Rimes is constructed through a complex set of elements that include her music, origins, fashion style, participation in cultural activities, and the media coverage of all these activities. The artist's active participation in cultural festivals (such as "Unity in the City" in 2023

and Untold in 2022, among others), the promotion of cultural values on social media, and the incorporation of traditional elements into her work all contribute to the creation of Irina Rimes' traditional cultural identity. This cultural identity is also constructed through the inclusion of traditional myths and rituals in her works. In this way, the artist helps to revitalize and perpetuate traditions within the Romanian space. Thus, these traditions will not be forgotten but will be reinterpreted and reintegrated into today's modern culture. The artist's songs, which indeed have a specific character, promote a distinct national identity while encouraging appreciation and self-awareness among Romanians. In 2020, Irina Rimes was appointed by the Minister of Culture, Bogdan Gheorghiu, to be the honorary ambassador of Brâncuși Day.

Research Methodology

The hypothesis from which we start in the discursive analysis is as follows: if artists from the Republic of Moldova who have a career in Romania are exposed to various cultural and artistic influences from both regions/countries, then they construct a mosaic/hybrid artistic identity that integrates the symbolic elements specific to both cultural and national environments, creating a mix of tradition and novelty that promotes national values. The corpus of the case study consists of a semiotic analysis of the lyrics from the film “Despre el [About him],”² in which the songs “Bandana,” “Bolnavi amândoi [Both of us sick],” “Cosmos,” “Octombrie Roșu [Red October],” and “Eroii pieselor noastre [The Heroes of our Songs]” are introduced.

Study Case: The Semiotics of Musical Discourse

Symbols of Identity

In the lyrics “Sunt Cosmos, tu îmi dai Cosmos / Când mă privești sunt pe jos, sunt Cosmos ... Norul care ne ține e prea rău / Simt că se rupe nu-i cale dentors / Simt că se rupe intrăm în haos, [I am Cosmos, you give me Cosmos / When you look at me I am on the ground, I am Cosmos... / The cloud that holds us is too bad / I feel it tearing, there's no turning back / I feel it tearing, we're entering chaos]” we encounter the cosmogonic myth and the myth of genesis, where we find the divinity Chaos, representing the personification of the primordial chaos that existed before the Genesis and the establishment of universal order. The cosmos is a complex symbol that represents infinity and vastness, and in this context, it represents the feeling of completeness and the profound connection between the two lovers. In the morphology and function of myths, from Eliade's perspective, the human couple is identified with the cosmic couple: “Eu sunt Cerul, [I am the Sky]” says the husband, “tu ești

² Video, „Despre el [About him]” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP-CZ3oLnc4> (accessed 31.05.2024)

Pământul [You are the Earth]” (Eliade 2013, 416). Through the lyrics “tu îmi dai Cosmos, [You give me Cosmos...]” the artist suggests that her lover offers her a transcendental experience. Both the cosmogonic myth and the myth of genesis explain creation and the origin of the universe.

We observe that the entire action takes place beyond the sky, in the vast space, where the cloud symbolizes a transition from the extended, infinite cosmic space into chaos, which also represents the beginning of creation. The cloud also symbolizes fecundity. Irina’s lyrics evoke the idea of vastness and infinity that she feels towards her lover and describe the romantic relationship that exists between the two, which is followed by a new creation.

In the lyrics “Fii Cosmos, mi-ai zis odată” [“Be Cosmos, you told me once”], the invitation to be cosmos suggests a call to become great and free. “Să mă las ușor pe spate, că tu mă ții / Să am încredere în tine, mai știi / Și eu am avut / Când m-am lăsat pe spate / Dar tu nu m-ai ținut / Și eu am căzut și eu am căzut” [“To let myself fall gently back, because you hold me / To trust you, you remember / And I did / When I let myself fall back / But you didn’t hold me / And I fell, and I fell”] symbolizes the trust and vulnerability experienced simultaneously with emotional collapse and the subsequent loss of confidence through the symbolism of falling.

The star is represented by a bright celestial body and is a symbol of “spirit” and light, while night signifies the disappearance of any distinct, analytical knowledge, even more, the lack of any security and psychological support: “Am căzut printre miile de stele / Te-am căutat nopți întregi printre ele / În tot Cosmosul meu tu erai un fel de Dumnezeu / Și-acum s-a ales doar praful de ele / S-a depus pe buzele mele / În tot Cosmosul meu n-ai găsit nimic pe gustul tău.” [“I fell among the thousands of stars / I searched for you for entire nights among them / In all my Cosmos, you were a kind of God / And now only dust remains of them / It has settled on my lips / In all my Cosmos, you found nothing to your taste.”]

Through the metaphors used in the lyrics “Fii Cosmos, arată-mi un soare / Arată-mi planetele și galaxiile tale / Arată-mi sufletul / Și eu m-am deschis / Dar tu mi-ai râs în față” [“Be Cosmos, show me a sun / Show me your planets and galaxies / Show me your soul / And I opened up / But you laughed in my face”], the sun appears as a manifestation of divinity. The lyrics refer to the “solar hierophany” (Eliade 2013, 144), with the sun being the supreme being in various cultures (Eliade, 2013, 142-167), thus the lover is solarized, divinized. All the planets revolve around the sun, so the lover asks her partner to become a radiant personality and to open up, to offer herself. Her soul's opening symbolizes emotional vulnerability and sincerity.

The lyrics “Am așchii pe inimă, tu mi le-ai scos / Eu m-am pierdut și tu m-ai întors / Eu am căzut și tu m-ai strâns de pe jos” [“I have splinters in my heart, you pulled them out / I got lost and you brought me back / I fell and you

picked me up from the ground”] present the man in the role of a hero, a savior of his beloved, but at the same time, this attitude actually reinforces the state of dependency, subordination, and helplessness that she cultivates. On the other hand, these lyrics remind us of the myth of rebirth and renewal, where the main character undergoes a process of metamorphosis through a transformative suffering that then leads to a new form of existence.

The Influence of Folklore and the Adoption of Rituals

The contemporary world is filled with a fertile rituality in myths and symbols that modernity cannot eliminate, and individuals who adopt them in the public sphere internalize a collective memory (Lardellier, 2003, 9). Rituals are nothing more than a form of social life (Lardellier, 2003, 12-13) and cultural relationship or transitory, transcultural, and universal acts. Irina Rimes has performed the characteristics of rituals in her musical creation by including them throughout the breadth of the stage, in the lyrics, musical notes, attire, and the entire musical spectacle (Lardellier, 2003, 12). Essentially, the artist celebrates the ritualism that produces symbolic signs and popularizes it for the new generation.

In the song “Ielele”³ feminine entities from Romanian mythology are invoked, said to possess supernatural powers. They are powerful, mysterious beings that are even feared by people, yet admired at the same time: “Voi, ielelor, maiestrelor / Dușmane oamenilor / Stăpânele vântului / Doamnele pământului.” [“You, iele, majesties / Enemies of mankind / Mistresses of the wind / Ladies of the earth.”] The iele are described as the rulers of certain elements of nature, specifically of the wind and the earth, which gives them a divinatory status. The lyrics “Că prin văzduh zburăți / Pe iarbă alunecați / Și pe valuri îmi călcați / Și pe valuri îmi călcați” [“For you fly through the air / Slip on the grass / And walk upon the waves / And walk upon the waves”] emphasize the flight of the iele through the air, highlighting once again their ethereal and supernatural nature. Their ability to walk on waves shows that they are able to control the element of water as well. “În locuri îndepărtate / În baltă, pustietate / În locuri îndepărtate / În baltă, pustietate” [“In distant places / In swamp, desolation / In distant places / In swamp, desolation”] suggests that they manifest only in isolated and sacred places, reflecting their mysterious and inaccessible nature. Here, the symbolism of duality is represented, as they are portrayed as both “enemies of mankind” and “mistresses of the wind / Ladies of the earth.”

Celebrations are connected to sacred time; they are consecrated in eternity (Mauss qtd. in Eliade, 2013, 401-402), as they close a temporal cycle and open a new one, undertaking a total regeneration of time (Eliade, 2013,

³ Video, Ielele <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6Z0xvuHckg> (accessed 08.06.2024)

403-404). Religious events repeat the archetype of what occurred at the beginning.

"Noaptea de Sânziene" is another song⁴ which was inspired by Romanian mythology and in which we find descriptions of rituals performed around the summer solstice night, on June 24. This night is considered to be magical and full of mystery. Mircea Eliade wrote a two-volume novel about certain mysterious things that can happen on this night. In the lyrics "Noaptea de sânziene / În lumina lunii / Cine mi-i ursitu / Astăzi o să-mi spună / Am să arunc cununa / De flori peste poartă / Și-o să știu ursitul / Unde pașii-și poartă" ["The Night of Sânziene / In the moonlight / Who is my destined one / Today will tell me / I will throw the wreath / Of flowers over the gate / And I will know the destined one / Where his steps lead"], we observe the stages of the ritual performed by the artist to find out who her life partner is. A wreath made of flowers is created, and when night arrives, it is thrown over the gate to trigger the mystical process presented in Romanian mythological legends. The Sânziene are the mystical entities that can reveal destiny and fate due to their supernatural abilities.

Through the expressions "Arde-n faclă focul / Voi citi în flăcări / Unde mi-e norocul" ["The fire burns in the torch / I will read in the flames / Where is my luck"], fire is seen here as "a ritual and symbolic element" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, 64) and as a "messenger" of information from the astral worlds. At the same time, fire can also be associated as a symbol of purification, of the destruction of all that is impure. We could also assert that fire has a close connection with luck. In many different cultures throughout the ages, fire has represented a symbol of hope, lighting the way to people's dreams and ambitions, rooted in the belief that fire can drive away misfortune and bring good luck.

The chorus of the song describes the ritual performed on the night of Sânziene: "Toată noaptea până-n zori / Voi citi în foc și-n flori / Voi citi și voi vrăji / Ca să aflu ce va fi / Toată noaptea până-n zori / Soarta voi citi în flori / Ce va fi în viitor / Toată noaptea până-n zori" ["All night until dawn / I will read in the fire and in flowers / I will read and I will enchant / To find out what will be / All night until dawn / I will read fate in flowers / What will be in the future / All night until dawn"]. Here, flowers are a symbol of femininity, of the "passive principle" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, 55) of beauty, which is used as a tool for divination. Flowers also symbolize love and harmony characteristic of primordial nature (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, 56), but at the same time, they are correlated with youth, childhood, and signify the "Edenic state" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, 56).

⁴ Video, Sânziene https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HG4__bwU-Tc (accessed 08.06.2024)

Irina Rimes integrates the religious ritual, with all its array of rites and symbols, into the musical scene. During Christmas, the artist returns home to the Republic of Moldova and sings the famous carols. “We sing old and new carols, songs about longing, about love, about mother and country. Songs that remind us who we are and where we come from.” She believes that cultural wealth cannot be stolen by anyone and that the way national values and traditions are preserved depends solely on the people and the youth who inherit this treasure of Romanian tradition: “If they can take Roșia Montană, oil, gold, earthly riches, timber, and forests, then they cannot take our culture. They will never be able to claim it as their own.”⁵

The construction of identity through the rhetoric of clothing

Irina Rimes's clothing style is often influenced by cultural and traditional themes to effectively convey the message of her songs inspired by folklore to the audience. She incorporates elements inspired by traditional Romanian attire, such as folk motifs and cuts taken from folk clothing. Some outfits include specific visual details featuring floral or geometric patterns. These details communicate her cultural influences and the specific musical themes she addresses.

The choice of such outfits and the use of the symbolic sign "flag" during events she participates in underscore her love for cultural roots and contribute to the creation of her cultural identity. The use of traditional elements signals respect for tradition and cultural identity.

On the other hand, at most concerts, she is often seen wearing extravagant, avant-garde dresses or skirts accompanied by contemporary accessories. These elements reflect global cultural influences and contemporary trends while also providing a visual quality of lightness and delicacy. Since Irina Rimes began releasing songs in French, her clothing style has changed significantly, reflecting the influences of French fashion. She adopts a more refined and elegant aesthetic, integrating elements characteristic of haute couture into her outfits.

For instance, Irina Rimes appeared at a concert in Craiova wearing a coat and a red beret typical of French fashion. The coat is often associated with elegance, being a classic and sophisticated clothing item. The beret is a garment associated with French style. The red beret is often linked to revolutionary movements, as it became a symbol of the Carlist movement or

⁵ Editors' translation from Camelia Badea. “Irina Rimes, Promotor al Lui Brancusi: Ministrul Culturii E Multumit ca va “Dezvirgina” Un Milion de Tineri...” *Ziare.com*, 24 Sept. 2024, www.ziare.com/constantin-brancusi/expozitii/irina-rimes-promotor-al-lui-brancusi-ministrul-culturii-e-multumit-ca-va-dezvirgina-un-milion-de-tineri-care-n-au-auzit-de-celebrul-sculptor-1597649. Accessed 24 Sept. 2024.

the far-right during the Second Carlist War in Spain in the 19th century. Thus, it symbolizes courage and the desire for change.

The Influence of Romantic Relationships on Musical Creation

The triangular theory of love, proposed by Robert Sternberg, treats love as both an emotion and a characteristic of a relationship, consisting of three components: intimacy, passion, and commitment (Sternberg, 1986, 119). The intimacy component captures the feelings of being close, connected, and bonded in a loving relationship. The passion component encompasses romance and physical attraction within a romantic relationship. Finally, the commitment component refers to the decision made by two individuals to love each other and to maintain that love over time.

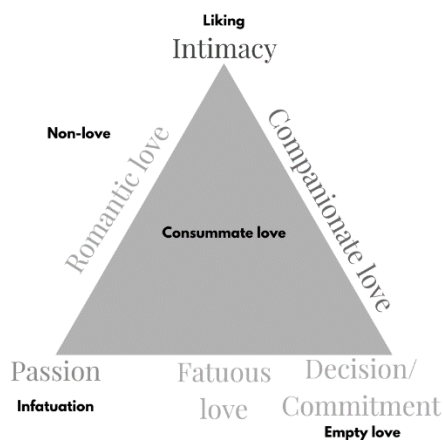


Figure 1. The triangular theory of love. Source: Sanditiya Krsitian Sugiarto. "Triangular Love Theory" *Cendekia Harapan*, 23 Aug. 2022

The theory also predicts that there are different types of romantic love. These types include infatuation (intimacy only), passion (passion only), empty love (commitment only), friends with benefits (intimacy plus passion), and consummate romantic love in a long-term relationship (intimacy plus passion plus commitment). Sternberg provides an account of how the three dimensions of love fluctuate throughout a relationship and why some changes in the components lead to successful relationships, while other changes result in the failure of the relationship. Excessive passion and intimacy, Sternberg argues, can shorten the duration of a relationship. The primary positive aspect regarding the duration of a relationship is commitment.

After a four-year relationship, Irina Rimes expresses her emotions in the hit song "Visele," with which she captivated the general public, launching a trilogy composed of the songs "Iubirea noastră mută," "Da Ce Tu," and "Haina Ta." The music videos for these three songs together create a story of unfulfilled love, reflecting that dimension of love—passion – that, according

to Sternberg, shortens or leads to the failure of a relationship. In the song “Da Ce Tu”,⁶ Irina Rimes emphasizes the need for personal identity to be recognized by the partner in a relationship: “Da’ ce tu suferi după mine. / Da’ ce, tu te gândești măcar un pic la mine” [“But what, do you suffer because of me? / But what, do you even think a little bit about me?”]. Through the lyrics “Sunt dependentă de momentul ăla când te văd” [“I’m addicted to that moment when I see you”], she expresses her vulnerability towards her partner. The phrase “Arăt de fier, dar, de fapt curg în mod latent” [“I look like iron, but in fact, I obscurely flow”] reflects the way she behaves in the outside world, with iron brought to the forefront as a symbol of hardness, robustness, harshness, stubbornness, excessive rigor, and inflexibility, while also revealing a duality of emotions between her tough appearance and the inner reality of helplessness and fragility.

Psychologists (Gonzaga et al., 2006, 163-179) have supported the view that love is an emotion, characterized by its manifestations, whether felt as a wave of passion, affection, or the continuous disposition to have these feelings for another person.

Dependency here is seen as a key symbol of the song, used to describe the intensity of the relationship. The man is compared to a drug: “C-ai devenit vital ca un aliment / Și mi-ai intrat în structură ca un component / Ești drogul meu cel mai eficient” [“You’ve become as vital as food / And you’ve entered my structure like a component / You’re my most effective drug”], and his presence in her life becomes essential. In the expression “Păcat că eu sunt dependentă, tu independent” [“Too bad I’m dependent, you’re independent”], we again notice the contrast between the man and the woman.

Rabindranath Tagore, in *Sadhana: The Realisation of Life*, reflecting on love, said that in love, loss and gain are harmonized; the one who loves seeks themselves in the person they love (Tagore, 2013, 78). Tagore also presents the perspective that in love, bondage and freedom are not antagonistic because love is both free and at the same time the most binding—independent and dependent, finite and infinite are one. According to the Indian thinker, the great attribute of love is its ability to accept all limitations and transcend them.

The lyrics of the song “Haina ta”⁷ are rich in symbols that explore the complexity of intimacy, vulnerability, and longing in a relationship. The coat, as a central symbol in this context, represents protection and the almost vital connection between the two lovers. The first words of the song, “Timpul, zboară, altfel când taci” [“Time flies differently when you're silent”], instantly suggest that the perception of time changes in the absence of communication. The artist seems to want to recover the mythical, sacred, or divine time, "any

⁶ Video, Da Ce Tu <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3o70u5-qAw> (accessed 31.05.2024)

⁷ Video, Haina Ta <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctXxonvxoHU> (accessed 31.05.2024)

time, whatever it may be, is ‘open’ to a sacred time" (Eliade 2013, 395). Hierophanic time (Eliade 2013, 394) is sacred time diluted depending on the lovers' perception. Time presents itself in various forms, with varying intensity, so it can be either subjective or objective. When we refer to subjective time, we consider the personal perception of time when performing a certain action. Objective time refers to the time measured by an instrument, such as a clock. In this context, the author feels that subjective time would be different from objective time in the absence of communication.

In the lyrics “Ți-am purtat și haina / Ți-am purtat bandana / Ți-am purtat mirosul de marijuana” [“I wore your coat / I wore your bandana / I wore your smell of marijuana”], dependency in the couple's relationship appears. The coat and bandana are found in Irina Rimes' work as symbols of the relationship, continuous presence, and shared memories, even in the physical absence of the loved one, as we can also observe in the words from the monologue where the symbol of the "coat" signifies more than just a piece of clothing. It starts to clearly represent the relationship between the two: “Dacă eu scriu despre același lucru de ce nu pot să scriu despre aceeași haină zece piese?” [“If I write about the same thing, why can't I write ten songs about the same coat?”]. The symbolic sign of the "coat" also signifies the attribution of the lover's identity to hers. Clothes are used in many cultures to express individual identity and the social status to which a human being belongs. When the lover's coat becomes a symbol in the succession of lyrics, it implies the suggestion that the lover's identity itself becomes an integral part of the identity of the one who wears the coat. In fact, the entire process seems to be an act of identity theft.

In the song "Octombrie Roșu" [“Red October”], the artist addresses the theme of lost love, disappointment, and personal transformation. The central symbol of the song is the month of October, associated with autumn, cold, and rain, which represents a period of transition and melancholy, evoking a sense of autumnal asthenia: „Prea mult octombrie, prea mult / Afară-i frig și plouă” [Too much October, too much / It's cold and raining outside]. All of this reflects the artist's mood, through which a more difficult period of introspection seems to be transparent. “Prea mult octombrie” [“Too much October”] thus suggests a state of saturation with sadness and melancholy. The metaphorical description “Urâtă vreme, noi urâți” [“Ugly weather, us (being) ugly”] expresses the state of their relationship, while also emphasizing the degradation of the emotional bond between the two partners.

The following lines: “Am stat atâtea să ascult / Despre ce-i vântul ăsta rece / Dar vântul bate prost cu noi / Noi urâțim pe zi ce trece” [“I sat so long listening / About what this cold wind is / But the wind blows badly for us / We grow uglier by the day”] contain the symbolism of the cold wind, which presents a state of "vanity, instability, and inconsistency" (Eliade, 2013, 468) and also suggests the constant difficulties and conflicts in the relationship. The

contrast between the two, which we encountered earlier in the song "Bolnavi amândoi" ["Both of us Sick"], is also found in the lines "Tot mai grozav te crezi, iar eu / Tot mai umilă-n fața ta" ["You think you're more amazing, and I / More humble in front of you"]. This imbalance in the relationship, where he is seen as superior and she increasingly inferior and humiliated, highlights the artist's overwhelming feelings and lack of confidence.

In the lyrics "Voi deveni ceva ciudat / Și oamenii mă vor iubi / Voi fi un octombrie mai cald / Pe tine nu te-oî încălzi" ["I will become something strange / And people will love me / I will be a warmer October / But I won't warm you"], we encounter the myth of metamorphosis or renewal. The lyrics suggest a personal transformation, a rebirth. Here, we can recall the Phoenix bird from Greek mythology, which was reborn from its own ashes. However, her evolution into "something strange" carries abstract and inferior connotations regarding her personality. She believes she will be appreciated by others in this new form and that she will represent "a warmer October," in other words, a more pleasant, warmer, and more acceptable period. However, this state of hers will not be shared with her former partner.

A ritual of purification is found in the expressions "Dar ploaia-mi ține de urât, eu / Eu știi, nu pot să te mai uit" ["But the rain keeps me company, I / I, you know, can't forget you anymore"], symbolizing at the same time "heavenly influences" (Chevalier, Gheerbrant, 1993, p. 109). The rain becomes a companion to her sadness, highlighting the melancholy in which the artist remains entangled.

Irina's monologue continues with the sentence: "It might be that at some point everything will seem like a story from the past, a beautiful one, but I might live an even more beautiful story with someone I understand and stay with for life, or it might be nothing. Or I might not meet that person, and everything I lived with you could be the peak of my life, the peak of my creation, the peak of my music."⁸

In these lines, the author projects or manifests her future. A sense of optimism is felt here, but it is followed by a feeling of uncertainty, insecurity, and even fear, helplessness, and resignation.

The artist's film continues with the song "Eroii pieselor noastre" ["The Heroes of Our Songs"], where she addresses the theme of separation due to the lack of communication. Through the lyrics "Cuvintele sunt grele / E mai frumos să le punem pe foi / Noi am rămas doar poezie / Iar peste un timp o să fim eroi" ["Words are heavy / It's more beautiful to put them on paper / We've become just poetry / And in time we'll be heroes"], the author suggests that it's much easier for her to express her feelings through art. Here we find the myth of the hero, which also suggests that the two have managed to alchemize their

⁸ Editors' translation.

lower emotions into art. This speaks of experiencing a state of catharsis, achieved by sublimating suffering into art. This catharsis manages to purify all the mistakes, sufferings, and sadness of the past and alchemize the lower states.

Through the lyrics “Vom ridica statui din granit / Să fie rece ca noaptea / Cum a fost atunci când ne-am despărțit” [“We’ll raise statues from granite / To be as cold as the night / Like it was when we broke up”], the statue is represented as the immortalization of the experience, emotions, and practically the suffering lived, in a tangible form. Granite is a hard and cold rock, and in this context, it vividly represents the emotion felt by the artist at the moment of separation. The mention of the night here symbolizes a state of obscurity, even a darkness of regret and suffering.

We can further observe in Irina's monologue the influence of catharsis on her creation and life. "It feels like I don't need to talk about it anymore because I no longer suffer. But I see you there, I follow you, I watch you with great pride, I'm really happy for you. My heart blossoms when I see you radiating, having success. But I don't suffer anymore, I don't suffer for you anymore. I'm there, I'll never leave, but I won't suffer either. I feel good."⁹

In the end, she manages to process that suffering and the depressive states she talks and sings about, thus reaching a state of peace, acceptance of the situation, and even a certain sense of well-being.

Currently (2024), Irina Rimes is in a relationship with the French artist David Goldcher, which has lasted for about three years. During this time, she has released many songs in French. The first of them is a collaboration with her current partner and is called “Laisse tomber les filles” (Leave the girls alone)¹⁰. Other songs that followed are „Changer” (To Change)¹¹, „L’hiver avec toi” („Winter with you”) and „Dis-moi Maman” (“Tell me, Mother”). The lyrics are addressed from a woman to the man who broke her heart; she identifies, more or less consciously, with certain well-known hits in French culture, thereby creating an identity specific to French culture. The fact that she chose this particular song and not a less-known one shows that she wants to connect with the French audience through elements already familiar to them. It is a very simple and effective method of winning over an audience due to the phenomenon of recognition described by Eco. At the same time, her artistic identity begins to take on new influences through her integration into French culture, which will lead to the construction of a hybrid identity. In the song “Changer (To Change)”, Irina addresses the theme of her evolution. She writes about how it was necessary to change “the path, the land, the country, to change her beliefs,” but despite all this, she will not change the way she is towards a

⁹ Editors' translation.

¹⁰ Video, Laisse tomber les filles <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LS-tbdxyyoM> (accessed 10.06.2024)

¹¹ Video, Changer https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sjm9S28QaDE_ (accessed 10.06.2024)

partner. Here, we observe a smooth transition into French culture. This song could even be seen as a symbol of her transition from her original culture, country, land, and beliefs to a new country and culture. The lyrics in the song "Changer" explore universal themes of change and self-discovery, similar to the myth of the hero's journey. These themes resonate with audiences from both cultures and reflect the search for identity and the adaptation to new environments. "Ca toate femeile din lume / O nevoie de recunoaștere / În această viață care merge înainte / Aleg să cresc și să învăț / Dau totul, primesc totul." ["Like all the women in the world / A need for recognition / In this life that moves forward / I choose to grow and learn / I give everything, I receive everything"]. At the same time, "Changer" becomes a symbol of cultural interconnectedness and the possibility of integrating different cultural influences into a unique, hybrid identity.

Conclusions

Through the analysis conducted on the socio-cultural identity creation of the singer Irina Rimes, we explored the mechanism of mediating cultural influences from several countries, which contribute to the construction and consolidation of a hybrid identity. In this way, we were able to confirm the hypothesis from which we started this study: that if artists from the Republic of Moldova who have a career in Romania are exposed to various cultural and artistic influences from both regions/countries, then they build a hybrid artistic identity that integrates elements specific to both cultural and national environments.

Additionally, we observed that alongside the success Irina Rimes has achieved in the artistic market of Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the singer has begun to gain recognition internationally, in the music industry in France. She manages to shape her identity in an original manner through a fusion of traditional, modern, local, and international elements, from a multitude of symbols to myths and rituals, thus combining various artistic, musical, and fashion styles found both in Romania and France.

She often portrays herself, as we noted in the semiotic analysis of the lyrics, as a good girl in love with a man who does not reciprocate her feelings, leading to experiences of vulnerability, confusion, and emotional dependence that she conveys in her composed and performed songs. All these descriptive elements provide a deeper understanding of her artistic creations. Couple relationships have had a profound, significant, and multidimensional influence on the artistic creation of Irina Rimes. We also observed how the cultural and artistic influence of another country impacts the creation of a hybrid identity that integrates elements specific to both cultural environments. After analyzing her lyrics, we noted that frequently addressed themes in her songs include separation, longing, and unfulfilled love. Additionally, her experiences in

romantic relationships have served as a major source of inspiration for her. Despite the somber nature of her songs, they are characterized by a certain authenticity through which she captures the subtle nuances of human emotions. This approach allows her to resonate with listeners who find themselves reflected in the experiences described in her lyrics. It is evident that each romantic relationship she has had has contributed personally to her artistic creation. This contribution is validated by the diversification of her music over time.

Irina Rimes promotes a mosaic culture. This is defined by the multitude of styles and cultures she addresses in her creations. Her repertoire includes songs from various musical genres, and she "easily transitions from pop to ballads, to rock, or to music inspired by folklore".¹² Moreover, we noticed that she performs and composes songs in multiple languages: Romanian, English, Russian, and French. This aspect also contributes to the creation of a hybrid identity.

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¹² Paul Angelescu. "Irina Rimes, Vocea Unei Generații. Juratul de La Vocea României Care a Cucerit Publicul Cu Emoția Ei." *Știrile ProTV*, Dec. 2023, www.stirileprotv.ro/stiri/1-decembrie/irina-rimes-vocea-a-doua-generatii-juratul-de-la-vocea-romaniei-care-imparte-emoțiile-cu-generatia-ei.html. Accessed 24 Sept. 2024.

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