

Nation and Nature in Romanian Ecologist Discourse

When examining the history of ideas that shaped the Romanian concept of nation, one cannot disregard the centrality of the relationship between nation and nature. The imagined political community defining in Benedict Anderson's terms the Romanian nation relies heavily on a special relation identifying symbolically the fundamental connection between its members: that of a protective nature germinating the nation itself. Perhaps the best example of this may be found in an ancient and well-known popular saying: "Codrul e frate cu românul" (roughly translating into "The forest is Romanian's brother"). This communion with nature is reflected throughout the entire body of Romanian political, historical and even linguistic literature concerned, in the later part of the 19th and during the 20th Century with the construction of Romanian national identity. Also, it constitutes one of the main topics of nationalistic discourse, from the Romantic 19th Century to the national-communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu in the second half of the 20th Century, shaping Romanian symbolic national geography in a synthetic formula: the *carpatho-danubiano-pontic area*.

The natural-human brotherhood refers to specific political mythical figures, reflecting Romanian social history, like the *Haiducs* (seen as popular brigands fighting the oppressive governments in 18th and 19th centuries, element commonly found throughout the Balkan cultures, but nevertheless not limited to them), and also to an idyllic timeless relationship between human and nature expressed in the traditional lifestyle, originally inspiring romantic poetry like that of Mihail Eminescu (considered the national poet in Romania) or the interpretation of the *Miorița* ballad by Vasile Alecsandri, and nowadays inspiring at least in part the ecologist discourse.

My paper will try to explore how this defining nation-nature relationship is reflected in the emotional dimension of the ecologist discourse in Romania (traditionally perceived as leftist and internationalist), in the wider context of post-communism and nature management at state-level.