

# ***Magie și vrăjitorie***

*Perspective istorice, antropologice și artistice*

# ***Magie et sorcellerie***

*Perspectives historiques, anthropologiques et artistiques*

# ***Magic and Witchcraft***

*Historical, Anthropological and Artistic Perspectives*



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and Artistic Perspectives*

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# Introducere

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IOAN POP-CURȘEU

Acest volum reunește o parte dintre lucrările susținute sub formă de conferințe în cadrul colocviului internațional *Images of Witchcraft: Cinema, Theatre, Visual Arts*, care a avut loc la Facultatea de Teatru și Film a Universității Babeș-Bolyai, în perioada 17–19 octombrie 2019. Colocviul a fost organizat în parteneriat cu Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Artă Zalău și cu Teatrul Național „Lucian Blaga” din Cluj, în cadrul unui proiect de cercetare pentru stimularea constituirii de tinere echipe independente, susținut de Ministerul Educației și Cercetării UEFISCDI PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0067, nr. contract 135/2018, având titlul *Iconografia vrăjitoriei, o abordare antropologică: cinema, teatru, arte vizuale*. Echipa proiectului, compusă din Delia Enyedi, Daria Ioan, Rareș Stoica, Valer Cosma, a încercat, sub coordonarea directorului de proiect Ioan Pop-Curșeu, să reunească, în cele trei zile de lucrări și discuții, o serie de specialiști eminenți în vrăjitorie, din țară și din străinătate, avându-l ca invitat de onoare pe Willem de Blécourt.

Activitățile colocviului s-au dezvoltat în mai multe secțiuni, plene și paralele. Cele mai consistente au fost cele de teatru și cinema, însă artele vizuale și antropologia istorică și culturală au fost bine reprezentate. O primă selecție de lucrări a fost publicată într-un număr special din revista *Studia UBB Dramatica*, 1/2020, care – având în vedere profilul revistei – cuprinde mai ales articole despre teatru, arte performative și cinema<sup>1</sup>. Acel număr special din *Studia* este completat la modul ideal de prezentul volum, care strânge laolaltă cercetări cu un caracter interdisciplinar și are o deschidere „artistică” mai largă, cuprinzând și studii despre reprezentările vrăjitoriei în pictură și literatură, nu doar în cinema.

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<sup>1</sup> Numărul poate fi consultat în acces liber la următoarele link-uri:

[http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/arhiva\\_en.php](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/arhiva_en.php)

[http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/cuprins\\_en.php?id\\_editie=1287&serie=DRAMATICA&nr=1&an=2020](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/cuprins_en.php?id_editie=1287&serie=DRAMATICA&nr=1&an=2020)

La fel ca în *Studia*, am organizat materialul nostru în două secțiuni principale și convergente: *Historical and anthropological perspectives on witchcraft* și *Witchcraft and witches in cinema, visual arts and literature*.

În gruparea materialelor din prima secțiune, am încercat să intersectăm două criterii principale: criteriul istoric s-a îmbinat astfel cu cel tematic. Parcursul pornește, așadar, de la *Analele* lui Tacitus (în studiul semnat de Carmen Fenechiu), trece printr-un tratat al lui Ulrich Molitor (analizat de Robert Mirică), ajunge la vrăjitoarele secolului XVI din Cluj (prezentate de Tünde Komáromi) și adăstează la foile volante care relatau cazuri de vrăjitorie în Franța secolului XVII (descrise pertinent de Kévin Cochard). Câteva studii se axează pe cazuri românești. Astrid Cambose analizează diversele metamorfoze ale unui demon feminin infanticid, anume Avestița-Avizuha, aripa Satanei. Valer Simion Cosma tratează raportul dintre magie și religie în context liturgic în lumea țăranilor ardeleni din secolul al XIX-lea. Camelia Burghele construiește o nouă analiză a străvechiului ritual al cămășii ciumei, iar Laura Jiga-Iliescu scrie despre Grațian, „vâlvă, personaj de film și erou al memoratelor locale”. Secțiunea se încheie într-o notă ceva mai exotică, cu Ekaterina V. Gusarova, care prezintă imagini etiopiene ale vrăjitoriei, și cu Daria Ioan, care scrie un studiu despre credințele magice legate de comunitățile de trans-sexuali *hijra*, din India.

A doua secțiune, *Witchcraft and witches in cinema, visual arts and literature*, se deschide cu o serie de studii despre reprezentări ale vrăjitoriei în film. Ioan Pop-Curșeu analizează numeroase filme, de cinema sau televiziune, care o au pe antica Circe drept personaj de primă importanță. Katarzyna Lipinska se focalizează pe magia evreiască, așa cum este prezentată în filmul *Dybbuk* de Michal Waszynski (1937). Ziyin Chen propune un studiu comparativ între *Throne of Blood* de Kurosawa și *Millenium Actress* de Satoshi Kon. Anaïs Cabart problematizează, într-o perspectivă jungiană, arhetipul Marii Mame, pornind de la Carl Th. Dreyer și ajungând la Lars von Trier. Alexandru Sterian face o analiză aplicată a subtilităților compoziției vizuale în *The Blair Witch Project*. După aceste studii, urmează câteva cu tematică foarte variată, menite să deschidă apetitul de cunoaștere și să stimuleze curiozitatea cititorilor în multiple direcții. Andreea Apostu prezintă temele magice din creația lui Paul Ranson, pictor din gruparea nabiștilor. Gelu Teampău scrie despre imaginile vrăjitoarei și ale ritualurilor vrăjitorești în benzile desenate. Cristina Bogdan se apleacă asupra motivelor magice în proza unor scriitoare române contemporane (Doina Ruști, Andreea Răsuceanu și Simona Antonescu). Kriszta Szabó-Matei încheie volumul cu câteva note despre vrăjitoare și vrăjitorie în literatura maghiară.

Sigur că, la o privire superficială, varietatea studiilor prezentate în acest volum poate părea excesivă. La o privire mai atentă, însă, se desenează numeroase corespondențe tematice și fire de legătură. Unul dintre aceste fire principale de legătură este tocmai imaginea. Toate articolele reunite în aceste pagini, la fel ca toate cele din numărul special din *Studia*, explorează modalitățile în care, de-a lungul istoriei, s-au constituit diverse imagini ale vrăjitoarelor și ale vrăjitoriei, fie că este vorba de reprezentări sociale cu ecouri la scară largă, fie că este vorba de reprezentări artistice, obiectivate pe diverse suporturi ori în varii forme de expresie artistică. Fiecare dintre autorii reuniți de noi aici a resimțit din plin fascinația exercitată de cutare sau cutare imagine, forța ei de reverberație, subtilă și tulburătoare, dar și chemarea stăruitoare de a o decifra și de a-i înțelege mecanismele secrete.

În paginile volumului nostru, respectăm bogăția lingvistică de la colocviul internațional din toamna lui 2019, ale cărui activități s-au desfășurat în trei limbi: engleză, franceză, română, cărora li s-au adăugat multe altele în conversațiile marginale. Engleza a fost *lingua franca*, deoarece comunicările în franceză și în română au fost însoțite de diverse suporturi în limba engleză (prezentări power-point, versiuni traduse, rezumate dezvoltate etc.). Aici, am ales să lăsăm autorilor libertate lingvistică absolută, convinși fiind că plurilingvismul este benefic pe tărâm cultural, în vreme ce monolitismul lingvistic nu poate să ducă decât la stereotipii și la o sărăcire avansată a gândirii libere.

În încheierea acestei scurte introduceri, nu putem spune decât că sperăm că articolele de aici își vor găsi repede cititorii, pe care să-i îndrume pe căi ale gândirii și ale simțirii – seducătoare și pline de magie.



# Introduction

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IOAN POP-CURȘEU

Ce volume réunit une partie des travaux présentés lors du colloque international *Images de la sorcellerie: cinéma, théâtre, arts visuels*, qui a eu lieu à la Faculté de Théâtre et Film de l'Université Babeș-Bolyai, du 17 au 19 octobre 2019. Le colloque a été organisé en partenariat avec le Musée Départemental d'Histoire et d'Art Zalău et avec le Théâtre National «Lucian Blaga» de Cluj, dans les cadres d'un projet de recherche, destiné à encourager la constitution de jeunes équipes indépendantes de chercheurs, soutenu par le Ministère de l'Éducation et de la Recherche UEFISCDI PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0067, n° de contrat 135/2018, ayant le titre *Iconographie de la sorcellerie, une approche anthropologique: cinéma, théâtre, arts visuels*. L'équipe, composée par Delia Enyedi, Daria Ioan, Rareș Stoica, Valer Simion Cosma, a essayé, sous la coordination du directeur du projet, Ioan Pop-Curșeu, durant les trois journées consacrées aux travaux et aux discussions, de réunir une série d'éminents spécialistes dans le problème de la sorcellerie, roumains et étrangers, avec – comme invité d'honneur – Willem de Blécourt.

Les activités du colloque se sont développées dans plusieurs sections. Conformément au profil du projet de recherche, les plus solides ont été consacrées au théâtre et au cinéma, mais les arts visuels et l'anthropologie historique et culturelle ont eu de très belles contributions à la réussite de la manifestation. Une première sélection des travaux a été publiée dans un numéro spécial de la revue *Studia UBB Dramatica*, 1/2020, qui – étant donné le profil de la revue – comprend surtout des articles sur le théâtre, les arts performatifs et le cinéma<sup>1</sup>. Ce numéro-là de *Studia* est idéalement complété par le présent volume, qui réunit des recherches anthropologiques

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<sup>1</sup> Le numéro peut être consulté en accès libre aux liens suivants:

[http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/arhiva\\_en.php](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/arhiva_en.php)

[http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/cuprins\\_en.php?id\\_editie=1287&serie=DRAMATICA&nr=1&an=2020](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/cuprins_en.php?id_editie=1287&serie=DRAMATICA&nr=1&an=2020)

à caractère interdisciplinaire et a, de plus, une ouverture «artistique» plus large, comprenant aussi des études sur les représentations de la sorcellerie dans la peinture et la littérature, pas seulement dans le cinéma.

De la même manière que pour *Studia*, nous avons organisé le matériel en deux sections principales et convergentes: *Historical and anthropological perspectives on witchcraft* et *Witchcraft and witches in cinema, visual arts and literature*.

Dans le groupement des matériaux de la première section, nous avons essayé d'entrecroiser deux critères principaux: le critère historique s'est de cette manière associé au critère thématique. Le parcours prend, donc, comme point de départ, les *Annales* de Tacite (dans l'étude signée par Carmen Fenechiu), passe à travers un traité d'Ulrich Molitor (analysé par Robert Mirică), arrive aux sorcières qui ont vécu à Cluj au XVI<sup>ème</sup> siècle (présentées par Tünde Komáromi) et se penche sur les canards qui racontaient des cas de sorcellerie dans la France du XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle (décrits pertinemment par Kévin Cochard). Quelques études se focalisent sur des cas roumains. Astrid Cambose analyse les diverses métamorphoses d'un démon féminin infanticide, à savoir Avestița-Avizuha, l'Aile de Satan. Valer Simion Cosma traite du rapport entre la magie et la religion, dans un contexte liturgique, dans le monde des paysans transylvains du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Camelia Burghel construit une nouvelle analyse de l'ancien rituel de la chemise de la peste, tandis que Laura Jiga-Iliescu écrit sur Grațian, «loup-garou, personnage de film et héros du folklore local». La première section du volume se clôt sur une note légèrement plus exotique, avec Ekaterina V. Gusarova, qui présente des images éthiopiennes de la sorcellerie, et avec Daria Ioan, qui travaille sur les croyances magiques liées aux communautés de transsexuels *hijra*, en Inde.

La deuxième section, *Witchcraft and witches in cinema, visual arts and literature*, s'ouvre sur une série d'études sur les représentations de la sorcellerie dans les films. Ioan Pop-Curșeu analyse de nombreux films, de cinéma ou télévision, qui ont l'antique Circé comme personnage de première importance. Katarzyna Lipinska se focalise sur la magie juive, telle qu'elle est présentée dans le film *Dybbuk* de Michal Waszynski (1937). Ziyin Chen propose une étude comparative entre *Throne of Blood* de Kurosawa et *Millenium Actress* de Satoshi Kon. Anaïs Cabart problématise, dans une perspective jungienne, l'archétype de la Grande Mère, en partant de Carl Th. Dreyer et en arrivant à Lars von Trier. Alexandru Sterian entreprend une analyse appliquée des subtilités de la composition visuelle dans *The Blair Witch Project*. Après ces études, quelques autres suivent, qui ont une thématique très variée,



destinée à ouvrir l'appétit pour la connaissance et à stimuler la curiosité des lecteurs dans de multiples directions. Andreea Apostu présente les thèmes magiques dans la création de Paul Ranson, peintre nabi. Gelu Teampău écrit sur les images de la sorcellerie et des rituels magiques dans les bandes dessinées. Cristina Bogdan se penche sur les motifs magiques dans la prose de certaines écrivaines roumaines contemporaines (Doina Ruști, Andreea Răuceanu et Simona Antonescu). Kriszta Szabó-Matei clôt le volume avec quelques notes sur les sorcières et la sorcellerie dans la littérature hongroise.

Bien entendu, pour un regard superficiel, la variété des études présentées dans ce volume, peut paraître excessive. Pour un regard plus attentif, cependant, de nombreuses chaînes de liaison et correspondances thématiques se dessinent. Une de ces chaînes de liaisons principales est justement l'image. Tous les articles réunis dans ces pages, à l'instar de ceux inclus dans le numéro spécial de *Studia UBB Dramatica*, explorent les modalités dans lesquelles, tout au long de l'histoire, se sont constituées diverses images des sorcières et de la sorcellerie, soit qu'il est question de représentations sociales à échos très vastes, soit qu'il s'agit de représentations artistiques, objectivées sur divers supports ou dans diverses formes d'expression artistique. Chacun des auteurs réunis dans ces pages a pleinement ressenti la fascination exercée par telle ou telle image, sa force de réverbération, subtile et troublante, mais aussi l'appel constant à l'interpréter et à en comprendre les mécanismes secrets.

Dans les pages de notre volume, nous respectons la richesse linguistique de la conférence internationale de l'automne 2019, dont les activités se sont déroulées en trois langues: anglais, français, roumain, avec bien d'autres encore pour les conversations marginales. L'anglais a été une sorte de *lingua franca*, parce que les communications en français et en roumain ont été accompagnées par divers supports en langue anglaise (présentations powerpoint, versions traduites, résumés développés, etc.). Ici, nous avons choisi de laisser aux auteurs une liberté linguistique absolue, en étant convaincus que le plurilinguisme est absolument bénéfique dans le champ culturel, tandis que le monolithisme linguistique ne peut mener qu'aux stéréotypes et à un appauvrissement avancé de la pensée libre.

À la fin de cette brève introduction, nous ne pouvons qu'espérer que ces articles trouveront au plus vite leurs lectrices et lecteurs, qu'ils devront guider sur des voies de l'intelligence et de la sensibilité – séductrices et pleines de magie.



# Introduction

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IOAN POP-CURȘEU

This volume gathers some of the lectures of the international conference *Images of Witchcraft: Cinema, Theatre, Visual Arts*, that took place at the Faculty of Theatre and Film, Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2019. The conference was organized in partnership with the Zalău History and Art Museum and with the National Theatre in Cluj, in a project aimed at stimulating the constitution of young research teams, granted by the Ministry of Education and Research, UEFISCDI PN-III-P1-1.1-TE-2016-0067, contract number 135/2018, under the title *Iconography of Witchcraft, an anthropological approach: cinema, theatre, visual arts*. The project's team, composed by Delia Enyedi, Daria Ioan, Rareș Stoica, Valer Simion Cosma, under the supervision of the project's manager Ioan Pop-Curșeu, tried to reunite, during the three days of work presentations and discussions, a series of eminent specialists in witchcraft, from all over the world, having, as a keynote speaker, Willem de Blécourt.

The activities of the conference were distributed in several panels. The richest of them were the theatre and cinema panels, but visual arts and historical and cultural anthropology too had a strong presence in the conference. A first selection of the papers was published in a special issue of *Studia UBB Dramatica*, 1/2020, which – giving the profile of the journal – includes mostly papers on theatre, performative arts and cinema<sup>1</sup>. The special issue of *Studia* is ideally completed by the present volume, that gathers interdisciplinary contributions and has a wider “artistic” opening, through papers on witchcraft representations in painting and literature, not only in cinema.

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<sup>1</sup> The special issue can be read, in open access, at the next links:  
[http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/arhiva\\_en.php](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/arhiva_en.php)  
[http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/cuprins\\_en.php?id\\_editie=1287&serie=DRAMATICA&nr=1&an=2020](http://studia.ubbcluj.ro/arhiva/cuprins_en.php?id_editie=1287&serie=DRAMATICA&nr=1&an=2020)

In the same way we did for *Studia*, we organized the materials in two main sections: *Historical and anthropological perspectives on witchcraft* and *Witchcraft and witches in cinema, visual arts and literature*.

In grouping the materials of the first section, we tried to mix two main criteria: the historical criterium went hand in hand with the thematic one. The itinerary begins from Tacitus' *Annals* (in Carmen Fenechiu's paper), passes through a treaty by Ulrich Molitor (analyzed by Robert Mirică), reaches the witches of the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Cluj (presented by Tünde Komáromi) and then focuses on the printed *canards* that narrated witchcraft cases in the 17<sup>th</sup> century France (described by Kévin Cochard). Some papers are devoted to Romanian cultural facts. Astrid Cambose analyzes the diverse metamorphoses of a feminine infanticide demon, Avestița-Avizuha, Satan's Wing. Valer Simion Cosma approaches the link between magic and religion in liturgical context within the Transylvanian peasant world of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Camelia Burghele constructs a new analysis of the ancient ritual of plague's skirt, and Laura Jiga-Iliescu writes about Grațian, "fairy spirit, werewolf, film character and hero of local narratives". The section is completed in a somewhat exotic tone, by Ekaterina V. Gusarova, who presents some Ethiopian images of witchcraft, and with Daria Ioan, who writes a paper about magical beliefs related to *hijra* trans-sexual communities from India.

The second section, *Witchcraft and witches in cinema, visual arts and literature*, opens with some works on witchcraft representations in film. Ioan Pop-Curșeu analyzes numerous cinema and TV productions, which portray ancient seducing Circe, among other important characters. Katarzyna Lipinska focuses on Jewish magic, as it is presented in Michal Waszynski's film *Dybbuk* (1937). Ziyin Chen proposes a comparative study between *Throne of Blood* by Kurosawa and *Millenium Actress* by Satoshi Kon. In a Jungian perspective, Anaïs Cabart raises the problem of the Great Mother archetype, taking as a starting point the movies of Carl Th. Dreyer and reaching those of Lars von Trier. Alexandru Sterian makes an applicative analysis of the subtleties of visual composition in *The Blair Witch Project*. In the final part, we include in our selection some papers with various themes and subjects, meant to open the knowledge appetite and to stimulate the reader's interest in multiple directions. Andreea Apostu presents the magical themes in the creation of Paul Ranson, a painter affiliated to the Nabi's group. Gelu Teampău writes about witches, wizards and witchcraft in comic-books. Cristina Bogdan is interested in the magic motifs in the prose of some Romanian contemporary women writers (Doina Ruști, Andreea Răsuceanu and Simona Antonescu). Kriszta Szabó-Matei

closes the volume with some notes on witches and witchcraft in Hungarian literature.

It is clear that, at a superficial glance, the variety of the papers gathered here may seem excessive. At a closer look, though, various thematic correspondences and chains of continuity are visible. The strongest chain of continuity is, of course, the problem of the image. All the articles in our two sections, as well as all the articles from the special issue of *Studia UBB Dramatica*, explore the modalities in which, all along history, various images of witches and witchcraft were built, whether it is about widespread social representations, or artistic representations, objectified on various mediums or in various forms of artistic expression. Each one of the authors here lived entirely the fascination exerted by this or that image, its reverberation force, subtle and troubling, but also the permanent claim to decrypt it and to understand its secret mechanisms.

In the pages of our volume, we respect the linguistic richness of the international conference from 2019. Its activities developed in three languages: English, French, Romanian, to which some more were added in particular conversations and discussions. English was a sort of *lingua franca*, because the lectures in French or in Romanian were accompanied by various supports in English (power-point presentations, translated versions, long abstracts, etc.). Here, we chose to leave an absolute linguistic freedom to the authors, being convinced that a pluri-linguistic approach is beneficent to the flourishing of culture and science, when linguistic univocity can only lead to stereotypies and to an advanced poverty of free thinking.

At the end of this short introduction, we can only hope that these papers will find their readers very quickly, in order to guide them on seductive and magical paths of thinking and feeling.



HISTORICAL AND  
ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
PERSPECTIVES ON  
WITCHCRAFT





# Artele oculte în Tacitus, *Anale*, cărțile 1–6

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CARMEN FENECHIU\*

## OCCULT ARTS IN TACITUS, *ANNALS*, BOOKS 1–6

**Abstract:** The paper examines the manner in which Tacitus depicts and includes the occult arts in his relation of the events of Tiberius' Principate (books 1–6 of the *Annals*), as well as their role in the economy of the narration. The syntagma “occult arts” encompasses, in this context, different practices and phenomena which are designated nowadays with terms like witchcraft, magic, and astrology. The analysis takes into account diverse instances narrated in these first six books, such as the death of Germanicus, the accusations against Libo Drusus, Aemilia Lepida, Fabia Numantina, Claudia Pulchra, and Mamercus Scaurus, as well as Tiberius' relationship with astrology. In these episodes, the historian succeeds to bring forth Tiberius' complex character, but also to unveil the intimate and intricate texture of the Principate's politics by revealing the dark secrets and conflicts of the imperial house and by reporting the power struggles between members of the aristocracy. The dark and somber atmosphere is further enhanced by the recounting of Tiberius' predictions which presage hopelessness and desolation even for the future.

**Keywords:** Tacitus, *Annals*, Tiberius, magic, poison, astrology.

Articolul de față analizează maniera în care Tacitus înfățișează și inserează artele oculte în relatarea evenimentelor din timpul principatului lui Tiberius (cărțile 1–6 ale *Analelor*), precum și rolul deținut de acestea în economia narațiunii. Prin arte oculte sunt înțelese în acest context practici diverse ce implică cunoașteri secrete și misterioase, sunt săvârșite pe ascuns și au intenție răuvoitoare. Acestea includ procedee și fenomene pe care le-am clasa sub denumiri precum vrăjitorie, magie, astrologie, cea din urmă fiind prezentă mai ales sub aspectul ei divinătoriu cu privire la împărat sau la alți membri

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ai familiei sale. Sintagma „arte oculte” a fost preferată dintr-o perspectivă emică, deoarece, după cum se va vedea, chiar dacă cele două cuvinte nu sunt atestate împreună conectate, atât adjectivul *occultus*, *a, um*, cât și substantivul *artes* sunt întâlnite separat în textul latin, fiind folosite de Tacitus în caracterizarea unora dintre relatările selectate pentru analiză. Episoadele<sup>1</sup> vor fi prezentate în ordinea apariției lor în text, respectând așadar logica *Analelor*, cu excepția primului și celui mai complex caz analizat, cel al lui Germanicus, care se extinde pe mai multe cărți. Fiindcă o analiză atentă a textului lui Tacitus este necesară, vor fi citate uneori pasaje mai largi din lucrarea latină, ce vor fi însă însoțite de o traducere română cât mai apropiată de textul latin.

Pentru cei familiarizați cu maniera actuală de a scrie istorie poate părea neobișnuită predilecția lui Tacitus de a reda zvonuri, situații și împrejurări, precum unele dintre cele prezentate mai jos, pe care niciun istoric modern nu le-ar menționa. Tacitus însuși, distanțându-se de predecesorii săi, oferă în cartea a patra o explicație a interesului său pentru întâmplări mărunte sau care par lipsite de importanță: *Ann. 4.32 Pleraque eorum quae rettuli quaeque referam parva forsitan et levia memoratu videri non nescius sum: set nemo annales nostros cum scriptura eorum contenderit, qui veteres populi Romani res composuere. (...) nobis in arto et inglorius labor; immota quippe aut modice lacessita pax, maestae urbis res, et princeps proferendi imperi incuriosus erat. non tamen sine usu fuerit introspicere illa primo aspectu levia, ex quis magnarum saepe rerum motus oriuntur.*<sup>2</sup> (Știu că multe dintre cele pe care le-am relatat și pe care le voi relata par poate mici și neînsemnat de amintit, dar nimeni nu ar trebui să compare analele noastre cu scrierile acestora care au consemnat vechile fapte ale poporului roman. (...) Munca noastră se consumă într-un cadru îngust și este lipsită de glorie: o pace neclintită sau puțin încercată, evenimente triste la Roma și un principe nepreocupat de extinderea imperiului. Și totuși ar putea fi util a examina cu atenție cele neimportante la prima vedere, din care iau însă naștere adesea mișcările marilor evenimente.) Nu doar interesul său pentru micile întâmplări care

<sup>1</sup> Celor interesați să citească în extenso episoadele analizate le recomand cu precădere traducerea lui Gheorghe Guțu, Cornelius Tacitus, *Anale*. Traducere din limba latină, introducere și note de Gheorghe Guțu (București: Humanitas, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Textul latin citat este cel al ediției Teubner, Cornelius Tacitus, *Annales*. Iterum edidit Erich Koestermann (Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1965). A fost, de asemenea, consultată și ediția Loeb, Tacitus, *Histories: Books 4–5. Annals: Books 1–3*. Translated by Clifford H. Moore, John Jackson. Loeb Classical Library 249 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), Tacitus, *Annals: Books 4–6, 11–12*. Translated by John Jackson. Loeb Classical Library 312 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

dau naștere marilor evenimente istorice este implicat în alegerea celor relatate, căci selecția este făcută și în funcție de alte implicații, scrierea sa având un evident scop moral, după cum declară însuși autorul în *Ann.* 3.65 *quod praecipuum munus annalium reor, ne virtutes sileantur utque pravis dictis factisque ex posteritate et infamia metus* (cred că aceasta este principala îndatorire a analelor, ca virtutea să nu fie trecută sub tăcere și ca pentru vorbele și faptele ticăloase să existe frică de viitoarea dezonoare). Nu trebuie uitat însă că *Analele* sunt scrise în ultimii ani ai vieții lui Tacitus, la o distanță de aproape un secol de primele evenimentele examinate, prin urmare, în alegerea și dispunerea celor narate, istoricul beneficiază de avantajul și se folosește de perspectiva celui ce știe deja care dintre măruntele întâmplări au pus în mișcare evenimente importante, precum și care este judecata posterității, cel puțin a posterității apropiate, asupra unora dintre caracterele și faptele descrise.

**Moartea lui Germanicus:** Fiu al lui Nero Claudius Drusus (frate al lui Tiberius și fiu al Liviei) și al Antoniei Minor, fiica lui Marcus Antonius, Germanicus este unul dintre personajele cele mai remarcabile și atașante ale primelor cărți ale *Analelor*. Viața sa oferă autorului latin oportunități de a dezvălui secretele întunecate și jocurile de putere ascunse de la cel mai înalt nivel, precum și de a analiza dinamica relațiilor dintre membrii cei mai importanți ai casei imperiale. Moartea prematură și suspectă a acestuia are loc la Antiohia în anul 19 p. Chr., printre cauzele decesului fiind amintite otrăvuri, descântece, blesteme și alte fermecături, și este strâns legată de Tacitus de relațiile problematice ale tânărului cu bunica sa, Livia, și unchiul său, Tiberius. Tocmai de aceea, pentru a înțelege relatarea acestui tragic sfârșit, este util a fi analizată mai întâi maniera în care Tacitus conturează personajele implicate și construiește treptat narațiunea neînțelegerilor dintre aceste caractere ce culminează cu moartea lui Germanicus.<sup>3</sup>

Prima menționare a numelui Liviei în *Anale* se face într-o conexiune

<sup>3</sup> Pentru relația marcată de suspiciuni și conflicte dintre Tiberius și Germanicus a se vedea David Shotter, *Tiberius Caesar*. Second edition (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), cu precădere capitolul *Tiberius and the family of Germanicus*, 37–46. În privința morții lui Germanicus, autorul nu se referă la dovezile de practici magice menționate de Tacitus notând însă, la pagina 43, următoarele: “There is little doubt that his death was due to his illness, although there were many, principally Germanicus’ family and staff and even Germanicus himself, who believed that it was due to poison administered at Piso’s instigation, and further that Piso was acting on the instructions of Tiberius and Livia. Such suspicions magnified to near-hysteria in Rome, where few believed that Germanicus had died a natural death and many suspected that Tiberius feared and hated Germanicus enough to have caused his removal.”

funestă, cea a morții a doi dintre nepoții lui Augustus, iar portretul negativ al împărătesei devine, cu puține excepții, din ce în ce mai sinistru pe măsură ce expunerea înaintează. Această relatare concentrată și comprimată a morților a patru<sup>4</sup> membri importanți ai casei imperiale este una dintre primele instanțe care evidențiază faptul că afirmația lui Tacitus de a prezenta evenimentele fără mânie și părtinire (*Ann.* 1.1 *sine ira et studio*) se cuvine pusă sub semnul îndoielii: *Ann.* 1.3 *Ut Agrippa vita concessit, L. Caesarem euntem ad Hispanienses exercitus, Gaium remeantem Armenia et vulnere invalidum mors fato propera vel novercae Liviae dolus abstulit Drusoque pridem extincto Nero solus e privignis erat, illuc cuncta vergere.* (După ce Agrippa s-a sfârșit din viață, fie o moarte grăbită de soartă, fie perfidia mamei vitrege, Livia, l-a răpit pe Lucius Caesar, pe când acesta mergea spre armatele din Hispania, și apoi pe Gaius, revenind din Armenia și slăbit de o rană; deoarece Drusus murise mai înainte, Nero (i.e. Tiberius) rămăsese singurul dintre fiii vitregi și spre el se îndreptau toate.) Narațiunea dă impresia că decesele au loc într-un interval redus de timp și că se succed, deși ele au loc la distanță în timp și nu sunt prezentate în ordine cronologică, morțile lui Lucius și Gaius fiind intercalate între cele anterioare ale lui Agrippa și Drusus: astfel, Agrippa murise în anul 12 a. Chr., iar Drusus în 9 a. Chr., în timp ce Lucius a decedat în 2 p. Chr., iar Gaius în 4 p. Chr.; această comprimare a timpului, precum și folosirea adjectivului *propera* (grăbită) pe lângă *mors*, face ca *dolus novercae Liviae* (perfidia mamei vitrege) să devină pentru cititor o cauză mai probabilă a morților premature ale lui Lucius și Gaius decât *fatum* (soarta). Această impresie este întărită de folosirea substantivului *noverca*<sup>5</sup> (mamă vitregă) cu referire la Livia, care devenise, de fapt, mamă vitregă numai după adoptarea celor doi tineri de bunicul lor, Augustus. Termenul este intenționat folosit în mod repetat<sup>6</sup> de Tacitus în legătură cu Livia, căci

<sup>4</sup> Discutând acest pasaj, Patricia Watson are în vedere doar două dintre morțile amintite, trecând, astfel, cu vederea efectul cumulativ proiectat de Tacitus: Patricia A. Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers. Myth, Misogyny and Reality*. Mnemosyne, Suppl. 143 (Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill, 1995), 180: "There is also a telescoping of events: the deaths of Gaius and Lucius are mentioned together – in keeping with the insinuations against Livia – though they took place at a distance of two years."

<sup>5</sup> În lucrarea sa dedicată figurii mamei vitrege în antichitatea clasică, Patricia Watson analizează pe larg maniera în care Tacitus este influențat în portretizarea Liviei de stereotipul literar al mamei vitrege malefice (*saeva noverca*): Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers. Myth, Misogyny and Reality*, 176–192.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony A. Barrett, "Tacitus, Livia and the evil Stepmother", *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie, Neue Folge*, 144. Bd., H. 2 (2001): 172: "It has long been recognized that his most

*noverca* are conotații negative<sup>7</sup> în limba și literatura latină, termenul exprimând *per se* ideea mamei vitrege funeste pentru noua sa familie, asociată cu otrăviri, magie și vrăjitorie. Conexiunea Liviei cu magia și vrăjitoria este întărită în mintea cititorului de vocabularul folosit de Tacitus în formulări imediat următoare: *Ann.* 1.3 *non obscuris matris artibus* (nu prin procedeele secrete ale mamei), respectiv *Ann.* 1.3 *nam senem Augustum devinxerat adeo, uti nepotem unicum, Agrippam Postumum, in insulam Planasiam proiecerit* (căci [Livia] îl înlănțuise într-atât pe bătrânul Augustus încât să-l exileze pe unicul său nepot, Agrippa Postumus, în insula Planasia). Astfel, folosirea verbului *devincire* (a lega) în legătură cu Livia trimite cu gândul la puterea magică a cuvintelor și la magia legătoare<sup>8</sup>, mai ales că puțin înainte se făcuse deja referire la procedeele secrete, artele întunecate (*obscurae artes*) folosite de Livia pentru a ajuta ascensiunea lui Tiberius la putere. În plus, sub aparența de a face cunoscute suspiciunile altora, Tacitus o prezintă pe Livia drept posibil vinovată și de moartea lui Augustus însuși, prin sintagma *scelus uxoris* fiind făcută aluzie la otrăvire<sup>9</sup>: *Ann.* 1.5 *haec atque talia agitantibus gravescere valitudo Augusti, et quidam scelus uxoris suspectabant* (pe când se discutau acestea și altele asemănătoare, se înrăutățește starea de sănătate a lui Augustus și unii suspectau crima soției). Dacă implicarea Liviei în moartea lui Augustus este relatată sub forma unor suspiciuni, vinovăția ei în grăbirea morții lui Agrippa Postumus, al cărui exil îl uneltise mai înainte, este considerată de Tacitus foarte probabilă. În aceastăucidere, Liviei îi este asociat Tiberius, autorul oferind și motivele fiecăruia dintre

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successful device for arousing deep-seated prejudice against Livia is his repeated application to her of the word *noverca* (stepmother).”

<sup>7</sup> Michael J. G. Gray-Fow, “The wicked Stepmother in Roman Literature and History: an Evaluation”, *Latomus* 47, fascicule 4 (1988): 742–743: “When we reach the poets of the Augustan Age we find the stepmother depicted in the most unsympathetic colours. References to stepmothers by Virgil and Horace are harsh and uncomplimentary (...) Elsewhere Virgil’s stepmothers are more overtly and precisely villainous. He describes them as savage (*saevae – nouercae*), and pictures how *nouercae miscueruntque herbas et non innoxia verba*. An implied association with witches is obvious. (...) The tradition of the lethal stepmother was clearly well-established by the early Empire.”

<sup>8</sup> Francesca Santoro L’hoir, *Tragedy, Rhetoric, and the Historiography of Tacitus’ Annales* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), 148: “The connotations of *devincire*, furthermore, are especially ominous when Tacitus employs the verb in near combination with *dolus* and *artes* in relation to Livia, Augustus, and the imperial succession, since it suggests control by beguiling persuasion. Incantation as a means of binding was a metaphor of Greek tragedy. (...) Tacitus’ remark *senem devinxerat* seems to be similarly inspired.”

<sup>9</sup> Pentru opiniile specialiștilor despre acest înțeles al lui *scelus* în contextul citat a se vedea Santoro L’hoir, *Tragedy, Rhetoric, and the Historiography of Tacitus’ Annales*, 182.

cei doi: ura de mamă vitregă (*novercalibus odiis*; de remarcat fiind folosirea adjectivului *novercalis, e*, derivat din *noverca*), respectiv, teama (*metu*) lui Tiberius, probabil teama de posibilele pretenții la putere ale ultimului nepot de sânge al lui Augustus: *Ann. 1.6 propius vero Tiberium ac Liviam, illum metu, hanc novercalibus odiis, suspecti et invisi juvenis caedem festinavisse* (este mai aproape de adevăr că Tiberius și Livia au grăbit uciderea tânărului suspectat și urât, Tiberius din cauza fricii față de acesta, iar Livia din cauza urii de mamă vitregă).

Caracterul negativ al Liviei este atât de bine și într-un mod atât de determinat construit în doar câteva paragrafe încât atunci când istoricul consemnează în *Ann. 1.33* faptul că Germanicus era neliniștit din cauza urii ascunse a unchiului și a bunicii sale față de el (*anxius occultis in se patruī aviaequē odiis*), adăugând și animozitatea dintre Livia și Agrippina, soția lui Germanicus, iscată de împunsăturile de mamă vitregă ale Liviei față de Agrippina (*novercalibus Liviae in Agrippinam stimulis*), în mintea cititorului se creează așteptarea unui sfârșit prematur și tragic pentru Germanicus. Vocabularul utilizat întărește această presupunere, mai ales prin folosirea adjectivului *occultis* pe lângă *odiis* și a adjectivului *novercalibus* subordonat lui *stimulis*. Această așteptare este întărită de informațiile oferite de Tacitus în *Ann. 2.43* cu privire la îndrumări secrete (*occulta mandata*) date de Tiberius lui Cnaeus Piso, guvernator al Siriei, referitor la Germanicus, precum și cu privire la îndemnul Liviei către Munatia Plancina, soția lui Piso, de a o urmări pe Agrippina. Și după decesul lui Germanicus, Tacitus semnaleză repetat implicarea ascunsă, secretă a Liviei și a lui Tiberius în moartea tânărului, precum în *Ann. 2.77 est tibi Augustae conscientia, est Caesaris favor, sed in occulto* (tu, Piso, te bucuri de complicitatea Augustei și de bunăvoința împăratului, dar pe ascuns), *Ann. 2.82 secretos Augustae cum Plancina sermones*<sup>10</sup> (convoorbirile secrete ale Augustei cu Plancina). În *Anale* este constant relevat că, în relația lor cu Germanicus și cu Agrippina, Piso și soția sa, pe lângă inimițiile personale, sunt, de asemenea, intermediarii și agenții lui Tiberius și ai Liviei, formându-se prin urmare două triade: una masculină (Tiberius – inițiator, Piso – agent, Germanicus – victimă), alta feminină (Livia – inițiator, Plancina – agent, Agrippina – victimă). Aversiunii lui Tiberius față de Germanicus îi răspunde, astfel, aversiunea Liviei față de

<sup>10</sup> Watson, *Ancient Stepmothers. Myth, Misogyny and Reality*, 188: “there was nothing strange about her meeting with a close friend; Tacitus, however, takes this and several other innocent activities and puts a sinister construction on them in order to back up the impression of Livia as a scheming murderess.”

Agripina, iar rivalității dintre Piso și Germanicus îi corespunde drept pandant rivalitatea<sup>11</sup> dintre Plancina și Agrippina.

Boala aducătoare de moarte a lui Germanicus este pusă de victima însăși pe seama otrăvirii de către Piso, dar Tacitus asociază suspiciunii de otrăvire diverse alte practici magice ale căror dovezi s-au găsit în casa locuită de Germanicus: *Ann. 2.69 saevam vim morbi augebat persuasio veneni a Pisone accepti; et reperiebantur solo ac parietibus erutae humanorum corporum reliquiae, carmina et devotiones et nomen Germanici plumbeis tabulis insculptum, semusti cineres ac tabo obliti aliaque malefica, quis creditur animas numinibus infernis sacrari.* (Convingerea lui Germanicus că îi fusese administrată otravă de către Piso sporea forța virulentă a bolii; în podea și în ziduri erau găsite rămășițe dezgropate de corpuri omenești, farmece și blesteme și tăblițe de plumb incizate cu numele lui Germanicus, cenușă pe jumătate arsă și îmbibată cu sânge putred, precum și alte fermecături prin care se crede că sufletele sunt afurisite divinităților subpământene.)

Dacă acest pasaj face referire explicită numai la vinovăția lui Piso, câteva rânduri mai jos, în *Ann. 2.71*, Germanicus, pe patul de moarte, consideră că este răpus în egală măsură de ticăloșia lui Piso și a Plancinei (*sce-lere Pisonis et Plancinae interceptus*), remarcând apoi că va fi plâns ca unul care a supraviețuit atâtor războaie, dar a murit din cauza perfidiei femeiești (*muliebri fraude cecidisse*). De observat este folosirea adjectivului *muliebris* pentru a caracteriza substantivul *fraus*; adjectivul, fiind generalizator, trimite nu numai la Plancina, ci și la Livia, în timp ce prin folosirea substantivului *mulier* – *mulieris fraude* (perfidia unei femei) – ar fi fost desemnată doar Plancina. Vinovăția celei din urmă în obținerea otrăvii este indicată de Tacitus prin strânsa ei prietenie cu Martina, o femeie expertă în otrăvuri: *Ann. 2.74 infamem veneficiis ea in provincia et Plancinae perccaram nomine Martinam* (o femeie de rău renume în această provincie din cauza crimelor

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Ann Pollard, în studiul său, “Magic Accusations against Women in Tacitus’s *Annals*”, în *Daughters of Hecate. Women and Magic in the Ancient World*, eds. Kimberly B. Stratton, Dayna S. Kalleres (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 183–218, examinează pe larg și analizează cu atenție acuzațiile de magie aduse femeilor narate în *Analele* lui Tacitus. Pornind de la constatarea lui Mary Douglas, potrivit căreia relațiile competitive, nereglementate, pot duce la acuzații de magie, Elizabeth Pollard își îndreaptă atenția asupra circumstanțelor istorice în care au fost formulate învinuirile, concentrându-se asupra aspectelor sociale ale acuzațiilor de magie în termeni de competiție pentru putere. Cu privire la relația dintre Plancina și Agrippina Maior, autoarea notează la pagina 190: “In terms of the social implications, à la Mary Douglas, of these accusations, we have two women, Plancina and Agrippina Maior, with little direct access to power and few other means of social negotiation, battling it out through accusations of the use of *artes magicae*.”



prin otrăvire și foarte dragă Plancinei, pe numele de Martina). Această Martina este trimisă la Roma pentru a susține acuzațiile împotriva celor doi soți, dar moare pe drum: *Ann. 3.7 nam vulgatum erat missam, ut dixi, a Cn. Sentio famosam veneficiis Martinam subita morte Brundisii extinctam, venenumque nodo crinium eius occultatum, nec ulla in corpore signa sumpti exitii reperta* (căci se răspândise vestea că Martina, faimoasă prin otrăvirile sale, trimisă, după cum am spus, de Cnaeus Sentius la Roma, a sfârșit la Brundisium printr-o moarte subită și că otrava a fost ascunsă într-un nod al părului său, dar pe corpul său nu s-a găsit niciun semn de sinucidere). Spre deosebire de figura specifică a vrăjitoarei în literatura latină, care apare de obicei cu părul desfăcut sau vâlvoi, precum Canidia din *Satirele* lui Horatius, 1.8.24, *pedibus nudis passoque capillo* (cu picioarele goale și părul desfăcut), maniera în care este descris părul înnodat cu otravă al Martinei trimite cu gândul la magia legătoare, prin legătura etimologică dintre *nodus* și verbul *necto, ere, nexui, nexum* (a lega, a înnoda, a înlănțui). Această idee de legare – anterior menționată privitor la relația dintre Augustus și Livia – apare din nou câteva rânduri mai jos, prin folosirea verbului *innecto, ere* (un derivat al lui *necto*) cu referire la Tiberius, care este considerat de Piso ca fiind legat de această conspirație care a dus la moartea lui Germanicus prin complicitatea mamei: *Ann. 3.10 Tiberium (...) conscientiae matris innexum esse*. În asemenea pasaje, Piso și Tiberius apar drept secundari ca importanță în complot, autorul transferând implicarea și responsabilitatea uciderii lui Germanicus mai ales asupra celor trei femei și instituind, astfel, o nouă triadă, una malefică și feminină: Livia – inițiatoare, Plancina – agent, Martina – expertă în otrăvuri.

În ciuda legăturilor sale cu Piso, Tiberius, rugat să asume controlul investigațiilor împotriva acestuia, refuză și însărcinează senatul să cerceteze cauza. Printre învinuirile aduse de Vitellius, unul dintre acuzatori, sunt amintite și cele de otrăvire, precum și de săvârșire a altor acte magice care au dus la moartea lui Germanicus: *Ann. 3.13 postremo ipsum devotionibus et veneno peremisse; sacra hinc et immolationes nefandas ipsius atque Plancinae* (în cele din urmă Piso l-a ucis pe Germanicus cu ajutorul blestemelor și otrăvii; apoi au urmat ritualurile și sacrificiile nelegiuite ale lui Piso și ale Plancinei). Piso se sinucide în timpul procesului, dar soției lui, la rugămintele Liviei, îi este acordată imunitate, deși, după cum relatează Tacitus, mai ales împotriva Plancinei se îndreaptă acuzațiile și plângerile oamenilor cinstiți, care consideră că otrăvurile și meșteșugul ei (*venena et artes*), folosite cu succes împotriva lui Germanicus, vor fi îndreptate în curând împotriva Agrippinei și a copiilor ei: *Ann. 3.17 proinde venena et artes tam feliciter expertas verteret in*



*Agrippinam, in liberos eius* (prin urmare să întoarcă otrăvurile și artele sale, încercate cu atâta reușită, împotriva Agrippinei și a copiilor ei).

Tacitus încheie relatarea acestui complex episod ca și cum se îndoiește că adevărul celor întâmplate la moartea lui Germanicus poate fi cunoscut: *Ann. 3.19 Is finis fuit ulciscenda Germanici morte, non modo apud illos homines qui tum agebant, etiam secutis temporibus vario rumore iactata. adeo maxima quaeque ambigua sunt, dum alii quoquo modo audita pro compertis habent, alii vera in contrarium vertunt, et gliscit utrumque posteritate.* (Acesta a fost sfârșitul privitor la răzbunarea morții lui Germanicus, moarte care a fost discutată în feluri diferite nu numai de acei oameni care trăiau atunci, dar chiar și în timpurile următoare. Într-atât sunt de neclare marile evenimente, cât timp unii consideră sigure lucruri doar auzite, iar alții schimbă adevărul în contrariul său, ambele tendințe sporind odată cu trecerea timpului.)

Spre deosebire de narațiunea complexă oferită de Tacitus cu privire la Germanicus, victimă a unor acte magice, următoarele relatări examinate sunt mai concis narate și consistă din diferite acte magice menționate în contextul proceselor în care acuzații sunt învinuiți a fi recurs ei înșiși la otrăvuri, la procedee magice sau la diverse proceduri divinatorii. Succesiunea constantă de uneltiri, trădări, delatori, acuzații și acuzați încheagă o atmosferă întunecată, de teamă opresivă și neîncredere generalizată. Printre primele în ordine cronologică se află **acuzațiile împotriva lui Libo Drusus**, care este acuzat în anul 16 p. Chr. de a fi plănuit o conspirație, dar și de a fi recurs la diverse practici oculte. Tacitus prezintă mai pe larg acest eveniment deoarece îl consideră punctul de plecare pentru un tip de procedee nou și nociv pentru stat, delatorii atrăgând în cursă, iar apoi acuzând persoane a căror prietenie o câștigaseră în prealabil<sup>12</sup>: *Ann. 2.27 eius negotii initium ordinem finem curatius disseram, quia tum primum reperta sunt quae per tot annos rem publicam exedere.* (Voi relata cu mai multă grijă începutul, desfășurarea și sfârșitul acestei afaceri, fiindcă atunci pentru prima dată au fost descoperite procedeele care au distrus statul timp de atâția ani.) Istoricul specifică faptul că însuși unul dintre delatori, senatorul Firmius Catus, este cel care l-a împins (*impulit*) pe Libo către promisiunile Chaldeilor<sup>13</sup>, ritualurile magilor și interpreții de

<sup>12</sup> Henry Furneaux, *The Annals of Tacitus*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1884), 285: “Delation has already appeared (see on 1.72, 74), but we here first find persons entrapped by intimate friends, who keep up private communications with Caesar.”

<sup>13</sup> Termenul de Chaldei este folosit de Tacitus pentru a indica astrologi; pentru această identitate dintre *mathematici* (astrologi) și *Chaldaei* pledează și un pasaj din Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, 1.9.6 *vulgus autem, quos gentilicio vocabulo, Chaldaeos dicere oportet, mathematicos*

vise: *Ann. 2.27: Firmius Catus senator, ex intima Libonis amicitia, iuvenem improvidum et facilem inanibus ad Chaldaeorum promissa, magorum sacra, somniorum etiam interpretes impulit.* (Senatorul Firmius Catus, unul dintre prietenii intimi ai lui Libo, l-a împins pe tânărul fără judecată și aplecat spre lucruri prostești către promisiunile Chaldeilor, ritualurile magilor și spre interpreții de vise.) M. W. Dickie consideră că în acest paragraf *magorum sacra* se referă la magia divinatorie<sup>14</sup>, dar acest înțeles nu este univoc, cu atât mai mult cu cât Tacitus amintește și alte acte magice la care ar fi recurs Libo. Astfel, este menționat un anumit Iunius, care apare ca expert în magia necromantică, putând chema spiritele defuncțiilor, dar care îl trădează pe tânăr lui Fulcinus Trio, un alt delator, care cere o investigație a senatului împotriva lui Libo: *Ann. 2.28 donec Iunius quidam, temptatus ut infernas umbras carminibus eliceret, ad Fulcinium Trionem indicium detulit* (până când un anume Iunius, provocat să invoce umbrele morților prin incantații, l-a trădat lui Fulcinus Trio printr-un denunț). Tacitus îl prezintă pe Libo Drusus cu anumită bunăvoință și simpatie amestecate însă cu dispreț față de credulitatea acestuia. Dovezile aduse de Caius Vibius, un alt acuzator, împotriva lui Libo sunt considerate niște aiureli, cu excepția unor însemne teribile sau oculte (*atroces vel occultas notas*), prin care erau afurisite numele pe care le marcau, care duc gândul către *Ann. 2.69* și tăblițele de plumb în care fusese incizat și blestemat numele lui Germanicus: *Ann. 2.30 donec Vibius (...) singillatim se crimina obiecturum professus, protulit libellos vecordes adeo, ut consultaverit Libo, an habiturus foret opes, quis viam Appiam Brundisium usque pecunia operiret. inerant et alia huiusce modi stolidi vana, si mollius acciperes, miseranda; uni tamen libello manu Libonis nominibus Caesarum aut senatorum additas atroces vel occultas notas accusator arguebat.* (până când Vibius (...), declarând că va expune acuzațiile una câte una, a adus niște dovezi scrise atât de prostești, cum că Libo ar fi întrebat dacă va avea destule bogății încât să acopere via Appia până la Brundisium. Erau și alte aiureli prostești de acest fel sau, dacă le privești mai blând, demne de milă. Totuși, acuzatorul arăta că în unul dintre documente niște semne funeste sau tainice au fost adăugate de mâna

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*dicit* (mulțimea însă îi numește ‚astrologi’ pe cei pe care ar trebui să-i numească, printr-un etnonim, ‚Chaldei’).

<sup>14</sup> Matthew W. Dickie, „Magic in Roman Historians”, in *Magical Practice in the Latin West: papers from the international conference held at the University of Zaragoza, 30 Sept.–1 Oct. 2005*, eds. Richard L. Gordon, Francisco Marco Simón (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 97: “It is certainly true that the expression Tacitus uses to refer to Libo Drusus’ consultation of magicians about his future is *magorum sacra*.”

lui Libo numelor membrilor familiei imperiale și ale senatorilor.) Precum Piso, Libo se sinucide înainte să fie dat verdictul în procesul său.

Imediat după procesul lui Libo și sugerând, astfel, cititorului său o legătură<sup>15</sup> între cele două evenimente, Tacitus relatează **expulzarea astrologilor și magilor**, prilej cu care sunt transmise de istoric încă două nume de specialiști ai artelor oculte, Lucius Pituanius și Publius Marcius, ambii pedepsiți cu moartea: *Ann. 2.32 facta et de mathematicis magisque Italia pellendis senatus consulta; quorum e numero L. Pituanius saxo deiectus est, in P. Marcium consules extra portam Esquilinam, cum classicum canere iussissent, more prisco advertere.* (S-au luat hotărâri ale senatului și despre alungarea astrologilor și magilor din Italia; dintre aceștia, L. Pituanius a fost aruncat de pe Stânca Tarpeie, iar pe P. Marcius consuli l-au pedepsit în afara porții Esquiline după obiceiul străbun<sup>16</sup>, după ce au poruncit să fie dat semnalul cu trompeta.)

**Acuzațiile împotriva Aemiliei Lepida:** În anul 20 p. Chr., Aemilia Lepida, dintr-o familie importantă și influentă politic, este acuzată de a se fi prefăcut a da naștere unui copil al lui Publius Quirinius, bărbat bogat și fără copii: *Ann. 3.22 defertur simulavisse partum ex P. Quirinio divite atque orbo.* Se mai adăugau însă și alte acuzații, de adulter, otrăviri, consultare a astrologilor Chaldei cu privire la familia imperială: *adiciebantur adulteria venena quaesitumque per Chaldaeos in domum Caesaris, defendente ream Manio Lepido fratre.* Francesca Santoro L'hoir, remarcând preponderența otrăvurilor și otrăvirilor în *Anale*, notează faptul că Tacitus este tributar în narațiunea sa (pre)concepțiilor romane despre acestea, printre care menționează faptul că otrăvirea era considerată o crimă tipică femeilor, fiind corelată cu lipsa de castitate și adulterul, precum și cu magia.<sup>17</sup> Această asociere a adulterului, otrăvurilor și magiei (în această situație sub forma divinației cu privire la viitorul casei imperiale, pedepsită în conformitate cu *lex maiestatis*) se regăsește în complexul de acuzații aduse Lepidei, care, fiind găsită vinovată, este pedepsită prin exil.

<sup>15</sup> Pauline Ripat, "Expelling Misconceptions: Astrologers at Rome", *Classical Philology*, vol. 106, no. 2 (2011): 119–120, consideră că, deși Tacitus implică o conexiune între cele două evenimente, această legătură nu este susținută de dovezile istorice: "while it is undisputable that at least one expulsion decree was issued against astrologers under Tiberius, it is uncertain that it was passed in the same year as Libo's conspiracy, or even as a result of the conspiracy."

<sup>16</sup> Suetonius în *Nero* 49 descrie în ce constă pedepsirea după obiceiul strămoșilor: *nudi hominis ceruicem inseri furcae, corpus uirgis ad necem caedi* (vinovatul este dezbrăcat, gâtul îi este vârât în furcă, iar corpul său este lovit cu nuiiele până la moarte).

<sup>17</sup> Santoro L'hoir, *Tragedy, Rhetoric, and the Historiography of Tacitus' Annales*, 158–59.

**Acuzațiile împotriva Fabiei Numantina:** Conexiunea între magie și otrăvire se regăsește și în învinuirile aduse Fabiei Numantina în anul 24 p. Chr. După ce fostul ei soț, pretorul Plautius Silvanus, își omoară din cauze necunoscute actuala soție, Apronia, aruncând-o pe fereastră, Numantina este acuzată de a fi provocat nebunia lui Silvanus prin incantații (*carminibus*) și poțiuni (*veneficiis*), dar este judecată nevinovată: *Ann.* 4.22 *mox Numantina, prior uxor eius, accusata iniecisse carminibus et veneficiis vecordiam marito, insons iudicatur*. Poțiunile (*veneficia*) la care se face referire în acuzații sunt probabil filtre de iubire<sup>18</sup>, care însă în loc să îl determine pe Silvanus să se reîntoarcă la fosta nevastă, îl fac pe acesta să înnebunească și să o ucidă pe Apronia.

**Acuzațiile împotriva Claudiei Pulchra** sunt legate de Tacitus de înrudirea și prietenia acesteia cu Agrippina, precum și de iminenta prăbușire a celei din urmă. Domitius Afer, fost pretor și doritor să-și facă un renume cu orice preț și prin orice mijloace, o acuză, în anul 26 p. Chr., pe Pulchra, vară a Agrippinei, de necinste, adulter cu Furnius, precum și de încercări de otrăvire (*veneficia*) a împăratului și de blesteme (*devotiones*) îndreptate împotriva acestuia: *Ann.* 4.52 *crimen impudicitiae, adulterum Furnium, veneficia in principem et devotiones obiectabat*. În urma acuzațiilor, atât Pulchra, cât și Furnius sunt condamnați, iar Afer își câștigă faima de avocat și orator talentat. Ansamblul de învinuiri, care combină adulter, otrăvire și magie folosită contra împăratului, amintește de cel atestat în *Ann.* 3.22 contra Aemiliei Lepida.

Elizabeth Pollard, a cărei cercetare se concentrează, după cum am semnalat deja, mai ales asupra circumstanțelor istorice în care sunt aduse acuzațiile de magie împotriva femeilor relatate în *Anale*, consideră că acestea îndeplinesc o importantă funcție socială în cadrul complexelor relații competitive între membrii clasei dominante: “these accusations are working out competitive and unregulated relationships among powerful women and their families.”<sup>19</sup>

Aceeași cheie interpretativă sociologică, de reglare a competiției între membri ai aristocrației imperiale, poate fi aplicată și **acuzațiilor împotriva lui Mamercus Scaurus**, fost soț al deja amintitei Aemilia Lepida, care, în anul 34 p. Chr., este acuzat de Servilius și Cornelius de adulter cu Livia, nora lui Tiberius, precum și de recurgere la ritualuri magice, fără a se preciza în ce constau acestea (sintagma *magorum sacra* este identică celei deja întâlnite

<sup>18</sup> Pollard, “Magic Accusations against Women in Tacitus’s Annals”, 194.

<sup>19</sup> Pollard, “Magic Accusations against Women in Tacitus’s Annals”, 195.

în cazul lui Libo Drusus): *Ann.* 6.29 *ab Servilio et Cornelio accusatoribus adulterium Liviae, magorum sacra obiectabantur*. De remarcat este faptul că și în acest context, în care acuzatul este un bărbat, învinuirea de magie este asociată cu cea de adulter, transgresarea legilor divine, pe care o implică magia, fiind, așadar, asociată cu transgresarea celor umane, pe care o implică adulterul. După cum au făcut și Piso și Libo înaintea sa, Scaurus se sinucide fără a mai aștepta rezultatul procesului.

**Tiberius și astrologia:** În timp ce Libo Drusus și Aemilia Lepida sunt pedepsiți pentru că au consultat astrologi cu privire la viitorul împăratului și al familiei sale, Tiberius însuși dovedește un interes activ și o bună cunoaștere a artei Chaldeilor (*ars Chaldaeorum*), pe care o și practică cu succes, după cum narează pe larg Tacitus în cartea a șasea a *Analelor*. Autorul relatează cum a dobândit Tiberius aceste cunoștințe, precum și prevestirea adevărată a acestuia cu privire la viitoarea domnie a lui Galba: *Ann.* 6.20 *Non omiserim praesagium Tiberii de Servio Galba tum consule. quem accitum et diversis sermonibus pertemptatum postremo Graecis verbis in hanc sententiam adlocutus: ,et tu, Galba, quandoque degustabis imperium', seram ac brevem potentiam significans, scientia Chaldaeorum artis, cuius apiscendae otium apud Rhodum, magistrum Thrasillum habuit*. (Nu pot să omit prevestirea lui Tiberius cu privire la Servius Galba, pe atunci consul. După ce l-a chemat și l-a pus la încercare prin conversații despre diverse lucruri l-a agrăit cu vorbe grecești în acest fel: ,și tu, Galba, vei gusta odată din putere', indicând prin acestea o putere târzie și scurtă, biziindu-se în cele spuse pe cunoașterea artei Chaldeilor, întru dobândirea căreia a avut răgaz la Rhodos și drept maestru pe Thrasillus.) Tacitus transmite, de asemenea, cum a dobândit Thrasillus încrederea lui Tiberius: după ce pricepera i-a fost pusă la încercare, astrologul, măsurând poziția și distanțele dintre stele (*Ann.* 6.21 *positus siderum ac spatia dimensus*), a reușit să determine că se află în pericol de moarte și să evite astfel capcana mortală întinsă, scăpând de a fi aruncat în mare și câștigând prietenia de lungă durată a lui Tiberius.<sup>20</sup> Atitudinea lui Tacitus însuși față de astrologie nu reiese clar din cartea a șasea; istoricul declară în *Ann.* 6.22 că el ezită a judeca dacă lucrurile omenești se desfășoară după un destin și o necesitate neschimbătoare sau la întâmplare, dar apoi continuă prin a constata că cei mai mulți oameni consideră că viitorul fiecăruia este decis de la naștere, că prezicerile false se datorează necinstei prezicătorilor care spun lucrurile pe care nu le cunosc și că dovezi de încredere în această

<sup>20</sup> Walter M. Hayes, "Tiberius and the Future", *The Classical Journal*, vol. 55, no. 1 (1959): 4–5.

artă au fost date atât în trecut, cât și în prezent. Nu se poate ști dacă autorul se alătură opiniei majorității, dar atât relatările prevestirilor dovedite adevărate ale lui Tiberius, precum și prezența lui *quippe* pentru a introduce fraza următoare par să pledeze pentru un răspuns afirmativ: *Ann.* 6.22 *quippe a filio eiusdem Thrasulli praedictum Neronis imperium in tempore memorabitur, ne nunc incepto longius abierim* (într-adevăr, va fi amintit la momentul potrivit că domnia lui Nero a fost prezisă de fiul aceluiași Thrasillus, ca să nu mă abat prea mult acum de la subiect). Ultimele preziceri ale lui Tiberius se referă la destinul întunecat al familiei imperiale și amplifică atmosfera sumbră prin proiectarea în viitor a devastării și dezolării ce caracterizează principatul acestuia: *Ann.* 6.46 *mox incertus animi fesso corpore consilium, cui impar erat, fato permisit, iactis tamen vocibus, per quas intellegeretur providus futurorum. namque Macroni non abdita ambage occidentem ab eo deserui, orientem spectari exprobravit, et C. Caesari forte orto sermone L. Sullam inincidenti omnia Sullae vitia et nullam eiusdem virtutem habiturum praedixit. simul crebris cum lacrimis minorem ex nepotibus complexus, truci alterius vultu, ,occides hunc tu' inquit ,et te alius.'* (Apoi, nedecis în suflet și obosit trupește a lăsat sorții decizia în privința căreia nu era pregătit, aruncând totuși anumite vorbe prin care se înțelegea că prevăzuse cele viitoare. Căci lui Macro i-a reproșat, printr-o aluzie destul de evidentă, că îl părăsește pe cel ce apune și se uită spre cel ce răsare, iar lui Caius Caesar (Caligula), care, într-o discuție născută din întâmplare, își bătea joc de Lucius Sulla, i-a prezis că va avea toate viciile lui Sulla, dar niciuna dintre virtuțile acestuia. În același timp, îmbrățișându-l cu multe lacrimi pe cel mai mic dintre nepoții săi, la vederea expresiei furioase a celui de-al doilea (i.e. Caligula) a zis: ,tu îl vei ucide pe acesta, iar altul te va ucide pe tine'.)

În episoadele selectate pentru analiză datorită conexiunii lor cu artele oculte, Tacitus relevă aspecte diferite și ascunse ale caracterului complex al lui Tiberius (relațiile sale cu Livia și Germanicus, interesul său pentru astrologie), dar aduce la lumină și relațiile conflictuale din cadrul familiei imperiale (cazul lui Germanicus), precum și luptele pentru putere între familiile aristocratice (acuzățiile de magie aduse împotriva unor membri ai aristocrației romane: Libo Drusus, Aemilia Lepida, Fabia Numantina, Claudia Pulchra, Mamercus Scaurus). Practicile oculte consemnate de Tacitus intensifică în relatare atmosfera de nesiguranță, neliniște, teamă și primejdie ce caracterizează în *Anale* principatul lui Tiberius.

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# Visual Representations of the Witches’ Activities in a Demonology Treaty: A case study on Ulrich Molitor’s *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus* (1489)

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“Along the dim confines and swirling gulf  
Of chaos! Crowded round the cloudy throne  
Of Pandemonium all the rebel horde,  
And rapidly, with haughty gesture, passed  
Abaddon to his place, the lofties there  
Save one, and terribly his glowing eyes  
Watched and awaited the descending chief.”

Sumner Lincoln Fairfield,  
*Abaddon, the Spirit of Destruction*

**Abstract:** *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus/ Of Witches and Diviner Women*, the demonological treaty written by the legal scholar Ulrich Molitor in 1489, with his series of seven woodcuts, depicts the most important beliefs about witchcraft that circulated in the Germanic lands (the witches’ sabbath, the weather charms, the animal metamorphosis, etc.). The woodblock engravings depicting the witches’ activities that doubles the messages of the text would enable for the reader a better understanding of the cultural ideas concerning the superstitious beliefs in the witches’ activities.

**Keywords:** witches, witchcraft, demonology, demonological treaty, inquisitors, woodcuts, witches’ sabbath, devil.

One of the most notorious demonological treaties in history, the *Malleus Maleficarum*, written by the inquisitors Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger (in 1487), and his less-studied counter-part, *De laniis et phitonicis*

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*mulieribus/ Of Witches and Diviner Women*, elaborated by the legal scholar Ulrich Molitor (in 1489), were the direct result of a woman's actions. Her name was Helena Scheuberin<sup>1</sup>.

Helena Scheuberin, wife of Sebastian Scheuberin and a native of Innsbruck, was known for being aggressive, assertive, promiscuous, and of independent mind. She and thirteen other women stood before town officials, representatives of the Dominican order, and the Inquisitor Heinrich Kramer, on October 29 th, 1485. When Kramer had arrived in Innsbruck, Helena passed him in the street, spat, and said: "Fie on you, you bad monk, may the falling evil take you."<sup>2</sup>

This attitude was enough for Kramer to suspect her. Beside her attitude towards him, Helena never attended his sermons and also encouraged others not to go, for she believed him to be an evil man. Killing a knight with whom she was having an affair, keeping company with heretics, and causing a woman's illness so she could take her husband as a lover (either through witchcraft or poisoning), were the charges brought against Helena<sup>3</sup>.

During the trial, Kramer dwelled upon the connection between sexual immorality and *maleficium*, the evil activities of witches. When the line of questioning turned towards explicit details of Helena's sexual encounters, his fellow commissioners grew uncomfortable. Eventually, Bishop Golser's representative ordered Kramer to cease, and called for a recess. The next day there was an addition to the courtroom, Johann Merwais, a doctor and canon lawyer who was to act as Helena's defense. Immediately Merwais called into question the validity of the trial, citing procedural errors and questions about the nature of witchcraft<sup>4</sup>.

Ultimately, the accusations leveled against Helena and the thirteen other women were dismissed, and Kramer was essentially run out of town. Fueled by this perceived insult to justice, Kramer returned to Cologne to pen the *Malleus Maleficarum*<sup>5</sup>. Meanwhile, the events of the trial in Innsbruck left the town and the surrounding area in a debate about the definition of a witch and the extent of her powers. In order to settle the matter once and for all,

<sup>1</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the construction of witchcraft. Theology and popular belief* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 16.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts: Ulrich Molitor's De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus* (The University of Texas at Austin, 2016), 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum and the construction of witchcraft*, 18.

Archduke Sigismund of Austria (1427–1496) commissioned canon lawyer Ulrich Molitor to investigate the witchcraft issue<sup>6</sup>.

Ulrich Molitor was born in the city of Konstanz, most likely in the year 1442. In 1461 he began to study at the University of Basel, expressing an interest in grammar, philosophy and law. After completing the years of study (in 1470), Ulrich managed to become a doctor of canon law at the University of Padua. A few years later, Molitor started to work as a notary at the Episcopal Court of Konstanz. During this period of time, he was also a teacher at the University of Konstanz. Because of some disagreements with his superiors Molitor left the position of notary and entered in the service of Archduke Sigismund of Habsburg, beginning with the year 1482<sup>7</sup>.

Between 1488–1496 he worked for the Ducal Council of as a chancellor. From the year 1497 and until his death, he worked as a lawyer for the *Reichskammergericht* (the highest county court of the Empire). For a period of four years (1500–1504) he also occupied a clerck position for the city of Freiburg. He died in the year 1507, December 23. Over time, Ulrich Molitor wrote a series of political and judicial works (*Rechtsgutachten zur Gewerbeordnung*, 1485; *Kommentar to Ewigen Landfrieden des Reichstags von Worms*, 1495), a work on Christian demonology (*De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus*, 1489) and a comedy (*Somnium comedie*, 1475)<sup>8</sup>.

In the next pages, we will focus on the life and work of Ulrich Molitor, the content of the *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus*, and on the woodcuts that depict the activities of the witches. We will try to see what are the connections between the written text of the book and the seven woodcuts that are scattered through it.

Molitor's investigation resulted in *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus*, a treaty on witchcraft first published in Latin in Cologne, and almost immediately translated into vernacular German. *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus* was reprinted thirty-nine times (more than the *Malleus Maleficarum*)<sup>9</sup> and widely circulated throughout the cultural spaces of modern-day Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.

All later printings of *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus* were combined

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<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 2–3.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus. Impactul cultural al tratatului de demonologie Malleus Maleficarum (1487)* (2019), 11–12.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 13.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Mirică, «Onomastica angelică și demonică în tratatul de demonologie Malleus Maleficarum», in *Timp, societate și identitate culturală. «Miniaturi» istorice*, ed. Ileana Căzan and Bogdan Mateescu (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Academiei Române, 2015), 46–47.

with editions of the *Malleus Maleficarum* — a total of thirteen times between 1580 and 1669. The researcher Amy Ghilieri claims that this is because *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus* and the *Malleus Maleficarum* had “largely the same thematic content” and the same overall conclusions<sup>10</sup>.

The treaty was written in dialogic form with Ulrich Molitor, Archduke Sigismund, and Conrad Schatz, the chief magistrate of Constance, as the participants in the debate. By choosing this format, Molitor was able to present multiple opinions regarding the nature of witchcraft. Schatz represents the credulous opinion, who believes in every rumor; Sigismund assumes the role of the skeptic; and Molitor offers a moderate viewpoint, often siding with the Archduke<sup>11</sup>.

The treaty opens with Molitor’s dedication to the Archduke Sigismund and continues with a number of twelve chapters. In these chapters they discuss what kind of *maleficia*<sup>12</sup> witches are capable of committing, what powers are mere illusions, and what role God plays in the interaction between demons and mortals. Molitor was skeptical of some of the more extreme elements presented in the *Malleus Maleficarum* and took the opportunity to provide a more moderate approach to potential supernatural activity<sup>13</sup>.

Molitor’s basic arguments are summarized by historian Natalie Kwan: “The devil was more powerful than man, though he was constrained by the limits of providence. Witches, however, were powerless: although they believed they were granted power from the devil, they were in fact tricked by him into thinking that they could harm people, transform or travel to the sabbat by supernatural means. Nevertheless, these women deserved to be burned because they renounced God and dedicated themselves to the devil.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the dialogic format (a rare narrative format used for a demonological work)<sup>15</sup>, *De laniis* was also the first illustrated witchcraft treaty. The treaty was likely illustrated as an attempt by the publishers to make it more marketable<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 3–4.

<sup>12</sup> Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft* (Lanham, Maryland, and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2003), 87.

<sup>13</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor’s De Laniis et phitonicis mulieribus, 1489–1669: A Bibliographic and Cultural Analysis* (Reno: University of Nevada, 2015), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted by Elizabeth C. Srsic, *Words, Woodcuts and Witches: Ulrich Molitor’s De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus* (2015), 2.

<sup>15</sup> One later example that uses this dialogic format is Giovanni Francesco Pico della Mirandola’s, *Strix, sive de ludificatione daemonum* (1523).

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 4.

The images appear, with the relevant text, in the early editions of the work, in the following order: the authors' presentation of the treaty to the Archduke Sigismund, a woman shooting an arrow at a man, three transformed witches flying on a pitchfork, a male witch riding a wolf, the devil seducing a woman, two witches before a cauldron, and three women feasting outdoors. The last six woodcuts represented the powers most commonly associated with witches<sup>17</sup>.



Fig. 1. Ulrich Molitor presents his treaty to Sigismund, Archduke of Austria<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 4.

<sup>18</sup> «Des Sorcières et Devineresses. Ulrich Molitor», accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.histoiredelafolie.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/molitor-ulrich>.



The first woodcut from *De laniis* shows the dedication of his work to the Archduke, at his court, where he is surrounded by courtiers. An important person, wearing ecclesiastical attires is seen next to Sigismund, most likely the Archbishop Berthold of Mainz.

Such representation of individuals recalls Sigismund's status as the patron of *De laniis*, as well as the location of Constance in the archdiocese of the Archbishop of Mainz. The presence of the first woodcut bolsters the authority of Molitor's text<sup>19</sup>.



Fig. 2. Female Witch Lames a Man with an Arrow<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 78.

<sup>20</sup> «Des Sorcières et Devinereses. Ulrich Molitor», accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.histoiredelafolie.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/molitor-ulrich>.

The researcher Amy Ghilieri, after analyzing this woodcut, concludes that the inclusion of this woodcut before the text even begins suggests that the book was intended to prepare Sigismund for future witch trials, functioning just like a preparatory legal brief. Also, it must be observed that this first woodcut does not engage the material in the body chapters of the book<sup>21</sup>.

In this second woodcut, we are presented with a scene where a witch is shooting an arrow at a man in order to cause him pain (he has lost his shoe in the process). Archer witches were highly popular in the literature of the late fifteenth century, particularly in the *Malleus Maleficarum*, Question II, chapter 16<sup>22</sup> (e.g. the figure of Punker of Rohrbach)<sup>23</sup>.

The upper left corner contains a building, or perhaps some city walls in the distance. The woman and man exist in a space occupied by hills, birds, and plant life. Their location is important for understanding the image, as it warns of the often dangerous and untamable wilderness<sup>24</sup>.

Although the female figure is fully clothed, her head is uncovered allowing her hair to fly around wildly. This is a common visual cue for youth and lasciviousness termed “flame hair” by the historian Charles Zika, connotating unrestrained sexuality. The female figure’s uncontrolled sexuality is matched only by her aggressive gesture with the bow and arrow. The young witch is not using an object associated with a traditional female role. Instead of an item related to the house, she wields a weapon of war and hunt<sup>25</sup>. With this act, the young witch is inverting societal norms and assuming a more masculine identity<sup>26</sup>.

It appears the witch is aiming an arrow at the man with the intent to fire upon him. However, upon closer inspection, the arrow is revealed to be strung in reverse. The further reversal or inversion of the object is a common visual trope in the depiction of witchcraft, as the intent to bring harm upon the victim<sup>27</sup>.

According to Charles Zika, the arrow represents a specific type of *maleficia* commonly understood in popular culture. The arrow is likely charmed or

<sup>21</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 78.

<sup>22</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 80.

<sup>23</sup> For more details, see Robert Mirică, “Figura vrăjitorilor-arcași în tratatul de demonologie *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487)”, in *Istorie, Cultură și Cercetare* 3, ed. Dumitru-Cătălin Rogojanu and Gherghina Boda (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2019), 67–74.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe. Culture, Cognition, and Everyday Life* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 313.

<sup>26</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 25.

<sup>27</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 26.

poisoned, and the impact of the charm is symbolized by the loss of the man's boot. Firing the arrow is not what is important to casting the spell, but the intent behind the inverted gesture. Now bootless, the man's foot, thought to be a phallic symbol by Zika, is exposed to the witch's will<sup>28</sup>.

If we follow Zika's interpretation and see the man's foot as a visual metaphor for his penis, then the intention behind the witch's arrow is likely to render the man impotent. Thus, the inversion of the arrow is symbolic of the sexual inversion of the power dynamic and a witch's power over men<sup>29</sup>.



Fig. 3. Transformed Witches Ride a Forked Stick through the Sky<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic*, 314.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 26.

<sup>30</sup> «Des Sorcières et Devineries. Ulrich Molitor», accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.histoiredelafole.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/molitor-ulrich>.



*Transformed Witches Ride a Forked Stick through the Sky*, from *De laniis*, features three witches, two female and one male, with animal heads riding a fork to witches' sabbath. The witches have "transformed" or have been transformed, into a donkey, a rooster, and a dog before beginning their journey into the turbulent, stormy sky. Zika affirms that: "The motif of disguise – specifically the wearing of masks – was likewise common to the festive and the demonic."<sup>31</sup>

In carnival festivities the donkey was associated with foolishness, which can be seen throughout *Das Narrenschiff*, the rooster with vanity and sexual transgression, and the dog with gullibility. By choosing to depict these three witches as common carnival motifs, the designers associated the witchcraft with a coded set of negative traits. These witches were literally, visually, transformed into personifications of folly and sin. The witches are meant to be read as wearing these masks to convey Molitor's stance on metamorphosis as an illusion<sup>32</sup>.

When we look at the bodies of the three characters, we think another interpretation is also possible. In our opinion the symbolism chosen for the heads of the three characters is very suggestive. The devil has a cock face (a sign for the demonic sacrifice in the *Malleus Maleficarum*), the first witch, has a head of a donkey (a sign for excessive sexuality), and the second one, has a head of a dog (a sign for gorging and avarice)<sup>33</sup>.

The idea underlined by choosing these animal heads is that those witches are part of different categories, each of them being specialized in charms that are represented by their allegorical heads. The first witch belongs to the category of the young and seductive witches<sup>34</sup> (she is held by the devil in his arms), the last one, represents the midwife type<sup>35</sup> (which devours the kidnapped children, just like in the case from Bormio County mentioned in the *Malleus Maleficarum*)<sup>36</sup>.

As we will see in the accompanying woodcut, the witch riding the wolf is, in fact, male<sup>37</sup>. The gender discrepancy could be due to the many instances

<sup>31</sup> Quoted by Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 27.

<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 27.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 25–26.

<sup>34</sup> Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 92–93.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 26–27.

<sup>37</sup> For more details regarding the male witches, see Lara Apps and Andrew Gow, *Male witches in early modern Europe* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), 95–112.

of wolves in fifteenth-century trials<sup>38</sup>. Most of these accounts were formed by some peasant who saw a witch riding a wolf. Clearly these themes of witchcraft lump together in appropriate settings. As evidenced by the woodcut, three enchanted dogs, roosters, and donkeys all cavorted together<sup>39</sup>.



Fig. 4. Male Witch Riding a Wolf<sup>40</sup>

In our opinion, his facial features, and the fact that he is barefoot, sends the message that the male sorcerer is a ferocious being and has the ability

<sup>38</sup> Rolf Schulte, *Man as Witch. Male Witches in Central Europe* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 8–35.

<sup>39</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 65.

<sup>40</sup> «Des Sorcières et Devinesses. Ulrich Molitor», accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.histoiredelafolie.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/molitor-ulrich>.

to change into an animal (could it be the arch-sorcerer Stafus of Berne, mentioned in the *Malleus Maleficarum*?)<sup>41</sup>. Some argue that the image was intended to display moral inversion and the medieval wild ride, and does not depict an enchanted wolf<sup>42</sup>.



Fig. 5. Witch and Devil Embracing<sup>43</sup>

In this image we have a scene of an *incubus*<sup>44</sup> demon seducing a woman. By the fact that the woman's head is covered, we understand that she is a

<sup>41</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 22.

<sup>42</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> «Des Sorcières et Devineresses. Ulrich Molitor», accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.histoiredelafolie.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/molitor-ulrich>.

<sup>44</sup> Theresa Bane, *Encyclopedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2012), 176–177.

mature, married woman. The infernal seducer chooses for his vile act a remote place away from any witness, in the middle of nature, far outside human settlements (in the background we can see several hills or mountain peaks).

Despite his clothing, the demon's true nature is betrayed by the fangs of his mouth corners, cock claw shaped feet and by the fact that his tail comes out of his coat<sup>45</sup>.

Most likely, this woodcut was influenced by the numerous trial descriptions about the sexual encounters between the female witches and the demons known as *incubi*, and the various stories scattered along the pages of the *Malleus Maleficarum*.



Fig. 6. Weather Witches<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 29.

<sup>46</sup> «Des Sorcières et Devinresses. Ulrich Molitor», accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www>.



In this woodcut we have a depiction of a weather charm<sup>47</sup>. The practitioners of this peculiar charm, are two witches of different ages, one young and one older, symbolizing the existing relationship between the teacher and the novice, and also the perpetuation of witchcraft heresy, through the transfer of occult practices. In a cauldron on fire, the two witches cast two sacrifices for ensuring the efficiency of the ritual<sup>48</sup>. The woodcut depicts these two evil women over a cauldron, placing a rooster and snake into the pot, with a storm in the background<sup>49</sup>.

By the fifteenth century, as Zika noticed, there was a strong “association between witches and cauldrons, as the receptacles in which it was believed witches brewed their potions.” One famous example, is the one from the *Malleus Maleficarum*. It describes how a witch named Stadlin from the Swiss town of Boltingen would stir up hailstorms by sacrificing a black chicken at a crossroad and then throwing it up in the air for the “prince of demons” to catch. This story would have become widely known in the late 1480s and 1490s<sup>50</sup>.

After Molitor, the cauldron became the universal symbol of witchcraft. The cauldron was where the witch manufactured her potions and poisons, divined the future, and conjured terrible storms<sup>51</sup>.

Around a table three women of different ages are gathered. On the table there are fruits, a cooked bird, and in the middle a carafe. In the background, we see a tree (maybe the fruits on the table are taken from him?). The impression is that the three women are having an ordinary meal<sup>52</sup>. By its simplistic nature, this sabbath<sup>53</sup> scene illustrates the fact that at the time when Molitor's treaty was printed, the idea of a demonic assembly had not yet been fully developed (the witches are not undressed, nor do they do some obscene gestures, they do not have intimate relations with horned demons, the satanic pets and familiars are missing, the brooms and phallic sticks also do)<sup>54</sup>.

Ulrich Molitor's *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus*, one of the most important demonological treaties from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, with its series

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histoiredefolie.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/molitor-ulrich.

<sup>47</sup> Michael D. Bailey, *Historical Dictionary of Witchcraft*, 128–129.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 31.

<sup>49</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 86–87.

<sup>50</sup> Amy Ghilieri, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 88.

<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth C. Srsic, *On Female Witches and Woodcuts*, 29.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 34.

<sup>53</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *Ecstasies. Deciphering the witches sabbath* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), 1–17.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Mirică, *Tractatus Magicus*, 35.

of seven woodcuts, depicts the most important beliefs about witchcraft that circulated in the Germanic lands.



Fig. 7. Witches' Sabbath<sup>55</sup>

The innovation of the *De laniis* – the woodblock engravings depicting the witches' activities that doubles the messages of the text – would enable a better understanding of the cultural ideas concerning the superstitious beliefs in the witches' activities.

<sup>55</sup> «Des Sorcières et Devinereses. Ulrich Molitor», accessed February 3, 2020, <http://www.histoiredelafole.fr/psychiatrie-neurologie/molitor-ulrich>.

The seven woodcuts depict motifs associated with the demonic practices of the sect of witches, such as the witches' sabbath, the demonic animal rider and so on. These depictions are simple, with no theological subtleties (like the text of the *De laniis*), the witches seem real persons, in contemporary settings and costumes<sup>56</sup>.

The 39 editions of *De laniis et phitonicis mulieribus* were responsible for a wide distribution of the ideas concerning witchcraft. In the next two centuries, a large number of scholars and artists will be decisively influenced by the circle of the seven engravings. They will create a new image for the witch, which will become the standard image in the early modern period.

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<sup>56</sup> Amy Ghiliari, *Text and Image in Ulrich Molitor*, 77.

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# Night Witches and the Imprints of their Hands. Kolozsvár, 1584

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TÜNDE KOMÁROMI\*

**Abstract:** The paper is based on the witness testimonies of six witch trials from Kolozsvár, 1584, and analyzes beliefs and ideas related to witchcraft. Healers and midwives in ambivalent or conflicted relationships with their clients (or potential clients) are regarded with suspicion and accused of witchcraft. The testimonies of witnesses reveal 129 acts of bewitchment, 90 of them resulting in different illnesses. The paper starts by summarizing methods and tools employed by a witch, as well as the possible time and place of bewitchment and continues with a detailed discussion of night visits of witches and their bewitchments, which often occur in the physical presence of the person accused of witchcraft. As a consequence, night visits of witches are considered real ones, not dreams or visions. Two of the accused women are suspected of entering trance (the possibility of controlled trance is not excluded). According to the witnesses' beliefs, people have souls that can leave their body in the night. Witches appear in the household of the witness during the night as cats, mother swine, someone's mother or father, or 'in their own image'. The bewitchment based on physical proximity and contact appears in the testimonies in various forms, but the most interesting cases are when the witch touches, grabs, shakes her victim and, afterwards (the day after), her hand marks can be seen. The acts involving the hand are very frequent and varied in bewitchments; such as the harming touch, hold, shake, throw, or the mutilation (extracting an eye, a bone).

**Keywords:** witchcraft, bewitchment/maleficium, night witches, body and soul, animal form, hand marks, sixteenth-century.

In this study<sup>1</sup>, I used the witness testimonies of six witch trials documented

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<sup>1</sup> This study is an abridged version of a longer essay previously published in Hungarian: Tünde Komáromi, „Hat boszorkány rontásai. Kolozsvár, 1584 [The bewitchments of six witches. Cluj Napoca, 1584]” in *Életutak és életmódok*, ed. Töhötöm Szabó Á. (Cluj Napoca:

in Hungarian in 1584 in Kolozsvár<sup>2</sup> [today Cluj-Napoca, Romania], the objective being to examine the beliefs and ideas related to witchcraft of the people of Kolozsvár of the age. I was aware all along of the particular limits of the source material (judicial testimonies, they support the case of the prosecution, the opinions of the accused did not subsist, etc.). Nonetheless, I consider the analysis of these sources important, because these testimonies are considered to be early sources in both the Hungarian and the Transylvanian history of witch trials; it is, furthermore, exceptional and unique to have so many testimonies preserved from one region and from such a short period. The testimonies were given in the same year, between the beginning of May and mid-June, by residents of Kolozsvár who were members of several inter-related micro-communities.

The accused and their occupation: Kató Szabó healer; Mrs. Lakatos healer; Mrs. Miklós Szeles occupation unknown; Mrs. Ambrus Zöld healer; Mrs. János Sós, Ursula midwife; and the mother of Mrs. Varga (also known as Madame Katalin) healer. All of them were sentenced to be burned at the stake.

About the social status of the witnesses we know that some were burghers, some were of lower status: their house-servants, their lodgers. The testimonies were, however, pronounced in front of the city's judges who considered them worthy of being recorded and used as supporting evidence for the prosecution. Thus, we can consider the contents of the testimonies as views accepted by the city elite.

## The Ways of Bewitchment in the Analysed Witch Trials

I am using the terms 'bewitchment' or *maleficium* (*rontás* in the Hungarian terminology) as collective terms to refer to the harmful acts of various form and name described in the testimonies. Neither terms (bewitchment, *maleficium*) appear in the testimonies; the closest in meaning is the term *vesztés* meaning to 'get something lost' or 'to perish'. When they talk in general

Kriza János Ethnographic Society, 2002), 5–41. The translation contains the original references. I would like to thank Anna Klaniczay for the careful translation of this text.

<sup>2</sup> The first to publish the witness testimonies of the trial and the texts of the verdicts was Andor Komáromy (Andor Komáromy, *Magyarországi boszorkányperek oklevéltára* [*The source-book of Hungarian witch-trials*] (Budapest, 1910), 27–71. Since the publication of the original essay, a new source collection was published containing the Kolozsvár trials, including the ones used in this study: András Kiss – László Pakó – Péter Tóth G., *Kolozsvári boszorkányperek 1564–1743* [*Witch trials from Cluj Napoca 1564– 1743*] (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 2014), 110–161.

of a witch causing harm to someone, they usually use variants of this term (*vesztés, megvesztette, vesztegeti, cselekedte*). When referring to the methods and the tools employed by the witch, they use a much diverse terminology implying various actions of maleficent effect carried out by the witch, for instance: pressed (*megnyomta*), touched (*hozzányúlt*), grabbed (*megfogta, megfogdosta*), shook (*megrázta*), tied up (*megkötötte*), bandaged (*bekötözte, kötés*), prepared a substance or an object (*csinálmány*)<sup>3</sup>, picked up the footprint (*felszedte a lába nyomát*), kicked up the door-stone (*felverte a küszöb követ*), sprinkled (*felhintette*), forced them to eat or drink something (*erővel adott ennie, innia*) etc.

The individual bewitchments or acts of witchcraft<sup>4</sup> and the narratives of the illness were reconstructed<sup>5</sup> from the data of several witness testimonies. Several accounts were related to each victim's case, which either completed or contradicted the other narratives. In order to reconstruct each case of bewitchment, I had to construct a meta-narrative above the narratives from the scattered information. The aim of this methodology of mapping every belief and event related to a certain illness was to get a better understanding of the people's beliefs about illness and bewitchment.

According to my database, there were 129 acts of witchcraft in the witness testimonies; that is, the witnesses mentioned 129 incidents when a witch had cast some sort of bewitchment on a human being, on an animal or on a crop, or when an illness or some damage could not be interpreted as other than the result of witchcraft<sup>6</sup>. From all the bewitchments, 112 were inflicted on people, 90 cases of which were acts to cause illness. In the rest of the cases, the witch was either unsuccessful or caused damage in some other way to

<sup>3</sup> There is no exact translation of this term; it was usually a combination of substances or objects, for instance as a rope and salt, that the witch prepared and often placed with harming intentions in the proximity of the victim.

<sup>4</sup> I used the concept of bewitchment in the same sense as Éva Pócs employed the term after Larner: 'an act of witchcraft': Éva Pócs, "Maleficium-narratívumok – konfliktusok – boszorkánytípusok (Sopron vármegye, 1529 – 1768) [Maleficium narratives – conflicts – types of witches (Sopron county, 1529 – 1768)], *Népi Kultúra – Népi Társadalom* XVIII (1995): 15.

<sup>5</sup> On the basis of the testimonies I established a data base. The base unit of which was the act of witchcraft. I grouped the information by the accused individual, listing in detail the information of the victim, of the accused, of the conflict relevant to the bewitchment, the information about the instruments, the time and place of bewitchment, as well as data about the illness and the healing procedure.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. The verdict of Kató Szabó says: "those who cannot project the thought of their souls on anybody else in their misery but on Kató Szabó": Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 35.

people<sup>7</sup>. The remaining bewitchments included 13 cases damaging the milk yields of cows, 3 to spoil butter, and the rest caused the illness or the death of an animal, or was love magic.

We can examine the acts of witchcraft from various perspectives. The simplest analysis is to examine *when* and *where* the bewitchment occurred. The witness testimonies mention both “nighttime bewitchment” and incidents taking place during daytime; sometimes they even specify the exact time: at dawn, at twelve o’clock at noon, at eight o’clock in the evening, late at night, at midnight. The effect can manifest itself immediately, soon, the day after, on the third day, in three weeks<sup>8</sup>. The ratio of nighttime and daytime bewitchments was about half-half.

Another perspective of analysis can be the spatial relationship of the witch and the victim at the time of the bewitchment. According to the witnesses, the bewitchment occurred often in the physical presence of the person accused of witchcraft even in situations that seem unlikely according to our present understanding of things. Here, I am primarily referring to nighttime bewitchment. Apparently the nighttime apparitions of the witch were very real to them.

I have divided the bewitchments of the Kolozsvár witch trials based on how the witch entered into contact with the victim; more precisely, I focused on the presence of physical contact between the witch and the victim, or the lack thereof while attributing blame to the witch all the same.

According to the witnesses, the bewitchment can occur on the body of the victim or far from it. The witch can also perform the magic *maleficium* rituals far from the victim, which symbolically represent and produce the harm. The witness testimonies only mention bewitchment rituals that they have accidentally witnessed, but without knowing whom it was meant for; as well as suspicious acts of which the sense was unknown to them; or healing rituals performed in the presence and with the participation of the victim (acting upon their bodies), which turned out to be harmful, therefore were acts of witchcraft<sup>9</sup>. The witchcraft performed on the body could take place during a daytime visit, healing or the nocturnal apparition of a witch. At night, the victim is often lying in bed, or sometimes is in the courtyard.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Gyárfás Erszéngyártó did not know what he was saying “*in the law*” (i.e. in court) because Mrs. Ambrus Zöld had circled her three times before he came in: Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 69.

<sup>8</sup> The expressions referring to exact time are from the testimonies.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, the incident of Mrs. Pál Szabó, Barbara: Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 31.

Some of the bewitchments occurred when they came into contact by the request of the victim (for instance, for healing), and sometimes it was the witch who sought direct contact with the victim by paying a visit to them. In several cases, the witch prevented the application of a healing method recommended by another healer, or interrupted a treatment started by someone else, for instance by tearing off the bandage (“*lehányja róla a kötést*”<sup>10</sup>). The victim or their relative acknowledged this with surprise, adding that they had never been to their house before, for instance in the case of the mother of Mrs. Varga<sup>11</sup> or Mrs. Lakatos<sup>12</sup>.

With a focus on the presence or the lack of direct physical contact, we can distinguish four major groups of ways of bewitchment in the Kolozsvár witch trials:

I. Bewitchment where the witch has direct physical contact with the victim;

II. Bewitchment where the witch has physical contact with a surface or a substance previously touched by the victim;

III. Bewitchment where the witch prepares a bewitching substance/object (*csinálmány*) and places it secretly in the environment of the victim; thus, it is the bewitching material object touched by the witch that comes into contact with the victim;

IV. Finally, the bewitchment that occurs from a distance. There was only one case when the witch cursed someone; and there was one other single case when a father suspected the mother of Mrs. Varga of having eaten his son<sup>13</sup>. There are cases when the narrative starts with the description of the symptoms, followed by the attribution of the bewitchment to someone, based on the analysis of the context.

The above-mentioned four groups of bewitchment can be broken down into subcategories as follows:

I. The witch has direct contact with the victim

I.1. The witch appears uninvited

I.1.1. Nighttime apparition:

– alone or in company

– in the image of someone else or as themselves

<sup>10</sup> Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 50.

<sup>12</sup> Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 57.

<sup>13</sup> Testimony of Péter Grúz: Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 50. Cf. Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England. A Regional and Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 1970), 213.

- I.1.1.1. Commits physical violence
  - I.1.1.2. Gives the victim something to eat or to drink<sup>14</sup>
  - I.1.1.3. The witch's harmful inner power takes effect through touch
  - I.1.1.4. The witch's harmful gaze takes effect
  - I.1.2. Daytime apparition (The witch's harmful inner power takes effect through touch<sup>15</sup>)
    - I.1.2.1. Comes to heal
    - I.1.2.2. Surprises the victim when they are alone
    - I.1.2.3. Visits the house when the whole family is present
  - I.2. The witch arrives invited, called for healing
    - I.2.1. The witch's inner bewitching power takes effect via a physical act
    - I.2.2. Uses a bewitching substance
    - I.2.3. The performed ritual has a bewitching effect
  - II. The witch touches a surface or uses a substance previously touched by the victim
  - III. The witch places a bewitching substance/object (*csinálmány*) in the environment of the victim
  - IV. The witch and the victim are far from each other (word, thought and act)
    - IV.1. Curse
    - IV.2. Bewitching ritual
- In what follows, we will only discuss the night apparitions of witches<sup>16</sup>.

## Night Witches

Kató Szabó, Mrs. János Sós, the mother of Mrs. Varga, Mrs. Lakatos, Mrs. Ambrus Zöld and Mrs. Miklós Szeles were all accused of being a witch, and they were even told so to their faces by some of the witnesses. Some of them were also accused of being 'cunning folk' (*tudományos*). The witch, defined as one single category, is much more diverse in terms of the phenomena related to it. Besides the image of the witch bewitching with magical rituals and charms, the experiences told in the testimonies also reveal the character

<sup>14</sup> Black soup, fooling bread: Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 51.

<sup>15</sup> For instance, "[the bewitchment] happened to the child when he was around her": Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 54.

<sup>16</sup> The subchapters of the original essay discussing magical rituals, harming healings, bewitchment identification and illnesses caused by maleficium, as well as the introduction explaining the notion of *maleficium* in anthropology and historical anthropology and the related research could not be included in this study due to length constraints.

of the ‘night witch’ (éjjeljáró). The night witches are also of many kind: some can be seen, others not; sometimes they appear in their own image, other times they take the apparition of someone else or of an animal; sometimes they appear alone, or in threes or as a whole company.

The figure of the night witch is already mentioned in the earlier Kolozsvár trials<sup>17</sup>, however, it appears in the trials examined here more frequently. According to Gábor Klaniczay, these narratives about nighttime apparitions and ‘pressures’ constitute the mythological core of the later evolving narratives of the witches’ Sabbath<sup>18</sup>; the stories about bewitchments got increasingly complicated with time: initially it was one witch who bewitched the victim, later one heard of three of them or groups of them attacking someone<sup>19</sup>. The image of the Devil was missing from the sixteenth-century testimonies.

In the following section of the essay, we will discuss two important nighttime phenomena: the trance (*révülés*)<sup>20</sup> and the nocturnal harming (*éjjeli bántalmazás*).

On the basis of the testimonies, two of the accused can be suspected of entering trance<sup>21</sup>, Mrs. János Sós, and the mother of Mrs. Varga. The

<sup>17</sup> Cf. “*noctuae mulieres*”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Gábor Klaniczay, *A civilizáció peremén. Kultúrtörténeti tanulmányok* [On the margins of civilization. Studies on cultural history] (Budapest: Magvető, 1990), 287. Ibid: “In the oldest documented Hungarian trial (Kolozsvár, 1565) we already find a narrative similar to the witches’ Sabbath, allegedly told by the accused midwife, Klára Botzi, and then repeated by the witnesses in front of the judges. In this story the accused claims that in the night, thirty-two witches (*lemures*) appeared in her barn to switch the fodder to her own excrement.”

<sup>19</sup> Gábor Klaniczay, *A civilizáció peremén. Kultúrtörténeti tanulmányok* [On the margins of civilization. Studies on cultural history] (Budapest: Magvető Kiadó, 1990), 292. The Kolozsvár trials provide this kind of diversity within one year: in some cases, the maleficent witch is alone, or “*they were three*”, or sometimes there were many in a room.

<sup>20</sup> Without discussing the problematic of the trance – since this is not the subject of this study – I would nonetheless mention two important cases.

<sup>21</sup> “The expression ‘in trance’ (*révül*) usually described a dead-like unconscious state, which is the perception of the person witnessing the trance.”: Éva Pócs, “Transz és látomás Európa népi kultúráiban [Trance and vision in European popular cultures].” in *Eksztázis, álom, látomás. Vallásnéptudományi fogalmak tudományközi megközelítésben* [Trance, dream, vision. Notions of ethnology of religion in interdisciplinary context], edited by Éva Pócs. (Budapest: Balassi Kiadó, 1998), 33. Cf. Vilmos Diószegi, “Révülés [Trance].” in *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon IV* [The Hungarian Ethnographic Encyclopedia IV], ed. Gyula Ortutay (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981), 347. About trance see for instance Tamás, Grynæus “A megváltozott tudatállapotok pszichiátriai értékeléséről [Psychiatric evaluation of altered states of consciousness], in „Eksztázis, álom, látomás”, 213–228; Vilmos, Voigt, “Az eksztázis, az álom, a látomás,” in „Eksztázis, álom, látomás”, 9–14.



testimonies about them are from witnesses who lived in the same house with the accused. Little is revealed about their trance technique in the testimonies; however, based on the narratives, we can presume about at least one of them that her trance was not spontaneous but induced<sup>22</sup>.

The witnesses of Mrs. János Sós were István Kerekes and his wife, Erzsébet:

“We lived in the same house with Mrs. János Sós; once her daughter, the wife of the “trash judge”, came to me at midnight, called me and well: her mother, [the accused] lay there naked and we couldn’t feel the presence of any soul in her, but she was covered everywhere in human faeces and we couldn’t touch her anywhere. That night her soul was not found in her, but the day after, at eight o’clock she woke up and was quite ailing”<sup>23</sup>.

This testimony reveals much important information: firstly, that the incident occurred at midnight. It is not so unusual that she *lay there naked* since at this age it was common to sleep without clothes on. It is more important that she was “*covered everywhere in human faeces*”, at least allegedly. Furthermore, it is also important that they thought that there was no soul in her: implying that it left her for a while. The day after, however, her soul must have returned, since she woke up. Another important piece of information is that she was *ailing*, suffering – which might refer to the idea of nighttime struggles and fights (her soul experienced)<sup>24</sup>. The witnesses claimed that the

<sup>22</sup> Éva, Pócs, Élők és holtak, látók és boszorkányok. *Mediátori rendszerek a kora újkor forrásaiban [Living and dead, seers and witches. Systems of mediation in early modern sources]* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1997), 179.

<sup>23</sup> “Egy házban laktunk vala ez Sós Jánosnéval; egykor az leánya, az szemét bíróné éjfélkort hozzám jöve, ki híva és hát: az anyja a fogoly asszony meztelen fekszik és semmi lelket nem érzünk benne, de mindenütt be vala kenve és keverve emberganéval és sohol nem nyulhatunk vala hozzá. Azon éjjel nem érzettek lelket benne, hanem hát másnap nyolcz órakkort felkölt és igen nyeg vala”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the beliefs of the shaman’s and the *táltos*’s struggles. About the soul battles in witch trials (“*the whores are eating me*”) see: Éva Pócs, Élők és holtak, látók és boszorkányok. *Mediátori rendszerek a kora újkor forrásaiban [Living and dead, seers and witches. Systems of mediation in early modern sources]* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1997), 180. There is a case in the Kolozsvár trials when one of the healers appears to have had a battle with a rival. Mrs. Ambrus Zöld was treating the child of Mrs. Miklós Kádas, who had pustules on his foot. The massaging treatment made the child’s foot ‘swollen’, therefore they hid the child from her and called the mother of Mrs. Varga to heal the child. According to a witness, Mrs. Varga once said: “*I had to endure a lot because of you. (...) you can see the state I’m in; and well she was sweating a lot indeed, sweat was dripping from her nose.*”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 68. In another case, it was the daughter of the witch who was ‘eaten by the whores’: “*the other [day] the mother of Mrs. Varga sat next to me; I asked*



body of Mrs. János Sós was covered in human excrement, which is why I previously suggested that her trance might have been induced. Perhaps it would be too forced to say that she was using a trance-inducing ointment, but it is nonetheless a significant and unique data about a witch's body being *covered everywhere* with a substance considered impure. The 'human faeces' obtains a new meaning if we take into account that Mrs. János Sós was said to stink at her nighttime apparition<sup>25</sup>. This woman was a midwife, and later I will come back to my hypothesis about a connection between her trance techniques and her method of bewitchment.

The witness testifying about the mother of Mrs. Varga was the wife of György Varga (the daughter of István Fazekas), he said:

"I know this with certainty, that she did not sleep in the room, but in the attic, she was a heavy person, and she used to sleep there. She was called to heal patients from many places, sometimes they even went to the attic at night to get her but they were never able to wake her, they couldn't shake her to her senses. So, they came down and said: her body is there but it is nothing but a body, we cannot feel any soul in it. Moreover, some have heard this from a girl who said: a bumbling bug came in – she said – through a hole, and it flew into her mouth and she started to speak right away, she said 'I'm not going right now'; but the girl was from here, she was one of her servants. Several times, when they came to get her and when the same girl came, too, Mrs. Varga told them: you should leave, she will get up eventually<sup>26</sup>.

The description reveals that she was a healer called to see patients even in the middle of the night. This is how they discovered her custom of going to the attic to sleep, even though she was a *heavy person* (i.e. overweight), and how they experienced that they are not *able to wake her* because only her body

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*her why she was so ill-coloured, and the daughter of Mrs. Varga was also ill; she replied that the whores are harming my daughter because I am healing those whom these whores have bewitched.*": Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 45.

<sup>25</sup> Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 36.

<sup>26</sup> "Ezt is bizonytal tudom, hogy ő nem hált az szobába, hanem a ház héjára ment, maga nehéz ember volt, és ott hált. Sok felé hitták orvoslani betegekhez és néha felhágtnak az ház héjára éjjel is, de soha fel nem költthették, úgy nem taszigálhatták, hogy érzékenységet leljenek benne. Hanem alájöttek és azt mondták: hogy ám ott vagyon a teste, de csak olyan, mint a mi test, semmi lelket nem érzünk benne. Sőt egy leánytól ezt némelyek bizonyosan hallották, hogy azt mondja volt: egy dongó bogár jöve be – ugymond – egy lyukon és az mene az szájába és mindjárt kezd szöllani, hogy nem megyek én most; de a leány ide fel való volt, valamelyik szolgálója volt. Többször is mikor érte jöttek osztán és ugyan azon leány is, hogy eljött, az Vargáné eligazította azt mondván: menj el, csak majd felszerken."": Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 49.

was there, but they could not feel *any soul in it*. According to the witness, the woman was only able to speak when a *bumbling bug* flew into her mouth, which lets us conclude that they believed that it was her soul that returned in the form of a bumbling bug. If we consider that she called her soul back for it to tell them that she could not go with them, we can presume that she could control her trance, which would also recall the trance of the shaman. I only point these out as potential similarities. The data does not allow us to prove the suggestion of a trance similar to the shaman's 'soul journeys'.

The harming of nursing mothers, infants, and fathers is often associated with the person of the midwife. The majority of nocturnal bewitchments happen, according to the testimonies, with the witch or something invisible (sometimes more than one) appearing in the victim's room and hurting the woman, man, or child lying there. The mother is usually 'pressed' (*megnyom*)<sup>27</sup> or her 'milk is sucked out' (*kiszívja a tejét*)<sup>28</sup>, but it is also the midwife who is blamed for the long, postpartum 'childbed' illness<sup>29</sup>. Mrs. János Róma, Erzsébet "*had her legs drawn back while lying in confinement and she was unable to walk*"<sup>30</sup>. The wife of András Varga, Sónia suspected the midwife Mrs. János Sós, who was unhappy with her payment, when at night "the evil" attacked her in the image of her mother and her father<sup>31</sup>, and when she mentioned her suspicion to others, her otherwise paralyzed hand started to shake heavily<sup>32</sup>. It is often the newborn children who are harmed<sup>33</sup> already on the night of their birth, *their limbs are contorted, they are shaken*. The wife of János Csiszár, Katalin, had not called Mrs. János Sós during her confinement, who took revenge, at least that is what they suspected after she made threats: "*I have regretted it because my child who was being nursed, after being born – had it all come out on the nose and the throat of the baby and then the baby died*"<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> For instance: Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 37.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. "I was in confinement when they pressed me, but it was Mrs. János Sós who treated me and I suspected her. One time I was awake when they came in the image of mother swine and they had the piglets suck out my milk for which I had to lie in bed for twenty-eight weeks...": Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 37.

<sup>29</sup> They even blamed the midwife if the apparition was not in her image.

<sup>30</sup> Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 46.

<sup>31</sup> Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 37.

<sup>32</sup> Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 37. The reaction of the ill bodypart when they mention the bewitcher is an often-mentioned option to identify the witch.

<sup>33</sup> The violent torture of children is a phenomenon reminding of the demon world of the Balkans: Éva Pócs, "Élők és holtak", 75.

<sup>34</sup> "Ugyanis megbánám, mert az gyermekem, a kit szop vala, osztán hogy a világra lőn – mind

There is a story about a nursing mother and her newborn linked to Mrs. Ambrus Zöld who often appeared in the image of a cat:

“When God gave us this child of ours, at midnight many cats came into my house and I couldn’t sleep at all, and the [cats] sat all around the table; first the one in the middle cried out and then all the others started to howl terribly. I got scared, I couldn’t even speak. One of them came next to me and picked up the child and shook it, then it threw the baby to another cat, which then threw the child below me; the child started to become terribly ill. [...] When they were going to take the child from me, in the image of a cat, I sat next to the baby, and they pressed [i.e. bewitched] me for trying to protect him, I don’t even know how I was. My hand and my head got swollen, and there were many holes on my hand”<sup>35</sup>.

The story is told by the mother in her testimony against Mrs. Ambrus Zöld. Big cats appear at their house, they sit around the table and start to *howl*, one of them *picks up* the child from beside the mother, *shakes* it and then they *throw* it around, finally throwing the baby beneath the mother. They press the mother when she sits beside the baby to protect it. Due to the ‘pressure’, her *hand and head got swollen*, there were *holes* in her hand and she *couldn’t speak*.

There is a case very similar to this related to the mother of Mrs. Varga. The victim is not a mother in confinement, the child was already three-years-old, but the ‘whore’ (*kurva*), appearing invisibly during the night, also shook the child, beat the mother’s breast, the mother was again speechless, and when she gave the baby to the father and fled to the courtyard from her attacker, the father also lost the ability to speak:

“Once my three-year-old child started to cry during the night. I jumped up to her, took her on my lap, but she kept on crying terribly. I felt that she was

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orrán torkán jó vala ki és meghala.”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 40.

<sup>35</sup> “Mikor ezen gyermekünket adta volna az Isten, éjjel éjfélkorban nagy sok macska jöve be házamba és semmit nem aluszom vala, és renddel mind az asztal mellékét beülék; az középső jajdula elébb meg és az után rettenetesen kezdének ordítani. Elíjedék és nem is szólhaték. Egyik mellém jöve és az gyermeket felvötte és igen megrázá, az másiknak hajtá és az esméig alám veté; az gyermeket rettenetesen kezdé az betegség lelni. (...) Mikor pedig a gyermeket el vötték volna mellöllem, a macska képiben, hozzá ülék és úgy megnyomának aztán, hogy a gyermeket sem hagyom vala, hogy ingyen sem tudom, mint voltam. Az kezem és fejem ottan megdagada, én magamnak is nagy sok lyuk volt kezemem.”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 68–69.

shaken as she was on my lap but I couldn't see anyone, – because their kind cannot be seen. Then I finally told my husband that this must be the doing of Mrs. Varga, that whore was doing this, bewitching the child. I kept cursing her, and the child was crying and screaming ever more horribly. Finally, they started to beat on my throat and my chest as I cursed her. As I couldn't utter a word after that, I swaddled the child and gave her to my husband; I went out to the courtyard. I heard the child cry again so I ran in, and my husband couldn't speak either, the child was terribly crying. When he could finally speak, he was sweating and started to shout that the whores<sup>36</sup> tried to kill him with the child as well. The child's mouth was pulled aside and there were big wounds on the poor thing<sup>37</sup>.

The mother suspected the mother of Mrs. Varga, because she had turned her down once when she came to her to complain about a faulty chest-lock that the witness's husband was supposed to have fixed (“*talk to my husband*”). She was also suspicious because the mother of Mrs. Varga refused to heal the sick child even though the mother was begging her in tears<sup>38</sup>.

I would like to underline a few important phenomena from the narrative: the adult members of the family were not only awake and talking but also walking around, the woman even ran out to the courtyard, which all suggest that the witness's belief was that they had a lucid and real experience despite the fact that she did not see the witch present. When she starts to curse the presumed culprit, they start to hit her in the throat and in the chest; and the child starts to cry even harder, which suggests that the harming intensifies. The husband is similarly tortured by the witch while he is watching the child, which wears him down in sweats. Finally: even though the witness speaks

<sup>36</sup> The expression ‘whores’ (*kurvák*) is used as a synonym of ‘witch’ in other testimonies as well.

<sup>37</sup> “Egykor csakhamar éjjel sírni kezdte egy háromszendős gyermekem. Felugrák éjjel hozzám és ölembe vőm és ölembe is rettenetesen sírt. Ugyan éreztem, hogy rázták az ölembe, de nem láthattam senkit, – mert nem is láthatják affélét. Végre mondták: bizony uram az Vargáné dolga ez, az eszez kurva az fogja cselekedni, vesztegetni a gyermeket. Rettenetes szidtam, a gyermek az ölembe annál rettenetesenben sírt, sikoltott. Végre az torkomat és mellyemet kezdék verni, hogy szidtam. Hogy ugyan nemigen szólhattam osztán, kötém be a gyermeket és uram mellé adám; kimenék az udvarra én magam. Esmég sírni kezdte a gyermek, befutamám, hát az uram egyet sem szólhat, a gyermek rettenetesen sír. Végre szólhata és hát ugyan elveritezet és ő maga is kiáltani kezdte, hogy ő magát is mind megölnék az kurvák, mind gyermekestől. Az gyermeknek felén mene az szája és nagy sebek lesznek szegényen.”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 48.

<sup>38</sup> She even said: “*even if I filled the child's skin with gold, she wouldn't bandage him any time*”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 48.

in the plural, she only names one specific person as the perpetrator, and this person is someone with whom she had a conflict.

I have not come across in any other testimony a statement similar to this one: “*but I couldn’t see anyone, – because their kind cannot be seen*”. It was however mentioned several times that they did not see, only felt the presence of someone. This idea of invisibility is also interesting if we consider that it is the same mother of Mrs. Varga who usually sleeps in the attic without *any soul in her body*, and who has a *bumbling bug* fly into her mouth<sup>39</sup>.

Similarly to the previous case, there is another incident of *holes* – this time it is not on the hand of the mother, but on one of the bones in the child’s head: “*The child died after that and before he died a bone looked out from the child’s head, I extracted it and it was as if it had been pierced and penetrated by ants*”<sup>40</sup>. In this case, it is unclear what a bone ‘*looking out*’ of the child’s head means; in another case, however, the mother claimed that her child’s bones were taken out by Mrs. Szeles with two of her companions when they went to their house during the night. We know the story from the testimony of Mrs. György Szakál, Erzsébet:

“She came to my house in the night, Mrs. Miklós Szeles, I’ve seen it with my own eyes, it was three of them; we looked at her with my husband, she came in even four times, we saw her with our eyes. Once, she took my hemp soaked in the river Szamos, and when I wouldn’t let her have it, she threatened me that I was going to regret it. Soon after that she came to my place, they made something to me so that I couldn’t speak, I couldn’t get up, and they picked up my four-week-old and put him on the table; I kept on trying to speak and to get up, but I couldn’t. But as soon as they had left, I got up and I found my child on the table, and his rotator bone was taken from his leg and his shoulder, I could still keep him for a week then he went completely black and died”<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 49.

<sup>40</sup> “A gyermek osztán meghala és szinte halálakor egy csont néz vala ki a gyermek fejből, ki vőm és olyan vala mintha által furták volna és hangya járta volna által.”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 48.

<sup>41</sup> “Bejőve házamba éjjel ez Szeles Miklósné, ez szememmel látám, hárman valának; az urammal reá néztünk, négyszer is jöve be, szememmel reá néztünk. Egyszer az Szamosban ázott kenderemet övének fogta vala és mikor neki nem engedtem volna, megfenyegetett vala, hogy megbánnám. Az után hamarsággal jöve oda be, én magammal úgy cselekedének, hogy sem szólhattam, emelkedhettem és négy heti gyermekemet megfogák és az asztalra tövék; váltig akarok vala szólani és én magam is emelkedni, de nem lehet. De hogy elmenének, felkelék és az asztalon találom az gyermeket, hát a forgó csontját kivötték a lábából és a vállát is kivötték és egy hétig tarthatám, mind elfeketője és meghala.”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 64.

This testimony, similarly to the two previous ones, tells the story of a mother who cannot speak or move as a result of what had been done to her by the witches. The aim of disabling the mother or the father is to have a free go at the child, but the child's illness (and later death) is to cause loss and grief for the parents, as an act of vengeance. Extracting a bone<sup>42</sup> is an archaic motif that Gábor Klaniczay observed to be missing from the torture confessions and the demonological treatises; we only encounter them in witness testimonies, which reflect the belief system of the common folk more faithfully<sup>43</sup>.

Besides the mother, the midwife can also 'pressure' the other woman helping out at childbirth, at least according to the testimony of Mrs. István Szécsi. When her former servant, Mrs. Márton Egresi was about to give birth, she went to help her. The midwife was Mrs. János Sós, but she stayed there as well until the child was born. Mrs. István Szécsi gave the following account of what happened:

"The same night, I felt like I was being pressed [bewitched] and I started to moan, but my husband heard it and wrapped up the quilt on me and beat on it heavily. The next day, I went to see the same ill woman in the morning, the midwife didn't come, neither did she come the morning after that. When she came in the evening, I was sitting with the ill woman, she came in the evening and she was groaning miserably, I asked her what had happened to her, she said she had the shivers, and she fell off the bed in her feverish state; 'look at my arm', and I saw that it was all swollen, and so was half of her face. This is when I first started suspecting her"<sup>44</sup>.

This is a long testimony containing a whole series of bewitchment narratives. The 'pressure' or bewitchment is referred to twice as 'hardship'<sup>45</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> About bones, extraction, swapping, cooking, etc. of bones, see: Ginzburg, Carlo (1996: 231–299).

<sup>43</sup> Gábor Klaniczay, "A boszorkányszombat ördögi látomása a vádaskodók vallomásaiban," in Éva Pócs ed., „Eksztázis, álom, látomás”, 291.

<sup>44</sup> "Ugyanakkor éjjel, az mint nekem tetszik vala, mintha megnyomtak volna és kezdék erőssen nyegegni, Uram azomban meghallja és az paplant rajtam összetakarította és erőssen megveré. Másnap menék ugyan azon beteg asszonyhoz reggel, az bába nem jöve el, másnap reggel sem jöve. Mikoron estve felé odajött volna, ülök vala az beteg asszony előtt, eljöve nagy nyegve. Ugy kérdém, hogy mi lelte s mondá, hogy az hideg lelte erőssen, az forróságomban leestem volt az ágyról és összetörödtem; im látod minémű a karom, s látám, hogy el dagadozott vala, a mint eszembe jut a fél orczája is. Így volt elsőbben gyanuságom hozzá." : Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 42–43.

<sup>45</sup> "After that I had similar hardships a couple of times": Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 43.



The quoted section of the testimony contains a method of identifying the bewitcher, beating the ‘*wrapped up*’ quilt, as if they were wrapping up and beating up the witch herself in it. She later even applies the witch-identification method of “calling her for salt and iron”, she even sends messages to Mrs. Sós several times to “give up” harassing her.

From the examined narratives, we can so far conclude that the midwife, when someone hurts her professional or other interests, will usually harm the child, the parents or her rival. The nocturnal form of an apparition can be an animal, but she can also appear and do harm invisibly.

### **The Imprint of the Hands of Night Witches**

After having analyzed the testimonies, I came to the conclusion that the witnesses experienced the night apparitions of the witch as reality. They always considered it important to specify that they were not asleep when the incident took place, that they had seen the witch entering lying in their bed with their eyes wide open. The fact that they believed to be lucid<sup>46</sup> at the time of the witch’s presence definitely makes their experience more significant, than if they thought it was a dream or a vision; and it is obviously also indispensably a necessary factor to corroborate the accusation. There are many cases where the witness tries to prove the guilt of the accused with narratives of nighttime apparitions and harming. The judges took these accusations seriously, they have questioned a series of witnesses (in the case of Kató Szabó, for instance, they had fifty-five witnesses on the stand) and have given capital sentences<sup>47</sup>. The text of the verdicts proves that there were only nuances of difference between the views of the witnesses and that of the judges: there is a more distinct Christian discourse in the verdicts, they also feature the concept of the Devil.

Norman Cohn, in the chapter of his book about night witches, says that the educated people in the Middle Ages were aware of the witches’ nocturnal journeys taking place in their imagination.

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<sup>46</sup> Sometimes the witness claims to have turned in the bed, having spoken with their spouse, child, to have gotten up, picked up their child, in one case they claimed to have gone to the courtyard.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Norman Cohn, *Europe’s Inner Demons. An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (Sussex University Press, 1975), 255: “The great witch-hunt can in fact be taken as a supreme example of a massive killing of innocent people by a bureaucracy acting in accordance with beliefs which, unknown or rejected in earlier centuries, had come to be taken for granted, as self-evident truths.”

“But in the sixteenth, and still more in the seventeenth centuries, this was no longer the case. And that is what made the great witch-hunt possible: the witch-hunting reached massive proportions only where and when the authorities themselves accepted the reality of the nocturnal journeys. For without such journeys, no witches’ sabbats.”<sup>48</sup>

It is also important to highlight the reality of the nighttime harming because according to the narratives, the witch physically abused her victims. The victim is often fighting the witch; or in the case mentioned above, the whole family is in a lucid state, moving around, picking up the child, the woman even runs to the courtyard to flee the presence of the evil inside the house<sup>49</sup>. The imprints<sup>50</sup> of the harming can be seen the day after and, besides the visible signs, it also impacts the victim’s health and wellbeing.

<sup>48</sup> Norman Cohn, “Europe’s Inner demons”, 224. Cohn discusses the period prior to the great witch hunt and sees that by the sixteenth century, there was a paradigm shift. It can be presumed that it was also a paradigm change that led to the end of the witch trials. This paper does not discuss this issue in detail but I would nonetheless like to mention a few indicative observations that I have made while preparing this study. According to Gábor Klaniczay the early narratives accentuating the physical proximity of the witch are later replaced by *maleficium* narratives describing a nightmarish vision: Cf. Gábor Klaniczay, “A rontás- és gyógyítássel-beszélések struktúrája: maleficium és csoda,” in *Démonikus és szakrális világok határán. Mentalitástörténeti tanulmányok Pócs Éva 60. születésnapjára*, eds. Katalin Benedek – Eszter Csonka-Takács (Budapest: MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, 1999) 119–120. Margit Sárdi, when studying the work of Transylvanian memoirists, observed that the attitude towards dreams has also changed; while in the seventeenth century delirious dreams were accepted as realities, in the eighteenth century we can already see a rational doubt towards such experiences: Margit Sárdi, “Jóslás és álomlátás XVII-XVIII. századi erdélyi emlékiróinknál,” in Éva Pócs ed. „Eksztázis, álom, látomás”, 481. Gábor Klaniczay in his essay *Boszorkányok, vámpírok és felvilágosítók* [Witches, vampires and enlighteners] writes about how in the imagination of eighteenth-century people, the scare of the witch was gradually replaced by that of the vampire, which satisfied more their need of evidence; in the same period we see a doubt about witchcraft accusations appearing in the arguments of defense attorneys. (Gábor Klaniczay, „A civilizáció peremén”, 313, 319). András Kiss, in a recently published writing examined the change in the approach of the defense in the eighteenth-century witch trials of Aranyosszék. He found that what was presented in the witness testimonies as a real act, was described from the perspective of the defense as a product of imagination. According to this we encounter different perceptions of the same phenomena in the high culture than in the popular culture. The rhetoric of the defense contains elements of the medical knowledge of the age. The defense’s closing arguments examined by András Kiss include a discourse that might have led to the end of witchcraft accusations: András Kiss, “A védelem szemléletváltozásának jelei a 18. századi aranyosszéki boszorkányperekben [Changes of the defense in the 18<sup>th</sup> century witch trials in Aranyos seat],” *Limes* no. 1 (2000): 22.

<sup>49</sup> Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 48–49.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. the vision experiences with saints can also leave physical marks; generally speaking,



The bewitchment based on physical proximity and contact<sup>51</sup> appears in the testimonies in various forms<sup>52</sup>, but the most interesting cases are when the witch touches, grabs, shakes<sup>53</sup> her victim and, afterwards (the day after), her hand marks can be seen.

The acts<sup>54</sup> involving the hand are very frequent and varied in bewitchments; such as the harming touch, hold, shake, throw, or the mutilation<sup>55</sup> (extracting an eye, a bone). These are either clearly maleficent acts or bewitchments occurring during healing, when the patient's body gets swollen, breaks out in wounds or is pierced following treatment (*massage, bandage*), etc.

Regarding the extraction of the eye, we find two incidents in the testimonies (aside from other troubles related to the eyes). In one case, it is a child who loses an eye (*vesze ki a szemé*) and the mother suspected Mrs. Zöld<sup>56</sup>. The other eye-related incident involved an adult man, and the bewitchment was attributed to the mother of Mrs. Varga. The second story is more explicit about the eye being taken out by hand (we will come back to this incident later)<sup>57</sup>.

From the stories about the bewitchment of the foot, which is often done with the hand, I have chosen one particular narrative, which is mentioned in the testimonies of four witnesses, and which explicitly mention *handprints*. The victim of the maleficium was the daughter of Ferenc Kőmíves, who at

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this type of *maleficium* fits into the category of 'negative miracles.' The miracles of the saints were also experienced as reality by the people: Gábor Klaniczay, "A civilizáció peremén", 283.

<sup>51</sup> From Evans-Pritchard's categories this type of bewitchment would fall into that of 'witchcraft', which – according to him – is part of the human organism (i.e. comes from within the witch), but its action is psychic: E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1937), 21. Cf. also Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971), 519.

<sup>52</sup> See the table classifying the bewitchments of the Kolozsvár trials at the beginning of the essay.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the expressions used to describe the methods of bewitchment in the witness testimonies: pressed (*megnyomta*), touched (*hozzányúlt*), grabbed (*megfogta, megfogdosta*), shook (*megrázta*), tied up (*megkötötte*), bandaged (*bekötözte, kötés*), prepared a substance (*csinálmány*), picked up the footprint (*felszedte a lába nyomát*), kicked up the door-stone (*felverte a küszöb követ*), sprinkled (*felhintette*), forced them to eat or drink something (*erővel adott ennie, innia*) etc.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. the expression of 'doing' (*cselekedte*).

<sup>55</sup> In previous chapters of the paper we find examples of such actions, for instance the night witches attack an infant by shaking it, throwing it around, sometimes even mutilating it.

<sup>56</sup> Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 70.

<sup>57</sup> Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 52, 53, 54.

the time of her illness was already the wife of András Viczey. The witnesses – including the parents – attributed the bewitchment to the fact that they had not called Mrs. János Sós as a midwife when Mrs. Ferenc Kőmíves had one of her children. Mrs. János Sós had been mad at them for a while since they had called another midwife for the previous childbirth as well. Mrs. Sós met the wife of Gáspár Herczeg, the sister of Mrs. Ferenc Kőmíves, at the market, and found out that the baby was not yet born and sent a message to call her for the birth (“*perhaps you won’t regret it*”<sup>58</sup>). They met later on and she found out that the child had been born with the help of another midwife. That night the daughter of the Kőmíves family fell ill: “*That night the leg of the girl, now staying with András Viczey, was lost [bewitched]; one could even see the prints of the fingers on the leg of the girl, and my sister Mrs. Ferenc Kőmíves also lost her milk*”<sup>59</sup>. The mother’s account is more detailed: “*One day she was about to get up one morning, she couldn’t stand on it and she was crying terribly. I asked her what had happened? She said her leg was in a lot of pain. We saw that one of her legs was very swollen and turning blue*”<sup>60</sup>.

Mrs. Gáspár Herczeg, when examining the girl’s leg, thought it was a case of ‘Saint Anthony’s fire’ (ergotism) and since she heard that the treatment for that was to blow on it with a consecrated candle, she tried it. She was punished for this during the night. In her own account, the motif of the hand and the act of grabbing appears again, as well as the mentioning of Mrs. János Sós (who was “*covered in human faeces*”) wearing a foul-smelling pelt (*feles gerezna*):

“on that night, I was at home, going to bed with my daughter as the poor widow I am, then suddenly someone in the image of Mrs. János Sós came at me, she grabbed my hair, she was wearing half a pelt, it had a terribly foul smell. I told her that she cannot hurt me because I know her well, and she took a step back at my address, and with her buttocks she leaned against the table, it almost cracked under her weight. She attacked me again, she started to pull the sheets off me. I prayed to God and she couldn’t harm me; although she did press on my hair, so that I could never lift my head<sup>61</sup>”.

<sup>58</sup> Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 36.

<sup>59</sup> “... és hát azon éjjel megveszett a lába az leányának, ki most Viczey Andrásnál vagyon; még az ujjaknak helyei is az leány lábán rajtok valának és az teje is elveszett Kőmíves Ferencné nénémnek is.”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 36.

<sup>60</sup> “Mikor egy reggel felkölt volna, hát az egyik lábára nem állhat és igen sír vala. Kérdém, mi lelte volna? Mondá, hogy az lába igen fáj. Meglátjuk, hát az egyik lába erőssen megdagadtott és igen szederjes.”: Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 41.

<sup>61</sup> Andor Komáromy, “A magyarországi boszorkányperek”, 36.

The girl's story continues after the 'candle-blowing' treatment. The parents turned to the barber-surgeon 'Illés Borbély' to bandage her. The barber treated her with bandages for three-four days, but then he gave up, saying that "he can't do anything about it with his bandages, it would even make things worse because it was not a case of *erysipelas*<sup>62</sup> but of *night bewitchment*"<sup>63</sup>.

The parents then find a healer from Vista:

"then they called a man from Vista, who recognized the night bewitchment at first sight; he was the one who finally healed her with the help of God, for a grand payment. The man told them that in Moldavia<sup>64</sup> he was lodging at a witch woman, she taught him how to heal such bewitchment, because all the barbers in the world could not heal such bewitchment. The man even showed on our daughter's leg that there was a human handprint visible on it. Therefore, we are still suspecting her, the mother of the trash-judge's wife, of fulfilling on her threat. Moreover, we even suspect her of causing all the confrontation between András Viczey and his wife, it's all her diabolic doing"<sup>65</sup>.

The man from Vista boosts his credibility by claiming to have lodged

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Mária Sztatky, ed., "Minden doktorságot csak ebből kísérték." *Szemelvények a XVI-XVII század magyar nyelvű orvosi könyveiből* [„I only try therapies from here.” Extracts from Hungarian medical books of the XVIth-XVIIth centuries](Budapest: Magvető Könyvkiadó, 1983), 447. Here, the two diagnoses of the aunt and of the barber use both terms (Saint Anthony's fire, *erysipelas*) to refer to the same illness.

<sup>63</sup> "... ő semmit nem használhatna az ő kötésével, még inkább ártana az ő kötése neki, mert az nem orbáncz, hanem éjjeli vesztés." : Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 41.

<sup>64</sup> In this period as well, apparently, the geographical distance was part of the myth of the healer. In this case it appears even twice: learned in Moldavia, comes from Vista (Viștea, Cluj county, Romania) .

<sup>65</sup> "Ugy hozatánk osztán egy vistai embert, ki mikor meglátta volna, mindjárt megismeré, hogy éjjeli vesztés volna rajta; osztán az vigasztá meg Isten után, nagy fizetésekért. Az ember pedig nyilván mondá, hogy ő Moldovában egy boszorkány asszonynál lakott, az tanította ötet reá, mint kelljen aféle vesztést megvigasztani, mert mennyi borbély ez világon vagyon mind, az sem tudna afféle vesztést megvigasztani. Sőt még azt is megmutatta az ember az lábán az leányunknak, mint egy ember-kéznek a helye, olyan látszott rajta. Azért nekünk minden gyanóságunk most is erre vagyon, ez szemébtiróné anyjára, hogy ő tökéllente meg fenyegetését rajtunk. Sőt még abba is gyanakodunk hozzája, hogy még Viczey Andrásnak is az minémű háborúsága vagyon feleségével, mind ő cselekedte ördögösségével rajtok." : Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 42. It is from another testimony that we know that the daughter is the wife of András Viczey: "She saw the day after that the leg of Ferenc's daughter, Mrs. András Viczey, was bewitched and that the print of her thumb is visible on the skin. She still complained that they hadn't called her, but they are going to regret it": Andor Komáromy, "A magyarországi boszorkányperek", 35. Komáromy (1910: 36).

at a witch in Moldavia who taught him how to heal “*such a bewitchment*”: he knew and was able to observe the witch from close, who – dealing with bewitchments herself – could possibly know the antidote. The idea is made even more credible for the parents that there was a human handprint on their daughter’s leg, which proved that it was a case of nocturnal bewitchment. The testimonies suggest that they attributed an important role to the act of grabbing (cf. mark of the hand, of the thumb) in nocturnal bewitchments.

I underline the importance of the hand, the touch and of the ‘doings’ because they illustrate well a typical aspect of how the late-sixteenth-century people of Kolozsvár were thinking: they always use very concrete, visible, audible, tangible phenomena to describe experiences that today would be considered mental experiences. The nighttime apparitions<sup>66</sup> also feature concrete actions leaving marks: they press, shake, throw, twist or squeeze a leg, which leaves the imprint of the hand the day after.

We learn from the testimonies that according to the witnesses’ belief, people have souls that can leave their body in the night<sup>67</sup>. The witnesses attributed a bodily form to the witch’s soul. The free soul of mother of Mrs. Varga took the form of a bumbling bug: “*a bumbling bug came in through a hole, and it flew into her mouth and she started to speak right away*”<sup>68</sup>. The same woman was diagnosed not to have her soul in her by shaking and pushing her, which didn’t wake her up. If we add to the idea of a bug soul manifestation the other night witch apparitions as cats, mother swine, someone’s

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<sup>66</sup> Éva Pócs has a different perspective on these phenomena. She defines the perception of ‘night witches’ as a vision experienced by people in an altered state of consciousness: “the data of present-age witchcraft do not always reflect what was still an obvious view in the trial protocols: the maleficent witches penetrate the homes of people as nocturnal demons, and harm them as – and in the image of – the above-mentioned evil dead and underworld demons. The victims experience all this in nighttime apparitions and visions – according to hundreds of witness testimonies from Hungarian trials. In light of these narratives we can establish that in early modern villages, market towns a significant percentage of supernatural visions experienced in an altered state of consciousness were ‘witch visions’”: Pócs (1998: 31). When defining the notion of vision, Éva Pócs followed Peter Dinzelsbacher, who said that a vision is “the manifestation-like presence of superhuman forces in the supernatural space (in the ‘otherworld’)”: Éva Pócs, “Transz és látomás”, 18. About visions see also: Ioan Petru Culianu, *Călătorii în lumea de dincolo [Out of this World]* (Bucharest: Nemira, 1996); Tamás Grynáeus, “A megváltozott tudatállapotok”, 213–228; Vilmos Voigt, “Az eksztázis, az álom, a látomás”, 9–14.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 49.

<sup>68</sup> “... *egy dongó bogár jöve be egy lyukon és az mene az szájába és mindjárt kezd szólni.*”: Andor Komáromy, “*A magyarországi boszorkányperek*”, 49. About the idea of free souls: Pócs (1997: 37) and Culianu (1996: 63–76).

mother or father, or ‘in their own image’<sup>69</sup>, we can conclude that in all these cases the soul took a visible form, in other words, the soul had a body.

Translated by Anna Klaniczay

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<sup>69</sup> It is also interesting that when saying this, they still refer to a bodily manifestation of the appearing witch: she wears clothes, she has a foul smell, etc.

- of six witches. Cluj Napoca, 1584]”. In *Életutak és életmódok [Lifeways and Modes of Life]*, ed. Töhötöm Szabó Á. Cluj Napoca: Kriza János Ethnographic Society, 2002, 5–41.
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# Les représentations de sorcières dans les médias français du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle: l'exemple des canards

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## WITCHES REPRESENTATION IN THE FRENCH SEVENTEENTH CENTURY MEDIA: THE 'CANARDS' EXAMPLE

**Abstract:** The aim of the following paper is to study witches' representations in the French chapbooks called 'canards'. During the period of the witch trials, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries France, an overwhelming majority of women were condemned at the stake. But, in these texts, there is much more male wizards than witches. These representations are mostly sensational and it is obvious that they were deformed by this perspective. The witches described in these 'canards' are mostly viewed as capable of harming people, like the witch who, in 1613, strangled little children and drank their blood. In the 'canards', these women were seen as adult, strong, intelligent and seductive, not as the old ugly witches like everyone thinks about nowadays. The stories of the 'canardiers' – the 'canards' writers – need to be studied because of these particularities. This is a way to better understand the witch-hunt in the French kingdom.

**Keywords:** canards, witchcraft, witches, witch-hunt, early modern press study, French chapbooks, XVII<sup>th</sup> century witchcraft, press and media history.

Dès le premier tiers du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle et sans doute avant, des publications occasionnelles virent le jour pour, grâce aux progrès de l'imprimerie, informer la population de toutes sortes d'événements. Bien sûr, ce n'était pas nouveau et ce mode de publication venait d'abord remplacer les nouvelles à la main, tout en touchant un plus large public. Nous sommes ainsi à une époque antérieure à l'invention du périodique, que l'on situe au premier tiers du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle avec la *Gazette* de Théophraste Renaudot. Cette dernière, malgré son grand succès, ne rima pourtant pas avec la disparition complète

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de ces occasionnels dont elle reprit d'ailleurs la forme pour ses numéros *Extraordinaires*<sup>1</sup>.

Parmi ces publications et pratiquement dès leurs débuts, certains auteurs, toujours anonymes, spécialisèrent leurs écrits dans les faits divers. Nous n'avons pas d'informations sur ces personnes, si ce n'est, vu le contenu catholique et volontairement anti-Réforme des textes, qu'il y a fort à parier que nombre d'entre eux étaient des clercs. Parmi ces documents appelés de manière anachronique *canards*, certains évoquent des cas de sorcellerie, à peu près en parallèle avec l'essor de la chasse aux sorcières<sup>2</sup>. Les premiers de ce genre apparurent, d'après ceux aujourd'hui conservés, au cours de la décennie 1560, pour vraiment prendre essor au début du siècle suivant. En effet, près de 65% des canards spécialisés dans la sorcellerie, ou qui traitent de sujets s'y rapprochant, furent publiés durant le premier tiers du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Les publications de ce type, de format in-8° pour la grande majorité, proposaient 8 à 16 pages – ce qui correspond à une feuille d'impression recto-verso – de contenu alliant morale, récits sensationnels et conclusion macabre<sup>3</sup>. Ces particularités avaient nécessairement des raisons économiques : ces publications étaient proposées contre une somme modique, afin de toucher un public le plus large possible. Pour être rentables, les auteurs utilisaient régulièrement des informations regrattées, parfois même chez d'autres éditeurs concurrents issus de villes éloignées. Dans ce cas, les textes portaient des mentions le spécifiant, telles que : «jouxte la copie imprimée à...» ou parfois se taisaient sciemment à ce sujet.

Le but de ces publications était ainsi de proposer une information dite de première fraîcheur, la plus sensationnelle possible. Pour attirer le lecteur, nombre d'entre eux se voyaient affublés de titres aguicheurs qui étaient criés dans les rues, quand les textes ne se vendaient pas *via* des marchands ambulants en campagne. Les logiques de réduction de coûts faisaient que, lorsqu'ils avaient une image d'illustration, elle provenait bien souvent d'un catalogue dont disposait déjà l'imprimeur. Ainsi, elle n'avait dans la plupart des cas qu'un rapport lointain à l'action et surtout s'y rapprochait de manière

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Feyel, *L'Annonce et la nouvelle : la presse d'information en France sous l'Ancien Régime (1630–1788)* (Oxford : Voltaire Foundation, 2000), 146.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Silvia Liebel, «Les canards», *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 2017, <https://www.litencyc.com/php/topics.php?rec=true&UID=19449>.

<sup>3</sup> Henri-Jean Martin et Roger Chartier, *Histoire de l'édition française : le livre conquérant, du Moyen Âge au milieu du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 1, 4 vol. (Paris : Promodis, 1982) (supplément non paginé).

symbolique. Lorsque les canards de sorcellerie comportaient une image, il s'agissait, soit d'une affaire très particulière, comme celle de Loudun par exemple, nécessitant l'emploi d'un bois gravé, soit d'un cas plus classique pour lequel l'illustration n'avait que peu de lien avec le texte. De plus, lorsqu'il s'agissait de sorcières, il n'y avait régulièrement pas d'images. En conséquence, on ne trouve donc pas d'illustrations de femmes sur des balais ou au sabbat dans ces textes-là, alors même qu'il en existait pourtant depuis plus d'un siècle: le traité d'Ulrich Molitor et d'autres textes démonologiques étaient bien illustrés<sup>4</sup>.

### Profil des sorcières dans les canards

On sait déjà, grâce aux nombreuses recherches sur la question que la majorité des condamnés pour sorcellerie en Europe étaient des femmes (75%)<sup>5</sup>. Ce chiffre est par ailleurs corroboré et même davantage, à travers un canard qui traite du renouveau des affaires de sorcellerie en 1644 dans la région toulousaine, avec 133 femmes condamnées pour moins de quinze hommes; le chiffre concernant ces derniers n'étant pas précis<sup>6</sup>. Ces stéréotypes ont été largement véhiculés par des succès de librairie attribués aux démonologues, le *Malleus maleficarum* en tête, mais aussi *via* le traité de Jean Bodin en France, par exemple<sup>7</sup>.

Or, la première différence avec ce standard, dont nous ne discuterons pas davantage ici, est que les femmes ne représentent plus que 1 cas sur 5 dans

<sup>4</sup> Voir Natalie Kwan, «Woodcuts and Witches: Ulrich Molitor's *De Lamiis et Pythonicis Mulieribus*, 1489-1669», *German History* 30, n° 4 (2012): 493-527.

<sup>5</sup> Brian P. Levack, *La grande chasse aux sorcières en Europe aux débuts des temps modernes*, trad. par Jacques Chiffolleau (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1991), 136. Robert Muchembled étend même ce chiffre à 80%, Robert Muchembled, *Société, cultures et mentalités dans la France moderne. XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 3<sup>e</sup> éd., Cursus (Paris: Armand Colin, 2003), 121.

<sup>6</sup> *La grande meschanceté découverte des sorciers & sorcieres. Avec le nombre de celles qui ont esté pendües & bruslées dans la place de Salin, tant à Toulouse, qu'ez villes de Foix, Pamiers, Bannieres, & autres lieux, & places dependans du ressort du Parlement de Toulouse* ([s. l.]: [s. e.], 1644), 6-8. Ce renouveau de procès de sorcellerie en région toulousaine est corroboré par un article de la *Gazette*: Théophraste Renaudot, *Recueil des Gazettes et Nouvelles Ordinaires et Extraordinaires et autres relations des choses avenues toute l'année mille six cents quarante-quatre* (Paris: Théophraste Renaudot, 1645), 111. À ce sujet, voir Robert Mandrou, *Magistrats et sorciers en France au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle : une analyse de psychologie historique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), 379-80.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Institoris et Jacques Sprenger, *Le marteau des sorcières*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd. (Grenoble: Jérôme Million, 2014). Voir particulièrement p. 12-14 concernant les éditions de ce texte et leur succès. Voir aussi Jean Bodin, *De la demonomanie des sorciers* (Paris: Jacques du Puy, 1580).

les canards. En effet, ces dernières ne sont pas majoritaires au sein de ce type de texte. Cela s'explique assez simplement par le fait que les auteurs recherchaient, dans un but éminemment vendeur, le plus sensationnel pour leurs histoires. Or, vu le nombre de procès dans certaines régions, durant la période où la chasse aux sorcières était la plus virulente, proposer des récits de nouvelles basés sur des femmes condamnées pour ce motif apparaissait sans doute plutôt commun. Il fallut donc que ce soit des affaires bien plus extraordinaires qui nécessitent réellement une publication afin d'attirer le lecteur. Ainsi, lorsque ce sont des canards montrant des sorcières à l'œuvre, il s'agit d'une représentation des plus extrême de ces femmes, par conséquent assez éloignée de ce qui se retrouvait dans les procès.

Plus concrètement, le stéréotype admis de la sorcière n'est autre qu'une vieille femme repoussante, image popularisée par les procès et les démonologues<sup>8</sup>. Dans les canards, on retrouve assez peu de personnages de ce type. La majorité des cas évoquent des adultes, plutôt en pleine possession de leurs moyens, ce qui les rend d'autant plus redoutables. Les vieilles femmes sont peu représentées et interviennent souvent dans des histoires liées à d'autres crimes, régulièrement féminins également. C'est le cas de cette vieille sorcière qui est à l'origine d'un maléfice visant à faire enfanter un homme, histoire reprise plusieurs fois dans le siècle<sup>9</sup>. Celui-ci s'était rendu coupable d'avoir trompé une jeune fille en lui promettant mariage avant de se raviser et de partir avec une autre. La première chercha donc à se venger et fit naturellement appel à une vieille sorcière. Celle-ci s'exécuta en échange d'un nouvel habit complet et d'une faible somme d'argent<sup>10</sup>.

Le canardier décrit bien peu cette sorcière: on sait seulement qu'elle est vieille et surtout vile: elle profita que l'homme trompeur tombe malade pour lui proposer de le guérir au moyen d'un breuvage de sa composition. Ce dernier n'était autre que la vengeance tant attendue de la jeune fille, un maléfice qui le fit enfanter d'un «diable» mi-homme mi-animal<sup>11</sup>. Cela nous en dit

<sup>8</sup> Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft*, 2<sup>e</sup> éd. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 15; Levack, *La grande chasse aux sorcières*, 141-45.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *Traite merueilleux d'un monstre engendre dans le corps d'un homme, nommé Ferdinand de La Febve, habitant de Fereyta, au Marquisat de Cènete, par des ensorcellements qui luy furent donnez en un breuvage. La sage femme qui le receut s'appelloit Françoise de Leon, il fut mis sur terre par la partie extraordinaire, le vingt uniesme de Juin, 1606. Imprimé premièrement à Madrid en Espagne le quatorzième de septembre de cette présente* (Rouen: Jean Petit, 1606), in: Maurice Lever, *Canards sanglants: naissance du fait divers* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), 473-81.

<sup>10</sup> Lever, *Canards sanglants*, 477-79.

<sup>11</sup> Lever, *Canards sanglants*, 476.

d'ailleurs long sur l'ambiguïté de ces vieilles femmes, capables de soigner – la victime lui a d'abord fait confiance – mais aussi du pire. Finalement, nous avons là un texte qui allie à la fois histoire de sorcière, présumée vraie, et naissance monstrueuse, un autre genre à part entière de ce type de publication<sup>12</sup>. Ce canard reprend bien sûr les stéréotypes misogynes des démonologues mais aussi ceux de la femme vile et donne lieu à un avertissement au lecteur<sup>13</sup>:

Ouvre les yeux, lecteurs, ne vous fiez point aux mauvaises femmes, car celle qui vous montre le plus beau visage, c'est celle-là qui vous vend en public criée; ce sont les vers de l'âme et de la conscience, qui vous sucent le sang comme le font les sangsues, qui sont des vipères vénéneuses. Elles sont fausses et flatteuses. Celle-là qui vous montre bel aspect, c'est un basilic dans les yeux. Gardez-vous donc bien qu'elles ne vous fassent enfanter comme a fait cette sorcière à ce pauvre homme, sur lequel vous pouvez prendre exemple [...].<sup>14</sup>

Ce type de message est très courant dans ce genre de texte et souvent lié à une réaffirmation du culte tridentin révélant, pour reprendre l'expression de Silvia Liebel, un catholicisme exacerbé<sup>15</sup>.

Mais, si ce ne sont pas de vieilles sorcières que l'on retrouve dans nos canards, de quel type de femmes s'agissait-il? Tout d'abord, pour près de la moitié d'entre elles, l'âge est non spécifié. En revanche, pour les autres, que l'on catégoriserait comme «adultes», c'est-à-dire entre une vingtaine et une soixantaine d'années, il s'agit toujours de cas extraordinaires, outre les quelques canards qui se contentent de donner des listes de noms de condamnées sans davantage d'informations<sup>16</sup>.

Même lorsqu'elles sont arrêtées avec des hommes, les femmes sont toujours décrites par les canardiers comme ayant un pire caractère que leurs homologues masculins ou, tout du moins, montrant une grande méchanceté. C'est le cas de ces «trois espagnols et une espagnolle, magiciens & sorciers, qui se faisaient porter par les diables [...]» et dont, dès le titre du texte,

<sup>12</sup> Pour un exemple, voir: Kévin Cochard, «“Monstres horribles” et “effroyable(s) accouchement(s)” : tératologie et sensationnel dans les canards (fin XVI<sup>e</sup> – début XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)», in Étienne Courriol et Teresa Hiergeist (éd.) *Monstres et christianisme – monstres du christianisme* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2018), 37-55.

<sup>13</sup> Voir Silvia Liebel, *Les Médées modernes. La cruauté féminine d'après les canards imprimés (1574–1651)* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2013), 53-55.

<sup>14</sup> Lever, *Canards sanglants*, 481.

<sup>15</sup> Liebel, *Les Médées modernes*, 207.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. par exemple le *Discours véritable de l'exécution faite de cinquante tant sorciers que sorcières exécutez en la ville de Douay* (Paris: Jullian Pillou, 1606).

on attire l'attention sur une femme, en la séparant des hommes du groupe<sup>17</sup>. Le texte est fameux puisqu'il fut publié à Paris en 1610, 1622 puis en 1626 au moins, étant donné que bon nombre de ces publications sont aujourd'hui disparues. Le canard raconte qu'ils furent tous condamnés au bûcher à Bordeaux en 1610 pour «enchantement, magie et sortilèges et autres pernicieuses œuvres malheureuses & diaboliques»<sup>18</sup>. Or, seule cette Espagnole bénéficie d'une description plus avancée de ses méfaits, sans doute car les plus sensationnels, ce qui justifiait sa séparation du groupe des hommes:

L'espagnolle qui les suyvoit nommee Catalina Fiofela, dit & confessa une infinité de meschancetez par elle exercez entre autres par les malheureux sorcilleges [:] elle avoit fait avorter une infinité de femmes enceintes, & d'avoir infecté avec certaines poisons plusieurs fontaines, puits, & ruisseaux, & aussi d'avoir fait mourir plusieurs bestail, & d'avoir fait par ses charmes tombé pierres, & gresles sur les biens & fruits de la terre [...]<sup>19</sup>

Tout est classique ici, en termes de condamnation pour sorcellerie, l'avortement, les sortilèges, le poison et la destruction de récoltes, on peut même dire qu'il s'agit, pour les contemporains, d'un des pires spécimens de sorcières, étant donné qu'elle cumule presque tous les méfaits qui leurs sont communément attribués. À l'inverse, les hommes de cette affaire n'avaient confessé, sur le bûcher, que quelques sortilèges destinés à causer la mort au moyen de poisons disséminés dans les fontaines et des attaques aux domaines agricoles.

Par ailleurs, les lieux où se passent les affaires de sorcellerie racontées par les canardiers sont le plus souvent citadins, en lien avec la clientèle attendue de tels textes. Toutefois, même si la majeure partie des cas faisant intervenir des sorcières dans les canards se passent en ville, la campagne n'est pas à négliger pour autant. Tout au long du siècle, il y a régulièrement des textes faisant intervenir des femmes accusées de sorcellerie en campagne, ou tout du moins dans de petits villages. Parfois cela n'est qu'évoqué puisque l'auteur se place au moment du procès, donc nécessairement en ville, alors que l'accusée a commis ses méfaits en dehors de celle-ci. C'est le cas notamment

<sup>17</sup> *Discours prodigieux et espouventable, de trois Espagnols & Une espagnolle, Magiciens & Sorciers, qui se faisoient porter par les diables, de ville en ville, avec leurs declarations d'avoir fait mourir plusieurs personnes & bestail par leurs sorcilleges, & aussi d'avoir fait plusieurs degats aux biens de terre. Ensemble l'Arrest prononcé contre eux par la Cour de Parlement de Bourdeaux, le Samedy 10 jour de Mars 1610* (Paris: [s. e.], 1610).

<sup>18</sup> *Discours prodigieux et espouventable*, 10.

<sup>19</sup> *Discours prodigieux et espouventable*, 12.

de l'*Histoire prodigieuse d'une jeune damoiselle Sorciere* [...], qui se passe à un quart de lieue de Plairmel (aujourd'hui Ploërmel en Bretagne), dans une petite noblesse portant le nom de Bois-Joly<sup>20</sup>. Tous les enfants d'un couple décédèrent sauf la cadette, Marguerite. Lorsque les parents moururent, elle demeura seule pour garder la seigneurie. C'est là que le diable lui apparut et «l'emporta au sabbat des Sorciers la ou elle recogneut (celuy sembloit à voir) plusieurs personnages, lors le Diable par ses enchantemens la sceut si bien avoir qu'il luy bailla une certaine marque, que si tost qu'elle fut de retour se mit à estrangler un petit enfant & en beut le sang [...]<sup>21</sup>.

Le pacte avec le diable est, comme dans nombre d'autres canards, tout à fait en accord avec la représentation habituelle, pour l'époque, de la sorcière. Ce qui nous intéresse ici, c'est que celle-ci, lorsqu'un jeune homme lui fit la cour et finit par la demander en mariage, a peur qu'il ne découvre son penchant secret pour les arts diaboliques et la dévoration d'enfant<sup>22</sup>. On pourrait facilement imaginer que celles ayant obtenu le pouvoir du diable par le pacte se sentent protégées et invulnérables. Or, le canardier affirme explicitement qu'elle a peur de la justice qui la ferait condamner. Seulement voilà: cette femme tomba enceinte de ce jeune homme, qui promit alors de l'épouser. Puis, «elle ce monstre en cet affaire plus cruelle que les bestes brutes, car estant delivrée elle tuë son fruct & en boit le sang comme elle avoit coustume de faire aux autres qu'elle estrangloit ça & la ou elle en pouvoit avoir»<sup>23</sup>. Ce fut là la cause de sa perte: le jeune homme la fit arrêter et elle fut condamnée au bûcher. La sentence se vit confirmée après appel à la Cour du Parlement de Rennes<sup>24</sup>.

## Les condamnations

Assez logiquement pour l'époque, la plupart de ces femmes furent condamnées de la sorte pour crime de sorcellerie. Ce fut parfois même le cas après l'édit de décriminalisation de 1682, comme l'indique un canard évoquant une condamnation à mort en 1687 en Bretagne<sup>25</sup>. Bien sûr, ces cas

<sup>20</sup> *Histoire prodigieuse d'une jeune damoiselle Sorciere, eagee de vingt cinq ans, laquelle à confessé avoir estranglé & beu le sang de soixante sept enfans, executee dans la ville de Rennes en Bretagne le vingtiesme Octobre mil six cens treize* (Rennes: Jean Robert, 1613), 3.

<sup>21</sup> *Histoire prodigieuse d'une jeune damoiselle Sorciere*, 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> *Histoire prodigieuse d'une jeune damoiselle Sorciere*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Histoire prodigieuse d'une jeune damoiselle Sorciere*, 6-7.

<sup>24</sup> *Histoire prodigieuse d'une jeune damoiselle Sorciere*, 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> *Relation de trois sorcieres, lesquelles ont esté condamnées à faire l'amende honorable, et estre*

tardifs sont plus rares mais il faut tout de même en tenir compte dans l'étude de la chasse aux sorcières.

Concernant les cas «plus classiques» de condamnation, un canardier raconte très bien la procédure, pour le cas d'un mari et sa femme «attaints & convaincus [...]» de ce crime<sup>26</sup>.

Pour reparation dequoy auroient [...] estez condamnez faire amende honorable, nuds en chemise, ayans la corde au col, tenans chacun en leurs mains une torche ardante du poix de deux livres, au devant de la principale porte de l'Eglise dudit Moulins, & illec à genoux declareroient à haute & intelligible voix, que meschamment & impieusement, ils avoient assisté au Sabat, renoncé à Dieu, adoré le Diable, & par le moyen d'iceluy faict plusieurs maléfices, dont ils demanderoient pardon à Dieu, au Roy, & à Justice: ce fait conduits en la grand place des Lices, & là pendus & estranglez à une potence qui y seroit à cet effect dressee, leurs corps morts ardz & bruslez, les cendres jettees au vent, tous & chacun leurs biens acquis & confisquees à qui il appartiendroit, sur iceux & autres non subjects à confiscation prealablement pris la somme de deux cens livres, moitié au Roy, & aux reparations du Palais de Moulins, & en cent livres d'aumosne la fabricque de S. Pierre & à l'Hostel-Dieu.<sup>27</sup>

Nous avons là un cas tout à fait représentatif, l'auteur reprenant le texte des arrêts de parlement, d'où le style judiciaire. La particularité de cette affaire étant la condamnation de leur fille à assister à l'exécution avec défense de récidiver: en réalité, ses parents avaient confessé l'avoir emmenée au sabbat, sans son accord. Elle fut donc considérée comme une victime, au bénéfice du doute<sup>28</sup>. Cela confirme les préconisations des démonologues en matière de clémence auprès des enfants dans ce type de cas, vu l'absence de procédure officielle en France<sup>29</sup>.

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*brûlées vives, leurs cendres jettées au vent, dans la ville de Dinam, province de Bretagne. La sentence de condamnation renduë le neuf de ce mois de juillet 1687 ([s. l.]: [s. e.], 1687).*

<sup>26</sup> *Arrest de la Cour de parlement contre le mary & la femme, convaincus de sortilege, & d'avoir meschamment & impieusement assisté au sabbat, renoncé à Dieu, adoré le diable, & fait plusieurs malefices par le moyen d'iceluy. Avec le discours des execrables meschancetez qu'ils ont commises audit sabbat, où ils ont mangé de leurs enfans, & offert les autres au Diable* (Paris: Antoine Vitray, 1624), 12.

<sup>27</sup> *Arrest de la Cour de parlement contre le mary & la femme*, 12-13.

<sup>28</sup> *Arrest de la Cour de parlement contre le mary & la femme*, 13.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Pierre Cameron, «De victime à accusé: la criminalisation de l'enfant sorcier en Europe (fin XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle – début XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle)», *Histoire sociale / Social History* XLVII, n° 95 (2014): 539-42.



Dans cette affaire, il y a bien un homme, le père de famille, mais la faute est immédiatement renvoyée sur une personne de sexe opposé: son ex-femme l'avait conduit au sabbat et à son tour il y avait emmené sa nouvelle compagne, puis sa fille<sup>30</sup>. Le tort est donc d'abord imputé à une femme, alors même qu'il a sa part à jouer dans les sortilèges, ce qui, toutefois, ne l'empêcha pas d'être condamné.

Il y a bien d'autres supplices réservés aux sorcières, bien que la large majorité des canards ne fassent état du même que nous venons de citer. Ainsi, il faut se fier, pour cela, à celui publié à Toulouse en 1644, dévoilant une liste des arrestations durant l'année dans la région, comportant les condamnations, les lieux et le nombre de personnes. On y retrouve par ailleurs, un cas similaire au canard précédent, qui fait office de dernière partie au texte. Il s'agit là, une nouvelle fois, d'une histoire classique impliquant un mari qui ne se doute de rien pendant que sa femme transporte son enfant au sabbat pour le donner au diable. Lorsqu'il s'en rend compte, car il se réveille en pleine nuit, il les surprend durant leur retour: il poignarde sa femme puis se dépêche le lendemain de faire baptiser son enfant<sup>31</sup>. Le canard ne précise pas, volontairement sans doute, si le mari a été inquiété par la justice, probablement pour justifier le fait qu'il ait tué une femme vouée au diable, acte bénéfique s'il en est.

Pour en revenir à cette liste, la majorité des sorcières qui y sont mentionnées furent condamnées à la pendaison puis au bûcher. Cependant, un nombre important durent subir seulement, si l'on peut dire, des peines de fouet, dont l'auteur précise régulièrement qu'elles sont en fait décédées sous les coups incessants du bourreau. Enfin, un cas fait état d'une femme qui, après cette peine, fut assommée par les enfants du village à coups de pierres. Par rapport à d'autres textes de ce genre, on voit que ce dernier reflète la réalité de la situation toulousaine en 1644: un reflux de sorcellerie. Ce canard, non seulement fait mention des cas du moment et, surtout, des condamnations, mais encourage, sans le dire vraiment, à continuer à se débarrasser de l'épidémie de sorcières. Tout y est fait pour entretenir le climat de la chasse, en poussant le lecteur à l'inquiétude, dès le titre: *La grande meschanceté découverte des sorciers & sorcieres*. C'est une manière d'allier à la fois le sensationnel inhérent à ce type de texte, et ce qui les faisait vendre, à une idéologie de la chasse aux sorcières. Par ailleurs, comme son auteur l'indique, ce canard nécessite une suite, voire même un ouvrage plus long, qui soit n'est

<sup>30</sup> *Arrest de la Cour de parlement contre le mary & la femme*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> *La grande meschanceté découverte des sorciers*, 7-8.

jamais paru, soit ne nous est pas parvenu: «C'est pourquoy attendant de vous faire voir en bref un plus ample discours d'un si grand nombre de sorciers & sorcieres, que l'on a amenees prisonnieres dans la ville de Toulouse. Je me contenteray de vous faire sçavoir combien il y en a eu d'executees, en diverses manieres, & en divers lieux, & dans le ressort du Languedoc.»<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Ainsi, les canards, ces textes spécialisés dans les faits divers vendus à travers tout le royaume de France, principalement autour des années 1600 à 1630 en ce qui concerne la sorcellerie, parlaient moins des sorcières que de leurs homologues masculins. Dès lors que ces publications évoquaient des femmes, il s'agissait le plus souvent d'adultes, évoluant en ville ou dans des villages proches. On les voit surtout comme des femmes fortes, même si elles peuvent craindre la justice. En effet, celle-ci leur réserve le plus souvent le bûcher ou tout du moins le fouet là où les juges étaient les plus cléments.

Les canards nous offrent une vision biaisée de ces sorcières, biaisée par le prisme du sensationnel. On observe très peu de cas de sorcellerie «simples» si l'on peut dire car, pour l'époque, il s'agissait d'affaires banales et donc peu vendeuses. Les canardiens nous offrent, au contraire, des cas les plus atypiques, à l'image de cette sorcière qui avait l'habitude de boire le sang des enfants qu'elle étranglait, sort qu'elle a également réservé à sa propre progéniture! Toutefois, bien que cette vision soit orientée, elle nous offre tout de même un angle de vue important sur ce dont se délectaient les lecteurs car, même si les informations sur eux sont maigres, on sait bien désormais qu'ils appréciaient ces histoires et particulièrement la morale omniprésente dans ces textes.

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# Metamorfoza unei reprezentări, de la *Testamentul lui Solomon* la demonologia folclorică românească: Avestița, aripa Satanei / Avizuha / Samca

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METAMORPHOSIS OF A REPRESENTATION, FROM THE  
*TESTAMENT OF SOLOMON* TO ROMANIAN FOLKLORE:  
AVEȘTIȚA, SATAN'S WING / AVIZUHA / SAMCA

**Abstract:** This paper deals with questions of cultural anthropology, namely, the ritual means of confronting community fears regarding infant mortality in premodern Romanian culture. One of the central thesis of the article is that Abezethibou and Obyzouth, some of the most powerful daemons with the help of which King Solomon has supposedly erected the Temple of Jerusalem, according to the pseudo-epigraphical *Testament of Solomon*, have later merged into a single representation, by the name of Avestița, Satan's Wing, Avizuha or Samca. Manuscript exorcisms, handwritten and oral spells have alternatively been used in the last centuries in Romanian popular culture in order to fight not as much the daemon, but the terror he/she spread. Reading all these items as anthropologic documents, we focused on the information about the daemon's names, portraits and description of specific ways of action, trying to make out their functions as means of taming social fear. The case seemed instructive, in that it illustrates the concept of risk management in traditional communities. On this view, protection can be efficiently assured only by an adequate (magic) performance, in which the aggressor (the daemon) and the victim (the woman or the child) are made to change their places and roles with the help of a saint, a holy figure, or even a human intercessor.

**Keywords:** *Testament of Solomon*, Hebrew daemonology, Obyzouth, Abezethibou, infanticide daemons, Romanian handwritten and oral spells, diabolic afflictions, ritual performances for protection.

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Într-o cercetare<sup>1</sup> dedicată arheologiei transformărilor culturale prin care a trecut demonul infanticid cunoscut în tradiția noastră recentă mai ales sub numele Avestița ori Samca, ne-am ocupat pe larg de metamorfozele și confluența folclorică a două reprezentări provenite din literatura sapiențială solomonică îmbogățită, după 1834, prin (re)descoperirea, traducerea și studierea câtorva manuscrise grecești ale unui *Testament*<sup>2</sup> apocrif, „un pseudoepigraf al *Vechiului Testament*, produs al gândirii «populare» care pune la un loc tradiții magice, astrologice și medicale antice, [...] datat cu larghețe în primele patru secole ale erei creștine”<sup>3</sup> având ca motiv central zidirea Templului din Ierusalim cu ajutorul demonilor – spre deosebire de relatarea din 3 *Regi* și 2 *Paralipomena*, de unde aflăm că Solomon a construit Casa Numelui Domnului în șapte ani, instituind în tot Israelul munca obligatorie pentru edificarea impresionantului monument. Așadar, *Testamentul lui Solomon* oferă o altă lectură, în cheie magică și simbolică, a efortului de construcție, a grandorii și a valențelor spirituale ale lăcașului. În textul apocrif, Arhanghelul Mihail îi transmite regelui un inel cu pecetea divină, împreună cu un *modus operandi* de factură magică: „Ia, Solomon, fiule al lui David, darul pe care ți l-a trimis Domnul Dumnezeu Sabaoth cel Preaînalt; [cu el] îi vei închide pe toți demonii, și pe cei de parte bărbătească, și pe cei de parte femeiască, și cu ei vei zidi Ierusalimul”<sup>4</sup>.

Ar fi inutil să refacem aici demonstrația pe care am încercat-o în studiul nostru anterior menționat, dedicat preponderent efortului de elucidare a unor jaloane filologice și etnografice din parcursul cultural „identitar” al demonului infanticid. Reluăm aici, pe scurt, ipoteza pe care am susținut-o acolo:

*Testamentul lui Solomon*, impresionant tratat de demonologie, este în același timp un corpus de exorcisme. Parada demonilor veterotestamentari include două figuri care ne deschid o perspectivă nouă asupra exorcismelor și descântecelor legate de *Avestița*, *aripa Satanei*, numită în folclorul românesc și *Avezuha* ori *Samca / Sanca*, demon responsabil de moartea infantilă. În *Testamentul lui Solomon* apar doi demoni cu nume asemănătoare, *Obyzouth* și *Abezethibou*, din suprapunerea cărora a luat naștere, în opinia noastră,

<sup>1</sup> „De la *Testamentul lui Solomon* la demonologia folclorică românească”, în Astrid Cambose, *Cealaltă grădină. Cultura tradițională a morții la români* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2019), 334–360.

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<sup>3</sup> Ștefan Colceriu, studiu introductiv, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ștefan Colceriu, studiu introductiv, 66.

*Avezuha-Avestița, aripa Satanei.* Chipul lui *Obyzouth*<sup>5</sup> nu se vede din cauza pletelor ei sălbatice, lungi până la pământ; ea îi mărturisește regelui Solomon că noaptea dă ocol lumii după femei și, ghicindu-le sorocul nașterii, le sugrumă pruncii, că strâmbă ochi, că risipește minți și îndurerează trupuri, dar îi spune și faptul că numele ei scris pe o bucată de hârtie o îndepărtează de lângă femeia care naște – or, toate textele-amuletă românești *de Sancă* conțin numele demonului, în număr de 19, scrise pe o hârtie purtată la gât de lăuză sau de prunc. Ipoteza noastră [...] este că numele *Obyzouth*<sup>6</sup> s-a modificat până la forma românească *Avezuha*, iar *Abezethibou*<sup>7</sup>, duhul cu o singură

<sup>5</sup> „Și a venit înaintea mea [un duh] *cu înfățișare de femeie, care însă își ținea trupul și măduarele ascunse și părul despletit.* [...] M-am așezat pe tron, am întrebat-o și am zis: «Cine ești tu?», iar ea a răspuns: «*Obyzouth.* Nu dorm noaptea, ci dau rotoocolo lumii după femei, și, ghicindu-le sorocul, le iscodesc și le sugrum pruncii. În nicio noapte nu plec fără să-mi fi făcut treaba. Tu însă nu-mi poți da nicio poruncă. [...] Nu am altă treabă decât să *ucid prunci, să strâmb ochi, să pun stavilă gurilor, să risipesc minți și să îndurerez trupuri.*». Când eu, Solomon, am auzit acestea, m-am minunat. *Chipul nu i-l puteam vedea, iar trupul ei era întunecat și pletele, sălbatice.* Atunci eu, Solomon, i-am zis: «Spune-mi, duh rău, ce înger te răpune?», iar ea a răspuns: «Îngerul Raphael. *Când nasc femeile, scrie numele meu pe o bucată de hârtie și eu o să fug de la ele pe ceea lume.*». Când am auzit acestea, am poruncit să fie legată cu pletele-i și să fie atârnată [pe partea] din față a Templului, ca toți fiii lui Israel care trec pe acolo să o privească și să îl slăvească pe Dumnezeu, Care mi-a dat puterea aceasta” (s.m., A.C.) – Ștefan Colceriu, 90–92.

<sup>6</sup> Am regăsit această filiație mitologică în eruditul studiu al Mariei Patera: „Bien que le nom de Gylou n'apparaisse pas dans le Testament de Salomon, outre la parenté de fonction entre Gylou ou les Géloudes et Obyzouth, il y a plusieurs raisons pour associer le(s) personnage(s) byzantin(s) à ce texte. D'une part, on notera que, dans toute une série de textes byzantins et post-byzantins qui mettent en scène la démons Gylou, parmi les noms de la démons (dont l'énumération assure le pouvoir sur la créature) se trouve le nom Abyzou. C'est l'un des principaux noms de la démons et il peut même se substituer à celui de Gylou. Abyzou pourrait être une déformation du nom Obyzouth, grécisé de manière à lui donner un sens: «la sans-poitrine»” – Maria Patera, „Gylou, démon et sorcière du monde byzantin au monde néogrec”, *Revue des études byzantines*, tome 64–65 (2006–2007), 314.

<sup>7</sup> „Apoi eu l-am întrebat pe celălalt demon care ieșise din mare cu stâlpul: «Tu cine ești și cum te cheamă și care ți-e îndeletnicirea? Căci am auzit multe despre tine.» Și demonul a răspuns: «Pe mine, rege Solomon, mă cheamă Abezethibou. Odinioară stăteam în primul cer, care se numește Ameloth. Sunt așadar un duh cumplit, înaripat, [însă] *cu o singură aripă* (s.m., A.C.), uneltitor împotriva întregii suflări de sub ceruri. Eram de față când Moise a venit la Faraon, regele Egiptului. Eu i-am împietrit inima. Eu sunt cel pe care îl chemau Iannes și Iambres când s-au luptat cu Moise în Egipt. Eu sunt cel care s-a împotrivit lui Moise cu minuni și semne.» Atunci i-am zis: «Dar cum de te afli în Marea Roșie?», iar el a răspuns: «În timpul exodului fiilor lui Israel, eu am împietrit inima Faraonului și am ațâțat\* inima lui și a fiilor lui. Și i-am făcut să meargă pe urmele fiilor lui Israel, și Faraonul și toți egiptenii i-au urmărit laolaltă. Și eu eram atunci de față și i-am urmărit împreună cu ei, până când am ajuns cu toții la Marea Roșie. Și a fost așa: îndată ce fiii lui Israel au trecut marea, apa s-a întors și a acoperit toată oștirea egiptenilor. Atunci mă aflam și eu acolo și am fost acoperit de



aripă, cel de sub stâlpul din Marea Roșie (vezi „stâlpul”, adică turnul, în care stă ascunsă sora lui Sveti Sisin) a dat naștere sintagmei descriptive suplimentare *aripa Satanei*. Așadar, dacă *Avezuha / Avizuha / Aveziha / Avizoe / Avezuia / Avesa* din folclorul românesc sunt reflexii ale lui *Obyzouth*, iar *Avestița / Avistrița / Vestița / Veștița / Avesteța / aripa Satanei* îl moștenesc pe *Abezethibou*, unirea lor în sintagma denominativă *Avestița, aripa Satanei*, secundată de diverse nume alternative, perpetuează, transcultural, imaginea și atributele perechii de demoni din *Testamentul lui Solomon*.<sup>8</sup>

În paginile de față ne propunem să insistăm asupra „portretului” demonului, urmărindu-i numele alternative, caracteristicile de actant magic și atributele fizice, așa cum apar acestea în surse precum „cărțile” (amulete cu textul exorcismului, însoțit de regulă de 19 nume ale demonului și de o reprezentare grafică a acestuia) și descântecul înrudit (de Samcă / de strâns / de răul-copiilor / de fapt ș.a.m.d.). Filologia temei va constitui planul secund. Perspectiva principală din care vom aborda subiectul este una mai degrabă antropologică. Creșterea, devenirea și stingerea interesului comunităților pentru Avestița a fost, desigur, direct proporțională cu numărul de cazuri grave a căror explicație putea fi pusă pe seama atacului demonic, dar ceea ce ne interesează aici nu este translarea din etiologia medicală în cea magică, în siajul medicinei mistice neoplatonice. Ne interesează *spectacolul* acestei confruntări cu demonul, urgența existențială resimțită în diverse păături sociale și răspunsul ritual la aceasta, efervescența cu care și-au organizat oamenii „liniile de apărare” – în acest sens, după cum s-a putut vorbi cu îndreptățire despre magie și vrăjitorie ca instrumente de „management al riscului”<sup>9</sup>, am putea să ne referim, în cazul nostru, la exorcismele din seria amintită și la alternativele ori substituturile acestora ca la principalul mijloc comunitar de a combate afecțiunile post-partum, mortalitatea infantilă și numeroase boli psihosomatice a căror cauză era considerată Samca. Ne interesează scenografia luptei, elementele de recuzită magică utilizate sau numai invocate de exorcist, regia profundă a acestui ritual de protecție. Pătrunzând și mai mult în registrul dramatic, nu ne putem împiedica să constatăm că scenariul magic – acea *historiola* de la care pleacă exorcismele ori descântecul din aria noastră de cercetare – este, ca de obicei în spectacolele menite

apă și am rămas în mare, prins sub stâlp, până când a venit Ehippas.» Atunci eu, Solomon, l-am blestemat să care stâlpul până la sfârșitul [lumii]” (\*gr. ἀπεπέρωσα, „am înaripat”) – Ștefan Colceriu, 115–116.

<sup>8</sup> Astrid Cambose, *Cealaltă grădină*, 336–337.

<sup>9</sup> Ioan Pop-Curșeu, *Magie și vrăjitorie în cultura română. Istorie, literatură, mentalități* (București: Cartea Românească, Iași: Polirom, 2013), 21.

să producă efectul de *catharsis*, în același timp o formă de *narativizare* și o *revelare* a subiectului.

Cum se poate face, însă, portretul „nevăzutelor”? Cum altfel, decât crezând profund în ele? Căci nimeni dintre cei care descriu demonul nu pretind a-l fi întâlnit în carne și oase, dar, cu toate acestea, descrierile converg în albia aceleiași tradiții, care le informează, le alimentează și le asigură perpetuarea, atâta timp cât reprezentarea vehiculată corespunde unei nevoi reale a comunității. Credița în demon și frica de el au evoluat în tandem.

Dacă este adevărat că „principiul de organizare și, implicit, de controlare a lumii demonice ar fi listă”<sup>10</sup>, merită să insistăm și din punct de vedere antropologic asupra acestei maniere de abordare (enumerativă), comună tuturor nivelurilor culturii religioase, de la religiozitatea populară de expresie orală, până la îndelung șlefuitele discursuri clericale ori meditații mistice. Lista reprezintă, am spune, nu numai un mod de organizare a lumii demonice, ci și al lumii divine și al intermundiilor – să ne amintim de apocriful *Cele 72 de nume* [ale lui Hristos]<sup>11</sup>, de numele Maicii Domnului (Șaptizăci și doao de numere a precisti)<sup>12</sup>, de ierarhiile cetelor îngerești, de lungile liste cu nume de sfinți invocați în finalul unora dintre exorcisme<sup>13</sup> ș.a.m.d. Revenind la „punerea în scenă” ritualică, ne putem întreba la ce folosesc atâtea cuvinte și fraze înșiruite domol, parcă niciodată dispuse la a-și găsi o încheiere,

<sup>10</sup> Ștefan Colceriu, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Amuleta, text manuscris datat 1784, transcris de Moses Gaster, *Literatura populară română* (București: ig. Haimann, 1883), 403. Am transcris titlul după ediția princeps, din care sunt preluate și fragmentele citate.

<sup>12</sup> Moses Gaster, *Literatura populară română*, 404–405.

<sup>13</sup> Exemplele sunt numeroase. Cităm aici două. „Și iar te jur cu numele Domnului nostru Is. Hrist., și cu precurata lui maică pururea Fecioară Maria, și cu Ioan Botezătorul, și cu cei 12 proroci, și cu cei trei ierarhi Vasilie cel Mare, Grigore Bogoslovul și cu Ioan Zlataust, cu Maftei, Luca, Ioan și Marco, cei 4 evangheliști, cu cei 318 părinți de la Nichea, cu Sfântul m.m. Gheorghe și Sf. Dumitru și ierarhul Nicolae, Teodor Stratilat, și cu Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava, și cu toți sfinții cuvioși și cuvioasele mucenice, și cu toți sfinții acum și pururea și în vecii vecilor amin” – S.Fl. Marian, *Nașterea la români. Studiu etnografic*, ediție îngrijită, introducere, bibliografie și glosar de Jordan Datcu (București: Saeculum I.O., 2009), 32–34; „Și iară te jur cu numele domnului Isus Hristos și cu pre curată Maică, pururea Ficioară Maria, și cu doispreșe prooroși și cu trei sfinț arhirei: Vasáli cel Mare, Grigori Bogoslovu și Ion Zlataust. Și cu Maftei și Luca și Marcu cu cei patru vanghiliști și cu cei trii sute opsprăzășe părinț di la Nichia și cu Sfântul mare Mucinic Gheorghe și Sfântului Dumitru, ierarhulu Neculai. Și cu Ion cel Nou di la Suceava și cu toț sfințai cuvioșai și cuvioasale și cu mucenițai și cu toț sfințai, rugați-vă naintea lui Dumnezău pintru pruncu său. Să dăruiască sănătate totdeuna, acum și pururea și în vecii vecilor. Amin.” (Citit din „Epistolie” de Vera Dângă și scris sub dictare), în Ștefania Cristescu Golopenția, *Descântatul în Cornova – Basarabia*, ediție, introducere și note de Sanda Golopenția (București: Paideia, 2003), 179–180.

precum piesele dintr-un rozariu? *Blestemele Marelui Vasilie, care se citesc celor nebuni*<sup>14</sup>, de pildă, procedează la nesfârșite enumerații, ale căror elemente ies de sub rigorile logicii textului și se suprapun, reluându-se, completându-se și revenind asupra propriilor făgașe expresive, adâncite, modulate, izvorând ca dintr-o sursă infinită – eficiența unui asemenea discurs devine evidentă numai prin raportarea sa la „situația de comunicare”, dacă ne imaginăm cum cel cu mințile rătăcite era astfel asistat de litania menită să-l calmeze. Din fragmentul amintit, ne rețin atenția în special câțiva termeni ce funcționează într-o logică a paradoxului fertil: „[...] adâncule, înșălătoriule, *fără de chip, cel văzut* pentru obrăznicia, *nevăzut* pentru fățaria, oriunde ești, [...] *sau de unde știm, sau de unde nu știm*”<sup>15</sup> (s.m., A.C.). Lista e, așadar, o încercare de a-l surprinde pe diavol măcar sub vreuna dintre proteicele<sup>16</sup> sale înfățișări: cel „fără de chip” propriu, văzut doar atunci când se manifestă („pentru obrăznicia”), nevăzut atunci când se ascunde („pentru fățaria”), atotprezent spațio-temporal. După cum constata Emanuela Timotin în contextul cercetării unor descântece manuscrise românești, „tiparul enumerativ nu are ca rezultat doar insistența asupra unei anumite idei, ci și recrearea unei totalități, utilizabile fie ca model pozitiv, fie ca schemă de exorcizare completă”<sup>17</sup>.

Ne interesează, deci, *spectacolul* prin care un regizor de geniu manipulează privirea ochiului lăuntric în așa fel încât demonul „fără de chip” să devină vizibil, chiar prezent, și simultan să fie eliminabil din câmpul existențial. Mai întâi, demonul va trebui înlocuit cu numele și/sau imaginea lui. Acestea implică un grad de risc mai scăzut decât prezența sa „spontană”, masivă, indefinită, plină de energii negative care pot lovi oricând. „E de neapărată trebuință să cunoști numele duhului, căci numai astfel capeți stăpânire asupra lui și ai puțința să-i poruncești și să-l alungi”<sup>18</sup> – observa I.A.

<sup>14</sup> Vezi fragmentul transcris în 1835 de un scrib anonim dintr-un *Molitveanic* bucureștean din 1794, editat de G.T. Kirileanu, în „Leacuri și descântece adăogate pe un calendar vechiu”, *Șezătoarea*, nr. XXIV (1928), 113–120.

<sup>15</sup> „Leacuri și descântece adăogate pe un calendar vechiu”, 86.

<sup>16</sup> „Samcă de zori,/ Samcă de cântători,/ Samcă din spaimă,/ Samcă din scârbă,/ Samcă de duc cu ducoaică,/ Samcă de Moroi cu Moroaică,/ Samcă de neamț cu nemțoaică,/ Samca de leach cu leașcă,/ Samcă de rus cu ruscă,/ Samcă cu Sburătoriu,/ Samcă cu pocitoriu,/ Samcă de 99 de feliuri,/ Samcă de 99 de chipuri” – S.Fl. Marian, *Descântece poporane române* (Cernăuți: R. Eckhardt, 1886), 221.

<sup>17</sup> Emanuela Timotin, *Descântecele manuscrise românești (secolele al XVII-lea – al XIX-lea)* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2010), 82. Vezi și 165, unde autoarea se referă mai pe larg la la „funcția de exorcizare pe care enumerația o are adesea în textele magice”.

<sup>18</sup> I.A. Candrea, *Folclorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică*, studiu introductiv de Lucia Berdan (Iași: Polirom, 1999), 148.

Candrea. Este o formă de „management al riscului” magic, cum s-ar spune. Este și mecanismul care face ca textele-amuletă („baiere”) să conțină numele diavolului, creditate a *proteja* astfel fertilitatea femeii, sănătatea mamei sau a pruncului care le poartă.

Am notat în altă parte care sunt textele referențiale<sup>19</sup> de tip amuletă sau exorcism direct legate de demonul infanticid studiat. Numele acestuia, sistematizabile sub forma unui tabel comparativ<sup>20</sup>, sunt extrem de ofertante din punct de vedere filologic. Se observă lejer că recurente sunt mai ales Avestița, Avezuha și Samca (cu variantele și/sau derivatele lor); aceleași nume apar în titlurile textelor-sursă; aceleași sunt și apelativele sub care întâlnim cel mai adesea acest demon în descânțece – cu precizarea că forma Samca acoperă mai ales arealul nordic, de influență slavă mai pronunțată.

<sup>19</sup> „Cel mai vechi exorcism cunoscut în literatura noastră este un text anonim, redactat în slavonă, pe care popa Grigore din Măhaci l-a copiat înainte de anul 1600 și B.P. Hasdeu l-a publicat în 1879: Млтва стго Сісіна вт диавола проклзта (*Rugăciunea sfântului Sisin împotriva proclatului diavol*) («Carele voinic fu ca sveti Sisinu, ce multe oști birui?» etc.). Hasdeu considera că textul are un prototip bogomilic de secol X. La noi sunt cunoscute cel puțin zece texte-amuletă cu «Sveti Sisin», vânătorul de diavoli, un sfânt stâlpnic (*styli-tes*), devenit în variantele mai noi Sfântul Sisoe, sau înlocuit ca actant de către Arhanghelul Mihail. Cel mai vechi este *Exorcismul lui «ierei popă Simeon»*, cca 1550, în limba slavonă în original, tradus de B.P. Hasdeu, urmat de *Rugăciunea sântului Sisin contra afurisitului drac*, text de secol XVI, găsit într-un manuscris miscelaneu al popii Grigorie din Măhaci, originalul fiind în limba slavonă și în limba română (text intercalat), transliterat de B.P. Hasdeu. Mai există un text din secolul al XVIII-lea – *Avestița, aripa Satanei* (cca 1799), publicat de Moses Gaster – și câteva din secolul al XIX-lea: *Rugăciunea Sf. Arhanghel Mihail* (1809) și *Zapisul Satanii* (1836), publicate de Tudor Pamfile, *Afurisaniile Arh. Mihail asupra satanei de Samca* (1862) și un *Descânțec din Bucovina* (1869), publicate de S.Fl. Marian, *Minunile Sf. Sisoe* (1878), publicat de B.P. Hasdeu, *Rugăciunea Sf. Arh. Mihail (Mănăstirea Dragomirna)* (data neprecizată), publicat de S. Fl. Marian și un text transcris de C.N. Mateescu după un manuscris din 1803 al lui Isaia Ieromonahul. Cel mai recent exorcism din această serie este cel cules din Cornova (Basarabia) în 1931 de către Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția, care l-a publicat sub titlul *Cărticică de strâns*; o importantă descoperire o reprezintă varianta foarte veche, scrisă cu litere chirilice pe o plăcuță de plumb găsită de niște țărani în timpul aratului, la Budănești, Mehedinți (se păstrează în prezent la Turnu-Severin, în muzeul Liceului „Traian”. Trei tablete de lemn pictate cu imaginea Avestiței, însoțită de texte de tip carte de Samcă, au fost găsite în Oltenia: una în 1885, la Călinești, Argeș, una în 1939, la Costești, Argeș și una din 1875, descoperită nu se știe exact când, aflată în prezent în colecția Muzeului Județean Vâlcea. În fondul documentar de la Arhivele Statului, Iași există două cărți de Samcă manuscrise necunoscute anterior studiului nostru, una nedată și nelocalizată, dar care pare a fi de secol XVIII, și cealaltă purtând data 1825 și indicația de localitate Bacău” (Astrid Cambose, *Cealaltă grădină*, 340–342).

<sup>20</sup> Pentru că nu avem altă cale mai eficientă de a prezenta informația sub o formă cât mai condensată, reluăm aici tabelul – cf. Astrid Cambose, *Cealaltă grădină*, anexa 1, 565–567.

1550 Hasdeu ВЪШИИЦА ИМЕНИМ АВИЗОЮ <i>Veaștița numită Avizoe</i>	1799 Gaster <i>Avesteța, aripa Sătani, aripa împăratului nostru voivodul Velzävul</i>	Sec. XVIII A.C. <i>Veștița aripa Setanii</i>	1809 Pamfile <i>Avestița, aripa Satanei</i>	1838 Pamfile <i>Diavolu Avesti- ța aripa Satani</i>
<b>Avizoe</b> Mora Veaștița Ahoħa De-miazăzi (Пладница) Lecta A-omului... (Члкоудица) De-miazănoar- te (Полонощни- ца) Svevela Нодаважща Nebucuroasa (Нерадостна) Neagra (Чръни)	<b>Avesteța</b> Brană Zălina Iscara Piħa Isprava Liba Muħa Hae Glubina Nicarda Teia Hulubai Tehaia Nevederia Teiana Ghesna Rota <b>Zălăsamca</b>	<b>Veștița</b> Brană Nalvarie Necorda Zalina Aimaisie Iscara Deca Tiħa Liba Hae Brană Șielie Rabie Cazarna Felca Neberza Haba Vatisa	<b>Avestița</b> Nadarca Salomia Nacara <b>Avezuħa</b> Nadariea Salmona Paha Puħa Grapa Zliħa Nervuza Hamba Glipina Humba Gara Glapeca Tisavia Pliăștia	<b>Avestița</b> Nadariia Salomiia Cadar Nicor Avesa Scornana Tiħa Puħa Grapa Zlie Perți/Perștița Hapar Huliba Haba Gara Glipina Feti Tiia

1862 Marian <i>Avizuħa, aripa Satanei, vașcă-Avizuħa</i>	1825 A.C. <i>Avezuħa, aripa Sătanii</i>	1869 Marian <i>Avezuħa, aripa Satanei</i>	1878 Hasdeu <i>Avestița, aripa Satanei</i>	1875 Ioana Ene <i>Avistița, aripa Satanii</i>
<b>Vestița</b> Navodaria Solnomia Silina Linicoida <b>Avizuħa</b> Scarmila Miħa Lepiħa Gripa Stana	<b>Viștița</b> Nacor Salonca Silica Nacorda Avezuħa Scomorla Tiħa Meha Agripa Zlae	<b>Vestița</b> Novadaria Valnomia Sina Nicozda <b>Avezuħa</b> Scorcoila Tiħa Miħa Grompa Slaloa	<b>Avestița</b> Navodar Salomnia Zurina Nicara <b>Avezihă</b> Scarbola Miħa Puħa Cripa Zlia	<b>Avestița aripa Satanii</b> Nataria Somïia Cadara Mulħa <b>Aviduħa</b> Comana Tiħa Puħa Grapa Ziia

1862 Marian <i>Avizuha, aripa Satanei, vașcă-Avizuha</i>	1825 A.C. <i>Avezuha, aripa Sătaniei</i>	1869 Marian <i>Avezuha, aripa Satanei</i>	1878 Hasdeu <i>Avestița, aripa Satanei</i>	1875 Ioana Ene <i>Avistița, aripa Sataniei</i>
Naconta Atana Hubiba Huba Giona Glubina Isprava Tihana	Meșekza Zăpae Huba Huliba Gaana Glubina Iara Tihae	Necausa Hatav Hulila Huva Ghiana Gluviana Prava <b>Samca</b>	Nevața Pesia Cilipina Igra Fosfor Luțifer Avie Berzebuti	Chirvuța Ihivara Paha Slina Baza Glipna Gaia Maha

1893–1896 A. Fochi	1899 M. Lupescu <i>Avestița, aripa Satanei</i>	Sec. XIX Marian <i>Duh necurat</i>	1931 Ștefania Cristescu- Golopenția <i>Fașca Avizuha, aripa Sataniei</i>	1995 Ion Drăgoescu <i>[Avestița, Aripa Satanei]</i>
<b>Avezuia</b> <b>Avestița</b> Clicoda Giropa Scorbia Goina Lioha Paha Zezaia Teohola Oaleda Suduca Vezena Zalina Chieva Verdeza Zolobina Vielftava <b>Samca</b>	<b>Avestița, aripa Satanei</b> Navodoria Solomonie Silina Licalja Carmila Miha Lipiha Cripa Slaŭa (Stana?) Nazaga Natania Nucarda Hubiba Huba Ghiona Șalia Dihana <b>Sanca</b>	<b>Aripa Satanei</b> Abaroca Ogarda Nesuca Muha Aspra Hluchica Sarda Vinița Zoița Ilinca Merana Feroa Fumaria Naszara Hlubic Nesatora Genția <b>Samca</b>	<b>Vestița</b> Năfodora Solomia Sâlina Licojda <b>Avizuha</b> Scarmila Miha Lipiha Gripa Slaua Nacatuța Ataua Hubiba Huba Ghiona Isprava Glubina Tihina	Afurisita <b>Avestița, aripa Satanei</b> Arsita <b>Avezuha</b> Drăcoia Gara Glapeca Glipina Grapa Hamba Humba Mamarca Nacara Nadaria Nădurca Nervuza Paha Piaștia Puha Salona Salomia Tisavia Zlina

Textele din care am extras numele prezentate în tabelul de mai sus au avut o transmitere scrisă, ceea ce le face, pe de o parte, mai stabile la nivelul informațiilor conținute, iar pe de alta, mai puțin accesibile insului de rând. O semnificativă categorie de texte orale le-a „concurat”, reflectând nevoia generală a publicului din toate păturile sociale de a lupta cu „cea mai temută dintre toate bolile datorate intervenției duhurilor necurate”<sup>21</sup>. Aparițiile demonului Avestița / Samca în descântecele așa-zis orale (adică în cele „culese” de la informatori și publicate de editori mai mult sau mai puțin specializați) sunt numeroase. Uneori demonul infanticid este menționat și în descântece manuscrise<sup>22</sup>. În descântece pătrund unele dintre numele transmise pe filieră cultă ale *Avestiței*, cum ar fi *Iuza*, *Avaruza*, *Dezana*, *Năfruța*, *Cadachia*, *Necorânda*<sup>23</sup>, dar determinant este unul dintre cele 19 nume din textul exorcismului – *Samca*, împărțit între o identitate feminină și una masculină („Samca cu Sămcoaia”<sup>24</sup>, „Samca cu Sămcoiu”<sup>25</sup>, „Samca cu Sămcoaica”<sup>26</sup>, „Șamca cu Șamculeasa”, „Stanca cu Stâncoiu”<sup>27</sup>, „Stanca cu Stânchioiu”<sup>28</sup>, „samca cei mari”<sup>29</sup>, „stămci cu stamcoaici”<sup>30</sup>). Toate aceste nume se folosesc și ca substantive comune.

*Samca* este atât numele demonului, cât și al bolii pe care o cauzează. În descântece, demonul mai apare cu numele *Avestița*, *Avistrița*, *Avistrițoiul* (mai ales în Muntenia), *Spurcul*, *Spurcata* (în Moldova și Bucovina), *Sămcoiul*, *Șamca*, *Șamculeasa*, *Vaca cea Neagră*, *Văcuța*. Mai amplu este spectrul

<sup>21</sup> I.A. Candrea, *Folclorul medical român comparat*, 271.

<sup>22</sup> Vezi, de exemplu, *Descântec de aru[...]*, în Emanuela Timotin, *Descântecele manuscrise românești*, 344.

<sup>23</sup> Vezi Ivan Evseev, *Dicționar de magie, demonologie și mitologie românească* (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1997), 37.

<sup>24</sup> „[...] I-a întâlnit strânsu,/ Samca cu Sămcoaia,/ Și Pocitura cu Pocitoroaia” – *De înădușeală*, ms. BAFA 195, Șanga Alexei, Cioburciu (Tighina), fără an, fila 16, transcriere A.C.

<sup>25</sup> „Lupul cu lupoaica,/ Ursul cu ursoaica,/ Samca cu sămcoiu,/ Moroaica cu moroiu” – *Descântec de ceas rău*, ms. BAFA 255, *Material cules de inv. Constantin En. Gafițescu, Dumbrăveni (Botoșani)*, fără an, fila 18, transcriere A.C.

<sup>26</sup> „M-o-ntâlnit strânsul cu strâncoaica/ Samca cu sămcoaica/ Și spărietul șial mari” – ms. BAFA 464, Iarjinița, Soroca, Vovcă Petru, 1933, fila 25, transcriere A.C.

<sup>27</sup> „Stanca cu Stâncoiu,/ Cu Moroiu cu Potcoiu/ Cu Strigoaica, cu Strigoiu” – *Descântec pentru strânsoare (boala copilărească)*, ms. BAFA 289, *Adunături de folklor*, Sarata (Neamț), Avadani Vasile, 1929–1930, fia 74, transcriere A.C.

<sup>28</sup> „L-o-ntâlnit stanca cu stânchioiu,/ Moara (*sic*) cu moroiu./ Bogi, Dogi/ Ghici plesnit-o,/ Gios trăsnet-o” – *Descântec de strânsul cel mare*, ms. BAFA 173, *Folclor din Bahnari (Vaslui)*, cules de preotul Nicu Ivan, 1931, fila 18, transcriere A.C.

<sup>29</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova. Tipologie și corpus de texte*, (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2009), 491, 494.

<sup>30</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 492.



denumirilor bolii: *aboaală, agâmbală*<sup>31</sup>, *alte alea, apucat, baiu cel rău, bân-tuială, boala cea rea, boala copiilor, boală diavolească, boală sfântă, borză*<sup>32</sup>, *călcătură, ceas rău, ceas slab, ducă-se-n pietre, ducă-se pe pustii, duh necurat, fărâmat, fras, fulgerătură, [î]l găsește*<sup>33</sup>, *încleștat*<sup>34</sup>, *întâmpinat, întâlnitură, întunchinat, năbădaică, năbădăi, năvârlui*<sup>35</sup>, *neputință, poceală, răul copiilor, săptămână*<sup>36</sup>, *strânsori, strâns*<sup>37</sup>, *strânsu-ăl-mare, stropșală, stropșitură, tâmpinătură, zghihueală etc.*<sup>38</sup> Majoritatea acestor termeni desemnează epilepsia (numită popular și astăzi „boala copiilor”<sup>39</sup>), rahitismul și malformațiile grave ale sistemului osos (bolnavul fiind „ghebos”, „grebănos”, „stricat”).

Lăsând deoparte alți agenți magici<sup>40</sup> care pot contribui la bolile de acest tip, ne vom ocupa în continuare în special de reconstituirea portretului Avestiței,

<sup>31</sup> De la a agâmba (‘a prinde’, ‘a apuca’).

<sup>32</sup> „Sub «Borză» se-nțelege o ființă mitologică daco-romană, a cărei pasiune e de-a spăria mai ales pre pruncii cei mici și a le cauza prin această nu numai boală, ci adeseori chiar și moarte” – S.Fl. Marian, *Descânțece...*, 236.

<sup>33</sup> Ms. rom. BAR 3419, fila 246<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> „Încleștatul, afară de *apucat*, se mai cunoaște și sub numele de *strîns, strînsură, strînsătură, încleștătură*” – G.Dem. Teodorescu, *Poesii populare române. Culegere* (București: Tipografia Modernă Gregorie Luis, 1885), 363; încleștatul este „durerea coșului pieptului, care stânjenește respirația” – Grigore G. Tocilescu, *Materialuri folkloristice*, vol. 1, partea a II-a, *Poesia poporană* (București: Tipografia Corpului Didactic, 1900), p. 1607.

<sup>35</sup> Ms. rom. BAR 3421, filele 293<sup>r</sup>, 296<sup>r</sup>, transcriere A.C.

<sup>36</sup> „Despre Elepsie [*sic*] n-au cunoștință; se povestește însă că un copilă nascut, dacă în săptămâna întâi moare, îi zice că au murit de săptămână, l-a apucat săptămâna” – Ms. rom. BAR 3421, fila 292<sup>r</sup>, transcriere A.C.

<sup>37</sup> „Iac-aț văzut la nunta asta unu strîcat de tăt, unu grebănos, unu străin. L-o strîcat Samca! Și să-l či dus la tăt doctorii și n-avea șe să-i faci. Să-l či descîntat di strîns și cărtișica și i-o či făcut! Crucea ceai mari și i-o či făcut! Făr’ iel și-ndrepta, n’ave s’cie strîcat așa. Cî ista, strînsu ista, tari mai slujăști oamini! Îi strîcă cheptu și schinarea și-i ies oasăli pi la spati” (inf. Anica Poiată, în Ștefania Cristescu Golopenția, *Descântatul în Cornova – Basarabia*, 109–110).

<sup>38</sup> Pentru alte nume, precum și pentru diverse explicații filologice, vezi I. A. Candrea, *Folclorul medical român comparat*, 271–272.

<sup>39</sup> „Sub răul sau răutatea copiilor înțeleg românii din Bucovina acea boală, ce constă dintr-un feliu de cărcei de stomach, cari frământă pre copii înuntru și-i sgârcesc uneori așa de tare, până ce-i fac ghiem și le duc picioarele la gură. Alteori copiii ce sînt (*sic*) torturați de această boală fac spume la gură, schimbă feliu de feliu de fețe, ba adeseori se schimosesc, adică li se sucește vr’o mână, vr’un picior, se-ncrucîșează, li se strâmbă falcile, li se slăbesc toate nervele și rămân apoi, dacă se-ntâmplă să nu moară, astfelii schimosiți pentru toată vieța. Inșă cei mai mulți copii nu pot petrece și scăpa de această boală uricioasă, ci mai degrabă mor” – S.Fl. Marian, *Descânțece...*, 199.

<sup>40</sup> Ielele, ceasul rău, ochiul rău, spurcatul / spurcul / întâmpinatul, strigile, zburătorul (care face ca femeia măritată să nască pruncul mort), „lăhuzia” (frigurile puerperale), „mătricea” (colicile intestinale) ș.a.m.d.

Aripa Satanei, cel mai frecvent numită în descântece Samca – unul dintre cei mai reductabili demoni, care „mănâncă copiii din pântecele mamei”<sup>41</sup> și atacă fulgerător și imparabil, izbind bolnavul la pământ: „De creștetul capului l-o luat, / În pământ l-aș isbit, / Fața i-o îngălbinit, / Ochii i-o înpănjinit, / Viața i-o scurtată, / Auzu i-o luat, / Limba i-o legată”<sup>42</sup>, „Samca cei mari / În cânci l-o luat, / Spatili i-o strâcat, / Cheptu i-o zvârlit, / Carnea i-o măcelărit, / Urechili i-o surzât, / Fața i-o veștezât, / Gura i-o muțat, / Mânili i-l legat, / Chicioarili i-o-nchedicat!”<sup>43</sup>, „Di schinari-l rupé, / Di chept îl strângé, / În pământ îl trânté”<sup>44</sup>.

G. Dem. Teodorescu publica în 1885 în colecția intitulată *Poesii populare române* două texte de samcă preluate de la S. Fl. Marian, însoțindu-le cu o notă de subsol în care preciza: „În Muntenia, *Avestița* seau *Aripa Satanei* e un spirit rău, care omoară pruncii în pântecele mamelor seau îndată după naștere. De aceia se zugrăvește Sf. Sisoe seau Sf. Mihail, ținând-o în lanț, și jos se scrie coprinsul de aci. Poporul crede că *Avestița* nu se mai apropie de casa unde se află scrise aceste nume”<sup>45</sup>. În precedentul nostru studiu referitor la subiectul în discuție notam unele informații – asupra cărora merită să revenim aici pentru o analiză din perspectivă antropologică – despre felul cum se făcea în zona Botoșani *hârtia de samcă*<sup>46</sup> în anii 1930 („se desena un chip de femeie, cu pletele până la pământ, gheboasă, colțată și cu ochii mari, iar cel care o scria venea seara la copilul speriat, aprindea lumânarea la icoană și citea de trei ori rugăciunea scrisă alături de chipul duhului rău; obiceiul se făcea, preventiv, în fiecare familie unde era un copil mic”<sup>47</sup>) și despre persistența practicii în 1970, în Moldova („se descântă de strâns sau de samcă, ca să nu rămâie copilul ghebos, cu mâinile și picioarele strâmbe. Pentru asta se fac *cărți de strâns* de către călugări și se bagă între fața și dosul pernei copilului”<sup>48</sup>, „se scrie *strânsoarea Sfântului Sâsoie* și se pune sub cap”<sup>49</sup>). Luate în sine,

<sup>41</sup> Adrian Fochi, *Datini și eresuri populare la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea: răspunsuri la chestionarele lui Nicolae Densușianu* (București: Minerva, 1976), 262.

<sup>42</sup> *Descântec de ceas rău*, în D.P. Lupașcu, *Medicina babelor. Adunare de descântece, rețete de doftorii și vrăjitorii băbești* (București: Tipografia Carol Göbl, 1890), 16.

<sup>43</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 458.

<sup>44</sup> *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 460.

<sup>45</sup> G. Dem. Teodorescu, *Poesii populare române*, 390.

<sup>46</sup> Emil Petrovici, *Texte dialectale. Suplement la Atlasul lingvistic român II* (Sibiu–Leipzig: Muzeul Limbii Române, 1943), 181.

<sup>47</sup> Astrid Cambose, *Cealaltă grădină*, 349.

<sup>48</sup> Nicolae Gr. Ciubotaru, *Comuna Vulturești*, vol. III (*Amurgul culturii tradiționale*), text stabilit, introducere și note de Mircea Ciubotaru (Iași: Kolos, 2009), 201.

<sup>49</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 125.

majoritatea elementelor par ortodoxe. O rugăciune scrisă, cel mai adesea, de către un călugăr, un preot sau un diacon se citește de trei ori, seara, în fața icoanei unde se aprinde o lumânare, apoi este pusă sub capul copilului – dar rugăciunea este adresată *unui demon!* Biserica se autosesizase de sute de ani asupra acestor ritualuri necanonice, pe care se străduia din răspuțeri să le combată. Ce ne spun asemenea practici astăzi, dacă le citim în cheie antropologică? În primul rând, faptul că reverența omului se manifestă cu privire la zona sacrului ca întreg, sferă în care sunt înglobate forțe contradictorii, divine și infernale, într-o *mise-en-scène* asemănătoare până la indistinție. În al doilea rând, că printre clerici numărul celor capabili să înțeleagă sau măcar să se plieze directivelor Bisericii ortodoxe, care interzicea strict toate ritualurile de protecție din aria magiei, punând un canon aspru, de la penitență până la caterisire, asupra făcătorilor de „baiere”, era ne semnificativ. În al treilea rând, că, într-o „poetică a gestului”, pentru oamenii simpli, pacienți ori beneficiari ai acestor practici, eficacitatea este direct legată de cantitatea de energie pe care o acțiune o poate „elibera” – de aici, caracterul șocant al descântecului ori al rugăciunii-exorcism, violența vocabularului și a imaginilor, duritatea scenariului dramatic care înfățișează acțiunea demonului asupra pacientului și replica, încă mai violentă, a antagonistului (Sfântul Sisoe, Arhanghelul Mihail, Isus Hristos, Maica Domnului, descântătoarea). Ne-am putea întreba, în lumina reflecției anterioare despre magie ca „management al riscului”, ce-i determina să intre în joc pe actorii angrenați în efectuarea acestor periculoase ritualuri? Cel care „scria” amuleta și venea s-o citească la căpătâiul unui beneficiar de obicei analfabet risca, în afară de pedepsele administrate de Biserică, răzbunarea demonului, constând, probabil, în diminuarea propriei fertilități: „Se caută însă totdeauna ca să li-o scrie un moșneag bătrân și neputincios, care, cum se zice, «și-a trăit traiul și și-a mâncat mălaiul»; nicicând însă un fecior sau o fată mare, un bărbat sau o nevestă, pentru că Samca se leagă apoi de cel ce a scris-o, pe când de moșnegi nu se leagă așa de ușor”<sup>50</sup>. Este adevărat că plata pentru scrib era semnificativă (acesta putea primi „și până la 4 fl.”<sup>51</sup>), dar în opinia noastră nu acesta era principalul mobil care îl îndemna să se implice în apărarea contra Samcâi, ci, mai probabil, senzația de triumf în luptă, satisfacția de sine și respectul câștigat pentru a fi intervenit într-o chestiune vitală pentru comunitate. Mulți bucovineni obișnuiau să ceară să li se facă amuleta chiar pe un perete al casei, într-atât de utilă era considerată aceasta, după cum ne

<sup>50</sup> S.Fl. Marian, *Nașterea la români*, 32.

<sup>51</sup> S.Fl. Marian, *Nașterea la români*, 32.

informează S.Fl. Marian. Ce îi determina, la rândul lor, pe „beneficiari” să vrea ca, printre puținele imagini din casa lor, alături de una-două icoane, să găzduiască permanent un chip de demon? Întrebarea trebuie completată: un chip de demon bătut, străpuns, învins. Imaginea urma să-l avertizeze ce-l așteaptă în acea casă dacă ar îndrăzni să se apropie. Consumată pe plan ritual, lupta era deja câștigată – sau cel puțin așa putea spera, în liniștea înfricoșătoare a nopților pline de ființe necunoscute și amenințătoare, mama care, epuizată de muncă, dureri și spaima, simțea nevoia să lase măcar pentru o vreme în grija *altcuiva* pruncul nou-născut...

Portretul Avestiței din exorcismele-amuletă este construit în jurul detaliilor fizice prin care se identifică Obyzouth, demonul din *Testamentul lui Solomon*: „Chipul nu i-l puteam vedea, iar trupul ei era întunecat și pletele, sălbatic<sup>52</sup> – „ea își întinsese pletele pînă în călcâe”<sup>53</sup>, „un duh nicurat cu ochil[e] ca stelile, și mânuile ca de foc, și unghiele ca săcirile, și părul capului pînă la călcăi, și fața ca cătaranu<sup>54</sup>”, „părul capului îi era pînă la călcăie și cu ochii roșii de foc și cu mâinile schimonosite, și de her, și căutătură sălbatică, și cu trupu schimonosit, și era foarte strajnică și grozavă”<sup>55</sup>, „era părul capului ei lung pînă la călcâe, și ochii erau ca focul, și din gură-i eșia foc și din tot trupul ei, și mergea foarte strălucită și cu trupul schimonosit”<sup>56</sup>, „cu pielea goală, ochii ca sticlele, cu țâțele pără la genunchi, cu părul capului pără la călcăi, unghiile ca secerile”<sup>57</sup>. Consecvența cu care autorii exorcismelor din această serie au transmis imagistica este explicabilă prin forța tradiției. Excepție face *Rugăciunea sântului Sisîn contra afurisitului drac*, text de secol XVI cuprins într-un manuscris miscelaneu al popii Grigorie din Măhaci, care constituie probabil prototipul unei copii tardive intitulate *Minunea Sf. Sisoe*, transcrisă în 1803 de un anume Isaia Jeromonahul și publicată de C.N. Mateescu în 1915; în ambele variante dracul care fură copiii este de gen masculin.

Dorim să insistăm, totuși, asupra unui aspect: este Avestița, de regulă, reprezentată ca un demon de gen feminin? Așa ar părea, după pronumele și

<sup>52</sup> Șt. Colceriu, 91.

<sup>53</sup> B.P. Hasdeu, *Exorcismul lui „ierei popă Simeon”*, în *Cuvente den bătrâni*, vol. II, 280.

<sup>54</sup> M. Gaster, *Avestița aripa Satanei, Chrestomație română. Texte tipărite și manuscrise (sec. XVI–XIX) dialectale și populare*, vol. II (Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, București: Socec & Co., 1891), 171, transliterare A.C.

<sup>55</sup> T. Pamfile, *Rugăciunea Sf. Arh. Mihail*, în *Mitologia poporului român*, vol. 2, ediția a II-a, îngrijită și prefațată de I. Oprișan (București: Vestala, 2008), 238.

<sup>56</sup> B.P. Hasdeu, *Minunile Sf. Sisoe*, în *Cuvente den bătrâni*, vol. II, 277.

<sup>57</sup> S.Fl. Marian, *Rugăciunea Sf. Arh. Mihail (Mănăstirea Dragomirna)*, în *Nașterea la români*, 34.

determinările adjectivale din majoritatea „conjurațiilor”, ca și după elementele descrierii: plete lungi până la pământ, sâni și ochi supradimensionați. Indicii excesului transformă imaginea într-una monstruoasă: pletele îi sunt sălbătice, fața îi este de catran, trupul, gol, îi este strâmb, întunecat sau negru, sâni, malformați din punct de vedere anatomic, sunt aruncați pe spate ori îi bat genunchii, mâinile îi sunt de fier și unghiile gheare, ochii sunt de foc. Nuditatea sa este un semn al puterii pe care o deține, la fel ca strălucirea înfricoșătoare care se distinge cu atât mai bine, cu cât Avestița își face simțită prezența malefică noaptea. Un amănunt logic lipsește din întregul tablou: de ce nu este acest diavol, probabil moștenitor al biblicei Lilith, un demon sucub? De ce obiectul interesului său nu sunt bărbații, ci femeile și pruncii? Scopul său nu pare a fi corupția sexualității, ci doar a fertilității și a progenerării femeilor. Avestița din exorcisme întruchipează aspectul monstruos al feminității malefice, lipsite de rod sau născătoare de prunci estropiați. Teroarea dezlănțuită de ea în comunitățile tradiționale este reflexul spaimei generale a „stingerii neamului”. Prezența ei ține, așadar, de un registru existențial, nu de unul moral sau etic, iar din această perspectivă devine mai puțin relevantă apartenența sa la categoria demonilor feminini. Această deplasare de accent produsă în straturile profunde ale reprezentărilor populare a condus la modificări însemnate în portretul transmis pe cale orală al demonului. Descântecele prezintă mai ales varianta sa teriomorfă – „o samcă neagră/ Cu țitele zăbolozate,/ Cu coarnele lăsate pe spate”<sup>58</sup>, „o samcă cu patru picioare/ Cu păr de urs îmbrăcată până în pământ”<sup>59</sup>, „Cu dinții/ Ca pieptenii,/ Cu măselele/ Ca secerile,/ Cu unghiile/ Ca cângile,/ Cu părul poleit/ Cu coadele cănite,/ Cu coarnele zugrăvite”<sup>60</sup>, „avistrița,/ Cu avistrițoiu,/ Cu părul/ Pînă-n călcîie,/ Cu capu cît capacu,/ Cu ochii cît cepele,/ Cu dinții cît lopețile,/ Cu unghiile/ Cît secerile,/ Cu deștele/ Cît fusăle,/ Cu mîinile/ Cît prăjinile,/ Cu picioarele/ Cît rîșchitoarele”<sup>61</sup>. Am trecut deja în revistă perechile de numele de genul feminin și masculin ale demonului; să amintim aici că substantivele derivate cu sufixe moționale de tipul acesta nu corespund unor „genuri” naturale, ci reprezintă simple „figuri ale insistenței”<sup>62</sup> (alte exemple: „Lichitura cu lichitoroica,/ Ceasu cel rău cu

<sup>58</sup> *Descântec de ceas rău*, în D.P. Lupașcu, *Medicina babelor*, 16.

<sup>59</sup> *Descântec de samcă*, în D.P. Lupașcu, *Medicina babelor*, 8.

<sup>60</sup> *De sancă*, în B. P. Hasdeu, *Opere VII. Folclor literar*, ediție critică de I. Opreșan (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2004), 71.

<sup>61</sup> De la Sanda lui Zamfir, din Cernișoara, Vâlcea, cules de Toma Dragu și D. Drăghicescu, în Gr.G. Tocilescu, *Materialuri folkloristice*, vol. III, 239–240.

<sup>62</sup> Vezi Emanuela Timotin, *Descântecele manuscrise românești*, 103–106 ș.a.

cesuroaica,/ Frica cu-nfricatu,/ Norocu cu norocoica,/ Boala cu boloaica”<sup>63</sup>, „canceru cu cănceroiu”<sup>64</sup>, „faptu cu făptoiu”<sup>65</sup>). Atributele fizice din descântece ale Samcăi nu fac decât să întărească ideea desexualizării sale. Nu mai este un demon feminin, nici măcar unul cantonat în registrul grotesc, excesiv și monstruos, ci este o arătare supranaturală, un *patchwork* de elemente din varii regnuri, o reprezentare căreia îi rămâne ca atribut, în absolut toate descântecele în care este prezentă, o neasemuit de mare putere. Samca din descântece este violența însăși, irațională, inumană, incomprehensibilă. Am putea spune că gradul de „puritate” substanțială la care a ajuns demonul în imaginarul țărănesc e superior, în ordine logică, circumscrierilor sale anterioare pe linie teologică și livrescă. Odată cu acest proces s-au despecificat parțial și afecțiunile magice atribuite Samcăi. În anii 1970–1980 în Moldova descântecele în care apăreau „Sanca cu Săncoiu”, deși încă numite „de răul copiilor”, „de samcă”, „de ceas rău”, „de speriat”, „de strâns”, se adresau (și) unor stări fiziologice greu de clasificat sub obișnuitele diagnostice atribuite demonului: „slăbășuni, rău,... ti slăgești”<sup>66</sup>, „dintr-o fricî, sî likești-on șas rău, sî cutremurî trupu”<sup>67</sup>, „se cutremură chelea pe om”<sup>68</sup>.

Interpretările din paginile de față neglijează numeroase elemente de primă importanță ale temei, spre a se ocupa de chestiuni pe care un etnolog le-ar considera, desigur, mai puțin semnificative. Ne-am asumat aici o perspectivă atipică, în cheia căreia am încercat să citim *ca documente antropologice* ritualurile, manuscrisele, imaginile și reprezentările analizate. Codurile de comunicare, oricât de bine articulate, inspirate și impresionante la nivel estetic ar fi ele – este și cazul majorității discursurilor folosite de noi spre exemplificare – se activează doar în anumite condiții, ținând de emoția declanșatoare specifică. În speță, frica. Comunitatea o trăiește difuz, dar și-o reactivează cu fiecare nou atac asupra membrilor ei. Ce ne-a interesat aici a fost managementul concret al fricii în lupta omului premodern cu un dușman fabulos, venit din adâncurile civilizației ebraice, de unde își proiecta silueta gigantică, văduvită de una dintre aripi, un demon dintre cei mai capabili de proteice adaptări la datele oricărei vârste istorice și ale oricărui spațiu cultural.

<sup>63</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 458.

<sup>64</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 308.

<sup>65</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 468.

<sup>66</sup> Lucia Cireș, Lucia Berdan, *Descântece din Moldova. Texte inedite*, în „Caietele Arhivei de folclor”, text dactilografiat, Iași, 1982, p. 222.

<sup>67</sup> Lucia Cireș, Lucia Berdan, *Descântece din Moldova*, 87.

<sup>68</sup> Silvia Ciubotaru, *Folclorul medical din Moldova*, 317.



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# Magie și religie în context liturgic în lumea țărănească a românilor ardeleni din secolul al XIX-lea

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VALER SIMION COSMA\*

**Abstract:** During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the religious life of Romanian communities from Transylvania was targeted by a series of measures and interventions designed to purify the liturgical life and to expel the magical practices and beliefs associated with church practices and rituals. This paper aims to discuss the para-liturgical and extra-liturgical rituals and beliefs that encompass the liturgical life within the peasant society of nineteenth-century Transylvania. Usually being labelled as superstition, magic, or witchcraft by lay intellectuals, and by the high clergy of Romanian churches (Greek-Orthodox Church and Uniate Church), such practices and beliefs reflect the interaction between religion and magic, and the dynamics of vernacular religion beyond the normative discourse of the churches.

**Keywords:** Magic, Priest, Vernacular Religion, Transylvania, Peasants.

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La începutul secolului al XIX-lea, *aufklärer*-ul Petru Maior se arăta tulburat de maniera „superstițioasă” și nefirească de raportare la anumite practici religioase ale poporului din sânul căruia s-a ridicat. Într-una din lucrările sale de istorie bisericească descrie un episod specific, în viziunea lui, modului în care românii înțeleg și practică creștinismul:

„pre însuși pruncii cei sugători, spre zioa de Paști, de la miezul nopții până la vremea cîn se împarte zisa pîne întinsă în vin, cu tirănie îi silesc la ajun și

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așa fometoși îi duc mamele la biserică... ba drumariul, de nu va putea ajunge în zioa de Paști la vro biserică de legea sa, unde să se poată împărtăși din zisa pîne în vin întinsă, nu cutează a lăsa postul Paștilor; și de se va lăuda cuiva pentru vro greșeală preotul locului că nu-i va da paști (așa chiamă pînea cea întinsă în vin), socotind această pedeapsă foarte mare, cu tot adinsul se nevoiaște a-și îndrepta greșeala ca să poată scăpa de sub amenințata pedeapsă. Ba chiar și aceia carii se cuminecă cu sfânta taină a evharistiei, în zioa de Paști, nu se odihnesc pînă nu se împărtășesc din zisa pîne ținimoniaală.<sup>1</sup>

Tot în acea perioadă, Dositei Obradovici descria religiozitatea românilor transilvăneni spunând despre aceștia că „din vremile dedemult s-au obișnuit românii să facă descântece și vrăji și pînă în ziua de astăzi (prostimea), așa încât când aceștia se nasc vrăjesc, când se botează vrăjesc, când se însoară sau mărită, când intră în biserică, când stau sau ies din biserică tot vrăjesc, când se betelesc sau când mor încă vrăjesc, când cumpără sau vînd, când merg să fure, când merg la judecată încă vrăjesc și toată întîmplarea și tot meșteșugul au a lor osebite descântece și farmece și pentru fiecare descântec au vrăjitoarele osebit dar, cinste și plată. Când ar vrea omul să arate deosebi fiecare descântătură – care mai bine ar fi fost să nu fi nici auzit de dănsule ce fac vrăjitoarele, ce cuvinte idolești și turcești întrebuintează în vrăjile și minciunile lor și cum oamenii cei proști le țin și le cred ca pe niște legi firești și dumnezeiești – i-ar trebui adevărat multă hârtie și mult să vorbească.”<sup>2</sup>

Dincolo de nuanțele critice specifice discursului de sorginte iluministă, fragmentele evidențiază împletirea organică dintre magie și religie la nivelul religiei vernaculare<sup>3</sup>, precum și semnificațiile magice atribuite ritualurilor religioase și elementelor care articulează practica religioasă. Aceste descrieri sunt confirmate la finele secolului, dintr-o altă perspectivă, de către folcloriștii și etnograful răsăriți în climatul romantismului, dornici să colecteze cât mai mult din „tezaurul” unei lumi aflată în ghimpia modernizării<sup>4</sup>. Și unii istorici au remarcat țesătura complexă a religiozității populare, după cum putem observa din cuvintele lui Nicolae Iorga de la începutul secolului al

<sup>1</sup> Petru Maior, *Istoria besericei românilor* (Buda: 1813), 78.

<sup>2</sup> Dositei Obradovici, *Sfaturile înțelegerii cei sănătoase* (Buda: 1802), 37–38.

<sup>3</sup> Despre conceptul de religie vernaculară, vezi Leonard Norman Primiano, „Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife” in *Western Folklore*, vol. 54, No1, (1995).

<sup>4</sup> Valer Simion Cosma, „Preotul folclorist: de la combaterea superstițiilor la culegerea folclorului. Studiu de caz: Simion Florea Marian” în *Incluși și Excluși. Problema identitară în epocile modernă și contemporană*, ed. Valer Simion Cosma, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Eikon, 2012).

XX-lea, care spune că „nu e greu să se arate larga parte de păgânism care e și acuma religia, de un materialism uneori grosolan și de superstițioase iluzii, a satelor. Din păgânismul adânc înrădăcinat care a căzut încetul într-un folclor insondabil, au rămas, în jurul dracului, o sumedenie de superstiții, care leagă și dezleagă, cu strige și strigoi, cu vergelatul și alte obiceiuri care, sub nume slavone [...] s-au păstrat până la noi.”<sup>5</sup>

Fără a intra în discuții de profunzime despre straturile precreștine și ceremoniile folclorice ale majorității sărbătorilor în lumea țărănească, în acest articol ne propunem să discutăm „dimensiunea populară a vieții rituale”<sup>6</sup> în lumea țărănească a românilor ardeleni din secolul al XIX-lea, cu focus asupra ipostazei de intermediar a preotului și a evoluției atitudinii clericilor față de această dimensiune „populară” a vieții rituale și față de acele manifestări folclorice și populare cuprinse în cadrul diferitelor sărbători și etichetate de către biserică, prin vocile teologilor și ierarhilor săi, drept „păgânisme” și „superstiții”<sup>7</sup>. Discuția se concentrează asupra Liturghiei și Euharistiei ca centru al vieții liturgice, examinând o serie de documente de arhivă, edite și inedite, scrieri liturgice, literatură și materiale folclorice din a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și prima jumătate a secolului al XX-lea.

## Clerul și viața religioasă în secolele al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea

Analizând modul în care ierarhii greco-catolici au căutat să edifice nou-înființata biserică și să impună la nivel parohial un nou model de preot care să corespundă exigențelor formative și morale formulate în cadrul Conciliului Tridentin, istoricul clujean Greta-Monica Miron afirmă că „în viziunea episcopiei, preotul primei jumătăți a secolului trebuia să fie nu atât catehet, inițiator al enoriașilor în adevărurile credinței, cât un conștiincios și corect executant al practicilor religioase care ritmau viața spirituală a comunității. Chemat să suplinească lipsa școlilor, clerul local și îndeosebi protopopii au gestionat această pregătire bazată pe observația directă a unui tipic și a unei gestici, episcopia asumându-și rolul de a interveni doar în situații mai

<sup>5</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria românilor*, II, *Oamenii pământului (până la anul 1000)* (București: 1992), 85.

<sup>6</sup> R.W.Scribner, *Popular Culture and popular movements in Reformation Germany* (London and Ronceverte: The Hambledon Press, 1987), 22–23.

<sup>7</sup> O analiză detaliată a conceptelor de „păgân” și „superstiție”, a evoluției acestora și a modului în care au pătruns în discursul ecleziastic din dorința de a eticheta ceea ce nu se încadrează în pietatea oficială, găsiți în lucrarea istoricului Stella Rock, *Popular religion in Russia. “Double belief” and the making of an academic myth* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 12–15.

delicate.”<sup>8</sup> Alături de demersurile ce urmăreau însușirea de către cler a unor minime cunoștințe teologice, a învățaturii despre unirea cu Biserica Catolică și alături de demersurile de disciplinare a clerului, aflăm că și administrarea corectă a tainelor/sacramentelor și săvârșirea conform tipicului bisericesc a diferitelor ritualuri și rânduieli bisericești au fost preocupări majore ale ierarhilor pe întreaga durată a secolului al XVIII-lea<sup>9</sup>, prelungindu-se puternic și în secolul al XIX-lea. Dacă în privința educării tinerilor greco-catolici atrași de preoție, încă din primele decenii ale unirii se pot sesiza tendințele spre rigoare, în paralel s-a dus și o „politică de reciclare a preoților aflați în funcție”, a căror pregătire era mult sub nivelul pretins de biserica catolică. S-a mers astfel pe încercarea de educare din mers fiind stimulați în diferite forme, chiar și financiar. Instrumentul pe care se fundamenta acest proces era *Catehismul*. Rezultate vizibile în modificarea profilului preotului, apar doar în a doua jumătate a secolului, în special spre final, multă vreme filierele tradiționale de pregătire ale aspiranților la cariera sacerdotală, fiind cele mai uzitate<sup>10</sup>. Analizând catehismul părintelui iezuit Boroneai Laslo intitulat *Pânea Pruncilor* și tipărit în 1702, istoricul clujean Ovidiu Ghitta surprinde mizele și direcțiile acestuia în contextul post tridentin în care se edifica Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania, spune următoarele:

„Sublinierea apăsată a importanței deosebite a ritualului, a calității sale de reper identitar fundamental pentru orice „adevărat creștin”, cadra perfect cu spiritualitatea catolică a timpului (ca, de altfel, și cu cea de expresie răsăriteană), cu marile teme de reflecție și direcții de acțiune stabilite la Trento. Catholicismul posttridentin încorporează un puternic și definitiv filon pietist, cerând reverență față de tot ceea ce ținea de ordinea liturgico-sacramentală prescrisă.

E de precizat însă că domeniul riturilor și al ritualurilor religioase, atât de important pentru legătura oamenilor cu sacrul ori pentru menținerea coeziunii și specificității unui grup, n-a rămas neatins de elanurile reformatoare manifeste în acea Biserică. Considerat în continuare crucial, el a făcut obiectul unor intervenții menite, în esență, să-l epureze de uzanțele ce contraveneau accentelor doctrinare și devoționale puse și susținute în mod oficial,

<sup>8</sup> Greta-Monica Miron, ... *poruncește, scoală-te, du-te, propoveduește... Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania. Cler și enoriași (1697–1782)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2004) 212.

<sup>9</sup> Greta-Monica Miron, *Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania*, 232–235.

<sup>10</sup> Ovidiu Ghitta, „Formarea clerului greco-catolic din comitatul Satu Mare în prima jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea”, în *Acta Blasiensia I – Coordonatele preoției greco-catolice, istorie și actualitate*, coord. Pr. Călin-Daniel Pațulea, Anton Rus, Andreea Mârza (Blaj: Editura Buna Vestire, 2002), 156–158.

sensului mai restrâns al ideii de sacru cu care teologii vremii operau sau dezideratului impunerii ferme a parohiei ca organism-cadru, matriceal, la nivel comunitar. Aceste eforturi clericale, subsumate unui plan general de acțiune în sfera ritualului, urmăreau delimitarea cât mai netă a liturgicului de non-liturgic, a „tradiției bune” de cea „rea”, a religiei „adevărate” de cea „falsă”, de erori, de excese, de superstiții, de practici neautorizate sau considerate inacceptabile de către Biserică. [...] Varietatea trebuia să facă loc de acum uniformității liturgice indicate prin decretele tridentine, standardizării și disciplinei dorite de Biserică în sfera comportamentului religios și social al indivizilor. Tendința de promovare a unui sistem și a unui limbaj ritual unitar și distinctiv însemna totodată un pas în direcția revigorării tradiționalei pietăți sacramentale populare, o pietate combătută dur de pe pozițiile Reformei. Revitalizarea ei în cadre controlabile, potrivit unui cod comun de observanță religioasă, apărea deci și ca o cale de a păstra poporul de partea cauzei catolice, de a-l ține departe de inovația protestantă.”<sup>11</sup>

Astfel de preocupări pentru administrarea corectă a sfințelor taine au fost și în rândul Bisericii Ortodoxe, după cum se poate observa din actele sinodului ținut de către Sofronie în 1761, însă eforturile celor două biserici nu au influențat foarte mult realitatea din teren. Pe parcursul secolului al XVIII-lea vizitațiile canonice au scos la iveală numeroase abateri și devieri de la normele fixate<sup>12</sup>. Situația continuă și în secolul următor, după cum reflectă activitatea episcopului Vancea care a acordat o atenție deosebită ritului, prin care înțelegea „cuprinsul regulilor de după care este a preface cultul divin și alte servicii sacre” considerându-l „o parte constitutivă a bisericii”. Ordinariatul constatase că aproape toți candidații înscriși la cursul pentru teologie sau preparandie erau lipsiți de cunoștințele necesare domeniului<sup>13</sup>.

Direcțiilor reformatoare specifice catolicismului post tridentin și prezente în procesul de edificare a greco-catolicismului li se alătură o serie de măsuri modernizatoare și disciplinatoare inițiate de statul modern austriac, cuprinse în sintagma „reformism iosefin”. Între măsurile cuprinse de „reformismul iosefin” cele care vizau sfera religiozității populare ocupă un loc aparte, după cum reiese din cercetarea istoricului Daniel Dumitran.

<sup>11</sup> Ovidiu Ghitta „Pânea pruncilor – context istoric, discurs și mize”, in Pânea pruncilor sau Învățăturăa credinții creștinești. Strînsă în mică șumă, ediție îngrijită de Florina Ilis (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2008), LVII-LVIII.

<sup>12</sup> Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începutul timpurilor moderne (1680–1800). Societate rurală și mentalități colective* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 2001), 106–107.

<sup>13</sup> Nicolae Bocșan, Mirela Andrei, „Viață ecleziastică în Dieceza Gherla în timpul păstoririi Episcopului Ioan Vancea –studiu introductiv”, in *Episcopul Ioan Vancea. Pastorale și Circulare 1865–1869* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003), 47.

Încercările de reducere a numărului de sărbători<sup>14</sup>, de îndepărtare a unor practici considerate superstițioase, urmărindu-se reorientarea enoriașilor către biserica parohială „prin accentul pus pe calitatea asistenței religioase oferite de preotul paroh, pe participarea la serviciul liturgic și pe catehizare”<sup>15</sup> s-au lovit de o puternică opoziție și inaderență din partea lumii țărănești și chiar din partea unei bune părți a clerului rural, în practica zilnică și în profunzimea mentalităților încercarea de guvernare a timpului sacru al țaranului a fost un eșec<sup>16</sup>. „Preoții înșiși, departe de a denunța autorităților locale sau superiorilor lor cazurile de nerespectare a regimului sărbătorilor, așa cum se prevedea în decretele imperiale și în circularele episcopale, încălcau chiar ei acest regim prin continuarea oficierei liturghiei în zilele de sărbătoare desființate.”<sup>17</sup>

În prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea sunt reluate constant multe dintre aceste măsuri care urmăreau reformarea și redirectionarea pietății populare dinspre practici și credințe considerate superstițioase sau păgâne, înspre o religiozitate mai apropiată de ceea ce prescria biserica post-tridentină completată de cultivarea unei fidelități față de statul modern<sup>18</sup>. Insistențele asupra însușirii tipicului bisericesc și săvârșirii corecte a tainelor/sacramentelor, continuă după cum putem observa din vizitațiile canonice<sup>19</sup>. Și în cazul Bisericii Ortodoxe, „o biserică a țaranilor”<sup>20</sup> după cum a formulat istoricul american Keith Hitchins, prin recunoașterea sa *de jure*, prin acceptarea unei ierarhii proprii și prin includerea în sistemul de libertăți religioase însă și de control ale statului habsburg, după mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea, a determinat o presiune tot mai mare dinspre autoritățile laice, în direcția modernizării, la care erau solicitați și clericii ortodocși considerați funcționari ai statului în teritoriu. Aceștia li se cere să impună în practică și o serie de idei preluate

<sup>14</sup> „sărbătorile uniților vor fi drastic reduse de-a lungul unui secol la 16, din nevoia de a le egaliza cu cele ale catolicilor, dar și din rațiuni economice, în timp ce cele ale ortodocșilor vor rămâne într-un număr mai ridicat (27 plus duminicile), dar oricum mult reduse față de sărbătorile tradiționale ale ortodoxiei. Cel puțin formal, la nivelul hotărârilor sinodale și a măsurilor administrative, rezultatul măsurilor de raționalizare a fost o reușită.” Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începutul timpurilor moderne*, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Dumitran, *Un timp al reformelor. Biserica Greco-Catolică din Transilvania sub conducerea episcopului Ioan Bob (1782–1830)* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2007), 92.

<sup>16</sup> Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începutul timpurilor moderne*, 66.

<sup>17</sup> Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începutul timpurilor moderne*, 91–92.

<sup>18</sup> Toader Nicoară, *Transilvania la începutul timpurilor moderne*, 159–165.

<sup>19</sup> Camelia Elena Vulea, *Biserica Greco-Catolică din Vicariatul Hațegului (1850–1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2009), 153.

<sup>20</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Mit și realitate în istoriografia românească* (București: Editura Enciclopedică, 1991), 12.



de stat din ideologia reformei catolice, convergente cu ideile iluministe de combatere a „superstițiilor” și „ignoranței”, implicit și a culturii țărănești<sup>21</sup>.

Îmbunătățirile se lasă așteptate fiindcă de multe ori – cel puțin în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și mai ales în rândul ortodocșilor lipsiți de un sistem educațional până în vremea lui Șaguna<sup>22</sup> – candidații la preoție învățau tipicul bisericesc pe lângă alți preoți sau protopopi, ai căror fii de regulă erau. Sub îndrumarea acestuia, tânărul învăța să citească rugăciunile liturgice sau pur și simplu le învăța pe de rost și învăța să îndeplinească ritualurile bisericești. Filiera familială de instruire a preoților a contribuit semnificativ la transmiterea între generații nu numai a cântărilor, rugilor și rânduielilor bisericești, ci și a greșelilor rituale și a inculturii teologice, dat fiind că izvoarele vremii denotă o pregătire în general rudimentară a clerului<sup>23</sup>. Așa că, pe lângă puternica presiune venită dinspre comunitate, preoții au contribuit într-o măsură semnificativă la perpetuarea unor practici și credințe magico-religioase aflate fie la liziera religiei oficiale fie chiar în afară, după cum vom observa explorând viața liturgică a perioadei.

Însă, mai trebuie precizat un detaliu extrem de important pentru înțelegerea coordonatelor pe care se desfășura viața religioasă a românilor ardeleni din perioada vizată. În pofida concesiilor încadrabile iluminismului și raționalismului făcute de către unii ierarhi în fața politicilor statului modern, în pofida adeziunii sincere a unor cărturari din rândul clerului la sistemul de explicații modern, științific, care vedeau rolul bisericii și al vieții religioase preponderent sub aspect utilitarist, cel puțin din perspectivă ritualică, învățătura și practicile ritualice ale bisericilor, precum și importanța lor în economia sacralului, au rămas în linii mari aceleași. Avem un exemplu în acest sens în privința campaniei de reducere a numărului sărbătorilor, în contextul încorporării lumii rurale românești pe orbita capitalismului și a transformărilor sociale și culturale presupuse de acest amplu proces<sup>24</sup>. Deși măsurile au fost asumate de ierarhi și circularele emise de aceștia au cuprins tot mai multe cereri adresate preoților de a impune ca zile de lucru zilele care nu mai erau considerate sărbători, preoții fiind de multe ori somați să nu slujească Liturgia în acele zile și să ofere exemple personale enoriașilor

<sup>21</sup> Barbu Ștefănescu, „Puterea de remanență a unor vechi rituri agrare acceptate și preluate de Biserică”, *Caiete de Antropologie Istorică*, anul X, nr. 1 (18), (2011), 64.

<sup>22</sup> Ioan Lupaș, *Mitropolitul Andrei Șaguna. Monografie* (București: Editura România Press, 1999), 146.

<sup>23</sup> Ovidiu Ghitta, „Formarea clerului greco-catolic...”, 150–151.

<sup>24</sup> E. P. Thompson, „Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism” in *Past & Present*, No. 38 (Oxford University Press: 1967), 56-97.

prin executarea unor munci la câmp<sup>25</sup>, abia în *Acathistierul* din 1835, tipărit în timpul episcopului Ioan Lemeni, lista sărbătorilor corespunde cu cea stabilită prin decretul din 1787<sup>26</sup>. Numărul mare de Molitfelnice tipărite în această perioadă și faptul că ritualurile și rugăciunile cuprinse într-însul erau în concordanță cu o viziune țărănească premodernă asupra lumii, în care calendarul agricol ritmează viața comunității și în care ritualul este perceput ca mijloc de protecție, purificare și contracarare a diverselor forțe necurate care acționează în univers, denotă o prelungire a viziunii tradiționale (premoderne) asupra lumii, precum și limitele modernizării lumii țărănești. În fond, această atitudine a bisericilor ține de consecvența față de propria doctrină și față de propriile tradiții, iar preocuparea pentru purificarea, ordonarea și controlarea dimensiunii ritualice a vieții religioase nu implica minimalizarea rolului acesteia<sup>27</sup>. Preocuparea pentru definirea și cenzurarea unor „superstiții” și „excese populare”, specifică mai ales catolicismului post tridentin și într-o măsură mai mică și mai puțin sistematizată bisericii răsăritene, a fost constantă și direct relaționată cu pledoaria consecventă pentru recunoașterea autorității excepționale a preotului în cadrul parohiei. Acesta era considerat unicul deținător al puterii de a administra tainele/sacramentele și oficiantul legitim al ritualurilor, fiind singurul investit cu harul aferent<sup>28</sup>.

### **Preotul ca intermediar al sacrului și dimensiunea populară a vieții rituale**

Trecerea anului este ritmată de o serie de mari sărbători *legate* sau *creștine* – Nașterea Domnului, Sfântul Vasile, Boboteaza, Învierea Domnului, Sfântul Gheorghe, Sfântă Mărie, Sfântul Dumitru, Sfântul Nicolae etc.- și alte sărbători *nelegate* sau *păgâne*<sup>29</sup>, multe dintre acestea din urmă ținându-le poporul „cu o sfințenie mai mare chiar decât pe cele legate”<sup>30</sup>. Pe lângă

<sup>25</sup> Ștefan Buzilă, „Documente bisericești”, *Arhiva Someșană*, nr. 15, Năsăud, (1931), 31–32.

<sup>26</sup> Daniel Dumitran, *Un timp al reformelor...*, 92.

<sup>27</sup> Valer Simion Cosma, „Popular Mythology, Church Teachings and Masses in Romanian Communities of Transylvania in the 2nd half of the Nineteenth Century” in *Myth, Symbol and Ritual: Elucidatory Paths to the Fantastic Unreality*, eds: Maria-Luiza Oancea & Ramona Mihăilă, (București: Editura Universității București, 2017).

<sup>28</sup> Ovidiu Ghitta, „Pânea pruncilor”, LIX.

<sup>29</sup> Au fost denumite așa de către biserică, însă această catalogare s-a împământenit și în rândul cărturarilor.

<sup>30</sup> Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la români. 1. Cârțile* (București: Editura Saeculum I.O., 2011), 29.

acestea, duminicile ritmează viața religioasă a comunității. Prin aceste sărbători biserica impune un cadru pentru relațiile oamenilor cu sacrul, liturgiile săvârșite în cuprinsul sărbătorilor având rostul de a exprima misterul credinței creștine, de a slăvi pe Dumnezeu și de a binecuvânta participanții. Liturgia are un rol fundamental pentru viața religioasă a unei comunități, prin intermediul acesteia o anumită ordine, sacră și socială deopotrivă, este constant reafirmată. Liturgia regularizează viața comunității și prezervă ordinea societală și sacră/cosmică<sup>31</sup>. Săvârșirea săptămânală sau în alte zile de sărbătoare a Liturghiei conferă însăși substanța ordinii liturgice<sup>32</sup>.

Ritualurilor cuprinse în Liturghie li se alătură altele, de natură extra-liturgică sau para-liturgică, care, privite printr-o optică modernistă, par a fi preocupate mai mult de relațiile sociale, în sensul reafirmării solidarității comune, purificării unei comunități sau reglării unor ritmuri biologice legate de reproducție prin invocarea binecuvântării divine asupra fertilității umane, animale sau agrare.<sup>33</sup>

Fundamentul Liturghiei este celebrarea tainei Euharistiei,

„Închinarea Sfințelor Daruri, care sunt – prin sfințire – adevăratul trup și sânge al lui Hristos, se face în Biserica Ortodoxă numai la Liturghie, când Ele se scot pentru împărtășire, iar mai pe urmă în ducerea Lor la jertfelnic (proscomidiar) pentru *consumare* sau *administrare*, fapt ce corespunde Înălțării. Prin Ele noi ne închinăm Domnului Însuși, Care este prezent în Sfânta Împărtășanie [...] de aceea, prefacerea Sfințelor Daruri și chiar Împărtășania în timpul Liturghiei nu sunt acte izolate, separate, luate din afară și fără legătură cu întreaga viață a Mântuitorului, cu întreaga Întrupare. De asemenea, actul acesta nu e ca un fel de act magic săvârșit de preot, întovărașit cu recitarea unor anumite cuvinte sacramentale, care, ca să zicem astfel, seamănă unui descântec.”<sup>34</sup>

Dacă la nivelul teologic al înțelegerii tainei Euharistiei, precum și a altor taine și ritualuri bisericesti, se face o delimitare clară față de magie, nu același lucru se petrece la nivelul religiei trăite, vernaculare. Liturghiei i s-au asociat, de asemeni, puteri magice, biserica fiind în mare măsură responsabilă de acest fapt prin învățătura sa. De-a lungul timpului sacramentele desfășurate la altar au fost supuse unui proces teologic de reinterpretare. Spre

<sup>31</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 130.

<sup>32</sup> Roy A. Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion...*, 137.

<sup>33</sup> R. W. Scribner, *Popular religion...*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> Serghei Bulgakov, *Dogma euharistică*, traducere de Pr. Paraschiv Angheliescu (București: Editura Paideia, 2000), 67, 84.

sfârșitul evului mediu s-a mutat accentul dinspre comuniunea de credință înspre actul de consacrare – sfințire – desfășurat de preot, ne spune istoricul Keith Thomas cu referire la lumea occidentală<sup>35</sup>, observație care se poate extinde într-o mare măsură și la lumea răsăriteană.

O sumedenie de credințe și practici magice s-au acumulat în jurul tainelor/sacramentelor. Teama clericilor ca niciun element sfințit să nu fie irosit sau aruncat accidental a încurajat ideea că cuminecătura/anafura ar fi un obiect cu potență magică. Preotul care oficia trebuia să înghită restul de împărtășanie și să se asigure că nu se pierde nimic. În Anglia premodernă aflăm despre cel care nu înghițea împărtășania ci o ducea (în gură) afară din biserică că se credea în posesia unei surse de putere magică pe care o putea folosi în numeroase practici. Se credea și că un criminal care înghite ostia nu va fi descoperit<sup>36</sup>. În lumea țărănească românească întâlnim credința că cel care vrea să aibă noroc la prins pește, trebuie să nu mănânce anafora pe care o capătă de la preot în biserică, ci trebuie să o arunce în râu și tot anul prinde pește<sup>37</sup>, sau după cum scrie un text publicat în 1872 în *Telegraful român*<sup>38</sup>:

„dacă vrea să fie cineva în decursul anului pescar bun, să poată prinde mult pește, se zice că e bine să se ducă în ziua de Buna-Vestire la biserică, să ia de acolo anaforă (cuminecătură) și să meargă după aceea la pește. Și care pește îl va prinde mai întâi, să-i pună o fărâmătură de anaforă în gură și apoi să-i zică: – Du-te! Și cu câți te vei întâlni, spune-le la toți să vină la mine! Și cu acestea să-l lase iar în apă. Făcând aceasta, se crede că, peste tot anul, când va merge a pescui, va fi foarte norocos... totdeauna va veni cu straița plină.”<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> „The ceremony thus acquired in the popular mind a mechanical efficacy in which the operative factor was not the participation of the congregation, who had become virtual spectators, but the special power of the priest. If too ignorant to follow a private mass book, they were encouraged to recite whatever prayers they knew; so that during the Mass the priest and people in fact pursued different modes of devotion. The ritual was said, in a notorious phrase, «to work like a charm upon an adder». In the actual miracle of transubstantiation the «instrumental» cause was the formula of consecration. Theologians refined this doctrine considerably, but their subtleties were too complicated to be understood by ordinary men. What stood out was the magical notion that the mere pronunciation of words in a ritual manner could effect a change in the character of material objects.”, in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic. Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 33.

<sup>36</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 34.

<sup>37</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, *Datinele și credințele poporului român. Adunate și așezate în ordine mitologică*, vol. I (București: Editura Saeculum Vizual, 2008), 258–259.

<sup>38</sup> Gazetă editată de Biserica Ortodoxă din Transilvania.

<sup>39</sup> *Telegraful român*, Sibiu (1872), nr. 26, apud. Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la români. 2. Păresimile* (București: Editura Saeculum I.O., 2011), 250–251.

Și vânătorilor le poate fi de folos anafora, după cum aflăm din același material care ne spune că „în ținutul Reghinului săsesc din Transilvania circulă credința că cine vrea să fie vânător bun, să se ducă la biserică în ziua Bunei-Vestiri și, după ce va lua o fărâmatură de anaforă, să meargă cu dânsa, să facă într-un pom o găurice și să o pună acolo și apoi să țintească din depărtare asupra ei. Pușcătura negreșit va nimeri în anaforă, din care va curge sânge. În tot anul apoi va fi pușcaș foarte bun. Dar asta e păcat mare și de aceea nu cearcă nimeni.”<sup>40</sup> Nu știm câți au încercat această tehnică magică de perfecționare într-ale vânătorii, însă existența ei denotă multiplele utilizări acordate la nivel popular Euharistiei, precum și puterile magice atribuite, în total dezacord cu discursul creștin despre taina Euharistiei și semnificațiile ei. Importanța Euharistiei reiese și din obișnuința de a se plăti pentru primirea acesteia, mai ales când e cerută pentru un copil, fiind considerată extrem de eficientă ca mijloc de prevenție a diferitelor neplăceri și boli. Plata cuminecării este menționată într-un document din Șchei despre un diacon, candidat la preoție, care nu prea acceptă să meargă să cuminece copiii sau să facă slujbele cerute de săraci, ținând doar solicitările mai bine remunerate<sup>41</sup>.

Legat de taina Împărtășaniei/Euharistiei și puterile atribuite acesteia, o credință populară înregistrată spre sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea, spune că „cel ce se cuminecă în ziua de Florii, înainte de a se apropia de preot ca să se cuminece, ori ce va gândi în acel moment, Dumnezeu îi va îndeplini dorința.”<sup>42</sup> Se poate observa cum la nivelul religiei vernaculare, altele sunt semnificațiile atribuite unui ritual religios, decât cele prezente în discursul teologic. Granița dintre magie și religie, în pofida unor precizări de ordin teologic și a unor diferențieri de ordin teoretic, este fluidă la nivelul religiei țărănești, cele două fiind de cele mai multe ori amalgamate<sup>43</sup>. Credința în puterea Euharistiei formează baza pentru utilizarea sa în diferite ritualuri, precum cele legate de vreme, performate în timp de furtună sau secetă când aceasta e scoasă afară și prin însoțirea cu semnul crucii se urmărește alungarea norilor/chemarea lor în numele lui Hristos<sup>44</sup>. „Miridele”, adică bucăți din prescura sfințită de preot în timpul Liturghiei, sunt scoase din biserică

<sup>40</sup> *Telegraful român*, Sibiu (1872), nr. 26, apud. Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la români. 2. Păresimile*, 251.

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Sterie Stinghe, *Documente privitoare la trecutul românilor din Șchei (1784–1810)*, vol. II (Brașov: Tipografia Ciurcu & comp., 1902), 176.

<sup>42</sup> Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la români. 2. Păresimile*, 282.

<sup>43</sup> Jean Verdon, *Les Superstitions au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Perrin, 2008), 110.

<sup>44</sup> R.W.Scribner, *Popular religion*, 11.

și folosite în ritualuri, având atribuită o valoare magică, apotropaică<sup>45</sup>, deși „scoaterea părțicelor/miridelor” nu este „o rânduială scrisă în cărțile de slujbă, [iar uneori] vin unele persoane și cer părțicele cu gânduri necurate, [...] pentru a le folosi pentru: răzbunări, farmece și practici oculte. Sunt persoane care folosesc părțicele la vrăjitoare, la descântătoare, unii le aruncă pe apă ca vrăjmașul să se înece, le aruncă în foc ca să ia foc casa vrăjmașului, le aruncă pe stradă pentru ca vrăjmașul să fie lovit de mașină, ș.a.m.d.”<sup>46</sup>, după cum afirma un duhovnic cu largă popularitate la finalul secolului al XX-lea, probând continuitatea unor credințe și practici.

Euharistia poate fi utilizată și în divinație, conform unei credințe populare „când un bolnav se-mpărtășește și anafora șade deasupra vinului în linguriță, bolnavul se va face sănătos, iar de cade la fund, va muri”<sup>47</sup>. Sacralitatea și, implicit, forța magică ce sălășluiește în Euharistie sau în pasca sfințită și dată oamenilor la Paște, a pătruns și în literatura populară, după cum putem observa din basmul *Dreptatea și Strâmbătatea*, cules de Ion Pop-Reteganul din Zlatna, unde se vorbește despre o fată de popă care s-a îmbolnăvit extrem de tare pentru că „a scăpat la Sfintele Paști o sfărimitură de pască jos și aceea a apucat-o o broască și s-a ascuns cu ea sub pristol (masă din altar)”<sup>48</sup>. Ambiguitatea sacruului se probează încă o dată și în cazul acesta, Pasca, asemeni altor elemente și obiecte sfințite sau personaje mânuitoare ale sacruului, poate la fel de bine produce efecte malefice și benefice, fiind vorba de o energie conținută care poate fi direcționată de către diferiți actori în funcție de scopul urmărit, sau care se declanșează în contextul încălcării unor prescripții ritualice.

Biserica a multiplicat ocaziile seculare în care Liturghia poate fi performată ca mijloc propitiator<sup>49</sup>, iar puterea atribuită acesteia a transformat-o într-un ritual pe care oamenii îl solicitau pentru diferite ocazii, fie că era vorba de chestiuni individuale sau colective. Astfel că plățirea preotului pentru a săvârși un număr special de liturghii a devenit un obicei extrem de răspândit, după cum consemnează culegerile de folclor:

„În duminica cea dintâi, când e lună nouă, să plătești liturghie la biserică, sau să năimești anume slujbă, pentru ziua ce urmează, îndată ce s-a primit

<sup>45</sup> Alexandru Ofrim, *Cheia și psaltirea. Imaginarul cărții în cultura tradițională românească* (Pitești: Editura Paralela 45, 2001), 194.

<sup>46</sup> Pr. Argatu V. Ioan, *Răspunsuri duhovnicești la întrebările credincioșilor, ale Părintelui Arhimandrit Ilarion Argatu*, ediția a II-a (Fălticeni: Editura “Mila Creștină”, 2007), 182–183.

<sup>47</sup> Marcel Olinescu, *Mitologie românească* (București: Editura Saeculum Vizual, 2008), 229.

<sup>48</sup> Ion Pop-Reteganul, „Dreptatea și Strâmbătatea”, în *Basmele românilor*, vol. III, (București: Editura Curtea Veche, 2010), 24–25.

<sup>49</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 34.

lumina, și orice dorință are omul, orice cerere, pentru sănătate, noroc, trai bun în casă, sau orice, ți se împlinește.”<sup>50</sup>

În însemnările zilnice ale părintelui Elie Domșa, de la biserica ordinului bazilitan din Blaj, aflăm menționate numeroase solicitări pentru săvârșirea unui număr de liturghii, adeseori împreună cu alte slujbe și rugăciuni, cu scopul însănătoșirii cuiva sau soluționării unor necazuri și probleme în familie și comunitate<sup>51</sup>.

Liturghia putea fi chiar pervertită într-un act malefic, urmărindu-se cauzarea morții unei persoane. În acest sens aflăm că dacă „pentru sănătate cât și pentru tot ce e de bine să plătești slujbă la lună plină, și numai pentru dușmani la lună nouă”. În alte locuri „plătesc slujbă tot în duminica cea întâi pentru toate: fie pentru dușmani sau pentru bine, numai acaftist și agheasmă nu fac până nu se pișcă luna, până nu se învechește”<sup>52</sup>. Despre puterea Liturghiei, pervertită într-un maleficiu, aflăm și dintr-un studiu publicat în Anuarul Arhivei de Folklor, de Ion Mușlea, care aduce în atenție o circulară emisă de episcopul ortodox Vasile Moga în 22 decembrie 1824, care pomeneste de implicarea unui preot în practici ce au vizat provocarea decesului unei persoane. Astfel că ierarhul poruncește preoților să se țină departe de asemenea practici și „să nu amăgească norodul a crede într-o descânțecă, precum au făcut popa Iosif de la Cârțișoara că au făcut leturghie pe cămașa arândatorului Gheorghe Ciortolan”<sup>53</sup>.

Câteva considerații pe marginea celor prezentate mai sus, se impun. În primul rând, ajungem la chestiunea ambiguității sacralului, căci

„dacă un lucru posedă prin definiție o natură fixă, dimpotrivă, o forță poate aduce binele sau răul în funcție de împrejurările particulare ale manifestărilor ei succesive. Ea e bună sau rea nu prin natura ei, ci prin orientarea pe care o ia sau i se dă. [...] Orice forță, în stare latentă, provoacă dorința și totodată teama, îi suscită credinciosului spaima că-i cauzează eșecul, speranța că-i vine în ajutor. Dar de fiecare dată când se manifestă, o face într-un singur sens, ca izvor de binecuvântare sau ca focar de blesteme. În stare virtuală, este ambiguă; trecând în act, devine univocă și de atunci încolo nicio ezitare nu-i mai

<sup>50</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, *Datinele și credințele poporului român*, vol. I, 240.

<sup>51</sup> *Carnete de însemnări dintre 1875–1930 despre slujbele cerute de credincioși; poezii copiate, cheltuieli zilnice*, Nr. 102 – Fond Biblioteca Centrală Blaj, VIII Acte Culturale, Manuscrise, Arhivele Naționale ale României, filiala Cluj.

<sup>52</sup> Elena Niculiță-Voronca, *Datinele și credințele poporului român*, vol. I, 240.

<sup>53</sup> Ion Mușlea, „Practici magice și denumirea lor în circularele episcopicești și protopopești”, în *Cercetări etnografice și de folclor*, vol. II (București: Ed. Minerva, 1972), 403.



este permisă. [...] Sciziunea sacrului produce spiritele bune și rele, preotul și vrăjitorul, pe Ormazd și Ahriman, pe Dumnezeu și pe Diavol, însă atitudinea credincioșilor față de fiecare dintre aceste specializări ale sacrului dezvăluie aceeași ambivalență ca și comportarea față de manifestările-i indivize.”<sup>54</sup>

Dincolo de semnificațiile și rosturile teologice ale Liturghiei, a căror relevanță este sufocată de adaosurile specifice religiozității folclorice, oamenii caută să beneficieze în diferite scopuri de puterile atribuite acesteia. În această ecuație, preotul are un rol fundamental, fiind abilitat să săvârșească această rânduială bisericească. Postura sa de oficiant al Liturghiei (precum și al altor ritualuri religioase) îi conferă o putere teribilă și prestigiu la nivelul comunității. Pe de altă parte, se poate observa că la nivelul preoților de țară cel mai adesea preotul însuși este mai apropiat de orizontul religiozității folclorice, raportându-se, asemeni enoriașilor, într-o manieră magico-religioasă la propria funcție și la atribuțiile sacerdotale, decât de un orizont teologic în care există o mai clară delimitare a magicului de religios și în care misiunea preotului este legată de mântuirea sufletelor celor păstoriți.

Un alt aspect important care reiese din cele citate și care trebuie avut în vedere pentru înțelegerea complexității funcției preoțești la nivelul lumii țărănești, ține de modul în care preotul, reprezentant al bisericii, interacționează cu credincioșii. După cum formulează Rainer Beck cu referire la satele bavareze din secolele al XVII-lea și al XVIII-lea, oamenii trebuiau să plătească pentru asistența religioasă solicitată preotului, în bani sau bunuri, întâlnirea dintre preot și sat, dintre reprezentantul bisericii și credincioși, se manifesta pe două planuri, fiind deopotrivă o întâlnire materială și spirituală, fiind o corespondență inerentă între cele două<sup>55</sup>.

Pe de altă parte, pe lângă beneficiile materiale care pot lămuri în bună măsură implicarea unor preoți în astfel de acțiuni, săvârșirea unui număr de liturghii în scopul cauzării morții cuiva poate părea firească unui preot, în contextul în care biserica și slujbașii săi aveau și puterea de a intermedia justiția divină, după cum reiese din rolul major jucat de *cărțile de blestem* și din rolul atribuit clericilor în gestionarea justiției în comunitățile rurale<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> Roger Caillois, *Omul și sacrul*, traducere de Dan Petrescu (București: Editura Nemira, 2006), 38–39, 42.

<sup>55</sup> R. Beck, „Der Pfarrer und das Dorf: Konformismus und Eigensinn im katholischen Bayern des 17./18. Jahrhunderts”, in *Armut, Liebe, Ehre: Studien zur historischen Kulturforschung*, ed. R. v. Dulmen (Frankfurt a. M., 1988), 107–43, apud. Kaspar von Greyerz, *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800*, translated by Thomas Dunlap (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 56.

<sup>56</sup> Toader Nicoară, „Aspecte ale religiei populare în societatea românească din Transilvania

Rolul central al Liturghiei în viața bisericească și în cadrul religiozității țărănești reiese și din chestiunea ritualurilor de sfințire a unor obiecte, a ceea ce în occidentul medieval a fost numit de către Petrus Lombardus, *sacramentalii, sacramentalia* – „o serie de rituri de sfințire instituite sau recunoscute de biserică, pe lângă cele șapte taine”<sup>57</sup>, iar în lumea răsăriteană se cheamă *ierurgii*<sup>58</sup>. În *Pânea Pruncilor*, catehism răspândit în mediul greco-catolic în veacul al XVIII-lea, se alocă un spațiu important chestiunii sacramentaliilor, numite „făpturile ceale sfințite de obște”<sup>59</sup>. Vorbind despre chestiunea sacramentaliilor și a locului/rolului lor în viața religioasă, pe marginea catehismului adineaori menționat, istoricul clujean Ovidiu Ghitta spunea că sunt:

„acele lucruri (materii, obiecte, «semne sacre») binecuvântate de preot prin rituri minore, în ambianță liturgică, ce puteau fi apoi scoase afară din biserică și folosite conform dorinței și așteptărilor mirenilor. Expresia folosită în text marchează scrupulos cele trei însușiri definitorii ale acestora: sînt «făpturi», sânt «sfințite» (adică au benedictiunea preotului) și sînt «de obște» (de uz larg, popular). Purtau girul Bisericii, dar erau utilizate efectiv de către laici, în cadru extra-ecclesial, cu scopuri protectoare în fața răului, ca forme permise de magie. Erau forme populare de invocare a ajutorului sacru, pe care catolicismul posttridentin nu doar că le-aq perpetuat, dar le-a și încurajat, delimitându-se încă o dată foarte net de protestantism. A vorbi despre sacramentalii însemna, deci, a lucra în sensul unui curent agreat de Biserica romană, care n-a urmărit, precum Reforma, excluderea lor din categoria practicilor rituale oficiale. [...] funcția sacramentaliilor era apotropaică. Aveau menirea de a servi, pe de o parte, drept scut împotriva mării și omniprezentei amenințări, Diavolul, iar pe de alta (odată exorcizate spiritele malefice), de a facilita mai buna încadrare a vieții cotidiene într-o ordine sacră.”<sup>60</sup>

În ipostaza sa de sfințitor al unor elemente profane – alimente, obiecte etc. – preotul își manifestă funcția de mediator și, pe de altă parte, găsește o importantă sursă de venit, într-o lume a satului „împregnată de activități de

în secolul al XVIII-lea”, in *300 de ani de la Unirea Bisericii Românești din Transilvania cu Biserica Romei* (Cluj-Napoca, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 194.

<sup>57</sup> Jean Delumeau, *Liniștiți și ocrotiți. Sentimentul de securitate în Occidentul de altădată*, vol. I, traducere de Laurențiu Zoicaș (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2004), 32.

<sup>58</sup> Eugen Jurca, *Ritualul Sfântului Botez. Des-tăinuiri catehetice* (Târgu-Lăpuș: Editura Galaxia Gutenberg, 2009), 27.

<sup>59</sup> *Pânea pruncilor sau Învățătură a credinții creștinești. Strînsă în mică șumă*, ediție îngrijită de Florina Ilis, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Argonaut, 2008), 121.

<sup>60</sup> Ovidiu Ghitta, „*Pânea pruncilor*”, LXXIII-LXXIV.

natură magică și religioasă”<sup>61</sup>. Învățătura ortodoxă descrie *binecuvântarea* ca rostire a unor

„cuvinte cu înțeles de fericire morală și materială, și a chema ajutorul dumnezeesc, asupra celui ce se binecuvintează [...] o dau și laicii asupra fiilor lor, dar ea nu are putere ca binecuvântarea bisericească făcută de preot ori episcop. [...] iar *a sfinți* însemnează a curăți, a desface firea cu puterea divină de tot ce este rău și necurat. [...] sfințirea nu o face nici odată laicul, ci numai preotul sau episcopul”<sup>62</sup>.

Definiția pune clar accentul pe distincția dintre laic și cleric, puterea de a sfinți fiind prin excelență atributul clericilor, distribuitori ai harului divin, agenți ai sacralului. Efectele materiale provocate de binecuvântare și sfințire, sunt de asemenea evidențiate, ordinea sacră a lumii întrepătrunzându-se cu ordinea profană prin intermediul preotului. În cazul sfințirii, procesul magico-spiritual de desfacere a răului de bun și a purului de impur, este înțeles și în termeni cât se poate de materiali, mai ales când avem de-a face cu sfințirea unor obiecte și materiale. Prin sfințire și binecuvântare, preotul purifică obiectele, elementele, persoanele și le potențează eficacitatea, infuzându-le cu energie sacră, fapt ce le face extrem de potrivite și râvnite pentru numeroasele practici magice care acompaniază viața țaranului, în cele mai mici detalii.

Dar pe lângă semnificațiile magice asociate Euharistiei și Liturghiei, la nivelul religiei vernaculare, diferitele adăugiri la ritualul bisericesc au de asemenea o importanță majoră. Nu numai prin faptul că implică o abatere de la rânduiala bisericească, aspect sesizat de diferiți protopopi, ci și prin valențele magice cu care sunt investite de către enoriași. La începutul secolului al XX-lea, în contextul anchetelor și conferințelor inițiate de mitropolitul ortodox Ioan Mețianu pentru analizarea cauzelor „indiferentismului religios” crescând, aflăm următoarea chestiune dezbătută într-o conferință preoțească desfășurată în zona Clujului.

„Deși protopopul a cerut să se slujească la fel ca în catedrală, preoții au susținut că poporul este învățat cu anumite adăugiri la serviciul divin: cădelnițarea bisericii și a credincioșilor de fiecare dată când se iese prin ușile împărătești;

<sup>61</sup> Ernest Bernea, *Spațiu timp și cauzalitate la poporul român* (București: Editura Humanitas, 2005), 147.

<sup>62</sup> Badea Cireșeanu, *Tezaurul liturgic al Sfintei Biserici creștine ortodoxe a răsăritului*, III, Tipografia „Gutenberg” (București: Joseph Göbl, 1912), 336.

la fel, preoții au încercat să înlăture un obicei al credincioșilor, acela de a se întinde pe jos ca să treacă preotul cu Sf. Daruri peste ei.”<sup>63</sup>

Avem de-a face cu puterea magică, extrem de eficace, atribuită Sfințelor Daruri, amplificată de contextul liturgic. Atingerea Sfințelor Daruri, ca și în cazul atingerii/sărutării cărților sfinte, a moaștelor sau a altor obiecte bisericesti, nu presupune doar o comuniune, în sens mistic, cu sacrul, cu divinitatea, ci implică „și un transfer de valori benefice de la obiectul sacru (Cartea) spre beneficiar. Se așteaptă fie o vindecare fie, fie îndeplinirea unei dorințe. La credința în harul, în forța vindecătoare a Cărții sfinte a contribuit desfășurarea ritualului Sf. Maslu: preotul ia Sf. Evanghelie și o dă bolnavului să o sărute și să o deschidă, apoi este ținută pe capul acestuia”<sup>64</sup>. Preocuparea unor preoți pentru îndepărtarea din Liturghie a unor adaosuri cu valențe magice reflectă deopotrivă atașamentul lumii țărănești față de anumite credințe și practici, cât și prăpastia crescândă dintre o elită preotească școlită și desprinsă de orizontul cultural specific lumii satului și turma păstorită.

Contactul cu „sfințele daruri” poate alunga duhurile rele din cineva, după cum reiese dintr-un basm cules din zona Reghinului, unde un țăran este învățat cum să scoată dracii dintr-o femeie pe care voia să o ia de nevastă:

„O dus-o la biserică și, ce: «când a ieși popa cu darurile, atuncea s-o ducem. Da’ én-a vré. S-o ducem la popa sub patrafir și cutare și nu știi ce...» No! Ș-apoi s.o dus întâi la popa, la beserică, la preot și când i-o pus păharu de cuminecătură pe cap la doamna, numa’ fum’ ieșât din ea. Până atunci n-o vorbit nimic. Ș-atuncea o-nceput să vorbească și să spuie: «No, m-aș scăpat de duhurile răle!»”<sup>65</sup>

Preocuparea clerului pentru cinstirea deosebită a Liturghiei și pentru evidențierea puterii acesteia, reiese și din răspândirea legendei intitulată *Descoperirea Sfintei Liturghii*, Moses Gaster inventariind o serie de manuscrise care cuprind această legendă în traducere românească încă din secolul al XVIII-lea. Autorul menționează trei manuscrise (trei *Sbornice* din 1750, 1800 și 1813) pe care le posedă, în care este cuprinsă această legendă apocrifă, altele posedate de către Mihai Eminescu și Gr. G. Tocilescu, precum și prezența acesteia în cartea *Învățătura pentru preoți și diaconi*, tipărită la

<sup>63</sup> Valeria Soroștineanu, *Manifestări ale sentimentului religios la români ortodocși din Transilvania 1899–1916* (Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, 2005), 39–40.

<sup>64</sup> Alexandru Ofrim, *Cheia și psaltirea*, 238.

<sup>65</sup> I. Oprișan, *Basmе fantastice românești*, IV. *Basmе Superstițios-Religioase*, tom I (București: Editura Vestala, 2009), 50.

Viena în 1835 și mai apoi la Sibiu<sup>66</sup>. Legenda prezintă puterea Liturghiei asupra celor care atacă credința creștină și bisericile, precum și efectele produse în timpul săvârșirii acesteia prin invocațiile rostite de către preot. Tabloul este cât se poate de clar, „când se ruga preotul: «pentru cei ce umblă pe mare și călătoresc» întru acel ceas arătă D-zeu împăratului [care se îndoia] mare învăluită cu valuri grele, și corăbiile gata a se primejdui, și îndată cu cuvântul preotului s-a alinat marea”<sup>67</sup>. Legenda apocrifă, popularizată prin transcrieri de către diferiți copişti, cu precădere preoți, este răspândită mai apoi prin intermediul tiparului, din dorința de a cultiva o atitudine adecvată față de această slujbă atât din partea enoriașilor cât și a clerului. Pe de altă parte, maniera în care este descrisă acțiunea ritualică a preotului și puterea cuvintelor rostite de către acesta în timpul Liturghiei, lămurește importanța acordată Liturghiei ca ritual săvârșit pentru ocazii și scopuri extrem de variate și pentru pomenirea în timpul Liturghiei. Moment optim al comunicării cu divinitatea, prin intermediul preotului, Liturghia reprezintă ritualul prin excelență prin care ipostaza de intermediar ritualic a preotului se manifestă deplin.

Importanța Liturghiei pentru comunitatea religioasă, dincolo de semnificațiile ei teologice, reiese și dintr-o jalbă a obștii din Șcheii Brașovului, înaintată protopopiatului în 1817, în care se semnala apariția unui

„obiceaiu nou la ieșirea cu sfințele și precuratele taini dumnezeiești, când după orânduială numai numele Prea Înălțatului Monarh și al Prea Luminatului nostru Episcop pă cum este îndatorat preotul a le pomeni cu strigare, cum și pă ctitorii Sfintei Biserici, pă toți răposaii și pă tot norodul creștinesc, iar nu pă oricine voiește după nume, vedem acuma c'au început a pomeni, în toate zilele și duminica și la praznice, numele unora din morți, ba încă și cu polecra lor, strigare cu mare glăsuire. Acest obiceaiu rău, cunoscut fiind că numa pentru a trage bani dela norod curge”<sup>68</sup>.

Pomenirea de către preot în cuprinsul Liturghiei a celor morți, la cerere și contra cost după cum s-a subliniat de două ori în cuprinsul jalbei, are menirea de a le ușura soarta în lumea de dincolo. Pentru cei vii, pomenirea este investită cu o funcție magico-religioasă, ajutând fie la vindecarea cuiva sau la împlinirea diverselor dorințe. O altă valoare ține de importanța socială

<sup>66</sup> Moses Gaster, *Literatura populară română* (București: I.G. Haimann, Librar-Editor, 1883), 446.

<sup>67</sup> Moses Gaster, *Literatura populară*, 448.

<sup>68</sup> Candid C. Mușlea, *Biserica Sf. Nicolae din Șcheii Brașovului, vol. II (1743–1837)* (Brașov: Institutul de Arte Grafice „ASTRA”, 1946), 287.

a spațiului bisericii și a momentului Liturghiei, pomenirea contribuind la sporirea/confirmarea prestigiului celui care a plătit pentru asta. Inovația este percepută, totuși, de către acea parte a comunității care a înaintat jalba, ca o stricare a rânduiei.

Importanța Liturghiei pentru buna funcționare a comunității reiese și dintr-o altă jalbă în care șcheienii se plâneau că din cauza absența protopopului din parohie, „dus la o nuntă într-un sat [...]nevestele au rămas nemiruite, un copil nevârsnic împărțindu-le numai sfânta anafură”<sup>69</sup>. Plângerea venea în urma unor repetate cereri înaintate episcopului Moga de a primi un număr mai mare de preoți, pentru a avea asistența religioasă necesară ca și în timpurile trecute când aveau șapte preoți, însă din cauza limitărilor numărului de preoți, impusă de administrația imperială, episcopul e nevoit să le respingă cererea<sup>70</sup>. Relevă, totuși, trei aspecte majore: participarea preponderentă a femeilor la slujba duminicală, importanța acordată miruirii și anafurei, precum și modul în care minimul de asistență spirituală le era administrat enoriașilor, într-un timp în care preocuparea pentru săvârșirea corectă a tainelor și slujbelor bisericesti era o constantă a circulelor bisericesti și a controalelor ierarhice. Ordinea sacră a comunității (și implicit cea socială) era afectată de numeroasele atribuții ale protopopului care-l împiedicau de la împlinirea atribuțiilor sacerdotale și care astfel nu putea îndeplini toate solicitările enoriașilor. În rândul atribuțiilor sale săvârșirea Liturghiei duminicale era una majoră, cu multe semnificații și rosturi pentru cei păstoriți.

## Concluzii

La nivel popular religia este redusă la „determinațiile cele mai comune, universale, pragmatice la modul cel mai mundan”<sup>71</sup>, dar nu poate fi considerată ruptă total de doctrina oficială, în pofida deformărilor și amalgamărilor. Faptul că agheasma și tămâia (fumigațiile) erau folosite în ritualuri ce implicau și exorcizarea<sup>72</sup> explică utilizarea constantă a acestora de către o

<sup>69</sup> Candid C. Mușlea, *Biserica Sf. Nicolae...*, 286.

<sup>70</sup> Candid C. Mușlea, *Biserica Sf. Nicolae...*, 268–280.

<sup>71</sup> Marin Marian-Bălașa, „Conceptul de religie populară – oportunitate, aplicabilitate, adecvări”, în *Eshatologia Populară*, editori: Avram Cristea și Jan Nicolae (Alba Iulia: Editura Reîntregirea, 2010), 224.

<sup>72</sup> Sfeștania, „rânduiala ce se face când se va întâmpla să cadă ceva spurcat în fântâna cu apă”, „Rânduiala ce se face când se va întâmpla să cadă de curând ceva spurcat sau necurat în vasul cu vin, cu untdelemn, cu miere”, „Rugăciune când se spurcă grâul, făina sau altceva dintre nutrimente”, „Rânduiala binecuvântării casei celei noi, întru care voiește a locui cineva

lume în continuu asaltată de atacuri demonice<sup>73</sup> și de spirite producătoare de dezordine și necazuri. Firește, ritualurile performate de către preot în sensul alungării duhurilor necurate și binecuvântării, erau considerate mult mai eficiente, de aceea erau și generos răsplătite. Pe lângă Liturghia duminicală, numeroase ritualuri și rugăciuni cuprind formulări precum „Pentru ca să fie apa aceasta vindecătoare sufletelor și trupurilor și gonitoare a toată puterea cea vrăjmașă”<sup>74</sup> sau „Domnului să ne rugăm. Vindecă bolile noastre cele sufletești și trupești, cu mila Ta”<sup>75</sup>, așa că nu este deloc surprinzător că vindecarea era înțeleasă în termeni foarte trupești, într-o mixtură a efectelor fiziologice și spirituale<sup>76</sup>. Curățenia/puritatea, atât de importantă pentru o lume guvernată de ritualuri, nu este doar o obsesie a lumii țărănești amprentată de credințe precreștine. Ritualurile bisericesti și învățătura bisericească pun un mare accent pe ideea de purificare și de curățare, așa că nu e de mirare că într-o lume țărăneasă în care funcțiunile liturgice au un rol fundamental pentru funcționarea lumii materiale și spirituale<sup>77</sup>, oamenii sunt într-atât de preocupați de puritate și ritual încât consideră păcate grele încălcarea unor prescripții ce țin de ordinea rituală, sacră. Chiar dacă de multe ori înțeleg ideea de curățenie în cel mai profan mod, cum e cazul îmbăierilor specifice marilor sărbători, sau cu scaldarea în ziua spovedaniei pentru curățarea de boale și bube și pentru prevenirea lor<sup>78</sup>, legătura cu preocuparea bisericească pentru puritatea rituală este evidentă.

Pe de altă parte, toleranța bisericilor față de anumite practici și credințe populare atașate sacramentelor, slujbelor bisericesti și sărbătorilor creștine, în anumite cazuri chiar integrarea lor în ceremonialul religios, au contribuit substanțial la prezervarea lor și la prelungirea unei mitologii țărănești sincretice, până târziu în secolul al XX-lea. Calendarul țărănesc cuprinde o sinteză între sărbătorile și praznicele creștine și cele precreștine. Celebrarea acestora are menirea de a asigura buna funcționare a cosmosului, protejarea în fața variatelor năpaste și ordinea socială. Ritualurile aferente acestor sărbători au ca actor principal preotul în postura sa de intermediar între oameni și sacru. Prin rânduielile și slujbele săvârșite de către preot se asigură și rezervorul de

întâia oară” etc., în *Efhologhion* sau *Molitfelnic*, ediția a II-a (București: Tipografia „Cărților Bisericesci”, 1896), 620.

<sup>73</sup> Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil. Witchcraft, sexuality and religion in early modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 174.

<sup>74</sup> *Efhologhion* sau *Molitfelnic*, 126.

<sup>75</sup> *Efhologhion* sau *Molitfelnic*, 127.

<sup>76</sup> R. W. Scribner, *Popular Culture*, 39.

<sup>77</sup> R. W. Scribner, *Popular Culture*, 40.

<sup>78</sup> Simion Florea Marian, *Sărbătorile la români. 2. Păresimile*, 326.



elemente sfințite necesar sătenilor pentru numeroasele practici magice care le acompaniază și securizează existența. Preotul, integrat orizontului social și cultural al lumii satului, rămâne până târziu în secolul al XIX-lea parte a sistemului magico-religios care ordonează lumea satului, presiunile disciplinatoare și modernizatoare nereușind să disloce structurile socio-culturale majore și să producă transformări de profunzime. La aceasta contribuie nu numai faptul că preotul împărtășea același orizont cultural și spiritual cu cei păstoriți ci și presiunea puternică venită dinspre comunitățile deprinse cu o ordine sacră și socială cu o vârstă venerabilă. Revelația identității naționale propovăduită în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și în prima jumătate a secolului al XX-lea de către diverși intelectuali și de către mulți clerici, parte a *inteligentsiei*, investește cultura țărănească cu semnificații identitare solici-tând teaurizarea acesteia, proces în care preoții ajung să ocupe un loc central.

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# Fashion versus moarte: cămașa ciumei

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CAMELIA BURGHELE\*

## FASHION VERSUS DEATH: THE PLAGUE SHIRT

**Abstract:** In the 19<sup>th</sup> and even 20<sup>th</sup> century Romania, serious, deadly, and collective illness was associated with the plague and the remedy to it was always magic: the women in the community (the traditional village) would weave a beautiful shirt for plague so it would wear it, be satisfied and leave the village, allowing thus people's healing. These solutions are linked to a logic that is specific to a collective imagination that can be studied from an anthropological perspective, in a logical overview in 7 steps:

1. Any serious illness, in people or animals, with a collective outcome (pandemic as we would now call it) used to be associated to the plague – the illness that decimated Europe in the Middle Ages.
2. Plague has always been associated to a woman by the collective mentality (the woman is the one that made a pact with the devil); so, plague is a feminine figure, like death and like the witch.
3. One can assume that in any era or cultural space women were preoccupied of their looks, garments, dresses, elegance – fashion so to speak.
4. Universal fact: it is presumed that a woman's will can be bought with an expensive, fashionable garment.
5. As a woman (often ugly and old), plague would be tamed (and convinced to leave the village and take along an intrinsic disease) with the use of an elegant shirt: this is a grotesque display of fashion.
6. Any fashion has some rituals: the workshop (a house at the edge of the village), the designer (the 9 women), the model (plague), the catwalk (the exit over the village limits) are all sequences that prepare a special casting, essential to the act of creation, in this case exclusively feminine.
7. Fashion industry, promoted by qualified magic agents, can avoid disintegration: Death/Plague is defeated by Fashion, *quod erat demonstrandum*.

**Keywords:** cultural anthropology, medical anthropology, collective mentality, village tradition, magic rituals, magic disease, plague, plague shirt, death, fashion.

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Magia se dovedește a fi mai puternică decât medicina veterinară: pornim de la o observație de teren a reputatului sociolog și etnograf sălăjean Gheorghe Șișeștean, care atestă – credem – ultima punere în scenă a scenariului magico-ritual cunoscut sub numele „cămașa ciumii”: „este cazul obiceiului cămeșii ciumii, obicei revitalizat în satul Răstolțu Deșert – Sălaj, în anul 1984, când în această localitate a izbucnit o epidemie printre animalele domestice”<sup>1</sup>.

Așadar, discutăm despre anul 1984!!!, adică la sfârșit de secol XX! această observație de teren vorbește despre profunzimea mentalității tradiționale în compartimentul rezervat vindecării bolilor, despre persistența în timp a unui mod de raportare la realitate propriu satului tradițional și despre rezistența la schimbare a unui model de asumare a lumii.

Găsim punctul de plecare în cercetările de antropologie a sănătății (și bolii, implicit), pentru care, dincolo de o ideologie oficială asupra sănătății, se conturează o ideologie neoficială, subsidiară, forțată pe raporturile privilegiate ale omului cu transcendentul, așa cum sunt ele descrise de mentalitatea folclorică<sup>2</sup>. Consecința este un tratament magico-ritual al bolii, potrivit căruia, în ordinea magiei, boala este personificată, izolată și anihilată în baza unui proces de reprezentare al acesteia ca spirit malefic; este perspectiva antropomorfică a cauzalității bolii, care conduce la punerea în mișcare a unor resurse materiale și imateriale pentru a o imobiliza, prin instrumentalizare, izolare, manipulare și anihilare, ca efect al legitimării statutului de putere al magicianului (fie el singular, fie grup specializat)<sup>3</sup>.

„L'attaque de sorcellerie, elle, met en forme le malheur qui se répète et qui atteint au hasard les personnes et les biens d'un ménage ensorcellé”, postulează Jeanne Favret-Saada<sup>4</sup>, demonstrând că semnele de întrebare ale omului simplu nu se ridică în cazul bolii biologice, ci mai ales în varianta repetării

<sup>1</sup> Gheorghe Șișeștean, *Forme tradiționale de viață țărănească* (Zalău: Editura CCVTCP, 1999), 88.

<sup>2</sup> Un model de analiză a fost, pentru cercetările noastre, ancheta derulată de Jeanne Favret – Saada în sudul Franței, vizând practicile rituale terapeutice din Bocage: Jeanne Favret, „Le malheur biologique et sa répétition”, *Annales E.S.C.* nr. 3–4 (1971), 873–888; Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Les mots, la mort et les sorts. La sorcellerie dans le Bocage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977); Jeanne Favret-Saada, José Contreras, *Corps pour corps. Enquête sur la sorcellerie dans le Bocage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> E.-E. Evans-Pritchard, *Sorcellerie, oracles et magie chez les Azande* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

<sup>4</sup> Jeanne Favret-Saada, „Le malheur biologique et sa répétition”, *Annales ESC*, nr. 3–4 (1971), 17.

sale inexplicabile sau a bolilor colective<sup>5</sup>. În acest ultim caz, analizele sociologice vorbesc despre o semantică a bolii; în această interpretare, boala este un semnificant social, al cărei semnificat este reprezentat de raporturile individului cu socialul. Astfel descrisă, boala devine un factor producător de sens, unul dintre parametrii după care poate fi descrisă societatea și reacția sa față de boli colective severe, cum ar fi, de exemplu, epidemiile<sup>6</sup>, consecința acestei abordări fiind faptul că, pentru momentul respectiv, terapia ocupă un loc central în discursul social<sup>7</sup>.

În România secolelor XIX și chiar XX bolile grave, mortale, colective, erau asociate ciumei, iar remediul terapeutic era magico-ritual: femeile din comunitate (satul tradițional) confecționau o cămașă frumoasă pentru ciumă pentru ca aceasta, mulțumită, să o îmbrace și să părăsească satul, permițând, astfel, vindecarea.

Resorturile mentalitare țin de o logică specifică imaginarului colectiv folcloric, ce poate fi citită antropologic. Practic, asistăm la punerea în scenă a unei scheme logice în 7 pași:

1. Orice boală gravă, la oameni sau animale, cu efecte colective / comunitare (pandemice, am zice azi), era asociată ciumei, maladia care a decimat Europa medievală.

2. Ciuma a fost mereu asociată în imaginarul colectiv unei femei (femeia este cea care a făcut pactul cu diavolul); deci ciuma este o apariție feminină, la fel ca moartea, și la fel ca vrăjitoarea.

3. Putem presupune că în orice epocă și în orice spațiu cultural femeile au fost preocupate de aspect, de ținute, de costume, de eleganță, adică de modă, de fashion.

4. Precept universal: bunăvoința oricărei femei poate fi cumpărată cu o haină frumoasă, la modă.

5. Ca femeie (deseori bătrână și urâtă), ciuma va fi îmbunătățită (și convinsă să părăsească satul, ducând cu ea boala intrinsecă) cu o cămașă elegantă: asistăm la un exercițiu grotesc de fashion.

6. Orice fashion are ceva ritual: atelierul de creație (o casă din marginea

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<sup>5</sup> „Je pense que les sorts expliquent non pas le malheur biologique, mais sa répétition”, Jeanne Favret-Saada, José Contréras, *Corps pour corps. Enquete sur la sorcellerie dans le Bocage*, 26.

<sup>6</sup> Claudine Herzlich, „Médecine moderne et quête de sens: la maladie signifiant social”, *Le sens du mal. Anthropologie, histoire, sociologie de la maladie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 190–215.

<sup>7</sup> „La maladie est d’abord un fait social”, Claudine Herzlich, in *Santé et maladie. Analyse d’une représentation sociale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 189.



satului), designerul (cele 9 femei), modelul / manechinul (ciuma), etalarea pe catwalk (ieșirea din hotarul satului) sunt secvențe ce configurează un casting specific actului ritual al creației, exclusiv feminin, în acest caz.

7. Industria modei, practică de agenți magici calificați, poate salva de la neantizare: Moartea / Ciuma este învinsă de Fashion, *quod erat demonstrandum*.

Așadar, actele generate de procesul de vindecare rituală țin de un teritoriu al imaginarului în care prioritară nu este boala, ci semantizarea ei: boala este imaginată, descrisă, personificată, verbalizată, izolată, potrivit unui orizont mentalitar specific culturilor tradiționale / folclorice, bine explicat în etnologia franceză: „il n'y a pas de société où la maladie n'ait une dimension sociale et, de ce point de vue, la maladie, qui est aussi la plus intime et la plus individuelle des réalités, nous fournit un exemple concret de liaison intellectuelle entre perception individuelle et symbolique sociale; quant à la perception de la maladie et de sa guérison elle ne peut se satisfaire ni d'un recours arbitraire à l'imagination, ni d'une simple cohérence intellectuelle ou d'un effet de représentation: elle est ancrée dans la réalité du corps souffrant”<sup>8</sup>.

Dimensiunea socială a bolii este maximă în cazul epidemiilor, abordate în cultura tradițională tot la nivel ritual. De altfel, istoricii mentalităților includ reprezentările și formele rituale conexe păstrării sănătății într-un strat primar al mentalității colective, la fel ca tanaticul, parentalul sau genul, marcând devenirea umană de la societățile arhaice și până în modernitate<sup>9</sup>. Concluzia acestui fel de a vedea boala (ca un soi de paradox) îi aparține lui Marc Augé: „la maladie est à la fois la plus individuelle et la plus sociale des choses”<sup>10</sup>.

Satul românesc abordează boala – ciuma, în cazul nostru – în acest context ritual: așa cum de strigoi *te fereai cum puteai... da ne mai știam unu pă altu și ne mai feream!*<sup>11</sup>, țăranul satului tradițional a instituit o serie de zile ținute pentru ciumă și un sfânt protector – Sfântul Haralambie, toate în speranța unei anihilări magico-rituale oarecum preventive, profilactice, pe principiul că e mai bine ca ciuma să fie îmbunată, ținută și respectată sau

<sup>8</sup> Marc Augé, „L'Anthropologie de la maladie”, in *Anthropologie, état des lieux / L'Homme. Revue Française d'anthropologie* (Paris: P. U. F., 1986), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Alphonse Dupront, „D'une histoire des mentalités”, in *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*, nr 3 / 1970, 397–403.

<sup>10</sup> Marc Augé, „Ordre biologique, ordre social; la maladie, forme élémentaire de l'événement”, in *Le sens du mal. Anthropologie, histoire, sociologie de la maladie* (Paris: U. F., 1994), 36.

<sup>11</sup> Iozařina Onica, Peceiu – Sălaj

chiar onorată prin zile de ne-muncă și de cugetare, decât să ajungă omul să se confrunte cu ea.

După acest tipar cultural este construită Sărbătoarea Sfântului Haralambie (10 februarie):

- se ține nu doar pentru ciumă, al cărei patron necontestat este Sfântul Haralambie, ci și pentru a feri pe om de toate bolile;
- se face agheasmă care se bea sau cu care se stropește toată gospodăria, mai ales vitele, să fie ferite de boli;
- se stropesc cu apă sfințită viile și pomii, varza să n-o mănânce omizile și păsările de curte, să nu le prindă boala;
- se duce colac la biserică: o parte din el este consumat de gospodar sau de familia lui, atunci când este bolnav, o altă parte se dă găinilor, să nu moară de boli;
- cu colivă sfințită se ung pomii, ca să fie sănătoși;
- coliva e bună și pentru refacerea sănătății celor cu friguri sau celor posedați de diavol.

Și pentru că „după credința poporului, epidemiile sunt trimise pe pământ, de sus, din cauza greșelilor noastre”<sup>12</sup>, Sfântul Haralambie este prin excelență o sărbătoare „ținută” pentru sănătate, dat fiind faptul că Haralambie este personajul care a învins cea mai cumplită boală, ciuma. El este cel care o ține în lanț, adică, simbolic, joacă rolul unui terapeut virtual, care deține controlul asupra raporturilor individului cu boala, așa cum sugerează, de altfel, iconografia bogată.

Și mai bine centrată pe subiect este Vinerea Ciumei (prima vineri după Crăciun):

- se fac colaci pentru ciumă, care-i sunt oferți de pomană;
- se pregătesc mâncăruri cu mult ulei, pentru a unge călcâiele babei, astfel încât ea să meargă cât mai departe, fără a poposi în sat;
- se dă și băutură de pomană pentru ciumă, iar uneori se zicea: „pentru Mama Mușa, s-o ducă Dumnezeu în treaba ei, la copiii ei”;

În unele zone regăsim și Atanasia ciumelor sau Tănasea ciumii (18 ianuarie):

- se ține pentru a apăra vitele de ciumă;
- se fac hramuri și mormane, pentru a ocoli ciuma după ele;
- dacă se îmbolnăvește cineva în această zi, trebuie afumat cu buruieni speciale („ciumatură”);

<sup>12</sup> Ion Chelcea, „Îndepărtarea magică a ciumei din satele ardeleni”, *Societatea de mâine*, nr. 3, an XIV (1937), 102.

- se ține mai ales pentru bubă rea sau pentru bube la picioare („trântituri”);
- apăra de amețeli;
- cine nu se va spăla în această zi pe cap, va fi tot anul bolnăvicios.

În fine, unele comunități cunosc o reiterare preventivă, profilactică, a scenariului ritual, asociată fie unei zile nefaste, 21 noiembrie, când calendarul amintește de Filip cel Șchiop, un personaj malefic, fie unei zile faste – 10 februarie, ziua Sfântului Haralambie, cel care acționează decisiv asupra Ciumei, Holerei și Morții.

Cert este că, pentru orice epocă, epidemiile au generat mari destructurări sociale, dar, în egală măsură, au lăsat urme și în sensibilitatea colectivă, la nivelul unui sentiment global: frica. Frica de moarte și de reapariția bolii, frica în fața destinului, sentimentul neputinței statului și Bisericii deopotrivă, disperare în fața flagelului, resemnare în fața fatalității, apelul la structuri de contracarare magico-rituale (astfel încât niciodată imaginarul colectiv nu este mai populat de diavol, ființe malefice, personaje satanice dar și de sfinți tămăduitori, figuri mistice, poțiuni magice, vrăjitoare, ca în timpul epidemiilor)<sup>13</sup> dar și frica organică, dusă până la paroxism – de exemplu credința larg întâlnită a interdicției pronunțării numelui, cu speranța că atunci răul nu va acționa, de unde și frica de a înfrunța concret boala<sup>14</sup>.

Toate zonele au fost lovite, pe rând de ciumă (ulterior și de holeră). De exemplu, ținuturile care alcătuiesc acum Sălajul au trecut prin mai multe valuri de ciumă și holeră, la nivel de epidemii distrugătoare, potrivit documentelor de arhivă<sup>15</sup>. „Cauzele obiective” ale ciumei sunt redată într-un articol de la 1872 de George Barițiu: „cele mai mari necurății de care este dominată populațiunea..., în cele mai multe ținuturi apa de beutu se află numai în lacuri și bălți adesea împutite și pline de spurcăciuni pe care le aruncă oamenii întresele (...) când treci pe unele strate strâmte ale orasiloru sasesci, unguresci, gallitiane, românesci și esci silitu a te tiene de nasu, ați opri respirațiunea și a o tuli la fugă; cându dei uneori chiaru în stratele mai mari preste cani morți și mâție aruncate în cale, când vedi în unele orașie gruietiele de gunoiu adunatu și pusu tocma în midiulocu, seu celu multu de margine, ba tocma și de înaintea promenadei publice, cândi vedi pe jupaneasa Rozsi seu pe lele Maria cu perulu sburlitu, velvoiu, nepeptenatu dein

<sup>13</sup> Gerard Fabre, *La Peste en l'absence de Dieu. Image votives et representation du mal lors de la pest provençalede 1720*, (Paris: Archives des sciences sociales des religions, 1991), 155–158.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Delumeau, *Frica în Occident (secolele XIV-XVIII). O cetate asediată*, vol. I (București: Editura Meridiane, 1986), 185.

<sup>15</sup> Florin Ioan Chiș, „Despre epidemii și atitudini sociale în ținuturile sălăjene”, *Caiete Silvane*, 183 (aprilie 2020), 2–6.

dumineca trecuta, era rochia ei ca și cum ar fi ștersu vatra cu ea, cându ceri un castron (blidu), farfuria (taleru), ola, lingura și ți le da nespălate...”; unul din „criteriulu celu mai siguru alu gradului de cultura la oricare poporu este consumarea de săpunu”, „curăția fiind în cele mai multe cazuri este identică cu sănătatea”<sup>16</sup>.

În satul tradițional, orice boală gravă, la oameni sau animale, cu efecte colective / comunitare (pandemice, am zice azi), era asociată ciumei, maladia care a decimat Europa medievală. „Ciuma este privită drept o „calamitate publică”. Sătenii recurg la o practică de multă vreme experimentată și nici una, nici alta, fac cămașa ciumei<sup>17</sup>, ne reamintește o însemnare de la 1933.

Ciuma a fost cel mai adesea asociată în imaginarul colectiv unei femei (femeia este cea care a făcut pactul cu diavolul); deci ciuma este o apariție feminină, la fel ca moartea, și la fel ca vrăjitoarea iar pentru înfrângerea ei este nevoie de demararea unui proiect colectiv de anihilare, cu valențe terapeutice.

Concret, extensiile terapeutice cuprind întreaga comunitate în cazul unui obicei atestat până nu demult în satele din Sălaj, ridicând astfel omnitrapia la nivelul unei practici magice cu repercusiuni în viața socială și economică a întregului grup, marcând chiar coordonatele demografiei comunitare. Ne referim la stoparea epidemiilor la oameni și animale prin expunerea la hotare a *cămășii ciumei*. Așa cum aminteam, performarea actului magico-terapeutic comunitar pornește din activarea unor cadre ale mentalității de tip arhaic, generatoarea unui imaginar productiv pentru situațiile critice, cum este cel a bolii; în context, se considera că ciuma era:

*„...O femeie urâtă și bătrână, care aducea moartea și boala. Ea avea o cămașă care-i acoperea tot corpul, că era tare păroasă, ziceau oamenii, și când i se strica cămașa, atunci intra în sat și aducea cu ea boala, de-aia îi țeseau cămașă și i-o lăsau la hotar, să nu mai intre în sat.”<sup>18</sup>*

*„Ioi Doamne, ciuma era atâta de hâdă, dă Doamne feri! Era urâtă ca moartea!”<sup>19</sup>*

Boală temută, unanim personificată macabru – portretul promovat de culegerea de folclor medical a lui Candrea a rămas unul de referință: „cap ca de om, coarne ca de bou, și coadă ca de șarpe, în vârful căreia se află

<sup>16</sup> Cf. ziarul *Transilvania*, anul V, nr. 16/1872, 196 și anul VI, nr. 1 (1873), 4–5, 86.

<sup>17</sup> Ion Chelcea, „Îndepărtarea magică a ciumei din satele ardelenne”, 101.

<sup>18</sup> Cozma Sâmpetrean, Hida – Sălaj.

<sup>19</sup> Veronica Chiș, Fizeș – Sălaj.

un ghimpe mare, cu care înghimpă oamenii și-i umple de boală<sup>20</sup> – ciuma a canalizat atenția vindecătorilor din lumea satului către remedii urgente, imperioase și drastice, în conformitate cu dimensiunile sociale ale ravagiilor.

De partea cealaltă, avem femeile ierate care confecționează efectiv cămașa. Femeile care descântă, descântătoarele, la fel cu cele care lucrează la *cămașa ciumii*, la făcutul prescurii sau la o serie de întreprinderi magice sunt, de cele mai multe ori, femei *iertate*, adică femei curate, trecute de faza de tinerețe și fertilitate a vieții, care se supun benevol anumitor abțințe sexuale, actul sexual fiind resimțit deseori în spațiul tradițional ca generator de impuritate. Practic, este vorba despre femei care au parcurs toate stadiile feminității și care au un statut absolut special, aproape șamanic, aproape supranatural.

Un amănunt interesant în această ordine de idei: în unele variante, cămașa ciumei este dusă către hotar de cea mai bătrână femeie din sat, goală! însă nuditatea sa este una rituală, astfel încât o urmează toată comunitatea, fără însă a fi uimită sau deranjată de goliciunea bătrânei. Discutăm aici de tabu-uri care vizează viața sexuală a femeii implicată în procese care ar putea-o relaționa direct cu instanțe supranaturale: la *cămașa ciumii* nu lucrau decât femei *iertate*, menopauza fiind garanția unei naturale stări de curățenie rituală, la fel ca la făcutul prescurilor pentru biserică; descântătoarele erau, de cel mai multe ori, femei bătrâne, *iertate de Dumnezeu*, care, puteau aspira, de asemenea, la o puritate rituală imperios necesară acumulării aceluși plus de putere chemat să învingă, cu ajutor ceresc, boala.

Amănuntul asupra căruia se revine obsesiv în toate descrierile și care face să crească suspansul scenariului ritual, asigurând dozarea tensiunii, cu creșterea sa la cote maxime, este graba. Intervalul temporal este unul extrem de redus: o singură zi! „Atunci când pătrunde în Țara Românească vreo boală molipsitoare, se adună un număr anumit de femei și acestea în timp de douăzecișipatru de ore torc, țes și cos o cămașe de cânepă și apoi o ard în mijlocul unei curți și cred că în felul acesta odată cu cămașa a fost nimicită și ciuma<sup>21</sup>, spune o referință apreciabilă ca vechime. Condensarea timpului este încă o condiție specifică magiei și vrăjitoriei, pentru că tot ceea ce este (aproape) imposibil de realizat, primește, dintr-odată, semele fantasticului, miraculosului, supranaturalului.

În unele variante, temporalitatea condensată este explicit marcată magic:

<sup>20</sup> I.-A. Candrea, *Folclorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 1999), 162.

<sup>21</sup> Maria Holban, *Călători străini despre Țările Române* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1983), 378.

cămașa se face marțea, adică în acea zi în care, de teama Marțolei, femeile nu lucrau cu pânza, iar confecționarea cămășii într-o zi „sterilă”, nefastă, lipsită de cele mai vizibile attribute ale cotidianului feminin, orientează către finalitatea dorită a actului: sterilitatea ciumei.

Sincretismul magico-religios este maxim la nivelul performării acestui tip de act terapeutic. Geneza și scheletul actului sunt conforme principiilor magiei terapeutice, dar elementele de religie fac din proces unul de sinteză, caracteristic pentru pietatea populară, așa cum este ea definită de plaja largă a religiei populare. În unele sate, tot satul participă la ducerea cămășii în hotar iar micile amănunte ale procedurii terapeutice ce angrenează în derularea sa întreaga comunitate – argumentând ideea de norod ce merge la hotare întocmai ca la sfințirea acestora de Rusalii – denotă implicația maximă a *insider*-ilor în rezolvarea cazurilor de dezechilibre care afectează întreaga comunitate, dar și apelul la remedii compozite.

Participarea colectivă la ceea ce psihoterapia modernă ar numi terapie de grup este perfect explicabilă în condițiile în care ciurma a reprezentat, mai bine de un mileniu, cel mai cumplit flagel care a dezechilibrat lumea. De aici pornește și productivitatea maximă a imaginarului colectiv referitor la ravagiile acestei cumplite maladii, precum și varietatea terapierilor adiacente. Cele mai multe dintre mărturisirile citate în culegerile de folclor vorbesc despre un triptic fatal: Ciurma, Holera și Moartea, toate trei femei urâte, babe, viclene, mereu decise să atragă oamenii nevinovați în capcane fatale<sup>22</sup>.

Istoria orală consemnează terapii individuale, dar mai ales terapii colective, care merg progresiv, descriind un areal terapeutic masiv ritualizat; prima treaptă a acestui areal terapeutic este subordonată lingvisticii și are acoperire în capacitatea taumaturgică a verbului și în utilizarea eufemismelor verbale: la fel ca toate bolile, și ciurma are câteva denumiri politicoase, măgulitoare, care să-i potolească pornirile malefice (Maica Bătrână, Alba, Frumoasa, Maica Călătoarea).

Următoarele două trepte țin cont de nevoile unei ciume personificate, umanizate: alimentația și îmbrăcămintea; în ideea că ciurma înfometată și-ar putea potoli foamea cu victime umane sau animale, se încearcă substituția acestora cu oșpețe organizate la marginea satului, pentru ca ciurma nici măcar să nu intre în sat, sau, în cazuri mai modeste, i se scoate în hotar o măsuță cu un pahar de vin și o bucată de pâine; trebuie să menționăm că nu este o practică individualizatoare pentru această boală, pentru că, reîntorcându-ne la textele poetice ale descântecelor de boală, putem observa că toate bolile

<sup>22</sup> I.-A. Candrea, *Folclorul medical român comparat*, 152–153.

de care bolnavul este descântat sunt trimise cât mai departe de casa victimei, în locuri nelocuite unde li se oferă acestora ospete cu mese întinse; același resort stă și la baza pregătirii unei îmbrăcămînți adecvate: o cămașă albă, lucrată în condiții de excepție și în contexte condiționate de gravitatea bolii, de care ciurma să fie mulțumită; considerăm că asistăm aici la un început de personalizare a procedeelelor magice, pentru că, printre toate celelalte cămăși utilizate în diferite ocazii, există o cămașă specială care poartă numele sugestiv și restrictiv de *cămașa ciumei*.

Alungarea ciumei la hotare, izolarea și anihilarea ei prin mijloace specifice actului magic se apropie de o formulă de exorcism magico-religios. În aceeași ordine mentalitară trebuie văzute și procesiunile la moaște: istoria consemnează că la București au fost aduse, la 1 mai 1765, moaștele Sfântului Grigore Decapolitul, de la mănăstirea Bistrița, pentru a stăvili „năprasnica moarte a ciumei“. Procesiunea prin capitală și expunerea moaștelor este dublată de „rugăciuni pentru câștigarea blagosloveniei“, pentru stingerea focarelor din ciumă prin milostivirea lui Dumnezeu<sup>23</sup>, în aceeași sinteză de elemente magice și religioase.

Aceste observații determină receptarea procedeelelor de anihilare magico-religioasă a ciumei ca fiind acte de terapie colectivă, menite să anihileze dezechilibrele dintre o întreagă comunitate și o prezență malefică generatoare de boli și moarte, supradimensionând astfel ideea de terapie; așadar, aceasta este una dintre ipostazele care scot actul terapeutic din privat, pentru a-l plasa în social, în comunitar.

Într-un orizont antropomorfizat, rezolvarea este cea a însușirii unei cămăși simbolice; contactul corpului cu acest obiect de îmbrăcăminte pune în funcțiune resorturi ale procesului de similitudine magică, astfel încât piesa de îmbrăcăminte poate fi un centru de polarizare pentru performări magico-terapeutice. În simbolistica folclorică, unul dintre elementele de bază în asigurarea protecției corpului fizic și, deci, prin extensie, a individului în general, este tocmai cămașa. Piesă de îmbrăcăminte intim legată de corp, considerată chiar o a doua piele a omului, cămașa se aliniază perfect legii contiguității magice: farmecele, vrăjile și „aruncăturile“ direcționate asupra cămășii sunt, de fapt, transmise, prin contactul cămășii cu corpul, posesorului ei.

Cămașa se poate transforma într-o marca identitară pentru purtătorul ei, având chiar capacitatea de a-l substitui pe acesta. Astfel, în secvențele

<sup>23</sup> V. A. Urechia, „Codex Bandinus. Memoriu asupra scrierilor lui Bandinus de la 1646, urmat de text, însoțit de acte și documente“, *Analele Academiei Române, Memorii, Secția istorică*, tom XVI, 1893–1894 (1895).



terapeutice efectuate la hotare, prin *luarea urmei*, dacă bolnavul nu se poate deplasa, locul lui poate fi luat de propria-i cămașă. Obiectul de îmbrăcăminte aflat în contact direct și permanent cu trupul devine un „instrument eficace al magiei contagioase, efectuate în scopuri benefice sau malefice asupra purtătorului ei”<sup>24</sup>.

Interesant este și modul de expunere a cămășii, alături de o serie de ter-tipuri pentru ademenirea ciumei; dintr-o îndelungată practică a terenului, am înțeles că scenariul este unul general: în orice boală gravă – și subiecții fac referire clară la gravitatea bolii – cămașa care ține, în ordine magică, locul bolnavului (să nu uităm că prima din cele două legi fundamentale ale magiei, atât de plastic redată de James Frazer în „Creanga de Aur” este tocmai legea „parte pentru întreg”) este lăsată în hotar, fie pentru a fi luată de „Necuratu”, fie pentru a țintui boala între hotare, cu imposibilitatea acesteia de a mai intra în sat:

*„Da când era uomu tare rău beteag, atunci îl duce la holomburi, între hotară, și-i lua urma cea mare: îl culca pă spate pă pământ, și-i lua urma dânprejuru trupului. Uomu să scula și-i dăde o haină, on spăcel ori niște poale ori ceva, și le lăsa acolo, pă urma ce mare, în hotar, că zăceau că vine năcuratu că coată urmele cele rele, și ie haina uomului d-acolo și atunci ie pă iel și boala uomului.”*<sup>25</sup>

*„Da dacă beteagu îi tare rău, atunci să duce uomu la hotare, se așează pe spate și-i ieie urma mare. Altădată ieie numa haina beteagului, da haina pă care o avea câtă piele, kimeșe ori nădrajii. După ce era dăscântată, haina era părăsâtă acolo, în hotar, să rămână acolo răul, să să împoaște între hotară.”*<sup>26</sup>

În cazul particular al cămășii pregătite pentru ciumă, oamenii o duceau în hotar, într-un ceremonial care respecta toate coordonatele rețetei magice: de obicei o duceau bărbații, la miezul nopții, sub interdicția vorbitului, fără să se uite înapoi etc. Deznodământul era, citit, desigur, tot în cheie magică:

*„Apoi vinea ciuma și distrugea tot. Atunci îi făceau kimeșe, și o duceau între hotară, unde era cruce dă drum. Îi puneau acolo kimeșea, pă o măsuță, și-i mai lăsau și o bucată dă pâine și on păhar de vin.”*<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ivan Evseev, *Enciclopedia semnelor și simbolurilor religioase* (Timișoara: Editura Amarcord, 1999), 85.

<sup>25</sup> Dumitru Moisi, Valcău de Jos – Sălaj.

<sup>26</sup> Floare Țurcaș, Plesca – Sălaj.

<sup>27</sup> Alexandru Șerban, Meseșeni de Sus – Sălaj.

*„Când morea iosagu, făceau kimeșa ciумii. Ziua o făceau 12 femei și noaptea, 12 bărbați o duceau între hotară. O puneau pă on scaun, s-o vadă ciuma dă dăparte! Băsamă acolo la hotar vinea ciuma și o ieie, că n-o mai află pă când mărg să ducă scauănu d-acolo. Io îmi aduc aminte când o pus scauănu cu kimeșa pă meĵia dăntre Boian și Cizer, între hotară.”<sup>28</sup>*

*„După ce kimeșa e făcută de nouă muieri bătrâne și iertate, o duce-ntre hotară și o pune pă on scauăn. Ea să face atunci când moare iosagu în sat.”<sup>29</sup>*

Finalizarea cămășii într-o singură noapte conferă puteri magice nebănuite acestui obiect, dat fiind faptul că, în grila de decriptare magică arhetipală, condensarea unui proces într-o unitate minimală de timp presupune învestirea acestuia cu seme ale singularității și ale unei energii suplimentare.

Condiționarea temporală se leagă de cea actanțială: numărul magic de femei – uneori bătrâne, iertate, personajele care în mod normal performează actele magice, altele tinere, pure, lipsite de păcat – în fapt 3, 7, 9, 12, în funcție de zonă, face trecerea de la unicitatea cămășii care se țese într-o singură noapte la universalitatea protecției acesteia, care se răsfrânge asupra întregii comunități, pentru că, în anumite cazuri, consemnate de literatura etnografică, înainte de expunerea cămășii la hotare, prin ea trecea întregul sat, într-un demers de terapie individuală, decupată din cea generală, colectivă, comunitară.

Închiderea spațiului social prin mijloace magice avea o importanță covârșitoare pentru societățile rurale pentru că privea întreaga comunitate; tocmai de aceea, trecerea la acțiune se face în timpul cu potențialitatea magică cea mai mare, în cazul nostru – noaptea, prin asumarea unor interdicții magice de tipul vorbitului sau uitatului înapoi.

Judecând antropologic, cămașa devine vehicul magic consacrat și centru de polarizare ritual:

- este într-un continuu contact direct cu pielea, deci cu omul, și de aceea validează magia prin contagiune și similitudine: o cămașă care a avut contact cu un corp, preia întreaga „poveste” a celui corp și practic „devine” proprietarul său (deseori este considerată chiar o a doua piele a omului);

- este piesa de îmbrăcăminte care se poate amprenta genetic: se îmbibă facil în transpirație ori alte fluide corporale care conțin ADN ul purtătorului (medicina legală folosește transpirația ca sursă de ADN);

- este receptată ca un rezumat al vieții: în blesteme, soarta se întoarce prin întoarcerea cămășii pe dos;

<sup>28</sup> Ileana Crișan, Cizer – Sălaj.

<sup>29</sup> Valeria Moisi, Valcău de Jos – Sălaj.

– prin purtarea ei, beneficiarul poate fi luat în posesie simbolică: mirele va fi „stăpânit” de viitoarea soție, pentru că aceasta i-a cusut cămașa de mire;

– cămașa ține locul persoanei – experiment al magiei simpatetice (partea ține locul întregului); în secvențele terapeutice efectuate la hotare, prin luarea urmei, dacă bolnavul nu se poate deplasa, locul lui poate fi luat de propria-i cămașă;

– categoric, cea mai reprezentativă, elegantă, elaborată și personală piesă a costumului țărănesc, marca fashion a ținutei, deopotrivă în pret a porter (hainele de lucru, *purtărețe*) și haute couture (costumul de sărbătoare, *mândrețele*) – de aceea a generat punctul de vârf și în survival, și în revival, atunci când e vorba de mărci țărănești românești, sub forma iei.

În fine, praxisul magico-ritual (psihoterapeutic concret, detectabil în zeci și zeci de incursiuni în satul sălăjean post-tradițional (dar depozitar al memoriei colective preluată din satul tradițional) materializat în formule concrete: descântecel, vrăjile, farmecele, legările și dezlegările, blestemele, atestă faptul că toate se performează cu predilecție pe cămăși.

Facem din nou apel la cazul vrăjitoarei din Transcarpatia, Măria lui Holdiș – Apșa de Mijloc, Ucraina, așa cum l-am descris și în alte abordări: lelea Mărie, recunoscută ca fiind cea mai redutabilă vrăjitoare din Zacarpathia (Transcarpatia românească de dincolo de Tisa), descânta în mod obișnuit pe cămășile tinerilor plecați din sat la lucru în Rusia. Mamele lor le aduceau la vrăjitoare pentru descântat, în locul copiilor lor, mai ales vinerea, când era ziua de târg la Apșa („zi de bazar”, cum spun femeile); atunci femeile intrau pe la lelea Mărie a lui Holdiș și îi lăsau plasele cu hainele tinerilor, preponderent cămăși. Când am ajuns prima dată acolo, am fost, așadar, uimită că sub masa pe care își ținea ustensilele, baba avea o mulțime de plase, fiecare cu o hârtiuță cu proprietarul, pentru a nu le încurca...

O exploatare din perspectiva antropologiei culturale ne permite să aderăm la constatarea general-valabilă că în orice epocă și în orice spațiu cultural femeile au fost preocupate de aspect, de ținute, de costume, de eleganță, adică de modă, de fashion.

Pe de altă parte, cămașa nouă și frumoasă a ciumei conduce către ideea că nevoia unei noi cămăși poate fi citită nu doar ca o necesitate, ci și ca o cochetărie feminină, care plasează ciuma și cămașa ei, oarecum, folosind un limbaj contemporan, în zona fashion.

Detaliind, cochetăria tipic feminină era larg răspândită între fetele tinere din comunitatea rurală veche: cămașa țărănească feminină întrunește toate premisele pentru a fi „sexy”, mai ales prin jocul între „larg” și strâns”:

– croiala mânecii este o îmbinare de bucăți drepte cu bucăți încręțite, fie că e vorba de jocul altiței cu încręțul, fie de mâneca creață pe umăr, mărind cât se poate de mult umerii, pentru a-i contrasta cu talia;

– evidențierea pieptului, a sânilor, prin chiar „ascunderea” lor cochetă: exemplul cel mai potrivit se numește, de altfel, *kimeșe pă kept*;

– folosirea fodrei pe umăr, la îmbinarea mânecii cu fețele cămășii, ceea ce dădea senzația de înălțime și suplețe a fetei;

– îmbinarea cămășii la umeri era amplă, ca să contrasteze la maximum cu mijlocul;

– tăietura la gât era decentă, dar lăsa să se ghicească curbura sânilor;

– capătul cămășii este strâns pe talie cu barierele poalelor, așadar scoate în evidență talia: mai mult, impresia vizuală de cămașă pe talie e dată de întărirea acestei legături a ansamblului, prin sublinierea taliei de barta poalelor sau a zadiei: exemple pot fi *zadiile cu bocori* longitudinali și transversali, dar și barta cusută închingătorește pă fir;

– folosirea *bumbilor*, cromatica, măregele, augumentau cochetăria fetelor.

Urmarea acestor observații este mult-pomenitul „furat” al modelului de cămașă de sărbătoare și coaserea acesteia în secret, mai ales în cazul cămășii de Paști; se știe că fetele coseau în *habă* (șezătoare) orice altceva înafară de cămașa cea nouă care trebuia să fie gata pentru duminica Paștilor, urmând ca acest *spăcel* / *kimeșe* să fie făcut în secret, acasă, în singurătate, pentru a nu risca furarea modelului.

În final, exploatăm, așadar, un precept universal: bunăvoința oricărei femei poate fi cumpărată cu o haină frumoasă, la modă. Iar ca femeie (deserori bătrână și urâtă), ciuma va fi îmbunată (și convinsă să părăsească satul, ducând cu ea boala intrinsecă) cu o cămașă elegantă: asistăm la un exercițiu grotesc de fashion reiterat în satul tradițional de cămașa ciumii, ca obicei legat indisolubil de sectorul femininului.

În fapt, orice fashion are ceva ritual:

– atelierul de creație (în cazul nostru – o casă din marginea satului);

– designerul (aici e unul colectiv: cele 9 femei);

– modelul / manechinul (aici, chiar ciuma);

– etalarea pe catwalk (ieșirea în hotarul satului, cu cămașa etalată pe un băț).

Toate sunt secvențe ce configurează un casting specific actului ritual al creației, exclusiv feminin, în acest caz. Ne reamintim o informație mai veche (2002), dintr-o comunitate conservatoare sălăjeană, Plesca:

„io, când eram tânără, fată fecioară, am văzut kimeșea ciumii; am pândit din ocol femeile care u-o făceau: nouă muieri bătrâne făceau într-o sară kimeșe pântru ciumą și o puneau între hotară, că acolo să oprea ciuma la kimeșe, și o lua pă ia. Și când te duceai la hotar, numa vedeai că nu-i! Ciuma să îmbrăca cu iea, și fie frumoasă, no, și fie și ea în rând cu fetile, cu kimeșe faină, cosută!”<sup>30</sup>

Așadar, și ciuma vrea să fie cochetă, la fel ca Dochia, cunoscută în satele sălăjene ca *Ișdotea* sau *Ișdokia*; apelăm din nou la Gheorghe Șișeștean: „ca să scape de vreme rea, cea mai bătrână femeie din sat ia o blană de miel, care a fost curățată și tăbăcită și face o gaură pentru cap și două pentru mâini și cu acest cojoc se duce la Someș și-l pune pe apă, pe o bucată de scândură și cu o lumânare aprinsă și-l lasă să se ducă la Dochia să se îmbrace și ea și să se încălzească, trecând astfel vremea rea!”<sup>31</sup>

Așadar: industria modei, practică de agenți magici calificați, poate salva de la neantizare: Moartea / Ciuma este învinsă de Fashion, *quod erat demonstrandum*.

## ANEXE:

### Relatarea etnografului Ion Chelcea, comuna Feleac (lângă Cluj Napoca), 1936:

„Cum se face kimeșea ciumii?

În acest scop se adună în timp de noapte nouă femei. Dacă se poate în crucea nopții, la una din ele acasă, unde cu toate se desbracă în pielea goală și încep să lucreze care mai de care. Se observă aici o grabă. Cămașa, ce zic eu? Ritualul complex trebuie să se termine în câteva ore în această noapte. Una începe să melițe cânepa – alta urzește. Alta pune războiul și în sfârșit alta țese. Alta croiește cămașa, până când o dă gata. La urmă se iau toate femeile care au contribuit astfel la confecționarea cămășei, tot în aceeași noapte o duc această cămașă între hotară, departe de sat, unde o aruncă – și în chipul acesta, cred ei, locuitorii, că au scăpat sau scapă de ciumą.

În comuna Feleac, anul acesta<sup>32</sup>, a intrat ciuma în sat mai ales între porci, dar și între oameni. Sătenii s-au înțeles – pentru că în acest chip este avizată întreaga comunitate sătească. Ciuma este privită drept o „calamitate publică”. Sătenii recurg la o practică de multă vreme experimentată și nici una, nici

<sup>30</sup> Floare Țurcaș, Plesca – Sălaj

<sup>31</sup> Paulina Lazăr, Gâlgău pe Someș, citată de Gheorghe Șișeștean, „Dinamica timpului și spațiului social în comunitățile rurale din Sălaj”, *Acta Musei Porolissensis*, VIII (1984), 740.

<sup>32</sup> Este vorba de anul 1936, n.n.

alta, fac cămașa ciumei. Se strâng femeii în număr de nouă și: nevedesc, țes, torc. Furcile cu care țes, mi se spune, nu se țin normal, ci cu „talpa-n jos”. Dar în casa unde se pregătește cămașa ciumei, toate lucrurile stau, cum spun țăranii, „cu susa-n jos”. Mi se spune că femeile preferă o zi de lucru – Marțea – Marți noaptea. Se mai observă, astfel, că înafară de faptul că se întrunesc noaptea, că se adună în număr de nouă, că lucrează în pieile goale, acestea – după ce au aruncat numita cămașă între hotare, se întorc înapoi fără ca să se mai uite în urmă.

Locuitorul Radu Vasile din Feleac spune că mai demult s-a întâmplat că ciurma a intrat acasă la un gospodar, în casă, și că acesta, recunoscând-o, ar fi prins-o de mână, după care ar fi transportat-o, în același chip, precum fac femeile cu cămașa ciumei, între hotare. Asemănarea dintre ciurma însăși și cămașa ei este evidentă. Tota așa lucrurile se petrec și în Someș, și în Alba, și în Huedin (...).

La practica de mai sus țăranii noștri nu recurg decât atunci când văd că se îngroașă gluma; dacă ciurma nu iese afară din sat, „nici cum” după expresia lor. Ciurma așa dar intră și iese – la nevoie – poate fi scoasă afară din sat.”<sup>33</sup>

### **Relatarea lui Ioan Gavrian, Aghireș – Sălaj, (chestionat de Gheorghe Șișeștean), 1982:**

„Totul ține de viziunea arhaică, de sorginte magică: țăranii credeau că ciurma este o față acoperită cu păr pe tot corpul și atunci când i se strica cămașa se spunea că intra în sat și pe cine-l privea, acela murea.”<sup>34</sup>

„Obiceiul este prezent în toate zonele județului; atunci când era ciumă în sat, nouă femei bătrâne făceau cămașa ciumei. În ziua aceea, femeile nu vorbeau una cu cealaltă, nu mâncau nimic și nici nu beau apă. Seara, femeile torceau fuioru, urzeau cămașa, o țeseau, apoi o coseau și o duceau între hotare. Mai aduceau acolo un scaun și o masă, pentru a pune cămașa pe ea. În drum spre hotar, femeile nu se întorc și nu se uită înapoi. Dacă dimineața nu se afla cămașa pe masă, înseamnă că ciurma a plecat din sat, îmbrăcată în cămașa cea nouă.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Relatarea oferită de lelea Crișcă (Cristina Pop, n 1942) din Solona, 2019:**

„S-o făcut kimeșe pântru ciumă, io am auzit că s-o făcut la noi la Ciocmani.

<sup>33</sup> Ion Chelcea, „Îndepărtarea magică a ciumei din satele ardelenne”, 101.

<sup>34</sup> Ioan Gavrian, Aghireș – Sălaj, citat de Gheorghe Șișeștean, *Dinamica timpului și spațiului social în comunitățile rurale din Sălaj*, 744

<sup>35</sup> Ioan Gavrian, Aghireș – Sălaj, citat de Gheorghe Șișeștean, *Dinamica timpului și spațiului social*, 745

Nouă femei o fac aceie, noaptea. U-o tors noaptea, într-o sânghură noapte u-o tors, u-o urzât, u-o țasut și u-o cosut! Și o trimăs bărbații între hotare, să o lase la on pom neroditor, să o leje acolo de pomu ala neroditor, da să nu să uite înapoi!

Tătucu meu o mârș după ei și i-o pândit, că o fost copil atunci. O zâs să nu vorovească nici unu cu celălalt. O zâs atunci: – Ați avut mare noroc că ați făcut kimeșea ciумii că de nu, tăți mureați! Că opt sălașuri o scos atunci numa de la tătucu meu din casă, așe mulți o morit de ciумă!

Oaricând, când o fost tătucu meu copil, o fost ciумă în sat și numa din casă de la tătucu meu o morit opt într-o zi! Frați, surori, pruncii lor, că o fost ciумă în sat, moreau oaminii cu duiumu, numa să culcau oaminii și nu să mai scolau dimineața, moreau de ciумă și atunci când o dus așe, dă la vo patru căsi, așe, morții, o zâs femeile să facă kimeșe pântru ciумă.

Și o făcut-o într-o marți noaptea, că aceie așe să face, marți noaptea, așe spunea tătucu: – Pagubă că ați făcut kimeșea ciумii, că dacă nu, tăți mureați! Și așe le-o spus: – Oricine a strâga după voi, voi și nu vă uitați înapoi și și nu voroviți cu nimeni, nici între voi, ce să veniți acasă! Și tătucu mneu o fost în spatele lor, că o fost copkil și i-o pândit și el o povestit după aceie cum o fost.

Zâce că o găsit o răkită acolo cătă Bezded și acolo u-o lăsat, și dimineața nu o mai fost acolo, că u-o luat-o ciума și nu o mai morit după aceie oaminii în sat. Mare lucru o fost ala! O știut femeile alea de la mamile lor și le-o sfătuit și popa să facă ceva și nu mai moară în sat.

Să lăsa între hotară, că acolo umblă năcuratu. Nouă bărbați o mârș, nu o mârș mai puțini că s-o temut!

Io atunci am auzit ultima dată că s-o vorbit de kimeșea ciумii, când o fost tătucu meu copkil, că ne tăt povestea.”<sup>36</sup>

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# Grațian – Fairy Spirit, Film Character and Hero of Local Beliefs

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LAURA JIGA ILIESCU\*

**Abstract:** The article explores the fluid process of shaping the multiform portrait of a man who assumes the role his community assigned to him, namely to be a werewolf. We deal with a particular case recorded from the field and then re-shaped in an artistic documentary, which provide original narratives with new transmissions channels and, therefore, with a second life.

**Keywords:** werewolf, movie, belief narratives, truth and doubt, Carpathian Mountains.

The imaginary profile of the werewolf (Ro. *Pricolici*) is articulated on a paradigmatic complex of beliefs and practices that get syntactic coherence through the performance action of *telling the story* about the human who can metamorphosize in an animal. “In Izbuc, a village in the Apuseni Mountains, people believe that Grațian Florea (72 years in those time) is a werewolf (*pricolici de lup*)”. This is how the documentary directed by Thomas Ciulei in 1995<sup>1</sup> started, allowing the public to see and to listen to *a real werewolf*, also giving a frame to the local community’s voices to speak about *their* werewolf. I approach the film as an unconventional ethnologic field document, with its specific poietics, generic conventions, rigors, demands, destinations, that aren’t folklore *sensu stricto*, but that provide the original narratives with new transmissions channels and, therefore, with a second life<sup>2</sup>; as any ethnologic

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<sup>1</sup> The film *Grațian: The Real life of a Romanian Werewolf* won two important awards: The prize of the German Commission at the Festival of Duisburg (1995) and the prize „Joris Ivens” at the Cinéma du Réel Festival, Paris (1996). The movie is accessible on youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H508UPJiRCY>

<sup>2</sup> The term *second life of the folklore* refers to “outside the ‘system of communication’ which

document and as any artistic work it simultaneously enter into relation with other artefacts concerning similar beliefs and imaginary copus.

In the core of my article lies the particular situation in which the generic local *pricolici* is embodied by a familiar face or by the human face of the werewolf as the storyteller speaking on his behalf. The film delivers a group of *memorata* and *fabulata* handed down by nine local men and women. Each story reveals different details about the werewolf in his human and presumptively animal posture so that, in the end, there results a collective (but not necessarily consensual), multiform, multilingual and “diffuse”<sup>3</sup> portrait of the wolf-man.

The investigation concerns the process of constructing the (self) image of a werewolf at the interaction between his own philosophical and ontological quest, on one hand, and the religious and cultural code of the community, on the other hand. It results a multiform and subjective portrait of both Grațian and the community.

The typological profile of the werewolf, at a certain moment, represents a synthesis of its previous interrelated hypostases (functions and meanings), each of them configured (and re-configured) in line with successive and also simultaneous ideologies and concepts, expectations, needs and ways of viewing the relation between human and non-human (animal and supernatural, as well) nature, between body and soul, from the very old times to the contemporary ones. Undoubtedly, we speak about a layered and dynamic entity which cannot be described through a unique, frozen, and inflexible portrait.

The fact that we (the film audience) have *seen a werewolf* in the flesh – although obstructed by the screen and mediated by the film director’s and the cameraman’s eyes – didn’t make us more convinced of the *real* existence of those humans who metamorphose into animals (of course, the presumptive episode of transformation is not witnessed on the screen).

Each story teller, including the film maker, and his/her audience,

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maintains folklore in its original settings”. Lauri Harvilahti, “Textualising an Oral Epic – Mission Completed”, *Approaching Religion*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2014), 21.

<sup>3</sup> The term *diffuse tradition* was proposed by Henry H. Stahl meaning a sort of collective memory which is entirely shared by all members of a group, composed and recomposed from the certain fragments that each individual owns and put in practice in a certain time. Henry H. Stahl, *Eseuri critice despre cultura populară românească* (București: Minerva, 1983), 271. Otilia Hedeșan applied this concept when wrote about beliefs and characters of the popular mythology described by variants recorded from different story-tellers: “aproape întotdeauna ‘piesele’ (variantele, n.n.L.J.I.) nu se așează, una lângă alta, pentru a alcătui un tablou perfect, ci există zone de confundare și iradierii reciproce, apte, până la urmă, să conducă la sudarea variantelor”. Otilia Hedeșan, *Pentru o mitologie difuză* (Timișoara: Marineasa, 2000), 10.

evaluates the *truth* about the werewolf's reality at the inner level of individual private beliefs, and at the social one actuated during the story-telling performance event, as well. In both cases, the concrete presence of the werewolf forces people to re-interpret their inherited knowledge and tradition. In this regard, the *truth*, as an intrinsic part of the multi voiced portrait of each werewolf, has epistemological values articulated at the flexible junction between trust and doubt attitudes. In the case of an artistic documentary, the very convention of the genre towards verisimilitude, truth and fiction add a secondary level of the process mentioned above.

It is not my goal to exhaustively describe the legendary figure of the werewolf, as it was configured in the Romanian pre- and early modern tradition through oral, written and visual expressions, but to place Grațian within the un-personalized portrait of the generic werewolf. In other words, I will extract, from the entire corpus of data defining the werewolf (the werewolves), only those that might designate Grațian as being one of them.

## Terminology

The Romanian terms for werewolf are commutable, but not totally identical: *pricolici* (with the variant *tricolici*), *goglinte*, *strigoi* (this is an almost generic term for both living witch and a restless dead or revenant who may or may not take an animal shape), *vârcolac* (in the past, for Romanians, this term dominantly designated the supernatural entity who eats the sun and the moon. Currently, under the impact of cinematography – invariably, this is how the English ‘werewolf’ or the French ‘loup-garou’ are subtitled in Romanian – mass media and virtual blogs, *vârcolac* became the urban substitute for the obsolete and almost forgotten *pricolici*). As for our character, Grațian is called *pricolici* or, simply, *wolf*.

In the area of Apuseni Mountains, the collocation *vâlva lupilor* refers to the Master of the Wolves, a man able to communicate with wolves and to wield authority over them. Despite their partial isomorphism, *vâlva lupilor* should not be mistaken with The Shepherd of the Wolves, the saintly entity which commands the wolves and feeds them with miraculous bread or establishes what each of them can eat. Often, the quality of being master of the wolves – *vâlva lupilor* is combined with the ability and the power to take the shape of a huge wolf and to command the other wolves in this hypostasis, and not as a human<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> About the relation between werewolf and the Master of the Wolves, see Mirjam Mencej, “The

## Which is Gratian's nature, as werewolf?

I include the *pricolici* in the category of liminal beings placed in between humanity and animality. When thinking about a werewolf, we should not just mean a man or a woman who changes his/her form, but also a wolf which encloses or hides a human individual. In this regard, the wolf hypostases of a *pricolici* is distinct among other common wolves by anatomic marks: overlarge sizes, white or grey color, infirmity (very often in the Romanian folklore, the lame wolf under the command of the Master of Wolves is a werewolf). In the communities where a known werewolf is living, certain attributes of a wolf turn people's attention on **their** *pricolici* fellow: despite his wolfish shape, they recognize him. Here is the memorata delivered by one of Grațian's fellow villagers filmed by Thomas Ciulei: "One night, me and Marcu Sebiu were at the stall, with the cows. (...). Suddenly I saw two wolves – where did they appear from? I don't know – pouncing on the calves. Then Marcu shouted at them: 'Grați, is that you? Get out of there!' And then Marcu noticed that one of the wolves has... an abnormal... ass. And he said: 'this can only be Grați.'"

We might suspect a sort of mental strategy whose effectiveness is revealed when people face the dangerous situation of living in the same community with a werewolf: only if he remains a human in his substance (and not suddenly attack humans), people can accept to have a *pricolici* among them.

## Why and how Gratian became a *pricolici*?

There are two categories of werewolves: those who have been born like that, and those who became *pricolici* at some point in their life or after death.

The *pricolici* is the victim and also represents the divine punishment for his/her parents, because they have violated religious or social laws: the new born child is marked by impurity, being characterized by an inferior human, or even a devilish condition (see above). Speaking about himself, Grațian said: "*Do you know what the Jesus Christ Gospel says? To one man Lord God gave one piece of gold. To the second one, He gave two pieces. And to a third, He gave five. I mean that to the smallest of them, He gave only one piece. I*

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Christian and Pre-Christian conception of the Master of the Wolves", *EthnoAnthropoZoom*, 5, no 2 (2005), 278, doi: 10.37620/EAZ0550239m

Romanian legends about the wolves's shepherd (Ro. *păstorul lupilor*) usually assign St. Peter (actually known as St. Peter of the wolves) in this role. Less often the role is fulfilled by St. Andrew.

*mean there are three kinds of people on this earth: the one who has five pieces is super-human; the one with two pieces is human; and the one with one piece is infra-human, you know? Well, I was one of those with only one piece of gold. Infra-human.*<sup>5</sup>

In Grațian's case, there are two folk "explanations" of his condition: one, delivered by the community, asserting that he is a predestined werewolf; the other one, delivered by himself and supported by some voices in the community, stresses his polluted condition, but without an explicit suggestion that he might be a *pricolici*.

Here is the first one, narrated by a man: ...for example, we refer to Grațian: people say that when his mother, the priest's wife gave birth to him, the sack didn't break open. The midwife meant him to be learned, to be good working, even to be a thief, singer, anything. But it ripped only when she meant him to be a werewolf. Then his head came out and he was born.

The motif of the new born child who directly – he refuses to emerge, he cries in his mother's womb – or indirectly (through the midwife mediation) – chose his destiny is well known in the Romanian folklore and almost generally the choice will place the new born in a marginal position of common society, but with a major importance revealed in the supernatural realm: he (dominantly the motif is assigned to a boy) will be a charmed thief, a wanderer for immortality, a werewolf. In this regard, Grațian embodies the metaphysical anxieties of the community regarding the relation between predestination and free agency.

The second version is expressed by Gratian himself: "*My parents have cursed me, you know? My parents were evil, both of them. And the parents' curse was efficient; it came on me.*" and by an old lady in the village (probably a nun), as well: "I don't know if there is any salvation for him. All this comes from his mother. She's also punished in the other world. Because of that curse. His mother, yes. Because this body dies, but the soul doesn't".

It should be noted that, according to Romanian folk beliefs, the parents' curse against their child is totally efficient and without any possibility to be counteracted. Thus, the narratives about Grațian as victim of his parents' curse not only legitimize him as a marginal man, but have a strong warning function, as well.

Concerning their role in the community, werewolves act as guardians of the divine will: their aggressions point to people who do not observe

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<sup>5</sup> I transcribed Grațian words in italics characters, in order to distinguish him by his fellows. All other quotations taken from the movie are edited with straight letters.

religious holidays or who break hospitality and charity laws. The wolf-man interventions look like ritual punishments, hence the fear of werewolf is also a fear caused by the divine law transgression. Only sporadically the vigilante attacks are against human beings, mostly the victims are people's cattle. Consequently, the werewolves protect the flocks whose owners obey the religious laws. "People are afraid to refuse him [Grațian], so they give him this or that: candles, newspapers, milk, sugar... Basic stuff. Those who had refused Grați, after one day or two, had some troubles with their animals. They were eaten by wolves", asserted the teacher in the villages where Grațian begs for different food, clothes and other stuff.

The social marginalization of the *pricolici* turns to a central place in the imaginary of the communities they live in. For the last example, we notice how fear is used for constructing verisimilitude in regard to Grațian's werewolf's nature. On the contrary, other voices – more doubtful – pointed that he exploits people's fear in order to get everything he begs for.

At his turn, the priest expresses the Christian view over the presence of Grațian in the community as a divine instrument for people salvation: "The fact that Grațian became a beggar, here, in our two villages, I consider as God's benevolence for the people. Because through his gesture... I mean that although he could live with his brother and to have a more comfortable life, he prefers to live in his shack, isolated like a hermit, and to beg, so that through the good and mercy people who take pity on him, they shall be rewarded by God, when He calls them to account."

## Knowledge

First of all, the *pricolici* is assigned with a supernatural power, which remains obscure and impenetrable for common people. In emic language of Romanians, the expression *he/she knows something* points to a person which is suspected to be a charmer, owner of a certain knowledge that recommends him/her as specialists of sacredness.

With regard to Grațian, none of his fellow villagers (at least none of those who have been shot by the film camera) assigned him any high literate education. Neither himself does:

"...my brothers could learn at school and went to school and became gentlemen. But I couldn't. So, I remained at home."

Still, he wasn't illiterate. The manner he expresses himself, the vocabulary, the special interest in counting and speculating about numbers and infinity, witness to a certain propensity for reflexivity and the practice of reading.



He was an autodidact, mysterious in the eyes of his fellow villagers. Here's just one example: *“Do you know what the sextillion is? No? I am going to tell you the numbers that go up to the sextillion; even those that are bigger than the sextillion. (...) Then the million, the billion, the trillion... you know? (...) vintilion.”*

He invents words for the big numbers. It's interesting to note that *vintilion* probably comes from *vingt*, the French word for twenty. *“And the cinclon. This number is a huge number. Has up to a hundred of zeroes after the one. And they went as far as 200 sextillion km...in their astronomical distance and observations.”*

Anyhow, the main point does not consist of a high scholarly education, but of the possession of a peculiar knowledge, which distinguishes him from common people, and which, at the imaginary level, also entrusts Grațian with supernatural power that empowers him with the art of transfiguration.

Grațian's self-image expresses a certain sense of superiority over other humans, derived from his knowledge gained through what he considered learned self-education, that replaces his inferior status (*I am an infra-human*) with a haughty one. *“I will be mentioned among the greatest scientist of the world... after I would have discovered this infinity. (...). And after I will be able to answer to all the questions somebody would ask me: what is life, what is spirit, soul..., everything.”*

Grațian interrogation concerns his direct ontological relation with God in terms of existence and potentiality: exactly his inferior (pre)condition represents the chance to *become* and to progress. So, the sense of superiority is not directed towards his human fellows, but to the perfect (and immutable) God.

*“Well, I will become equal with God. By essence, not by nature. But morally I shall surpass Him. My superiority over God reveals itself in the fact that I am not changeless, as God expresses Himself, but I am reversal, from evil to good. From the moral regress to the moral progress. From evil to good (...). That's why I will be superior to God. Morally speaking (...). Then people will say: Grațian is mighty and strong. Then I'll be somebody! Maybe in 10 years from now.”*

## Initiation

There isn't any account about Grațian's initiation, neither told by himself or by other people. Although the memory of one of his younger fellow villagers shows that he was interested in transferring his role. *“One day, we were alone [this is a special condition to transmit charming knowledge,*

L.J.I.], it happened to be just him and me (...) and Grați told me: ‘Wouldn’t you like to take over my job?’ ‘Oh, no, I replied. I am young, you are an old man, it doesn’t suit me, it’s not for me.’ ‘You get to be like me, he said, a wolf’ (...).’ In fact, some beliefs recorded in Western Romania asserted that the *pricolici* must reveal their secret before dying, otherwise “the soul cannot get out of the body”<sup>6</sup>.

## Journeys

The wolf represents a multivalent figure in the traditions and beliefs of Romanians (and not only), where one of its functions is to guide the human’s soul during its travel after death. Its quality of being an agent of journeys to the other worlds is assumed by the werewolf, too. In this regard, the *pricolici*’s ceaseless wanderings – as Gratian is shown in the movie and, according to what Tomas Ciulei told me in a personal conversation, as people believe that Gratian cover kilometers walking – might be the visible sign of the mystic access to spaces than are invisible and forbidden for profane people. In his original and philosophic manner, Grațian pointed to the cosmic space as a means for gaining access to infinity.

*“Light travels at the speed of 300 000 km/s. This means that during one year, it travels ten trillion km. So, to get to a sextillion kilometers, it takes a billion light years. And to get to 200 sextillions km, you need 10 billion years. Yes. (...) This life in the world is temporarily. And then follows the other life, the spiritual one, which is eternal. Will live as long as God, becoming the giants of the time (...). To the infinity. This is why it’s good to know these astronomical numbers, whose core is infinitely high: millions, billions, and so on, which in time might grow to the infinity.*

*The existence of the soul is proved by the fact that humans have dreams.”*

These words might be interpreted as a subtle suggestion to the idea that dreams are images perceived by the soul during its journey within altered realms. In the narratives about Gratian, the mystic travels are translated as communication with his dead parents: “I suddenly heard him talking. I look over there and see an owl in a beech tree. It resembled as an owl, but her size was too big. I didn’t go there, but I kept listening, but I didn’t understand any word. So, after he finished talking (...) I went after him and say:

<sup>6</sup> Ion Mușlea and Ovidiu Bîrlea, *Tipologia Folclorului din răspunsurile la Chestionarele B. P. Hasdeu*, Cu un cuvânt înainte de Ion Taloș, Ediția a doua revăzută și întregită de Ioan. I. Mușlea (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2010), 225.

‘Grațian, what, or who were you talking to?’ ‘To my mother’, he said. ‘Well, where was your mother?’ I asked him. ‘Didn’t you see that big owl? That was my mother.’ ‘What did you two talk about?’ ‘I don’t, know’, he said. He didn’t want to say and went off. I stood there stunned.”

## Conclusions

When supernatural is embodied by a certain person with a familiar face, the numinousness becomes palpable and, in the case of a violent expression of sacredness as the werewolf might be, uncontrolled scare might be replaced by a range of feelings including restrained fear mixed with attraction, admiration, repulsion, desire to understand an *Otherness* that belongs both to the wild forest and to *our* community; or, in metaphoric terms, to our pack.

Apart from other human agents of sacred mediation, the werewolves fulfilled this role in their animal hypostases, a hypostasis derived from a polluted birth or from ulterior magic curses and rituals, in any case hypostases marked by impurity, which confer them an inferior condition. In Grațian’s words, they are infra-humans. So, we may speak about sacred persons, but with an ambiguous sacredness. Either in terms of salvation or in terms of justice, the werewolf embodies individual and collective fear. In other words, they represent the externalization of anxiety that, once receiving a familiar face, becomes bearable and sane.

Werewolf might be understood as a *homo sacer*, a functional concept which encompasses both the sense of the consecrated and that of the cursed (but not devilish!), of violence and indefensibility, of inclusion and exclusion. “Divine violence ... is put in relation with the state of exception. Sovereign violence opens a zone of indistinction between law and nature, outside and inside, violence and law”<sup>7</sup>. Once again, the question of the werewolf gets theological and metaphysical gravity.

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<sup>7</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer. Sovereign power and bare life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazer (Stanford: Stanford Publication, 1998), 41.

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# Witchcraft Images in Popular Beliefs, Literature and Art of Medieval and Modern Ethiopian Culture

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**Abstract:** Elements of magic used in everyday life have always occupied one of the central places in Ethiopian culture. The most widespread practice consists in wearing or keeping inside dwellings amulets in form of scrolls (called magic or protective), made of parchment. The amulet usually contains different kind of prayers, extracts from the Saint Scriptures and sometimes (in case the amulet was fabricated for a woman) the legend of St. Sisynnios and new-born babies' killer witch. The scrolls were decorated by schematic magical images and iconographical Christian elements. The St. Sisynnios legend is an integral part of both Christian and popular Ethiopian traditions. It is known to exist in Ge'ez (the classical Ethiopic) language and constitutes a part of the corpus of texts included in scrolls. There are two versions of the vita of St. Sisynnios in the official Church literature. The shorter one is found in the Synaxarion, whereas the longer one is included in a corpus of hagiographical compilations *The Lives of the Martyrs*. St. Sisynnios' legend plot was rarely included in the artistic decoration of both amulets and canonical books. However, the text is widespread elsewhere. The way of realization of images of magical character and, especially, of the St. Sisynnios and the witch inside the amulets is relatively rude (specific for Ethiopian art), mostly due to the grade of artist's abilities and to the fact that they were not widespread, in contrast to other images used in Church books. In this paper, we make an attempt of general classifications.

**Keywords:** Ethiopian manuscripts, magic scrolls, female evil force, witches, St. Sisynnios, hagiography, Ethiopian Church.

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The elements of magic used in everyday life used to occupy one of the central places in Ethiopian culture. Magic in Ethiopia exists on the border of religion and traditional medicine (in absence of other kinds of medicine until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century). Despite the fact that, along with white magic aimed at protecting against demons, black magic also existed, the latter is not frequently attested<sup>1</sup>. Samples of traditional Christian fine art along with religious and frankly magical texts<sup>2</sup> are an integral part of the local folklore<sup>3</sup>.

Magical texts were mostly written on parchment strips that usually were rolled in a tube (scroll)<sup>4</sup>. Texts of this kind can also be found in codex books inserted in spaces left unoccupied by the main text. Sometimes the scroll was inserted in a leather case and (rarely) shaped not as a tube, but as a harmonic. Previously, such scrolls were called magical among researchers. Currently, there is a tendency to consider this formulation incorrect, and scrolls containing texts and miniatures of magical content to be called protective scrolls or scrolls-charms, based on their main purpose – healing. The Ethiopians call them *kətab*, just scroll, but the word means both a scroll and an amulet.

People believed that the cause of the illness or a decease were the demons or evil forces that took possession of the sick, and tried to defend themselves by any means possible<sup>5</sup>. The best instruments of prevention and acceleration of recovery were considered amulets. For this purpose, the amulet contained prayers against certain spirits, sometimes excerpts from the Holy Scriptures, and it was obligatory decorated with special miniatures. The texts were inserted into the scroll one after another, often with no separation. As

<sup>1</sup> Black magic was not usually included in the Ethiopian books (manuscripts with recordings of conspiracies bordering on black magic are extremely rare). One example is conserved in Wellcome library in London (Eth. 17). A manuscript book of a modest size contains 93 folios filled with numerous texts of any kind of magical prayers, calculations and ways of prediction, such as knowledge about the diseases that are not fatal, calculations of the illnesses that can happen or not happen to you, prescriptions for a sterile woman and numerous spells (written in different script and probably different time). A kind of handbook of a magician that are quite rare.

<sup>2</sup> Déborah Lifchitz, *Textes éthiopiens magicoreligieux* (Université de Paris. Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'ethnologie, 38, Paris, 1940).

<sup>3</sup> Magicians and associated practices as keeping the scrolls in houses still exist in Ethiopia.

<sup>4</sup> Less commonly, scrolls (and books in codex shape) were made on a paper basis, probably due to the belief in the protective function of the traditionally used material (and partly because of lack of paper in the country and high grade of degradability of it).

<sup>5</sup> Bogdan Burtea, "Demons", in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed Siegbert Uhlig, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 130–132.

a result it is often possible to visually distinguish the beginning of a new text only if red ink is used for the first lines or words, in contrast to handwritten compilations in books in which a new text starts from the next page or texts are separated by an ornamental design or a series of dots (red and black). To prevent a disease, small scrolls were worn on a lace around the neck; larger ones were hung on the wall inside the house, usually in a folded form. Sometimes they were sewn inside the clothes.

Previously, the entire population of Ethiopia, including the nobles and the emperor himself, applied to traditional medicine in case of illness (in absence of medical institutions in general in the country until the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. This kind of medicine was certainly on the border of Christian tradition and magic.

The manufacture of such amulets, as, indeed, manuscripts in general, was performed by the people who studied at least in some grades of traditional schools (otherwise they were illiterate). The system of traditional church education, which remained the only form of systematic instruction in Ethiopia until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, implied many years of multi-stage preparation. Ethiopian scribes came out of this environment. Amulets could be made by priests and monks, as well as *dabtara*, a special category of people who, after graduating from such a school, formally remaining lay and participated in the liturgy as improvisational poets, singers and dancers.

The amulets were not intended for reading, mainly because the vast majority of the country's population was illiterate. The situation was aggravated by the fact that the only written language of Christian Ethiopia – *Ge'ez* – went out of use (as a spoken language) quite early<sup>7</sup>. The protective function of the amulet consisted in wearing it (as Christians do with a cross) or storing it in the dwelling (the physical presence is the main functional side of amulets, despite the fact that they contain texts). This is not surprising, given the high respect of the Ethiopians not so much

<sup>6</sup> The first medical structure appeared in Ethiopia as a consequence of the First Italian-Ethiopian war (1895–1896). As a result, there were a lot of wounded both among the Ethiopians and the Italians. King Menelik II (1889–1913) asked for help the Russian Empire, which Ethiopia had friendly relations with. The first sanitary squad was prepared by the Russian Red Cross Mission in 1896. In 1898 a stable hospital was opened in Ethiopia.

<sup>7</sup> *Gə'əz* or classical Ethiopic was spoken in the Aksumit kingdom and was the language of literature, court administration and liturgy, initially along with Greek. All the Christian books were translated in *Gə'əz* after the adoption of Christian faith as state religion in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. After the decline of the state about 8<sup>th</sup> century the language was driven out by popular Amharic, but remained an exclusive Church language (for Saint Scriptures and liturgy).



for the texts as for the manuscript books, the material embodiment of the Holy Scriptures.

An integral part of these scrolls were conspiracies and prayers. Scroll texts include both renounced literature and canonical texts, which in this case acquire a magical load. Among them there is The Legend of St. Sisynnios, the only text of legendary content found in Ethiopian magical literature. And the only text that sometimes is illustrated in the scrolls<sup>8</sup>. St. Syssinios is an equestrian Saint adopted by the Ethiopians from the Coptic Church tradition<sup>9</sup>. He is one of the equestrian Saints widely respected in Ethiopia even today. His vita is known in many medieval literary traditions<sup>10</sup>. The scrolls were commissioned both for men and women, however when written for women they were aimed to protect them from various female diseases especially those related to pregnancy and childbirth, including the womb bleeding. This connection appears to be clear since according to the Legend St. Sisynnios fought the witch, who used to kill new-born children by sucking out their blood and also to provoke dangerous womb bleeding of their mothers. The legend definitely developed from the Synnaxar vita of the Saint.

The vita of the Saint narrates that a certain man called Sisynnios lived in the city of Antioch at the time of the Roman Emperor Diocletian. He had to leave his native city; on his return he discovered that his sister gave birth to a girl, had subsequently killed the baby and sucked her blood. Later

<sup>8</sup> Here we mean not pictures of complex magical plot in general, but images connected to the plot of the legend (an analogue of modern illustrations).

<sup>9</sup> This fact is confirmed by the absolute identity of the Arabic and Ethiopic texts of the vita of the Saint. Comparison of Arabic and Ethiopian Synaxarion versions of the vita proved that they completely match. The text of the vita arrived in Ethiopia as a part of Coptic tradition and was then translated from Arabic language into *Gé'ez* and exist in short version (see Ethiopic version in: Gérard Colin, "Le Synaxaire ethiopien. Mois de Miyāzyā", *Patrologia Orientalis* 46, 4, No. 208 (1995), 98–101; the equal Arabic version: René Basset. "Le Synaxaire arabe jacobite (redaction copte). IV. Les mois de barmahat, barmoudah et bachons", *Patrologia Orientalis* 16 (1922), 336–338) and the extensive version, included in the collection of hagiographic texts known as *Gadla Sama'ətat* "Vitae of the martyrs" (see about the text and its characteristics Alessandro Bausi, "Gadla Sama'ətat", in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. Siegbert Uhlig, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 444–446). The main difference between them is that the long version includes a detailed description of all the tortures of the Saint.

<sup>10</sup> A detailed overview of the legend in different traditions has recently been realized by a group of authors, see: Андрей Л. Топорков et. al., *Сисиниева легенда в фольклорных и рукописных традициях Ближнего Востока, Балкан и Восточной Европы* [*St. Sisynnios Legend in Folklore and Manuscript Traditions of the Near East, Balkans and Eastern Europe*] (Moscow: Indrik, 2017).

she gave another birth but that time it was a male baby who did not look like humans. Being affected by these circumstances the Saint's sister started killing newborn children all over the country. The Saint who had to protect innocent Christians killed his witch sister as well as her child who appeared to be the Devil's son. Moreover, after that he had to kill even her husband who was apparently possessed by the evil spirit. The longer version of the *vita* provides the reader with some more significant details. According to it the Saint's father belonged to the people who constituted the close circle of the Emperor Diocletian. Sisynnios for some reasons was sent to the city of Nicomedia where he became a Christian. On his return to the city of Antioch he realized that his sister gave birth to a girl, then killed the baby and sucked off her blood<sup>11</sup>. She also became capable of taking form of birds and reptiles (a snake). After that, she gave birth to a boy who didn't look like humans. The Saint had to kill his witch sister, her child and her husband. After his father discovered what he had done he brought him before Diocletian requesting a punishment, which he deserved. Being a pagan king Diocletian invited Sisynnios to offer sacrifices to pagan gods, which appeared to be unsuccessful: the statues of the gods did break down as Sisynnios entered the sanctuary. In retaliation for that Sisynnios was severely tortured and finally killed. His soul was immediately ascended to the heavens with the help of the angels. Inside the amulets significant modifications occurred and the text lost some parts of the narration and on developed and extended others<sup>12</sup>. These changes significantly impede a reader to build up an idea about how did the narration of the legend look initially. On the basis of preserved versions of the text it became possible to select major textual segments inside the legend's narration. As a result, the following story was reconstructed.

A man called Sisynnios (later St. Sisynnios) gets married. His wife gives birth to one/two children. A witch called Wurzelya comes to the woman and kills the baby. Sisynnios hears the poor woman's crying and inquires her about the reasons. She tells what has happened to her and the Saint mounts his horse, takes the spear and leaves looking for the evil witch. On his way he meets an old lady and asks her, whether she did see Wurzelya. She replies that the witch in question lives in the forest/garden, which is in front of Sisynnios. The Saint enters the forest and finds Wurzelya laying under a tree being surrounded by "an army" of evil spirits. The Saint dismounts from

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<sup>11</sup> The same plot as in the short version, but with more details.

<sup>12</sup> There are no equal or even closely similar texts of the legend in the amulets that were attested and explored. Each text has some parts missing and some modified, written in a different way, often with small additions or mistakes.

his horse, kneels and prays the Almighty to grant him a victory over the witch to prevent her killing babies in the future. A voice from the Heaven allows him to do everything he wants with the witch. The Saint gets back on his horse, takes the sword in the right hand and pierces her side. The end of the story differs greatly from one manuscript to another. There are the versions as follows: a) Wurzelya is killed; b) Wurzelya is killed and she promises in the names of the Archangels to approach neither the houses where children are born, nor their mothers as well as the places where the prayer (legend) of St. Sisynnios is read (or inscribed); c) Although Wurzelya's side is pierced, she still does not die and promises not to kill newborn children and not to approach their mothers (see the version "b" as above); d) Wurzelya promises to go to the church and to become a good Christian. As a consequence, the Saint Sisynnios becomes the protector of the newborn children and women who give birth.

The variants of the narration mentioned above prevail with slight differences in the absolute majority of the manuscript scrolls, which contain the legend. It still remains not clear, when an oral tradition of the Legend was once written down<sup>13</sup>.

The Saint is represented in the fine art not as frequently as St. George with the dragon, for example, but he is the only to be presented killing a witch. And this Wurzelya is the only witch in magical and Christian fine art in Ethiopia. In the St. Petersburg collections of Ethiopian manuscripts, the image St. Sisynnios (roughly executed in color) is found in the code of Ef. 55, notated liturgical collection of the 18–19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Figure 1; in original the image is made upside down)<sup>14</sup>. The body of the witch is missing, only the head, which the Saint pierces with a spear, is realized. In the upper part of the miniature there is an inscription: "This is the image of St. Sisynnios", as well as pen samples. At the bottom the initial alphasyllabic sign of the name Wurzelya is present (*wa*; the name was not entirely written down).

Among the seven scrolls of the Wellcome Library<sup>15</sup> in which the legend

<sup>13</sup> Normally such literary genres initially existed in oral form. The evidences of different versions of the St. Sisynnios narration confirm that the legend passed through a long process of transformation both as an oral or written text. The analysis both of the original texts, as well as the secondary scholarly literature does not provide us with any idea about the actual nucleus of the St. Sisynnios legend. It could be both: either extended shorter narration or a longer one, which was subsequently shortened.

<sup>14</sup> Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, St. Petersburg, Russia. Ef. 55, fol. 2r.

<sup>15</sup> Wellcome Library (London) represents the richest collection of printed and manuscript books on the history of medicine in a broad sense, comprising subjects such as alchemy or witchcraft. The electronic catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts of this institution was made by

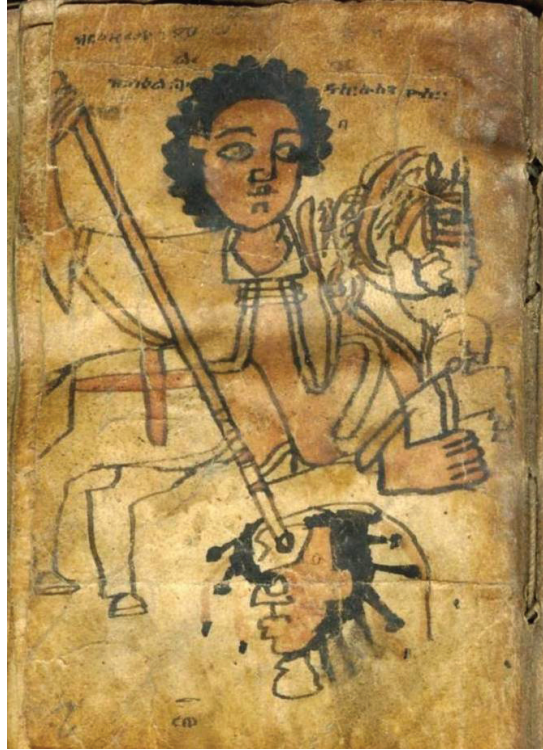


Figure 1: St. Sisynnios piercing the witch Wurzelya. Manuscript of liturgical collection of the 18–19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Ethiopia. Ef. 55 (Institute of Oriental Manuscripts RAS, St. Petersburg, Russia), fol. 2r.

is inscribed, only in one, Eth. 4<sup>16</sup>, dated 18<sup>th</sup> – the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there is a miniature depicting St. Sisynnios (Figure 2), while in all the scrolls of the collection (21) we find images of equestrian Saints only twice. A certain figure on the ground (so schematically executed that it is difficult to identify) is pierced with a spear. The Saint holds the second spear in his right hand<sup>17</sup>. In the background there is another horse. One can presumably (for lack of a signature in miniature) identify this Saint with Sisynnios.

the author of the present work in 2015 and is available in the internet side of Wellcome Institute (Ekaterina V. Gusarova, *Catalogue of Ethiopian manuscripts of the Wellcome Library* in <https://catalogue.wellcomelibrary.org/search~S12?/cWMS+Ethiopian+12/cwms+ethiopian+12/-3,-1,,E/browse>

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Strelcyn, “Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts of the Wellcome Institute of the History of medicine in London”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 35, No. 1 (1972), 30–31.

<sup>17</sup> Similarly, two spears are depicted in a miniature published by Jacques Mercier in his



Figure 2: St. Sisynnios piercing the witch Wurzelya. Protective scroll of the 18 – first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ethiopia. Eth. 4. Wellcome Library (London).

In the scroll Eth. 10<sup>18</sup> of the same collection there is another miniature with an equestrian Saint (Figure 3). From one point of view we cannot identify him as Sisynnios, because, firstly, the corresponding legend is not inscribed in the scroll, and secondly, he pierces with a spear something more like a beast, and not a witch in a human form. Probably (as usual) the artist was not skillful enough. He could realize traditional images and figures, but not the anatomy of human body, difficult to be depicted. On the other side, the “beast” does not seem a dragon or a snake. This excludes the identification of the Saint in the picture as St. George or St. Mercurios. Moreover, St. Mercurios was operating with a sword, not a spear. Much more likely that it is an unsuccessfully depicted Wurzelya, attacked by St. Sisynnios. The artist, not extremely skillful, but resourceful, realized several kinds of weapons in the bottom and the head of the beast more times cut. In two of the three

catalog: *Zauberrollen aus Äthiopien. Kultbilder Magischer Riten* (München-Prestel: The Museum for Africa Art, 1979), 169.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Strelcyn “Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts”, 35–36.





Figure 3: St. Sisynnios piercing the witch Wurzelya (?). Protective scroll of the 18 – first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ethiopia. Eth. 4. Wellcome Library (London).

examples (Figures 1, 3) Wurzelya is attacked not in her side, but in the head (or neck), that goes against the legend narration.

It is worth noting that the amulets are difficult to be dated due to the absence of any obvious signs in them that could indicate their chronological affiliation, and the radiocarbon analysis of parchment on which they are inscribed, as far as we know, has not yet been carried out<sup>19</sup>. The main criterion for dating Ethiopian manuscripts, based on paleographic data and proposed by Siegbert Uhlig in the years 80 of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>, is also difficult to be used due to the conservatism of Ethiopian scribes. In addition, most Ethiopian magic scrolls (for example, the scrolls, stored in St. Petersburg libraries), belong to the 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>21</sup>. The oldest, according to

<sup>19</sup> In any case, this method has a large error, not applicable for the relatively precise chronology.

<sup>20</sup> Siegbert Uhlig, *Äthiopische Paläographie* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1988); Siegbert Uhlig, *Introduction to Ethiopian palaeography* (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Ethiopian manuscripts preservation depends on a series of events in the history of

paleographic data, date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, but they are extremely rare. Therefore, they belong to a rather late period, and models of texts and images by that time had already passed their evolution. The old and recent scrolls do not contain distinctive features, except of the materials as ink or colors (that sometimes result quite recent).

As far as artistic decoration is concerned, there are no identical amulets in the composition of texts and miniatures, and the selection of subjects in the artistic design rarely depends on their content. The winged figures of angels and crosses in them alternate with images of a magical nature<sup>22</sup> and rows of special modified letters dating back to the Coptic-Arabic tradition (this applies, first of all, to the so-called *caractères à lunettes*)<sup>23</sup>.

Ethiopian magic scrolls, with extremely rare exceptions, are illuminated. The decoration is standard in the sense that various scrolls use a certain set of miniatures, often not associated with the texts inscribed in them. Usually a scroll starts and ends with a miniature. Normally, at least three miniatures are present (at the beginning before the text, in the middle and at the end, after the text). In long amulets there are much more such miniatures. The scrolls include images both of an openly magical nature, and traditional for Ethiopian Church iconography. A distinctive feature of Christian subjects in amulets is the archaic nature of their performance, as well as a strictly limited set of subjects. Church fine art changed over time, succumbing to some (albeit few) innovations, while the scrolls, being carriers of hidden magical powers, were copied precisely so as not to miss out on details that could affect its protective functions, and thereby retained this archaic character.

In case of angels, crosses or Equestrian Saints, the sense is clear. As far as magical drawings is concerned, for most of them we do not know the actual meaning. There is a number of different types of such images, each of them called in a proper way. But the meaning of the pictures seems to be lost. Most researchers agree that the presence of eyes in the decoration represents protection from evil eye. A separate square shaped design is called the seal

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the region. First of all, we shall mention the Ahmad Gran's (1525–1543) jihad military campaigns of the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century. It was intended to overthrow the king and seizure of central power and fighting against Christians in general. His troops passed through all the Ethiopian Highlands, destroying churches, monasteries and manuscripts in the ecclesiastic libraries and private houses and killing people and clerics. As a result, we have a very small quantity of manuscripts prior to the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, a PhD thesis on this matter: Laura G. Lombard. *Ethiopian Prayer Scrolls: An Iconographic and Archetypal Study* (Ohio: Union Institute and University, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Such modified letters from Arabic alphabet are attested in arabographic manuscripts. Probably they have the same magical semantic.



of Solomon and bears the protective characteristics. Eight triangles framing the central anthropomorphic face probably represent Cherubim with 8 wings or a devil with 8 horns – the specialists in Ethiopian art still have different opinions.

In spite of the fact that the scrolls were produced in the Christian environment, such fabrication was strictly prohibited. It is not only a generally well-known fact, but is confirmed in the Judicial code. In Ethiopia it was called *Fətha Nagast*, “The judgment of the Kings”<sup>24</sup>. Adopted in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, it was the only Code in Medieval Ethiopia and laid the foundation of the modern Legislation in Ethiopia, adopted during the reign of Haile Sellasse I (1930–1974). Punishment for magical practices is discussed in the 46<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Fətha Nagast* entitled “Punishment for negation of the God and His fouling, for worshiping other (gods) and for the actions that lead to this, as being witches, magicians, offering sacrifices of fruits from trees and cereals and magic”<sup>25</sup>. In the text of the Chapter we found the following words: “Penalty for the actions that lead to negation of the God, glory to Him, as being charmer, magician ... the sorcerer should not be left alive, both male or female, if they are sorcerers or magicians, will die of death and shall be stoned, as they are sinners and their blood is on them ... and who explains the dreams, who makes sorcery, and who produces small books of amulets shall abandon such practices, otherwise they shall be destroyed.”<sup>26</sup> We do not have information about any case of such physical punishment for magic practices or amulets fabrication. Normally the heaviest one for serious deeds consisted in excommunication. Still it was a grave sin in the Medieval Ethiopia. The church condemned and even forbade the tradition of wearing (and making) amulets.

<sup>24</sup> There is an edition of the original text: Ignazio Guidi, “*Fetha nagast*”. “*Legislazione dei re*”. *Codice ecclesiastico e civile di Abissinia* (Roma: Casa editrice italiana, 1899), with Italian translation: Ignazio Guidi, “*Fetha nagast*”. “*Legislazione dei re*”. *Codice ecclesiastico e civile di Abissinia* (Roma: Tipografia della casa editrice italiana, 1897). The latter was prepared for better management by Italian administration of its colonial properties in Ethiopia and Eritrea. There is also an English translation of the Code Paulos Tzadua, *The Fatha nagast. The Law of the kings*, translated by. Ed. Peter L. Strauss (Addis Ababa: Haile Sellasie I University, 1968).

<sup>25</sup> Ignazio Guidi, “*Fetha nagast*”. “*Legislazione dei re*”. *Codice ecclesiastico e civile di Abissinia* (1897), 300; Ignazio Guidi, “*Fetha nagast*”. “*Legislazione dei re*”. *Codice ecclesiastico e civile di Abissinia* (1899), 490.

<sup>26</sup> Ignazio Guidi, “*Fetha nagast*”. “*Legislazione dei re*”. *Codice ecclesiastico e civile di Abissinia* (1897), 303; Ignazio Guidi, “*Fetha nagast*”. “*Legislazione dei re*”. *Codice ecclesiastico e civile di Abissinia* (1899), 493–494.

Due to the prohibition of the magic by the Church (that was very influential and rich institution in the country) scrolls were fabricated secretly by people who were not good specialists in the matter and purely copied them. Both priests and *dabtara* were well acquainted with the process of preparing and rewriting manuscripts. But since the handwritten codex was an expensive thing and people did not order them often, some of the learned men used to copy magic scrolls to earn extra money for a living. Unfortunately, we have no possibility to trace back the evolution of the images of the amulets for a series of reasons. General conservatism of Ethiopian scribes and artists together with the absence of the sense of authorship<sup>27</sup> aggravate the dating of amulets and make the physical changes minimal in time perspective. Moreover, the scrupulous conservation of even small details was strictly connected to the protective function of the scrolls. Physical side of the scrolls and their way of use also play an important role in the state of conservation. Everyday wearing of the scrolls or putting them on a house wall in the region with two annual rainy seasons and where the houses were normally covered by straw, led to corruption of the material. The scrolls had less value than the big and precious codices of the Saint Scriptures, that merit better conservation.

In conclusion we can say that in spite of diligence of the oriental studies specialists and art historians, the hidden nature of the amulets rests in secret but continues its existence among the Ethiopians of today.

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<sup>27</sup> Copyright is the problem of today, but in Africa or in the Middle East nobody used to pay attention to the problem. Moreover, making a good precise copy was considered a masterpiece.

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# Magic powers, sexuality, theatrical images among the *hijras* of the Indian subcontinent

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DARIA IOAN\*

**Abstract:** In this paper we present several aspects of the creative ascetism phenomenon of the Hijra communities in the Indian subcontinent. The third gender recognized in the Indian culture, whether it is represented by hermaphrodites or eunuchs, has involved beliefs and practices of a sacred nature, which embroil both the sacrifice of stigmatization and the unicity conferred by this position. Being situated between two worlds, they never belong to clear social structures. This makes them the keepers of a significant ritualic instrumental, beyond their religious affiliation. Given that emasculation represents a symbolic rebirth, *hijra* acquire sacred attributes which confer them the possibility to perform rituals of fulfilling desires or healing of the others, of cursing or blessing, as long as they assume their own status and avoid the path of excess. We analyze here a few examples concerning such practices, in order to observe the functioning mode of this paradox.

**Keywords:** creative ascetism, sexuality, third gender, sacred powers, magic, blessing, curse, theatricality.

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Travelling across the Indian subcontinent may bring many peculiarities to an outsider's sight and spirit. One of these is certainly represented by the communities of men wearing women outfits, wandering in trains and market places by daylight and showing up after dark in the big cities: the hijras, also known as the ladyboys of India. As the country is often seen as the realm where everything is possible by both its inhabitants and visitors, these

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groups are generally identified with superstitious traditions about magic powers of influencing reality. Due to their specific dual nature, the hijras are the expression of the undetermined, a highly valued aspect in Hindu traditions and cultures. Even beyond religious tradition, the common sense easily integrates a great number of fantastic stories and the adherence of the real to the unreal, of the revealed to the unrevealed which is inseparable from the general manner of thinking and feeling in this part of the world. Contradictions may appear and ravage usual logic but they tend to be smoothly melted in an overall vision that can deal with both truth and its opposite, not to speak about different sides of the same notions. The third sex communities of the hijras (*kotis*) seem to be placed under the sign of this perception of the Indian society, where it has been possible to relate to such people far from the Occidental tradition of looking at the body and its limits.

The Hijra community in India has existed with a recorded history of more than 4000 years. [...]

They consist of hermaphrodites and women generally unable to lead usual life, unable for marriage, and producing children.

In India, Hijras now have the option to identify as a eunuch (“E”) on passports and on certain government documents.

The term Hijra is an umbrella term which includes various forms of gender deviances. They include true hermaphrodites, transgender/cross-dressers, homosexuals, bisexuals, and fake Hijras. In the studied area as well as in India the Hijras are mainly classified into five gender categories. These are: 1. Khusra: A genuine Hijra with sexual deformity (hermaphrodite or intersexed)

2. Aqua: A cross-dresser or transvestites and transsexual

3. Zananay: An impotent male, homosexuals, or bisexuals

4. Khoja/Chhinni: A castrated Hijra through the removal of penis, testicles, and scrotum

5. Chhibri: A biological fit female with fake Hijra identity.<sup>1</sup>

In Europe, even at the dusk of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emasculated male bodies could easily fall under the incidence of aggressive judgements, ending by being included into the monster categories of the Belle Époque, for instance, together with elephant men, monkey girls, Siamese twins, bearded women, etc. In a seminal book, *History of the Body*, Jean-Jacques Courtine writes about the culmination of the human body’s exhibition in the 1880’s, as a

<sup>1</sup> Sibsankar Mal, “The hijras of India: A marginal community with paradox sexual identity”, *Indian Journal of Social Psychiatry*, vol. 34, issue 1 (2018): 79–85, DOI: 4103/ijsp.ijsp\_21\_17.

result of the European barbarian customs of the time. Broadcasting the abnormal was a central element of an ensemble of devices which focused on exposing differences, oddness, deformities, infirmities, mutilations, monstrosities of the human body. This sort of exposures was at the core of popular shows in which the first forms of the modern mass entertainment were being experimented. The monster's figure nourished this theatricalization of the abnormal, of which it constituted at the same time the origin, the principle of intelligibility and the ultimate model<sup>2</sup>. (Courtine 2009: 230)

In such a cultural context, hermaphrodite and eunuch apparitions would have been undoubtedly associated with this kind of fair circus or with the so called "human zoos", while in India we can find mentions of the third genre even in *Ramayana*, without seeing them categorized as monstrous, but as part of a complex human world. However, the hijras were stigmatized and therefore criminalized by the English colonists in India in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The European sense of the normal and of the abnormal was imposed in this vast cultural territory, casting a new, dark shadow on the hijras:

Colonized men were characterized as inherently inferior, but were differentiated through a hierarchy on manliness that distinguished "martial tribes", such as Sikhs, Pathans and Muslims, from "effeminate races", such as Bengalis. [...] Interestingly, homosexuality was usually associated in colonial discourse with the "martial races", not with the "effeminate" Bengalis. Yet the colonizers perceived the figure of the hijra as effeminate, sexually "deviant" and "impotent" – as a figure of failed masculinity.<sup>3</sup>

In "The Hijras of India: Cultural and Individual Dimensions of an Institutionalized Third Gender Role", Serena Nanda refers to the episode where the hijras appear in the old epos of *Ramayana*, as being neither men or women, but belonging to both genres and still impossible to define:

Ram had to leave Ayodhya (his native city) and go into the forest for 14 years. As he was going, the whole city followed him, because they loved him so. As Ram came to... the edge of the forest, Ram turned to the people and said, "Ladies and gents, please wipe your tears and go away". But these people who

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<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Courtine, "Corpul anormal. Istoria și antropologia culturală a diformității", in *Istoria corpului III*, ed. Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, Georges Vigarello (Bucharest: Art, 2009), 230.

<sup>3</sup> Jessica Hinchy, "Obscenity, Moral Contagion and Masculinity: Hijras in Public Space in Colonial North India", *Asian Studies Review*, 38:2 (2014): 275, DOI:10.1080/10357823.2014.901298.



were not men and not women did not know what to do. So they stayed there because Ram did not ask them to go. They remained there 14 years and snake hills grew around them. When Ram returned from Lanka, he found many snake hills. Not knowing why they were there, he removed them and found so many people with long beards and long nails, all meditating. And so they were blessed by Ram.<sup>4</sup>

This is one of the commonly told stories amidst hijra communities, certifying their cultural importance and inheritance. However, the physical status of the hijras is not clearly defined in this legendary occurrence. It is not obvious that they are hermaphrodites or impotent men or both. In her research on the matter, Nanda provides a present example of a hijra who claims to have been born that way, inevitably and irredeemably separated from the other normal people:

From my childhood I was like this. From birth my organ was very small. My brothers tried taking me to the doctors [...] but the doctors said “no, it won’t grow, your child is not a man and not a woman, this is God’s gift [...] From that time my mother would dress me in girl’s clothes. But then she saw it was no use, so she sent me with the *hijras*. I am a real *hijra*, not like those others who are converts; they are men and can have children, so they have the (emasculatation) operation, but I was born this way.<sup>5</sup>

Hijras can be received in their communities taking into consideration the reason that they are born men with a physical sexual disfunction but they can also enter the same circles if they are hermaphrodites or converts, meaning men who willingly give up their reproductive function and role in society and choose to follow a guru of one hijra house, be part of that community and respect its rules and assessments, as a path of no turning back. The authenticity of the hijras has often fallen under the incidence of controversies. Generally, they share a mixed aspect which gathers male and female features under a sort of synthetic theatrical character, but there are differences under the unifying exterior look. The encounter between the two sexes in the various images that perpetuate neutrality and otherness are related to godlike representations.

In yet another famous myth, during the great war of Kurukshetra (*Mahabharata*), the most brave and powerful warriors of the Pandava clan

<sup>4</sup> Serena Nanda, “The Hijras of India: Cultural and Individual Dimensions of an Institutionalized Third Gender Role”, in *Culture, Society and Sexuality. A Reader*, ed. Richard Parker, Peter Aggleton (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 238.

<sup>5</sup> Serena Nanda, “The Hijras of India”, 239.

Arjun dressed as and became a woman in appearance called Brihannada (Hiltebeitel, 1980, p. 154; Sharma, 1984, p. 384; Nanda, 1999, pp. 30–1). As Brihannada, he participated in the wedding ceremony of his son Abhimanyu with the princess Uttara (Hiltebeitel, 1980, p. 166). It must be pointed out that Arjun's cross-dressing is read by almost all hijras as an instance of voluntary emasculation that opens up avenues of immaculate physical strength.<sup>6</sup>

Among other wonders related to emasculation in the Indian myths revivified by hijras, here we find the aspect of a human warrior, which is not so common in their stories. While being a "real" hijra by birth implies a deficit of the sexual functions, the myth above invokes "immaculate physical strength", which is commonly associated with masculinity, rather than with femininity. There are other examples where emasculation is related to physical increased capacities, even if, paradoxically, the protagonists are in fact taking over the traits of the so called "weak sex". The sacrifice is generally followed by a display of benefits and the renouncement to one's procreative functions, even at a symbolic level, like in the legend about the warrior Arjun, can attract divine gifts and blessings, especially in the context of a wedding, complex ritual and network of various significations. However, the hijra interpretation of Arjun's disguise as a sign of body strength may imply the ascetic way (*Tapasya*) which can result in a physical shape superior to that of common people.

The hijras are devoted to the goddess Bahuchara Mata, which protects those who survive the emasculation operation. Paradoxically, she is the goddess of chastity and fertility in her maiden aspect and the incarnation of the Mother aspect of Shakti (personification of creative energy). The goddess herself is believed to have performed a self-mutilation act by cutting off one of her breasts and offering it to assaulting thieves instead of her body. In Hindu mythology, God Shiva also performed such an auto-mutilation by self-castration, after Brahma had already accomplished the act of creation and accordingly Shiva's phallus (*linga*) was no longer necessary for it. The renouncement to his masculine physical power involves the myth of creative ascetism. Fertility became the result of such a renouncement, and the worshipping of Shiva's genital organ which was thrown to the earth is common to a great number of Hindu holy places. In another legend, in Hyderabad, an action similar to Shiva's is performed by a hijra who brings the rain at the

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<sup>6</sup> Sandeep Bakshi, "A Comparative Analysis of Hijras and Drag Queens", *Journal of Homosexuality*, 46:3 (2004): 214, DOI: 10.1300/J082v46n03\_13.

monarch's demand. The phallus fallen on the ground has an immediate effect and the rain is allowed by the gods to fall and end a severe drought.

Once during the Nizam's<sup>7</sup> rule, there was a big drought in Hyderabad, there was no water at all, and the people were dying. The Nizam did not know what to do. Finally, he went to the hijras and told them that it was in their hands to save the city. The Nizam had come to them and asked for their help. So, breaking a thorn from a plant nearby, one of the hijras cut off her organ (penis) and made herself *nirvan*. Then she threw the organ on the ground, and the minute it touched the ground, there was rain.<sup>8</sup>

The sacrifice engenders sacred powers to the hijras who are capable of making it, so they were solicited to use them for the god sake of a whole community. In many legends and oral stories, the hijras' creative ascetism represents a solution to problems of various kinds. In the example above, the sacred gesture of *nirvan* will make the land flourish and will bring back the balance in the principality of Hyderabad. It is interesting that in this legend the hijra is referred to by the feminine pronouns: "she", "her" and "herself" even before cutting of his penis with the thorn, meaning before the initiation ritual, while he was still a man. This could mean that the physical appearance of this hijra was already of effeminate nature and that he was perceived as a she before sacrificing his masculinity.

By giving up the capacity of engendering life, a strange power of conferring fertility to the others or to the earth appears in the perspective of this symbolic death. Hijras are believed to have this power once they survive the emasculation operation and they are invited to participate in wedding and new born baby blessing ceremonies all over India.

This theme provides one explanation of the positive role given the Hijras in Indian society. Born intersexed and impotent, unable themselves to reproduce, hijras can, through the emasculation operation, transform their liability into a source of creative power which enables them to confer blessings of fertility on others.<sup>9</sup>

The ambiguity between sexes is often related, in Hindu mythology, to an undifferentiated aspect of various gods symbolizing the perfect balance

<sup>7</sup> The Nizams were the 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries rulers of Hyderabad.

<sup>8</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex. Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (Chicago University Press, 2005), 97.

<sup>9</sup> Serena Nanda, "The Hijras of India", 239–240.

between the masculine side and the feminine side. Representations of androgyny are to be found in architectural pieces or ensembles, as for example a number of figures in the Khajuraho temples in Madhya Pradesh (built between 950 and 1050 AD by the Chandela dynasty, as a synthesis between Hinduism and Jainism). In her book *With Respect to Sex. Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India*, Gayatri Reddy emphasizes this aspect:

[...] hijras articulate their affinity with divine figures such as Siva, especially in his *ardhanarisvara* (half man/half woman) form, and the Pandava brother Arjuna in his disguise as Brhannala, the dance teacher /eunuch in the court of king Virata [...] “Arjuna is a eunuch who presides over marriage and birth” [...] Hildebeitel concludes by stating that “when eunuchs dance and sing at births and weddings, they mark by their presence the ambiguity of those moments where the non-differentiation of the male and the female is filled with promise and uncertainty: the mystery that surrounds the sexual identity of the still unborn child, and in that which anticipates the re-union of the male and the female in marital sex.”<sup>10</sup>

By mixing this mythologic background to their main occupations, the hijras define their identity status and their place in the society. Reddy observes that the construct of their individual selves and that of the hijra institution rely on the tension between three major tendencies:

First, hijras liken themselves to sannyasis, or ascetics, figures who are clearly ubiquitous and central to much of the Vedic and post-Vedic literature. Second, the tension between ascetism and eroticism or *tapas/kama*, which plays out in hijras lives as the tension between *badhai* hijras and *kandra* hijras, runs through the Vedas and is resolved in the later texts by the *asrama* system, a solution that is readily extended to hijras’ contemporary understanding of their life cycle. Third, hijras invoke non-differentiated images such as *ardhanarisvara* form of Siva, Arjuna as Brahnnala, Sikhandi and Vishnu as Mohini both to legitimize their gender-ambiguous form and to validate their occupation of singing and dancing at festive and liminal occasions.<sup>11</sup>

*Badhai* are called the hijras who practice dance and singing at the above-mentioned occasions, while *kandra* hijras are those who practice prostitution. In this melting pot of all possibilities, both aspects are claimed as legitimizing the hijra status and importance in society and religious life. The double valence makes the hijra communities’ members a complex social

<sup>10</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex*, 89–90.

<sup>11</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex*, 91.

group that floats like an island in the Indian culture. The ones who live out of sexual work are to be found all over the subcontinent in trains or by the railway stations, parks, markets or other crowded places where they can draw public attention. People usually take notice of their presence because of them clapping hands or exposing amputated genitals. The sound of hand clapping can be used in various ways, as a sign for the others to pay attention or to be aware of their curse. In trains, Indians are used to their apparitions but everybody offers them money just to be left in peace. Hijras climb up on the trains in random railway stations and touch only men on their shoulder to ask for money. They usually get paid to go away and not to do harm by their evil eye. At the opposite pole of the blessing *badhai*, the *kandra* can cast infertility on men. When they also lift their sari, the impact of such a sight can be violent to Indian people, who are known for their prudery. But the fear of the hijra curses is often unjustified, as long as they are said to have this kind of power only if they keep the ascetic way of life.



Figure 1. Group of hijras getting on a train, Gokarn, Karnataka, India, 2017 (photo: Daria Ioan)

The hijras who practice prostitution should be exempted of any supernatural gift. They are not under the protection of the goddess Bahuchara Mata, even if they might claim it. In India, some hijras obviously abandoned the ascetic way of life and take advantage of the opposite image they can claim. There is a controversy even in their communities whether they are authentic or not, by birth or surgical operation (*nirvan*), impotent by nature or by human intervention. *Kada-catla koti* hijras (*paonbattawala*, which is ostensibly “heterosexual” non sari wearing men), who don’t belong to any

household and don't follow any guru, can be married not only to men, but even to women. Another important matter in the hijra world is the one of the amount of *izzat* each of them has. Among common people, *kada-catla* have more *izzat* because they dress and live like men. But among the *kotis* (hijras) those who wear women clothes and act like them have more of it. The term *izzat* could be translated as power, respect or even value inside their communities.

Female attire (saris in context) serves as a marker of (public) recognition, and for the hijras it is the quintessential symbol of *izzat*. Those who are "out" on this scale of sartorial identity (like hijras) might be more stigmatized by the wider community, but they have greater respect within their community precisely because of sartorial practices. [...]

Moreover, this symbol of difference apparently distinguishes hijras, in their conceptualizations, from *zenanas* to *kada-catla kotis*. [...] In hijra terms, this [wearing saris] was the single most important marker of difference among *kotis*, in addition to the *nirvan* operation and *rit*.<sup>12</sup>

The *rit* is a ceremony payed by the aspiring hijra to the guru of the household he desires to be part of. During this ritual, he receives a new name and declares his wish to be protected and guided by the guru. Consequently, he becomes this one's *chela* (disciple). Once accepted in one household, the new hijra has many rules to follow, among which: not to use any razor blades instead of plucking facial hair, not to have their hair cut, not to wear pants, not to be seen with beard and the obligation of using women make-up, jewelry and the sari, and bleach his face. This ritual is performed before the emasculation operation, which the hijras may undergo even without the guru's consent. In such a case, they may be victims of the guru's abuse, most of the time inflicting conflicts at the core of the household's structure. But paradoxically they can have the guru's consent and help, depending on their personal relationship. They acquire more *izzat* by undergoing the *nirvan* operation, but because of this they may provoke animosities inside the group.

Today, more so than in the past, it is necessary to perform this operation in secret, because under Indian penal code emasculation is a criminal offence. [...]

This may be so because criminalizing emasculation made it more valuable, and hence more sacred, in the eyes of the hijras. [...]

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<sup>12</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex*, 131.



Next, the prospective nirvan (the one who is operated on) is asked, by his dai ma, to look at the picture of Mata. The operation is deemed to succeed if Mata appears to be smiling or laughing. If the first omen has been positive, it must be followed by the second, in which a coconut broken by the dai ma must break evenly in half. If it breaks unevenly, the omen is deemed to be negative and the operation cannot take place. [...] while the new initiate's life hangs by a thread, the dai ma's assistant buries the severed genitals in the earth, next to a living tree.<sup>13</sup>

The operation can be accomplished traditionally with the help of a hijra *daiamma* (a sort of midwife), or a medical doctor. For the hijras, the first one is considered more respectable than an operation performed illegally by a doctor. So, automatically, the hijra who undergoes it will be believed to have more *izzat*.

[...] the *rit* was mentioned as a marker of difference and *izzat*. Those who had a rit in a hijra house, were perceived to be of higher status than those who did not. The rit not only denoted membership in the wider community of hijras but also hierarchised kotis along this axis of kinship. Those kotis who had the *rit* in the house were official kin, while “*bina ritwale*”, or those without *rit*, were technically not kin. While this did not preclude the latter from identifying as kotis, as non-hijras, it placed them lower in the hierarchy of respect or *izzat*.<sup>14</sup>

The amount of *izzat* is connected to the symbolic value attributed to the blessing rituals they perform at weddings and births; and, as a consequence, the power of the hijra curses has also to do with their *izzat*. So, this concept is one of major importance for the life of hijras, given that it influences their performative force. The *izzat* can be augmented by a number of practices, among which that of getting closer and closer to the feminine look. For this reason, hijras not only wear women's attire, but also use hormones to transform their bodies, by growing their breasts and sometimes undergoing vaginal construction after the nirvan operation. Nowadays they have increased possibilities of shaping female-like physical traits:

Almost all hijras [...] inject or ingest female hormones in order to develop a *chati*<sup>15</sup> (*bosom*).

<sup>13</sup> Oleg Nekrassovski, *Emasculation among the Hijras*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236577080\\_Emasculatation\\_Among\\_the\\_Hijras](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236577080_Emasculatation_Among_the_Hijras) 2011 (accessed 20.12.2019).

<sup>14</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex*, 144.

<sup>15</sup> Breasts.



The most common of these hormonal products are oral contraceptives for women, commonly referred to as “Sunday-Monday golis” which are sold across the counter in all pharmacies. [...] Perhaps more deleterious to their health than this unrestricted use of oral contraceptives is hijras recent habit of injecting themselves with estrogen and progesteron concentrates, bought illegally from the local pharmacies.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that the radical body transformation hijras operate on themselves by cutting off their genitals is continued by another chain of methods used to achieve the female look. However, the feminized image of themselves they consciously build has more to do with staging femininity than actually truthfully copying it and living it. The gender enactment hijras perform has to do with a high level of theatricality. This aspect of their lives is one of great importance, since they make a living out of it.

Hijras who earned a living performing at marriages and childbirth were the elite of their community. Although they also worked very hard, they were better rewarded financially and gained status within the Hijra community for earning a living in this traditional manner, rather than by practicing prostitution or eking out a living begging for alms. [...]

Hijras can also come as an invitee to one’s home, and their wages can be very high for the services they perform. Supposedly, they can give insight into the future events as well bestow blessings for health. Hijras that perform these services can make a very good living if they work for the upper classes.<sup>17</sup>

Many hijras across the Indian subcontinent act in moving theatres, often playing roles that involve the mocked image of women. But it is not only on stages that they can be seen playing gender parodies. They circulate in many other public spaces, usually in groups that stand out in relief by using theatrical methods. They are intrinsically bound to the performance, as they use it in almost all contexts, mostly with the aim of earning money out of it.

They inhabit spaces openly, often drawing attention to them with loud speech and hand gestures, including their unique hand clap, Hijras also adopt male patterns of speech. Replica smile on their face, adorn themselves with kajal, makeup, lipstick, dressed in multicolored saris, in a horrible parody of

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<sup>16</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex*, 132–133.

<sup>17</sup> Sibsankar Mal, “The hijras of India: A marginal community with paradox sexual identity”, 82–83.

women in a unique style, they roam the busy market places in groups for their income.<sup>18</sup>

In South India the hijras can perform at various types of celebrations, even religious ones, where they obviously interpret feminine roles that are required in the ritualic performances. We can observe such a group in the image below, where they take part in a temple celebration in Munnar. The main figure is dressed in a costume that expresses the androgenic figure of Shiva-Parvati. The makeup and decorations split the actor's body in two symmetric opposite parts of the same divine structure.



Figure 2. Hijras in a temple celebration in Munnar, Kerala, India, 2019 (photo: Daria Ioan)

At the same holy celebration, other hijras embodied other ritualic figures, under a feminine aspect. The dark negative character from the image below combines the attitude and weapons of a warrior, as well as the horns referring to its evil nature, with woman clothes and hair style.

The mythical event they re-enact is by these means brought to present for the public, but at the same time distanced from it. This tradition of using

<sup>18</sup> Sibsankar Mal, "The hijras of India: A marginal community with paradox sexual identity", 81.



Figure 3. Evil god character in a temple celebration in Munnar, Kerala, India, 2019 (photo: Daria Ioan)

feminine imagery in order to introduce in performances various godlike occurrences is also used in the traditional Kathakali dance in Kerala, institutionalized during the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

From a European traveler's point of view, or first perception, the great number of androgynal figures can also be misleading. They are not only displayed during rituals, but also in traditional dances and, in hijras' case, in public spaces. Not all are though related to the same cultural nuclei. In Kathakali dance, in Kerala's small and bigger theatres, men wearing female costumes and wigs are present from the beginning of this sort of performance's tradition. The reasons are multiple, but mainly of a practical sort. First of all, the weight of the costumes makes them too heavy to bear for women's bodies. Another justification dancers mention is the holy character of the celebrations. Kathakali dance is performed during religious Hindu celebrations, which makes it impossible for women who have their menstruation to take part in such contexts. The resulting figures have both feminine and masculine looks. In the picture below, taken during my interview with Venu, a 40-year-old Kathakali dancer from Fort Kochi, Kerala, the feminine attire is obvious. He nevertheless explained that this type of dance is a manner of living and it involves a lot of feminine care of the body, but it has nothing to do with the hijras. Apart of being a dancer in the small theatre, Venu declared himself to be a loving husband and the father of three children. Kathakali dance needs a lot of commitment and influences even the dancer's private life, as a physical preparation is required to be

executed each morning at dawn, after waking up. Venu practiced everyday the mudras, the eye and the body movements he would later use in his role interpretation in the evening shows on the stage. It takes years to learn Kathakali and only men can traditionally perform it. Some of the painted faces and costumes, the women like characters can be confusing for an outsider's look, as they resemble the characters interpreted by hijras in religious celebrations. The performances are however impossible to compare, as hijras are not professional dancers and a great number of them don't even know the dances and the songs they have to sing during the celebrations. This is why their acting is often a sum of improvisations. When I asked Venu about them, he ironically underlined the lack of connection between Kathakali dancers and the hijras and even suggested he was personally not fond of them at all.



Figure 4. Venu, Kathakali dancer, Fort Kochi Theatre, India, 2019 (photo: Daria Ioan)

For the hijras to take part in celebrations is not necessarily a matter of dedication. Whether it comes to weddings, births or to complex religious events which may include them, they are often considered not to have any real connection with the traditional dances rituals they engage to perform in these occasions. Even if the hijras are show people, many times they are not trained by their gurus to properly attend the ceremonies, so they improvise dances and songs. Gayatry Reddy relates that during the Hindu festival of



Dussehra, the hijras she was writing about in her book invited her to their village to prove they knew to perform the rituals.

Here, as “a proof of their statements, the whole group put on a performance wherein they enacted a badhai scene, from the moment a household was marked for a new-born child to the final payment of the badhai at the end of their performance. At the end of this “play”, although it was evident that almost none of the hijra actors knew any of the songs and did not know what to do or say, Munira turned triumphantly to me and said, “this is what we do for a living”.<sup>19</sup>

The hijra world consists in a complex mixture of truth and illusion. They live at the edge of a society, brilliant in their kind of isolation, but they are at the same time accepted by the others as a unique social group. The myth of creative ascetism, so spread in legendary India turns out to be, in the hijras' case, a strong anchoring point for claiming their legitimacy and a way of life for those who practice the badhai style, but also a quality that they can easily stage and use to their advantage. This high degree of theatricalization of the sacred powers in hijra communities is connected to the Indian profoundly superstitious society but also to India of all possibilities, where things can perfectly coexist with their contrary, without necessarily displaying an implicit meaning. The numerous paradoxes that can be found in the hijra tradition and actual practices are integrated in this higher structure that allows us to evade the good and the bad, the real and the false, in a syncretic ensemble, astonishing by its variety. As a resulting symphony of the magic thinking, the hijras are being accepted in India as the bearers of forgotten sacred powers that have partially been lost in the tumultuous everyday movements and necessities of the present world.

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<sup>19</sup> Gayatri Reddy, *With Respect to Sex*, 81–82.

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WITCHCRAFT AND  
WITCHES IN CINEMA,  
VISUAL ARTS AND  
LITERATURE



# Circé à l'écran: portraits d'une sorcière séduisante

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IOAN POP-CURȘEU\*

## CIRCE ON SCREEN: PORTRAITS OF A SEDUCTIVE WITCH

**Abstract:** This paper tries to analyse some transformations undergone by Circe, the powerful “goddess” and witch from Homer’s *Odyssey*, in the world of cinema and television. Besides some iconic Homeric adaptations, such as *The Odyssey* by Mario Camerini (1954), *The Odyssey* by Franco Rossi (1968), or a television series from 1997, with Armand Assante as Ulysses and Bernadette Peters as Circe, more movies are taken into account: cartoons, comedies, erotic films. This paper shows that, in cinema and television, new iconographic forms emerge, through specific techniques, completing the traditional iconography (paintings, engravings, drawings), by their various and fascinating choices. Circe illustrates very well the apparition of a new iconography, through the choice of strange, seductive, attractive, actresses whose presence has something very troubling. Giving a body, a voice and a vivid acting style to Circe underlines the great force of incarnation of cinematographic art (big screen or television).

**Keywords:** Circe, Homer, Ovid, witchcraft, painting, cinema, television, adaptation.

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On a souvent souligné, à propos de *L’Odyssée* d’Homère, qu’Ulysse serait ce qui – dans le langage moderne – pourrait être désigné comme un «homme à femmes», qu’on pourrait considérer le poème homérique «un poème des femmes de tout point de vue»<sup>1</sup>. En effet, les errances d’Ulysse sont parsemées de rencontres féminines marquantes et, chaque fois qu’il tombe sur un écueil,

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une femme est là qui le tire d'affaire (Calypso, Nausicaa). D'un autre côté, Ulysse tombe souvent sous le charme de la beauté féminine et se laisse séduire, au point d'oublier son chemin de retour vers Ithaque. La métaphore du chant des sirènes n'a pas d'autre signification! Mais, parmi toutes les femmes d'Ulysse, il y en a deux qui excèdent les autres par leur importance symbolique et par leur statut dans la narration. D'un côté, il y a Pénélope, l'épouse aimée et trahie, qui ne rompt pas les serments de fidélité la liant à son mari. D'un autre côté, il y a Circé, la magicienne, qui incarne toutes les séductions féminines et qui est capable de faire oublier au héros sa patrie et le chemin du retour.

Dans ce texte, je me pencherai sur Circé, en essayant de monter comment sa figure a été imaginée et transposée sur les écrans, dans des créations cinématographiques et télévisuelles. Il est vrai qu'il existe déjà un article consacré à ce thème, publié par le chercheur espagnol Francisco Salvador Ventura<sup>2</sup>. Heureusement pour ma recherche, qui se veut approfondie et ouverte sur des perspectives comparatistes, l'article de Salvador Ventura reste essentiellement descriptif et narratif, malgré quelques intuitions intéressantes. De plus, Salvador Ventura ne discute que quatre films, alors que dans le présent article une quinzaine de créations cinématographiques ou télévisuelles – passées ou à venir – sont discutées en détail.

Avant de pousser plus loin et d'en venir aux films, il faudrait cependant rappeler comment Circé est présentée dans le poème homérique, notamment dans le Chant X. Elle habite une île nommée Aiaï<sup>3</sup>, couverte de bois de chênes épais, au milieu de laquelle se trouve son palais, lieu d'enchantements et de tentations. La présentation qu'en fait Homère renseigne les lecteurs sur sa nature divine et il faut dire que sa qualité de magicienne et de sorcière n'est pas désignée comme telle, même si elle est sous-entendue dans toutes les actions de Circé<sup>4</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> Evangelia Stead, «L'Odyssee» d'Homère (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), 124–129; Jasper Griffin, *Homer, "The Odyssey"* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 78–83.

À propos de la représentation des femmes dans *L'Odyssee*, voir aussi *The Distaff Side. Representing the Female in Homer's "Odyssey"*, éd. Beth Cohen (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Dans ce volume, se trouve un chapitre intéressant sur Circé: Richard Brilliant, «Kirke's Men: Swine and Sweethearts», 165–174.

<sup>2</sup> Francisco Salvador Ventura, «Las brujas de la mitología griega en el cine: las representaciones de la maga Circe», in *Brujas de Cine*, éd. Maria Jesús Zamora Calvo (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2016), 11–29.

<sup>3</sup> Sur l'île de Circé, il existe une abondante bibliographie d'où se distingue, par une approche anthropologique originale, Alain Ballabriga, *Les Fictions d'Homère. L'invention mythique et cosmographique dans «L'Odyssee»* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), 139–153.

<sup>4</sup> Judith Yarnall, *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress* (Urbana and

Nous atteignîmes l'île d'Aiaï où demeurait  
 Circé aux beaux cheveux, la terrible déesse  
 à voix humaine, sœur du pernicieux Aiétés.  
 Tous deux sont les enfants du Soleil brillant pour les hommes  
 et de Persé, l'une des filles de l'Océan.<sup>5</sup>

Circé est donc une déesse, fille d'Hélios lui-même et petite fille de l'Océan, conciliant donc en elle le feu et l'eau. Vingt compagnons d'Ulysse, sous la conduite d'Euryloque, envoyés en éclaireurs, s'approchant de la demeure de Circé, l'entendent chanter «à belle voix/ en tissant de la toile, un de ces fins ouvrages/ gracieux et brillants, tels qu'en font les déesses»<sup>6</sup>. Séduits, les hommes entrent dans la demeure de Circé, qui leur sert un vin de Pramnos, auquel elle a ajouté du miel, de la farine, du fromage et «un philtre qui devait leur faire oublier la patrie»<sup>7</sup>. Tout de suite, les malheureux sont transformés en cochons, à l'exception d'Euryloque, qui retourne raconter la catastrophe à Ulysse. Celui-ci entreprend à son tour un voyage vers la demeure de la déesse et, sans l'aide d'un dieu, il aurait sans doute subi le même sort terrible.

En effet, Hermès intervient et donne à Ulysse l'antidote contre les ensorcellements de Circé. Il s'agit d'une plante dont la racine est noire et la fleur est «couleur de lait pur»<sup>8</sup>. De plus, Hermès conseille à Ulysse de menacer Circé de mort avec son épée et de ne pas refuser de partager sa couche quand celle-ci l'y invitera. Seulement, il faudra lui arracher une promesse, c'est-à-dire qu'elle n'essaiera pas de nouer sa virilité, une fois que celui-ci sera nu. Ce détail renvoie à une croyance très répandue, dont on découvre de cette manière l'ancienneté, à savoir qu'il est possible de contrôler la virilité par des moyens magiques. Ulysse fait comme Hermès lui a enseigné et se rend maître de Circé, qui l'invite à partager sa couche, après l'avoir fait laver par ses servantes et après lui avoir enjoint de goûter à un magnifique repas. Ulysse, cependant, n'y touche pas avant de voir ses compagnons délivrés de l'enchantement de la puissante déesse: celle-ci les enduit d'une autre «drogue» et ils reprennent leur forme humaine, redevenant des hommes «plus jeunes qu'ils n'étaient/ beaucoup plus beaux encore et plus grands d'apparence»<sup>9</sup>.

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Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 52, soutient que «la carrière de Circé en tant que sorcière» a commencé pendant la période post-homérique.

<sup>5</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, Traduction, notes et postface de Philippe Jaccottet (Paris: La Découverte, 2004), 179.

<sup>6</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, 182.

<sup>7</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, 182.

<sup>8</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, 184.

<sup>9</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, 186.

Une année tout entière se passe dans des jouissances infinies, avant que la nostalgie du pays natal ne gagne les compagnons d'Ulysse.

À la demande que celui-ci fait à Circé de lui permettre de retourner à Ithaque, la déesse lui dit qu'il faut, avant cela, consulter le devin Tirésias, qui se trouve déjà dans «les maisons d'Hadès et de la grande Perséphone»<sup>10</sup>. Devant les périls sans nombre de ce voyage que nul mortel n'a jamais tenté, Circé se révèle d'un grand secours, car elle enseigne au héros comment il peut pénétrer dans le «palais de pourriture»<sup>11</sup> du seigneur du royaume des morts: elle lui explique l'exacte topographie des Enfers, elle lui décrit les offrandes qu'il faut apporter pour attirer les défunts (du «lait miellé», du «vin doux», de l'eau, de la «farine blanche»), ainsi que les sacrifices qu'il faut promettre et pratiquer. Logiquement, il s'agit de sacrifice d'animaux noirs («un agneau et une brebis noire»<sup>12</sup>), dont les morts se précipiteront pour boire le sang. Ulysse, se servant de son épée, doit empêcher les décédés de toucher au sang, avant d'avoir interrogé Tirésias.

Le voyage d'Ulysse chez les morts forme le sujet du Chant XI de *L'Odyssée*, mais je ne m'y attarderai pas, cette matière ne touchant pas directement à mon sujet. Je retiens juste que, par son savoir, Circé est celle qui peut ouvrir le chemin du séjour interdit des ombres. Au Chant XII, après un bref retour dans l'île de Circé, Ulysse repart dans son périple, non sans se faire avertir par la «terrible déesse» des dangers qui l'attendent encore: les sirènes, Charybde et Scylla, les bœufs d'Hélios, etc. Circé est donc douée aussi d'une grande force de prémonition; elle sait lire l'avenir et les cœurs des mortels, elle est capable de voir des événements qui n'ont pas eu lieu et que l'on pourrait éviter si l'on ne voulait pas se confronter à des malheurs...

Même si l'impact des descriptions homériques de Circé a été puissant et durable, la tradition antique a rajouté des détails à son portrait et en a fait un personnage central de toute une tradition magique. Déjà Théocrite, au III<sup>e</sup> siècle av. J.-Chr., la regardait comme une sorcière extrêmement puissante, la rapprochant de Médée:

Nel ruolo di antonomastica stregona (*pharmakis, pharmakéutria*) Circe viene esplicitamente invocata all'inizio di uno dei più celebri passi letterari che parlano di magia, il secondo degli *Idilli* del poeta Teocrito, in cui due donne, Simeta e la sua serva, sono intente a compiere un rito notturno destinato a costringere l'amante di Simeta a ritornare da lei: «Salve o Hekate tremenda:

<sup>10</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, 189.

<sup>11</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, 189.

<sup>12</sup> Homère, *L'Odyssée*, 190.



fino alla fine sii mia compagna nel preparare questi incantesimi (*phàrmaka*) potenti come quelli di Circe, di Medea e della bionda Perimede!»<sup>13</sup>

Plus tard, au Ier siècle av. J.-Chr., Diodore de Sicile rapporte une tradition qui fait de Circé et de Médée les filles d'Hécate, toutes étant des sorcières redoutables mais peu divines<sup>14</sup>. Au premier siècle apr. J.-Chr., *Les Métamorphoses* d'Ovide donnent une place de choix à Circé, dans le *Livre XIV*, où le poète latin reprend en résumé l'histoire homérique, tout en y ajoutant des détails qui ne peuvent manquer de nous intéresser dans le contexte de cette étude<sup>15</sup>. Au début du *Livre XIV*, Ovide raconte l'histoire de Glaucus, méprisé par Scylla, qui s'adresse à Circé afin de vaincre les rigueurs de celle qu'il aime. Circé, elle-même attirée par Glaucus, demande à celui-ci de renoncer à Scylla et de l'aimer: «moi qui, par mes incantations et par mes plantes magiques, exerce un pouvoir si redoutable, je ne demande qu'à être à toi»<sup>16</sup>. À ce propos, Ovide précise que la déesse-magicienne est très portée aux embrasements de l'amour:

Aucune femme n'eût jamais une âme plus prompte que celle de Circé à ressentir de pareilles ardeurs, soit que la cause en fut dans sa propre nature, soit qu'elle tint cette disposition de Vénus, irritée par la révélation du Soleil père de la magicienne.<sup>17</sup>

Devant le refus de Glaucus, qui ne veut pas renier son amour pour Scylla, Circé se met en colère et décide de se venger de sa rivale. Le tableau de sa furie retorse est plein de grandeur et vaut d'être reproduit ici, surtout qu'il contient des détails concrets sur les pratiques supposées de Circé:

La déesse est saisie d'indignation; mais elle ne peut s'attaquer à Glaucus lui-même et du reste son amour le lui interdit; alors sa colère se tourne contre

<sup>13</sup> Cristiana Franco, «I racconti del mito», in *Circe, la seduzione e la magia*, éd. Cristiana Franco (Roma: Corriere della Sera/ Out of Nowhere, 2018), 63–64.

<sup>14</sup> *Circe, la seduzione e la magia*, éd. Cristiana Franco, 137–139 (texte tiré de la *Bibliothèque historique* de Diodore).

<sup>15</sup> Le texte d'Ovide peut être consulté dans les deux traductions suivantes:

Ovide, *Métamorphoses, Livre XIV* (Trad. et notes de A.-M. Boxus et J. Poucet, Bruxelles, 2009), <http://bcs.fltr.ucl.ac.be/METAM/Met14/Met14,%201-153.htm> (consulté en juillet 2020).

Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Tome III, XI-XV, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye (Paris: Société d'édition «Les Belles Lettres», 1966), 90–92, 97–104.

<sup>16</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 90–91.

<sup>17</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 90–91.

celle qui lui est préférée; furieuse de voir repousser sa tendresse, en un instant elle broie des plantes vénéneuses et aux suc horribles qu'elle en tire elle associe des chants où elle fait appel à Hécate; après s'être enveloppée de ses voiles d'azur, elle passe au milieu de la troupe des bêtes sauvages qui la flattent, elle sort de son palais et, se dirigeant vers Rhégium, en face des rochers de Zanclé, elle se met en route sur les vagues bouillonnantes; elle y marche comme sur la terre ferme et parcourt à pied sec la surface des flots.<sup>18</sup>

Circé se dirige vers une anse où Scylla aime se reposer, à l'abri de l'agitation des vagues et de la chaleur du soleil. C'est là qu'elle prépare sa terrible vengeance contre la rivale détestée:

La déesse infecte à l'avance cet asile, elle le souille de ses poisons monstrueux; elle y verse les suc qu'elle a exprimés de racines vénéneuses et avec un obscur amalgame de mots inconnus elle compose un chant magique que sa bouche murmure trois fois neuf fois.<sup>19</sup>

Ne supposant pas les horreurs qui l'attendent, Scylla arrive et se baigne. À peine entre-t-elle dans l'eau jusqu'à la taille, qu'elle s'aperçoit que le bas de son corps est transformé en une meute de chiens «menaçants dont les crocs l'épouvantent»<sup>20</sup>. Scylla – mutilée à jamais – reste dans ce lieu solitaire, mais Glaucus se refuse à l'hymen de Circé. C'est par haine contre celle-ci que Scylla frappe Ulysse et ses compagnons:

Par haine pour Circé, elle ravit d'abord à Ulysse ses compagnons; plus tard elle aurait aussi englouti les vaisseaux troyens, si auparavant elle n'avait été changée en un rocher, dont la masse s'élève encore aujourd'hui au-dessus des flots; ce rocher lui-même est un danger qu'évitent les matelots.<sup>21</sup>

Un peu plus loin, dans le *Livre XIV*, après cette histoire d'amour tragique, Ovide reprend l'histoire d'Ulysse et de ses compagnons, captifs dans l'île de Circé. C'est Macarée, un des compagnons d'Ulysse, qui la raconte à Énée, en respectant scrupuleusement les détails que l'on trouve chez Homère, auxquels Ovide ajoute des touches d'une grande beauté plastique. Dans le tableau suivant, on trouve Circé en tant que déesse parée d'or, mais aussi en tant que grande spécialiste des plantes magique, connaissant chacune de leurs vertus. Les images ovidiennes, il faut le dire,

<sup>18</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 91.

<sup>19</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 92.

<sup>20</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 92.

ont beaucoup influencé les peintres, notamment les préraphaélites, dans leurs figurations de Circé:

Elle est assise au bord d'un appartement magnifique, sur un trône pompeux, elle porte une robe éblouissante, sur laquelle est jeté un manteau enrichi d'or. Autour d'elle sont des Néréides et des nymphes, qui, au lieu d'étirer la laine entre leurs doigts actifs et de façonner les fils obéissants, trient des plantes, repartissent dans des corbeilles des fleurs éparpillées sans ordre et des herbes de couleurs différentes. Elle-même, Circé surveille leur travail; seule elle connaît l'usage de chaque feuille et les vertus qu'elles se communiquent par leur mélange; elle pèse et elle examine attentivement toutes ces plantes.<sup>22</sup>

Circé change les compagnons d'Ulysse en pourceaux, en les touchant de sa baguette magique, après leur avoir fait absorber un breuvage ensorcelé. Comme si ces images de la puissance de la déesse n'étaient pas suffisantes, Ovide y ajoute une histoire supplémentaire, destinée à prouver sa capacité à provoquer des métamorphoses. Cette histoire est racontée à Macarée par une servante de Circé. Étant une fois allée cueillir des plantes dans la forêt, Circé aperçoit le jeune Picus, marié à la belle Canente. Prise de passion pour lui, elle l'égaré dans les profondeurs du bois, en lui faisant poursuivre un sanglier imaginaire, une vaine image. Elle change le temps, suscite un épais brouillard, afin d'égarer les compagnons de Picus:

Circé récite des prières, elle profère des paroles magiques, elle invoque des divinités mystérieuses dans un chant non moins mystérieux qui lui sert d'ordinaire à obscurcir la blanche face de la Lune et à tisser devant la tête de son père un voile de nuages altérés d'eau.<sup>23</sup>

Picus reste seul et Circé saisit l'occasion de lui avouer son amour. Devant le refus du jeune homme, elle se venge tout de suite, en le touchant de sa baguette et en proférant des incantations. C'est ainsi qu'il se transforme en oiseau, en pic, au désespoir de Canente, qui meurt en pleurant et son corps se dissipe dans les airs. Les compagnons de Picus subissent aussi un sort terrible, car ils sont changés en bêtes de diverses sortes pour avoir suscité la colère de Circé en lui adressant des reproches au sujet de leur roi. Encore une fois, le tableau est plein d'une terrible majesté:

<sup>22</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 98–99.

<sup>23</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 102.

Alors elle répand autour d'elle des substances pestilentielles et des sucs vénéneux; elle invoque la Nuit, les dieux de la Nuit, l'Érèbe, le Chaos et elle adresse des prières à Hécate, avec de longs hurlements. Les forêts (ô merveille!) bondissent hors de leur emplacement, la terre gémit, les arbres du voisinage pâlisent, l'herbe est trempée de gouttes de sang; les rochers poussent de rauques gémissements; les chiens aboient; le sol est souillé de serpents hideux et dans les airs voltigent les âmes subtiles des morts silencieux.<sup>24</sup>

*Les Métamorphoses* d'Ovide reprennent donc la tradition homérique relativement à Circé, mais y ajoutent bon nombre d'histoires et de détails plastiques captivants. Circé brille par la force des produire des métamorphoses et des illusions, elle connaît les vertus des plantes, elle marche sur les flots et peut invoquer les âmes des morts, elle contrôle les forces de la nature et change le cours du temps<sup>25</sup>. Mais partout, dans le texte ovidien, elle reste une grande amoureuse et il n'est pas étonnant que l'auteur de l'*Ars amandi* l'ait imaginée ainsi. Au fond, la Circé ovidienne pourrait illustrer les idées de Ioan Peter Couliano sur l'identité de substance et d'opérations entre éros et magie<sup>26</sup>.

Après une éclipse partielle au Moyen Âge, Circé revient sur le devant de la scène à la Renaissance et pendant la période baroque, accompagnée d'un long cortège de sœurs-sorcières, comme Médée, Érichto, Canidia, qui toutes contribuent à l'émergence de ce qui s'appellera plus tard «littérature fantastique»<sup>27</sup>. Une *interpretatio christiana* a laissé des traces sur Circé au long des siècles, mais, à la Renaissance, quand elle devient une véritable vedette, Circé profite de deux phénomènes convergents. D'un côté, le regain d'intérêt pour la littérature de l'Antiquité fait découvrir aux érudits des textes où Circé est

<sup>24</sup> Ovide, *Les Métamorphoses*, Texte établi et traduit par Georges Lafaye, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Plusieurs recherches mettent l'accent sur l'importance des passages sur Circé dans *Les Métamorphoses*: Garth Tissol, *The Face of Nature. Wit, Narrative and Cosmic Origins in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), 209–214; Elaine Fantham, *Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3–20 (chapitre «Transforming Bodies, Transforming Epic»); Genevieve Liveley, *Ovid's Metamorphoses* (London & New York: Continuum, 2011), 135–140.

<sup>26</sup> Ioan Peter Couliano, *Eros et magie à la Renaissance. 1484*, Avec une préface de Mircea Eliade (Paris: Flammarion «Idées et recherches», 1984). Couliano regarde Circé comme jouant un rôle capital dans les opérations magiques, 122: «Tandis que Diane représente l'univers en son unité, Circé est la maîtresse des opérations magiques dont le but est précisément de réunir les parties du monde, de les mettre en relation mutuelle. Sans Circé, il n'y aurait pas de Diane: le remède n'existerait pas sans le poison.»

<sup>27</sup> Marianne Closson, *L'imaginaire démonique en France. Genèse de la littérature fantastique* (Genève: Droz, 2000), 77–113.

décrite ou seulement mentionnée; d'un autre côté, la constitution du «portrait-robot» de la sorcière<sup>28</sup>, en passe de devenir la victime des grandes chasses des XVI<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, a besoin de matière pour se nourrir. Et la nourriture érudite et textuelle n'est pas à dédaigner!

Charles Zika a bien étudié ce phénomène dans un article remarquable, qui soulève plein de questions intéressantes, «Images of Circe and Discourses of Witchcraft, 1480–1580»<sup>29</sup>. Pour Zika, Circé est «the classical sorcerer or witch»<sup>30</sup> et sa figure doit absolument être étudiée de manière systématique, car les écrivains et les artistes du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle l'ont utilisée comme référence dans les débats sur l'existence et les pouvoirs de la sorcellerie. L'étude de Circé est d'autant plus importante que les spécialistes de la sorcellerie n'ont pas fait attention aux «classical models for sorcery and witchcraft on the part of sixteenth-century writers and artists, despite their widespread use in that period in underpinning debate concerning the incidence and powers of witchcraft»<sup>31</sup>. Zika souligne que les érudits et les artistes de la Renaissance ont étudié la Circé décrite par Boccace ou par Ovide dans ses *Métamorphoses*, plutôt que la déesse homérique, avant d'analyser un grand nombre de gravures et de peintures qui font le portrait de cette femme séduisante et dangereuse.

Il est vrai que la peinture occidentale, à partir de la Renaissance, jusqu'au préraphaélisme a fait de Circé une figure féminine de premier plan. Elle apparaît dans des œuvres picturales d'une grande beauté plastique et d'une grande richesse de signification, réalisées par: Dosso Dossi (1525), Alessandro Allori (1580), Annibale Caracci (1590), Bartholomeus Spränger (1590), Jan Van Bijlert (1598), Jacob Jordaens (1630), Salomon de Bray (1650–1655), Giovanni Domenico Cerrini (approx. 1650), Eglon van der Neer (1695), John Collier (1885), Wright Barker (1889), John William Waterhouse (1891, 1892, 1911), Arthur Hacker (1893), Adolphe Mossa (1904)<sup>32</sup>. Quelques précisions à propos de ces peintures s'imposent, avant de passer aux représentations de Circé au cinéma et à la télévision, ce qui

<sup>28</sup> Guy Bechtel, *La Sorcière et l'Occident. La destruction de la sorcellerie en Europe des origines aux grands bûchers* (Paris: Plon, [1997], 2000), 157–163.

<sup>29</sup> «Images of Circe and Discourses of Witchcraft, 1480–1580», *Zeitenblicke* 1, nr. 1 (2002), 1–34 (plus notes), disponible en ligne <http://www.zeitenblicke.historicum.net/2002/01/zika/zika.html> (consulté juin 2020).

<sup>30</sup> Zika, «Images of Circe and Discourses of Witchcraft, 1480–1580», 3.

<sup>31</sup> Zika, «Images of Circe and Discourses of Witchcraft, 1480–1580», 4.

<sup>32</sup> Par une simple recherche sur Internet, avec le nom du peintre, l'année de réalisation de la peinture, et le mot-clé Circé, il est facile de trouver des reproductions de toutes ces œuvres picturales.

constitue la substance principale de cet article. Tout d'abord, il faut remarquer des concentrations temporelles: Circé a intéressé les artistes plastiques surtout à la Renaissance et pendant l'époque de triomphe du baroque, mais aussi à la fin du XIX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, dans une atmosphère culturelle déliquescence et raffinée. Deux aspects principaux sont mis en avant dans ces représentations visuelles de Circé: d'un côté, il y a le savoir magique, traduit par des emblèmes visuels de la sorcellerie et, d'un autre côté, il y a la force de la séduction purement féminine. En peinture, Circé est représentée d'habitude comme une femme altière, jeune, d'une grande beauté sensuelle, le plus souvent à moitié nue. Des parties de son corps, surtout les seins, sont dénudées, afin d'attirer les spectateurs masculins et de les inviter à explorer les mystères de cette beauté féminine suprême.

Il est intéressant de noter que le cinéma émerge historiquement dans un contexte culturel dont les acteurs sont friands de consommer des images de Circé. Apparue en 1895, le cinéma est contemporain du préraphaélisme et du décadentisme, de tout un contexte imprégné de magie, de sorcellerie et de références multiples à une Antiquité fantasmée. De plus, le cinéma – art des métamorphoses, des trucages et des effets spéciaux – pourrait être mis sous le signe symbolique de Circé<sup>33</sup>.

Se nourrissant de la mode picturale contemporaine de son apparition, le cinéma ne tarde pas à s'inscrire dans les goûts de son temps et à constituer une nouvelle tradition de représentation de Circé, pour marquer une nouvelle étape dans l'évolution historique des images de cette fameuse déesse-sorcière. Pour instituer cette nouvelle étape, le cinéma assume une double dimension, narrative et picturale, à savoir que, d'un côté, il se fonde sur les récits relatifs à Circé et, d'un autre côté, s'inspire des représentations picturales, chargées de magie et d'érotisme.

Georges Méliès, père du cinéma fantastique, est le premier cinéaste à s'inspirer de la matière riche et fascinante de *L'Odyssée*. Nous ne pouvons que regretter que son film, *L'Île de Calypso, ou Ulysse et le géant Polyphème* (1905)<sup>34</sup>, ne contienne pas d'épisode relatif à Circé, surtout que le réalisateur interprète très librement la matière homérique. La même absence de Circé peut être constatée dans la première adaptation complexe de l'épopée homérique: *L'Odyssée d'Homère*, de Giuseppe di Liguoro (1911, Milano Films)<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> Pour cette identification, voir l'étude de Philip Sicker sur l'*Ulysse* de Joyce, "*Ulysses*", *Film and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 200–221 (chapitre «Mirages in the Lamp Glow: "Circé" and Méliès Dream Cinema»).

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LE\\_9tCpsXeA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LE_9tCpsXeA) (consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XdVCqp9hs2c> (consulté en juillet 2020).

Cette absence est peut-être seulement due au fait que le film ne s'est pas gardé en entier: sur les 1350 mètres que comptait la version originale, 500 mètres manquent. De plus, ce qu'on peut voir aujourd'hui, c'est une reconstitution basée sur une version allemande intitulée *Die Abenteuer des Odysseus*. Le même malheur frappe un film américain, perdu<sup>36</sup>, *Circe the Enchantress*, de Robert Z. Leonard (1924), qui constitue une intéressante interprétation de la figure de Circé, avec un scénario signé par le célèbre écrivain Vicente Blasco Ibañez. Pour malheur, le scénario aussi est perdu<sup>37</sup>, ce qui a pour conséquence qu'on peut se faire seulement une idée approximative de ce film mélodramatique, à partir de quelques documents qui survivent<sup>38</sup>.

Une grande co-production cinématographique italo-américaine, *Ulysse*, de Mario Camerini (1954), apporte un remarquable choix d'acteurs, dont Kirk Douglas (Ulysse), Anthony Quinn (Antinoos) et Silvana Mangano<sup>39</sup>. Le film propose quelques distorsions et concentrations de la matière homérique, afin de faire tenir l'essentiel des aventures d'Ulysse dans l'espace d'un long-métrage, de manière cohérente. Plusieurs petits épisodes sont introduits, afin de justifier l'acharnement de Poséidon (Neptune) contre Ulysse. Au début du film, les rapports entre Pénélope et les prétendants sont décrits de manière synthétique, alors que la Télémachie est à peine suggérée. Quant aux récits faits par Ulysse chez les Phéaciens, le film les présente sous forme de flash-back. Ulysse, ayant perdu la mémoire lors de son naufrage dans l'île d'Alcinoos, arrive devant la mer infinie et se rappelle brusquement des moments de son passé récent. Dans ces flash-back, l'accent est mis juste sur les moments les plus épiques: on a ainsi deux épisodes longs (le cyclope Polyphème et Circé), séparés par un épisode plus bref (les sirènes). Sont absents de l'histoire d'Ulysse les habitants de l'île des Cicones, les lotophages, les Lestrygons, Charybde et Scylla, Calypso, etc., mais l'essentiel est gardé.

Dans cette concentration essentielle de la matière narrative de *L'Odyssée*, l'épisode de Circé est présenté en détail (mais avec des transformations significatives), comme si Mario Camerini et ses scénaristes avaient bien pressenti

<sup>36</sup> Il paraît, sans que cela soit absolument certain, qu'une copie du film se trouve quand même dans une archive: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov:8081/diglib/ihms/loc.mbrs.sfdb.4284/default.html> (consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>37</sup> Rafael T. Corbalán, «Vicente Blasco Ibañez and the Movie Novel», in *The Hispanic Connection. Spanish and Spanish-American Literature in the Arts of the World*, ed. Zenia Sacks DaSilva (Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 2004), 329 [323–333].

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0014774/>; <https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v87280>; <http://www.dvrbs.com/camden-movies/images/Lyric-111024-02b.jpg>; <https://www.flickr.com/photos/italiangerry/5411220343/> (sites consultés en juillet 2020).

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPJZlc36JRc> (consulté en juillet 2020).



son importance symbolique. Après la rencontre des sirènes (qui dans l'épopée se produit bien après cela), Ulysse et ses compagnons arrivent directement à l'île de Circé et la rencontre du héros, parti en reconnaissance, et de la femme mystérieuse se produit tout de suite. Circé apparaît voilée et séduisante et, dès qu'il entend son nom, Ulysse la nomme «sorcière» («witch»), ce à quoi elle répond: «Pourquoi pas déesse?» Cette première rencontre culmine dans un baiser, après lequel Ulysse soulève le voile de la femme, seulement pour découvrir une ressemblance frappante avec Pénélope. En effet, Mario Camerini a eu une intuition artistique remarquable, en choisissant une seule actrice, Silvana Mangano, pour deux rôles de premier plan dans son interprétation du récit homérique: Circé et Pénélope. Cette ressemblance, étrange et inexplicable pour Ulysse, est naturelle pour Circé, et il faut dire qu'elle repose sur une tradition culturelle prestigieuse, bien résumée par Richard Brilliant:

Similarities between exotic Kirke and domestic Penelope, artfully conceived by Homer, have been acknowledged by many authors from Horace to James Joyce. Singers and weavers both, Kirke and Penelope ensnared men, distracting them by their beauty; they unmanned these intrusive males, the Companions and Suitors, rendering them helpless by the exercise of their feminine arts, at least until the advent of Odysseus. [...] Iconographically, the strongest connection between Kirke and Penelope was established through their persona as weavers.<sup>40</sup>

La ressemblance physique entre les deux femmes suggère qu'elles représentent les deux faces d'une seule et même médaille, à savoir ce que Goethe appelait «l'éternel féminin». L'épouse et la maîtresse, la femme vertueuse et la femme perverse, la femme chaste et la nymphomane sont UNE et incarnent l'essence double/ duelle de la féminité que recherche Ulysse. Cela ne veut cependant pas dire qu'il n'y ait pas de dissemblance entre Circé et Pénélope, à commencer par l'habillement. La sorcière porte toujours des robes vaporeuses, de couleur pourpre ou verte, ou brun clair avec des pierres précieuses. Sa tenue et les coiffures savantes de ses cheveux verdâtres sont parfois réhaussées de bijoux de forme tortueuse, et tout son corps – ainsi paré – transmet la séduction et une irrésistible force d'attraction érotique. À l'opposé, Pénélope porte des robes simples, souvent blanches (couleur qui souligne la pureté et la chasteté de l'épouse) et se conduit toujours avec modestie et prudence, quoiqu'elle cède pour le temps d'un baiser à la pression de l'insistant Antinoos.

<sup>40</sup> Richard Brilliant, «Kirke's Men: Swine and Sweethearts», 170–171.



Fig. 1: Silvana Magano dans le rôle de Circé

Les compagnons d'Ulysse sont transformés en cochons pendant le sommeil de leur chef et cette expérience n'a d'autre sens, aux dires de Circé elle-même, que de faire éprouver à l'homme qu'elle aime la même solitude qui la torture. Pour la vaincre et pour faire revenir ses hommes à leur forme première, Ulysse n'a pas besoin de l'aide du dieu Hermès: il lui suffit de menacer Circé avec son épée et de lui parler sur un ton un peu rude en lui disant: «Rends-moi mes hommes, déesse, démon, sorcière ou quoi que tu sois!» C'est une transformation simple, que Circé opère par la simple vertu du langage. Après cela, Ulysse vit dans les plaisirs des sens, pendant une longue période de temps, sur l'île de Circé: amour physique, bains relaxants, mets succulents et boissons capiteuses sont sur le point de lui faire oublier Ithaque. Ses compagnons se préparent à partir, après six mois d'escale, et, malgré les avertissements de Circé, ils se dépêchent de prendre la mer. Or, la sorcière sait que Poséidon (Neptune) prépare une terrible tempête pour la nuit même et que tous les compagnons du vaillant héros vont périr. Elle les laisse faire, car, à ses yeux, ce sont de simples mortels sans valeur: c'est Ulysse qu'elle aime et qu'elle veut garder auprès de soi, au point de lui proposer l'immortalité.

Dans *L'Odyssée*, la proposition d'immortalité est faite par la nymphe Calypso et refusée de même par Ulysse. Alors qu'Ulysse défend la condition humaine, avec ses fragilités et ses défaillances, tout en exprimant l'espoir de vivre à jamais dans la mémoire des hommes, Circé lui ouvre une

fenêtre sur l'au-delà, afin de laisser les morts lui dire à quel point ils sont «heureux». Tour à tour, comme chez Homère, Achille, Ajax et Agamemnon soulignent que l'existence posthume est rude, remplie de souffrances et de peines. Ils conseillent à Ulysse d'accepter le marché que Circé lui propose, ce que fait aussi Euryloque, surgi des brouillards. Sur le point de se laisser tenter par l'Olympe, Ulysse entend la voix de sa mère, que Circé essaie en vain d'éloigner: Anticlée lui apprend que Pénélope l'attend toujours fidèlement et lui enjoint de rentrer à Ithaque. Ulysse ne manque pas de suivre le conseil de sa mère défunte et de s'éloigner de Circé, image parfaite de la séduction féminine, du désir volage, mais aussi déesse des métamorphoses et sorcière toute-puissante.

Les années 60 voient émerger la mode des séries télévisées, et il faut dire que celles-ci ne restent pas étrangères à la matière homérique, qui se prête très bien à une présentation par séquences. En 1964, une série produite par la Rai reprend les aventures d'Ulysse sur le mode de la comédie musicale, avec des textes extrêmement amusants. Ici, le rôle de Circé est tenu par Elena Sedlak<sup>41</sup>. Sa beauté blonde, altière, s'harmoniserait bien avec un type circéen possible si le texte de sa chanson, parodique, ne contredisait pas cette impression. Elle se définit comme «maga» et «angelo del mal». Parmi les pourceaux avec lesquels elle vit, se trouve même «il suocero di Omero»! C'est sur ordre de Zeus lui-même qu'elle délivre les compagnons d'Ulysse et renonce à ses ébats amoureux avec le héros. Il faut noter aussi, pour la saveur du détail, que la plante magique avec laquelle Ulysse frotte sa peau, afin de résister à l'enchantement, est une banale... ortie!

La série télévisée *L'Odyssée* (1968), en co-production internationale (Italie, France<sup>42</sup>, Allemagne, tournée dans l'ancienne Yougoslavie), a été réalisée par Franco Rossi et s'est adjoint les services de présentation du grand poète italien Giuseppe Ungaretti. La distribution comprend des noms d'acteurs comme Bekim Fehmiu (Ulysse), Irene Papas (Pénélope), Renaud Verley (Télémaque), Barbara Bach (Nausicaa). En regardant de près cette adaptation, il faut dire qu'elle est le plus fidèle au texte homérique. Cette observation concerne aussi l'épisode Circé<sup>43</sup>, jouée par Juliette Mayniel.

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8Qr6Xm7yWQ> (site consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>42</sup> Des informations sur cette série, avec des documents à l'appui (extraits de presse), se trouvent à cette adresse: [http://php88.free.fr/bdff/image\\_film.php?ID=9395](http://php88.free.fr/bdff/image_film.php?ID=9395) (site consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>43</sup> L'épisode en entier est disponible, en version française, avec des sous-titres anglais, ici: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ww3291Av4hE> (consulté en juillet 2020). Toutes les autres parties de la série sont également disponibles sur Internet.



**Fig. 2:** Elena Sedlak dans le rôle de la «maga Circe», devant Ulysse et sa suite

Beauté sombre, au regard bleu-trouble, Mayniel campe une sorcière qui fascine surtout par des éléments de scénographie, à savoir les costumes somptueux, les accessoires, les coiffures.



**Fig. 3:** Juliette Mayniel dans le rôle de Circé

Quand on dit «magicienne» à propos de la Circé qu'imagine Franco Rossi, c'est une manière très précise de circonscrire sa nature<sup>44</sup>. Quand il raconte, devant Alcinoos et sa femme, l'épisode de sa «halte» d'une année, Ulysse dit: «Circé la magicienne chante et tisse comme seules les déesses savent le faire. Elle est fille d'Hélios, le Soleil, et de Persé. En abordant son île, je n'imaginais cependant pas les sortilèges dont Circé était capable.» Ulysse met donc l'accent sur la nature humaine de Circé, quoiqu'elle se rapproche des déesses par ses dons. La trame narrative de *L'Odyssee* est respectée, et c'est Euryloque, accompagné d'une partie des hommes qui s'en va explorer l'île le premier. À son retour, il décrit, effrayé, le «dédale» dans lequel ils se sont perdus, faisant référence à un autre topos majeur de la mythologie. Ulysse se lance à la recherche de ses compagnons, poussé par «l'attrait de l'inconnu» et par le défi que cette quête lui impose. Le chant de Circé fait naître le «désir» au cœur du héros, mais il s'efforce de rester «vigilant» afin de ne pas subir le même sort que les membres de son équipage. Comme chez Homère, dans le téléfilm de Franco Rossi, l'intervention d'Hermès est salutaire. Le nom du dieu ne doit pas être prononcé haut dans la forêt, qui est le domaine de Circé: elle habite dans chaque arbre, dans chaque feuille. Ulysse est fasciné et préoccupé par la sorcière, sachant qu'elle maîtrise au plus haut point l'art des métamorphoses: «Je me demandais sous quels traits elle m'apparaîtrait pour tromper mon esprit.»

Pour accueillir Ulysse dans son royaume, Circé le fait passer à travers le feu, et ce passage renvoie à de nombreux rites d'initiation des religions anciennes. C'est par-delà le feu qu'il la retrouve, en train de tisser une immense toile et, quoiqu'il pense tout de suite à Pénélope, il est vite (dé) trompé: dès qu'il touche la femme, par une coupure brusque, le film nous fait entrer dans un endroit étrange, peuplé d'oiseaux en cage (des rapaces) et de statues envahies par une végétation épineuse. C'est là que Circé essaie de transformer Ulysse en animal, mais la fleur «aux graines amères» donnée par Hermès l'aide à garder sa forme humaine et pour la sorcière c'est un coup extrêmement dur que de ne pas avoir réussi. Elle se tord par terre «envahie par la laideur de la haine» et le héros est pris par «un fort désir de la tuer». Se contenant, il la voit se transformer et «devenir femme», restant en son pouvoir pendant longtemps, ce qui amène une séparation avec ses compagnons, restaurés dans leur forme humaine.

Suite à un rêve, Ulysse comprend qu'il faut retourner à Ithaque, mais il est tellement bien pris dans les rets de Circé que, même pour la quitter, il

<sup>44</sup> Francisco Salvador Ventura, «Las brujas de la mitología griega en el cine», 18–21, considère, de même, que c'est dans sa puissance magique qu'on doit chercher l'essentiel de la Circé de Franco Rossi. Il la nomme «la Circe hechicera».

a besoin de son aide. En entrant dans le monde de la magicienne, Ulysse a choisi un chemin qui le sépare à jamais des autres êtres humains. En franchissant un pas de plus, il entre dans «la demeure des morts», toujours sur les conseils de Circé. La rencontre avec les défunts est décrite dans l'esprit d'Homère, avec les détails du sacrifice et les révélations faites par le devin Tirésias. C'est au retour qu'Ulysse demande à Circé les derniers éclaircissements, en lui demandant de traduire la prophétie de Tirésias sur le fait qu'il sera seul à rentrer à Ithaque. Au travers des paroles du prophète, Circé souligne qu'Ulysse est déjà seul car entre lui et ses compagnons une coupure de destin s'est produite. Elle l'avertit sur la méfiance avec laquelle ils vont accueillir chaque parole d'Ulysse, même celles qui seraient destinées à les sauver. De plus, Circé, grâce à son savoir surnaturel, révèle à Ulysse les écueils qui l'attendent sur son voyage de retour (les sirènes, Scylla et Charybde, les vaches noires du Soleil). Dès que ces dernières informations sont données et que «l'heure du départ est arrivée», Circé disparaît miraculeusement, derrière un rideau de fumée. En essayant d'avertir ses compagnons sur les dures épreuves qui les attendent et en disant qu'il tient ses révélations de Tirésias, Ulysse se heurte à leur incrédulité. À ce moment-là, il invoque une autre autorité prophétique et parle des «paroles de Circé». Les compagnons, ébahis, répliquent: «Circé?! Mais qui est Circé?», ce qui montre que leur mémoire a été effacée par magie. De leurs aventures dans l'île de Circé, rien n'a persisté, ce qui marque la coupure définitive entre eux et Ulysse, rivé à sa destinée solitaire.

Avant de pousser plus loin, il faut dire que le téléfilm de Franco Rossi, par-delà sa fidélité au texte homérique, possède d'autres qualités remarquables. Les rôles sont bien joués, quoiqu'avec un peu de théâtralité, les décors (naturels et construits en studio) sont bien choisis et font revivre l'esprit du monde archaïque. Les images elles-mêmes sont d'une picturalité raffinée et les transitions opérées au niveau du montage confèrent un bon dynamisme aux récits des aventures d'Ulysse.

En 1997, une mini-série télévisée dirigée par Andreï Kontchalovski reprend la matière narrative de *L'Odyssee*. Dans cette version, Armand Assante campe un Ulysse qui a beaucoup du super-héros américain typique. Malgré cet aspect, la série est bien faite, elle respecte le texte homérique et apporte même une certaine grandeur séduisante dans le rendu télévisuel des errances du héros grec. Quelques notes comiques ne déparent pas l'ensemble. L'épisode de Circé<sup>45</sup> est conçu dans les lignes du texte homérique.

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<sup>45</sup> À voir ici: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xsy6g9>; <https://www.dailymotion.com/>



Circé (jouée par Bernadette Peters) est introduite dans la narration par une double désignation sans ambiguïté: «a witch, a sorceress». Pour arriver à son palais, Ulysse monte des rochers escarpés, au sommet desquels il trouve une habitation somptueuse. C'est en montant qu'il rencontre Hermès, qui apparaît avec ses caractéristiques mythologiques, notamment les pieds ailés.

Sur le seuil du palais, la belle Circé attend Ulysse. Son corps est beau et onduleux sous sa robe blanche, sa voix traînante est pleine d'insinuations érotiques et ses cheveux roux et bouclés sont bien ceux d'une sorcière. La menace de mort, l'accouplement avec la sorcière et la transformation des compagnons d'Ulysse en êtres humains de nouveau sont rendus de manière synthétique, mais assez réussie. C'est pendant la vie de plaisirs de l'équipage d'Ulysse – qui a duré cinq ans – que sa mère Anticléa se suicide en se noyant dans la mer. Circé est, ici aussi, celle qui donne à Ulysse les clés du royaume des morts, en lui expliquant comment pénétrer dans la rivière de feu. La séparation du héros et de la sorcière se produit de manière brusque et Circé reste en arrière avec une expression de mélancolie et de regret. Francisco Salvador Ventura remarque, à juste titre, à propos de ce moment filmique, deux aspects essentiels: le fait que la présence de Circé est empreinte de sensualité et l'importance des références culturelles égyptiennes dans la scénographie<sup>46</sup>.

En 1998, dans la série animée *Mythic Warriors. Guardians of the Legend* (co-production Canada, France, Chine, en collaboration avec la chaîne France3), est lancé un épisode concernant la rencontre d'Ulysse et Circé<sup>47</sup>. L'équipage, après avoir malencontreusement délivré les vents, arrive sur une île. Dès que les hommes sont sur la plage, ils entendent des hurlements de loups qui leurs semblent humains. Bien plus, dans ces hurlements, Ulysse lui-même croit déceler une voix qui l'appelle par son nom. Circé, dans son palais, travaille à une tapisserie à sujet marin et se dit convaincue de l'arrivée

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video/xsy6ja; <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xsy6lz> (fragments consultés en juillet 2020).

<sup>46</sup> Francisco Salvador Ventura, «Las brujas de la mitología griega en el cine», 21–24. «Para el caso de Circe se eligen motivos del Egipto antiguo, como se aprecia con claridad y rotundidad en la primera imagen del palacio de Circe [...]. Así, los relieves de las puertas son signos jeroglíficos, las pinturas murales se atienen a los códigos de representación egipcios, las columnas bulbosas se inspiran en las formas vegetales, el mobiliario se realiza a partir del conocido en Egipto y la caracterización tanto de Circe como, sobre todo, de las esclavas que le sirven y que atienden delicadamente a los hombres de Ulises tienen una reconocible adscripción egipcia.» (22).

<sup>47</sup> L'épisode est disponible ici dans sa version anglaise: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKnBMcWkUg> (site consulté en juillet 2020).





**Fig. 4:** Ulysse menaçant Circé (Bernadette Peters) de la tuer

de ces hommes sur ses rivages. Elle a une robe verte et des cheveux roux (les deux éléments étant des symboles traditionnels de l'inconstance et de la perversité), et son regard est d'une méchanceté vite visible et peu réprimée. Ses yeux sont verts et vitreux, et sur sa pommette droite trônent des signes magiques de couleur violette. Quand un loup vient lui dire que les hommes s'approchent de son habitation, elle s'enquiert si Ulysse se trouve parmi eux. À la réponse négative, Circé répond: «I should have known. He is too cautious, to clever to be lured by the pleasures of the senses. But there are other ways to set a trap.» Les compagnons d'Ulysse tombent dans le piège tendu par la sorcière, qui les transforme en animaux ramenant à la surface de la peau les instincts qui les guident, notamment la glotonnerie. Ulysse, cependant, qui a «des amis haut placés», reçoit l'aide inespérée d'Hermès, mais le dieu fait peser la responsabilité des bons choix sur les épaules de l'homme.

Arrivé dans le palais de Circé, avant de se mettre à table pour un festin digne d'un roi, Ulysse veut inspecter les lieux et la sorcière lui sert de guide. La première pièce qu'ils visitent, c'est la «weaving room», l'atelier de tissage, où le héros est stupéfait de voir représentées, sur des tapisseries, ses propres aventures. Grâce à la magie de Circé, il entre dans l'univers des tapisseries, fictif et pourtant bien réel, où il peut choisir d'avoir de nouveau «the glory of battle», où il voit le fait que ses hommes ne lui sont pas toujours dévoués, où il aperçoit la conduite malhonnête des prétendants à Ithaque, etc. Après lui

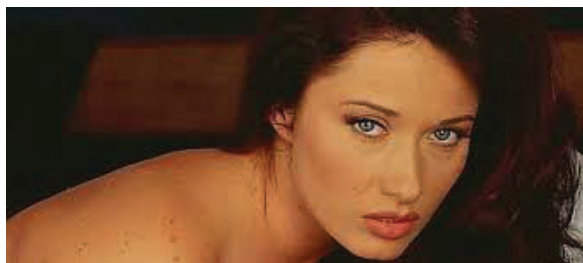
avoir montré tout cela, Circé lui dit: «Don't despair: riches, glory, loyalty, I can give them all to you.» Tout ce qu'Ulysse doit faire, en échange de trésors immenses, c'est de faire de Circé sa reine. Se souvenant envers qui il doit se montrer loyal, Ulysse refuse le pacte que lui propose la sorcière et celle-ci s'apprête à le transformer en renard, puisque son intelligence et sa ruse justifient une telle transformation. Grâce à la fleur que lui a donnée Hermès, Ulysse résiste, mais la sorcière s'entête et on la voit se transformer elle-même en un jaguar, qui poursuit le héros dans la forêt et lutte avec lui. C'est en rompant la baguette magique de Circé, sur laquelle il a mis la main, qu'Ulysse parvient à délivrer ses compagnons de ce qu'il appelle à juste titre «evil sorcery». Sa ruse de renard l'aide aussi à emprisonner Circé dans un grand trou creusé dans la terre, où elle gardait les cochons. Mais les mésaventures ne sont pas finies. Au moment de prendre la mer, un monstre sous forme de pieuvre – qui est un dernier avatar de Circé – surgit du fond des eaux, pour attraper les marins avec ses tentacules. Ulysse réussit à s'en débarrasser en jetant de l'huile sur elle et en y mettant le feu. Revenue à sa forme humaine, la sorcière crie ses derniers mots à Ulysse, en lui disant qu'il a été un «fool», qu'il aurait pu avoir tout ce qu'il veut.

Dans cet épisode de *Mythic Warriors*, il y a beaucoup d'anachronismes, comme par exemple une statue gigantesque qui garde le palais de Circé et qui a tout à fait l'air d'un diable chrétien, cornu, ou bien une allusion aux «patates» que les marins rêvent de manger avec du rôti (ce que les servantes de Circé leur servent, d'ailleurs).



Fig. 5: La méchante Circé avec sa robe verte et ses cheveux roux

C'est toujours de 1998 que date une adaptation pornographique de *L'Odyssée*, dirigée par un réalisateur polymorphe, qui s'est beaucoup illustré dans le cinéma de genre, à savoir Joe d'Amato (1936–1999)<sup>48</sup>. Le film s'intitule *Le Avventura sessuali di Ulisse* et, comme le titre le dit très bien, il remplace la substance psychologique et existentielle de l'épopée homérique par des aventures sexuelles. Tout se résout par des parties de sexe, même les discussions et les disputes entre les dieux de l'Olympe. Pénélope, quant à elle, cherche un homme qui soit aussi viril que son mari, sans le trouver avant le retour final de celui-ci. Ulysse passe sept années de plaisir auprès de la nymphe Calypso, échoue sur la terre des Phéaciens où il raconte ses péripéties et se montre toujours d'une indéfectible virilité. Dans la panoplie de ses exploits érotique, l'épisode de Circé fait contraste avec celui du cyclope, qui le précède. Le cyclope est représenté ici par une «femme monstrueuse» et barbue, avec un œil charbonneux dessiné au front, qui retient Ulysse prisonnier jusqu'à ce que, vaincue par l'orgasme, le héros puisse s'échapper. Circé, à l'opposé du cyclope, est une femme d'une grande beauté, joué par une actrice spécialisée dans le porno, à savoir Erika Bella<sup>49</sup>. Une image d'elle mérite d'être reproduite, juste pour monter dans les bras de qui Ulysse a passé un an de ses errances.



**Fig. 6:** Erika Bella<sup>50</sup>, l'interprète de Circé dans la version érotique des aventures d'Ulysse

Malgré la perspective de Francisco Salvador Ventura, qui y voit une «trivialisation» de la matière épique grecque<sup>51</sup>, un épisode de la docu-fiction *Clash of the Gods (Odysseus: Curse of the Sea)*, produit pour History Channel (diffusé le 14 septembre 2009), présente quand même un certain

<sup>48</sup> [https://it.qwe.wiki/wiki/Joe\\_D'Amato](https://it.qwe.wiki/wiki/Joe_D'Amato) (consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0068610/> (consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>50</sup> Il ne faut pas oublier, à propos de l'*Ulysse* de Joyce, que dans l'épisode du Nighttown le personnage circéen s'appelle Bella Cohen.

<sup>51</sup> Francisco Salvador Ventura, «Las brujas de la mitología griega en el cine», 25–27.

intérêt<sup>52</sup>. L'épisode de Circé est détaillé pendant six minutes, mais sans être lié de manière directe et complexe à la descente dans l'Hadès, qui – elle – est réduite à presque rien. Dans ce téléfilm, on considère que l'essentiel de l'arrêt d'Ulysse chez Circé est représenté par le plaisir érotique, par la séduction qu'exerce sur le héros cette femme étrange. On interprète même cet épisode dans les termes de l'infidélité conjugale, permise aux hommes mais interdite aux femmes, dans la Grèce archaïque. C'est, au fond, juste, mais dans une perspective tout à fait simpliste, qui ne tient pas compte du désir lancinant d'Ulysse de retourner chez lui, de son amour pour Pénélope, de ses inquiétudes sans fin et de son besoin d'évacuer les tensions de ses confrontations avec Poséidon, évacuation qui se fait toujours mieux par le sexe que par tout autre chose. L'actrice choisie pour incarner Circé appartient à un certain type de la beauté méditerranéenne, brune et légèrement ténébreuse, avec des lèvres sensuelles, un nez volontaire et un regard pénétrant.



Fig. 7: Circé dans la série *Clash of Gods* (*Odysseus: Curse of the Sea*)

Tout récemment, un long-métrage dirigé par Tekin Girgin, *Troy: the Odyssey* (2017)<sup>53</sup>, est une vraie catastrophe. Traitant sans discernement artistique les bouts de l'histoire empruntés à Homère, le film de Tekin Girgin est mal joué, avec des acteurs peu convaincants, ridicules dans leurs mouvements et leurs expressions. Le montage est pénible et plein d'erreurs, les effets spéciaux sont risibles et la seule recette possible pour gober cette ineptie cinématographique, c'est de s'imaginer qu'il s'agit d'une parodie. Cependant, dans le contexte précis de cette étude, un élément de *Troy: the Odyssey* est

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6oekpf> (consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>53</sup> À voir ici: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l736291vM7c> (consulté en juillet 2020).

susceptible de présenter un grand intérêt, à savoir le fait que Circé devient un personnage encore plus important de l'histoire qu'il ne l'était chez Homère et dans les autres adaptations littéraires ou filmiques.

Circé (Lara Heller<sup>54</sup>) est une grande prêtresse troyenne et la compagne de Priam. Lors de l'entrée des Grecs dans la cité, elle demande à Priam de relâcher le kraken, en se sacrifiant soi-même. On se demande pour un bref instant ce que cette bête issue de la mythologie scandinave vient faire ici, mais dans un film tellement stupide ce n'est au fond pas tellement étonnant. Guerrière accomplie, Circé tue Achille après avoir tiré une flèche dans son fameux talon. Elle est prise en otage par Ulysse et par ses hommes sur le bateau qui doit les ramener à Ithaque, afin de les protéger du kraken (qui ne touche d'habitude pas aux Troyens). L'armée d'Ulysse, au mépris du texte homérique, est invraisemblablement réduite à trois compagnons, alors que la flotte est composée d'une piètre barque. Au cours du voyage, grâce à la nature conciliante d'Ulysse et au fait qu'il ne fait pas de différence entre Grecs et Troyens (étrange attitude, après avoir grandement contribué à saccager la ville), Circé et lui deviennent des alliés et même des amis. Les ressentiments tombent bien vite dans ce film sans véracité psychologique. Puisque Circé est avec Ulysse, c'est sur les sirènes qu'est transférée la tâche de révéler à Ulysse les secrets de sa destinée. C'est la première aventure significative, suivie par l'escale chez Calypso qui lui donne à manger des fleurs de lotus pour lui faire oublier sa patrie. Arrivent ensuite l'entrée dans l'au-delà et la rencontre avec le cyclope. Lors de toutes ces épreuves, Circé accompagne et protège Ulysse. Seuls, ils arrivent à Ithaque et leur séparation se produit sur la plage de l'île. Lors de l'embrassade finale, on voit bien que la prêtresse-sorcière est un peu amoureuse du héros, qui la gratifie de l'appellation consolante d'«amie». Circé intervient une dernière fois, lors de la lutte finale avec les prétendants, en sauvant Ulysse de la mort, qui – à son tour – vient de sauver la vie de Télémaque. Circé assiste, souriante, à ce qui aurait pu être les retrouvailles heureuses de la famille d'Ulysse, sans le kraken, qui poursuit le héros. C'est le moment du sacrifice final: Circé donne sa vie en échange de celle d'Ulysse, car elle «refuse de voir son monde à lui détruit, comme elle a vu son monde à elle détruit». La dernière image, d'un kitsch parfait, nous montre Circé étendue en grande pompe sur son lit mortuaire, attendant le passage définitif dans l'au-delà, après avoir été régurgitée par le kraken, qu'elle a tué de l'intérieur, après avoir été avalée. Et c'est ainsi, grâce à la prêtresse-sorcière, qu'un très mauvais film peut s'avérer un honorable objet d'étude.

<sup>54</sup> [https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3946564/?ref\\_=tt\\_ov\\_st\\_sm](https://www.imdb.com/name/nm3946564/?ref_=tt_ov_st_sm) (consulté en juillet 2020).





Fig. 8: Circé tue Achille lors du siège final de Troie

Si le film de Tekin Girgin est mauvais, une série produite par la chaîne Arte est très réussie: il s'agit de *Odysseus* (2013). Cette série de Frédéric Azémar (producteur pour Arte) et Stéphane Giusti (réalisateur), essaie de rajeunir la présentation imagée de *L'Odyssée*, en proposant une focalisation sur les événements d'Ithaque. C'est une série profondément politique, presque dépourvue d'interventions surnaturelles, et qui ajoute beaucoup de détails à ceux qui viennent directement du texte homérique. Ici, on trouve le devin Thyoscos, qui accueille Ulysse à son retour et devine la destinée des gens de l'île.

Tout comme dans la littérature de l'Antiquité Circé n'est pas présente seulement chez Homère, il y a bien d'autres films qui – tout en s'éloignant de la matière homérique – recyclent toujours la figure de cette grande sorcière ou en empruntent le nom pour traiter les thèmes sous-séquents dans l'histoire/ les histoires circéenne(s). *Maciste nella terra dei ciclopi*, péplum italien de 1961, réalisé par Antonio Leonviola, recycle certains thèmes et figures de *L'Odyssée*, dans une histoire qui constitue une sorte de suite des événements présentés par Homère. Maciste, bien sûr, est le héros populaire doué d'une force surhumaine, sorte d'Hercule pétri dans une matière dure et résistante. Capys (Chelo Alonso) est la descendante de Circé et, en tant que reine de Sadok, a reçu pour mission d'exterminer tous les descendants d'Ulysse, notamment le roi Agisandre et la reine Pénopée. Maciste s'interpose et sauve

l'enfant du couple royal, résistant à toutes les déclarations d'amour et à toutes les tentatives de séduction que fait Capys à son égard.

*Circé*, film argentin de 1964, réalisé par Manuel Antín, sur un scénario auquel a collaboré Julio Cortázar à partir de sa nouvelle homonyme, traite de la séduction féminine, du désir et de la mort, ainsi que de la (in)capacité de l'homme à résister aux impulsions destructrices<sup>55</sup>. Sur Internet, on annonce une adaptation par HBO d'un livre à grand succès, *Circé*, de Madeline Miller (2018)<sup>56</sup>, et ceux qui sont intéressés par la figure de la déesse sorcière attendent avec impatience que la série soit lancée. La perspective du livre de Madeline Miller est ouvertement féministe et des événements bien connus sont (de nouveau) racontés à partir de la perspective de Circé elle-même.

Quelques mots, avant de finir, pour montrer le rayonnement de la figure de Circé sur les écrans du monde entier. Un film de série B, réalisé en 1983 par Luigi Cozzi (Lewis Coates), donne un rôle important à Circé: *Hercule*. C'est un cocktail ridicule, mais tout particulièrement amusant, de film d'action, références mythologiques, un peu de science-fiction et beaucoup d'allusions érotiques, le tout d'un kitsch bien spécifique des années 80. Créé par les dieux, Hercule (Lou Ferrigno) est un être d'une extraordinaire force physique. Sa principale mission dans ce film est de délivrer sa femme Cassiopée, fille d'Augias, prisonnière de Minos. Dans sa quête et ses aventures, il est aidé par une grande sorcière: Circé. Celle-ci lui apparaît tout d'abord sous les traits d'une vieille grotesque, répondant ainsi à un cliché culturel universellement répandu, à savoir celui de la sorcière âgée et laide. Après avoir bu dix gouttes du sang précieux d'Hercule, Circé se transforme en une belle jeune femme, très sexy (jouée par Mirella D'Angelo). Celle-ci l'assiste dans tous les travaux périlleux qu'il doit accomplir: elle l'aide à séparer les continents, voyage avec lui à travers l'espace cosmique, met à son service toutes ses astuces magiques et va même jusqu'à se sacrifier pour lui. Disons que, pour le sel et le poivre de cette histoire farfelue, il faut que la sorcière soit un peu amoureuse d'Hercule, mais celui-ci, tout rivé à sa destinée héroïque, ne se laisse pas trop tenter par le beau corps de femme, à demi dénudé, qui s'offre à lui...

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<sup>55</sup> Voir, à propos du texte de Julio Cortázar et du film, un bon texte en espagnol: Óscar Lapeña Marchena, «Ecos del Mediterráneo Antiguo en el Cine latinoamericano: *Circe* (Manuel Antín, Argentina 1964)», *Procesos Históricos*, núm. 31, 2017, <https://www.redalyc.org/jatsRepo/200/20049680009/html/index.html#fn7> (consulté en juillet 2020).

Le film est disponible à l'adresse suivante: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBYXH6ENduU> (consulté en juillet 2020).

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.slashfilm.com/circe-hbo-series/> (consulté en juillet 2020).





Fig. 9: Circé et Hercule, publicité pour le film de 1983

Que dire en guise de conclusions? Dans les lignes qui précèdent, on a pu voir la variété de perspectives que diverses époques culturelles et divers moyens d'expression artistique ont proposées sur Circé. La matière homérique reste, bien sûr, au cœur des idées qu'on peut se faire sur cette déesse-sorcière, mais à partir de cette matière-là beaucoup d'histoires secondaires ont pu voir le jour, de la littérature antique jusqu'à la littérature moderne et au cinéma. Que ce soit dans les textes littéraires ou dans les films, Circé constitue le vecteur de moments essentiels pour le devenir des héros qui la rencontrent à un point ou à un autre de leur quête. Circé est un personnage à travers lequel beaucoup de significations et de messages se sont structurés au cours du temps: messages contre l'oppression patriarcale ou pour une libération érotique, messages politiques et philosophiques, discours ayant au cœur la peur du sexe et de la magie, etc.

L'histoire de Circé au cinéma ne peut être qu'un fragment d'une histoire beaucoup plus ample, à savoir l'évolution de Circé dans les arts visuels, de l'Antiquité à nos jours. Il faut dire que le cinéma et la télévision font émerger une nouvelle iconographie à travers des techniques spécifiques. Elle

complète l'iconographie traditionnelle (peintures, gravures, dessins), par des trouvailles variées et séduisantes. Circé vit d'une vie fraîche au cinéma et à la télé, illustrant bien ce phénomène d'émergence d'une nouvelle iconographie, par le choix que les réalisateurs font d'actrices séduisantes, attrayantes, fascinantes, dont la présence a quelque chose de trouble et de troublant. Donner un visage, un corps, une voix et un style de jeu vivant à Circé met en avant la grande force d'incarnation qui caractérise l'art cinématographique (grand écran ou télé). Et, de plus, le cinéma, art des métamorphoses, se situe – symboliquement – sous le signe de Circé. Il nous transforme en cochons, puis de nouveau en êtres humains (plus beaux et meilleurs), il nous séduit et nous coupe de la réalité tragique, nous fait plonger dans le royaume des morts mais, surtout, nous montre le chemin de retour vers notre Ithaque personnelle...

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# ***Le dibbouk* de Michal Waszynski (1937): entre la magie et le mysticisme**

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KATARZYNA LIPINSKA\*

“DYBBUK” BY MICHAL WASZYNSKI (1937):  
BETWEEN MAGIC AND MYSTICISM

**Abstract:** Dybbuk, in the folklore of Hassidic Jews in Eastern Europe, is a spirit of a dead man who takes possession of the body of the person to whom he was attached in his lifetime. Michal Waszynski's *The Dybbuk*, released in Poland in 1937, set on stage this figure, based on the play by Sholem Anski, a Russian ethnographer, and on the expressionist aesthetics. Waszynski's film is a witness fiction that contains traces of the existence of Yiddish culture and the magical beliefs of Eastern European Jews before the Second World War, from which the legend of Dybbuk is originated. This paper aims to question the images of magic and mysticism present in Waszynski's film in order to understand the self-representation of a disappeared world.

**Keywords:** *The Dybbuk*, Hasidism, Kabbalah, Michal Waszynski, Yiddish cinema, Anski.

Dans les versions allemande et polonaise du film *Le Dibbouk* de Michal Waszynski, tourné en langue yiddish, le carton servant de prologue annonce la présence d'éléments magiques. Il communique le message suivant: «Dans l'âme du peuple juif la croyance aux pouvoirs magiques et aux esprits invisibles est profondément enracinée. La kabbale<sup>1</sup> est l'expression de ces humeurs sombres. Cette œuvre est consacrée au fantastique rempli de miracles. La croyance en la migration des âmes prit ici un caractère particulier». Ce prologue, qui n'est pas présent dans les versions du film sous-titrées en français et en anglais, annonce également la présence du Messenger, un

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<sup>1</sup> Plusieurs versions de ce terme en français sont possibles, nous allons utiliser celle proposée par Gershom Scholem dans son ouvrage *La Kabbale*.

émissaire envoyé par l'au-delà pour veiller à l'accomplissement du destin. En revanche, la première image cinématographique de toutes les versions du film est un mouvement panoramique du haut vers le bas, d'un chandelier – la lumière, vers la Torah – le verbe. Daria Mazur a remarqué dans ces éléments la symbolique de l'enseignement kabbalistique du *Livre de la Lumière*, selon lequel le Monde a été créé des lettres de l'alphabet hébreu et de la lumière<sup>2</sup>. L'ouverture suggère le marquage du récit par la mystique juive. Cette première image en mouvement n'est donc pas une simple description d'un livre qui s'ouvre et d'un chandelier qui s'allume. En association avec le prologue de la version allemande et polonaise, mais aussi avec un carton présent dans toutes les versions qui arrive après l'image du livre saint pour annoncer la possibilité de la migration des âmes, l'image cinématographique devient l'image pensante dans le sens de Gilles Deleuze. Elle est subordonnée «à des fonctions de la pensée»<sup>3</sup>. Quel sens l'analyse contextualisée de ces images pensantes peut-elle donner à la présence des pouvoirs magiques, des esprits invisibles et du mysticisme annoncés dans l'ouverture du film?

### ***Le Dibbouk et le folklore hassidique***

*Le Dibbouk* de Michal Waszynski sort en Pologne le 29 septembre 1937 et reste à l'affiche pendant trois mois. Il est aujourd'hui considéré comme l'un de rares témoins de l'existence du cinéma en langue yiddish, vernaculaire, qui a disparu «au profit de l'hébreu»<sup>4</sup> (et en conséquence de la Shoah), ce qui a donné au cinéma israélien le statut du «principal représentant du cinéma juif»<sup>5</sup>. Sous-titré en polonais à l'époque de ses premières projections dans le plus grand cinéma de Varsovie, Sfinks, ce film a également attiré des spectateurs ne parlant pas le yiddish. Pour Daria Mazur cet intérêt pour *Le Dibbouk* est lié à sa thématique qui traite du «mysticisme réconfortant»<sup>6</sup> durant la période des nationalismes et de l'antisémitisme montants en Europe dans les années 1930. Natan Gross remarque que l'un des arguments de produire ce film par la société Feniks, projeté pour la première fois le 29 septembre 1937 au cinéma Sfinks<sup>7</sup>, était la nostalgie de la pièce de théâtre *Le Dibbouk*,

<sup>2</sup> Daria Mazur, *Dybuk* (Poznań: Wydawn. Naukowe UAM, 2007), 54.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Cinéma 2: l'image-temps* (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1985), 35.

<sup>4</sup> Sabine Salhab, «Islam, judaïsme et cinéma. Interdits religieux, questionnements identitaires», *Cahiers d'études du religieux. Recherches interdisciplinaires* (2012), 18.

<sup>5</sup> Sabine Salhab, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Daria Mazur, *Dybuk*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> L'un des producteurs majeurs et laboratoire cinématographique (studio) en Pologne entre 1909 et 1939. Ce studio créé par Aleksander Hertz possédait également le cinéma Sfinks à Varsovie.

ou entre deux mondes de Shalom Anski<sup>8</sup> dont le film est l'adaptation. Ce lien avec le théâtre est renforcé par la mise en scène filmique qui emploie avec modestie la règle de 180° propre au cinéma, au profit de plans d'ensemble et à plusieurs personnages. Cette technique donne parfois l'impression de regarder du théâtre filmé, avec des zooms sur des situations qui se déroulent sur la même scène. La pièce d'Anski a été jouée pour la première fois le 9 décembre 1920 par la troupe de Vilna (théâtre yiddish), au théâtre Elizeum à Varsovie, un mois après la mort de son auteur. Abraham Morewski a interprété le rôle de Tsadik (guide spirituel chez les Juifs hassidiques<sup>9</sup> d'Europe de l'Est) de Miropole dans la pièce en question et dans le film de Michal Waszynski. Le personnage de ce mystique, le médiateur entre le monde terrestre et le monde surnaturel, a été sans doute inspiré par des observations d'Anski lors de son expédition ethnographique entre 1912 et 1914<sup>10</sup> visant à étudier et documenter le folklore juif dans les régions de Podolie et de Volhynie, situées à l'époque en Pologne et en Ukraine<sup>11</sup>. De nombreuses légendes et croyances juives hassidiques, dont les histoires des dibbouks, ont nourri l'écriture de la pièce de théâtre d'Anski entre 1914 -1915. L'impact du mysticisme a renforcé, pour Anski, la signification de ces légendes dans le contexte de l'éclatement de la première guerre mondiale: «Je me trouvais là-bas dans un environnement mystique, qui le devint encore plus au cours des horribles persécutions...»<sup>12</sup>

Selon Gershom Scholem, un dibbouk, dans la kabbale juive, est «un esprit malin ou une âme perdue qui pénètre dans une personne vivante, s'attache

<sup>8</sup> Shloyme Zanvl Rappoport (1863–1920), dit Sholem Anski, ou Sh. Anski, était ethnographe, écrivain et journaliste russe né à Vitebsk (Biélorussie), connu pour ses engagements auprès des révolutionnaires socialistes russes. Il a traduit *l'Internationale* en yiddish et a écrit *Le serment*, le texte de l'hymne du mouvement judéo-socialiste, le Bund.

<sup>9</sup> Le hassidisme a été fondé au XVIIIe siècle par le rabbin Baal Shem Tow et s'est répandu en Europe de l'Est. Cette orientation mystique et extatique du judaïsme vise rendre la Kabbale accessible à tous.

<sup>10</sup> Cette expédition était financée par la Société juive ethnographique et historique de Saint-Pétersbourg. Anski a été accompagné par son neveu, le photographe Solomon Youdovine dont les photographies sont les témoignages rares de la vie des Juifs de la zone de résidence dans l'Empire russe, abolie en 1917 suite à la révolution bolchevique. Les croquis de Youdovine ont été repris par Chagall et d'autres artistes Juifs de l'École artistique de Vitebsk. Voir: Olga Osadtschy, «Solomon Yudovin. An Archive of People and Places», in: Olga Osadtschy et Josef Helfenstein (dir.), *Chagall. The Brakthrough Years 1911–1919* (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2017), 74–93.

<sup>11</sup> Sylvie Anne Goldberg, «Une valse du démon et de l'histoire», *L'Homme*, 195–196 (2010), 71–72.

<sup>12</sup> Texte rédigé par Anski, cité par Sylvie Anne Goldberg, 73–74.



à son âme, provoque des troubles mentaux, parle par sa bouche et manifeste une personnalité distincte et étrangère»<sup>13</sup>. Les dibbouks pénétraient dans les corps des personnes coupables de péchés et étaient des esprits de personnes décédées n'ayant pas trouvé le repos et devenues des démons<sup>14</sup>. Les sources juives notent les premières apparitions des cas de possessions par ces esprits des morts qui s'emparent des corps des vivants dès le début du XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle chez les Juifs séfarades et hassidiques<sup>15</sup>. Ces documents attestent qu'il s'agit d'esprits malfaisants, qui s'imposent à la victime en accaparant son âme et son corps. Le dibbouk pousse souvent son hôte à commettre des actes immoraux et modifie sa voix. Il a été également observé que la victime entre dans une transe accompagnée par une série de convulsions, comme dans un cas d'hystérie. Son identité est complètement effacée au profit de celle de l'esprit. La victime ignore qu'elle est possédée. Le rituel d'exorcisme est obligatoire pour chasser un dibbouk<sup>16</sup>. Cet acte de magie cérémonielle ne peut être réalisé que par un puissant Tsadik ou Rabbi.

Le rituel magique d'exorcisme mis en scène dans le film *Le Dibbouk* de Michal Waszynski et dans la pièce d'Anski, ne ressemble pas à une bataille contre un démon suggérée par les textes précités. Plutôt que de parler d'un «esprit malin», le terme «âme perdue»<sup>17</sup> convient plus pour désigner le dibbouk du film de Waszynski. Déjà Anski dans son journal s'oppose à la connotation démoniaque du dibbouk de sa pièce de théâtre<sup>18</sup>. Puisque dans la pièce d'Anski, comme dans le film de Waszynski, il s'agit d'un jeune et pieux étudiant de yeshiva, Chanan<sup>19</sup> qui devient un dibbouk par amour et accidentellement, pour s'unir avec celle qui lui a été promise, Léa. La victime du dibbouk, Léa, est «une honnête et pieuse demoiselle juive, craignant Dieu». C'est ainsi que Sander présente à Tsadik sa fille possédée, plaidant pour son innocence dans cette affaire. Comment se fait-il que le cas de possession touche ces deux êtres purs? La scène du début du film présente leurs pères, Sander et Nissan, dans leur jeunesse, en train de se jurer de marier leurs futurs enfants (dont la conception n'est pas encore certaine).

<sup>13</sup> Gershom Scholem, *La Kabbale. Une introduction* (Paris: Gallimard, 2019), 528.

<sup>14</sup> Gershom Scholem, 529.

<sup>15</sup> Yoram Bilu, «Dybbuk and Maggid: Two Cultural Patterns of Altered Consciousness in Judaism», *AJS Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1996), 349.

<sup>16</sup> Yoram Bilu, 364.

<sup>17</sup> Référence à la définition précitée du dibbouk par Gershom Scholem, *La Kabbale*, 528.

<sup>18</sup> Shalom Anski, *1915 Diary of S. A. Ansky: A Russian Jewish Writer at the Eastern Front*, Traduit du yiddish par Polly Zavadvker (Indiana University Press, 2016), 113.

<sup>19</sup> Nous avons choisi la traduction française des prénoms des personnages qui provient du livret fourni avec le DVD du film édité par Lobster Films en 2016.



Ils habitent loin l'un de l'autre. Nissan, le père de Chanan meurt, Sander se concentre sur sa vie, le serment tombe dans l'oubli. Chanan ignore l'existence de la promesse lorsqu'il arrive à Brynitz où il dîne régulièrement chez Sander. Ce dernier, aveuglé par l'argent, trouve un riche fiancé pour sa fille. Il ignore que le cœur de Léa bat pour ce modeste étudiant du yeshiva qui prend des repas sous son toit. Désespéré, Chanan utilise la kabbale magique pour pouvoir récupérer sa bienaimée, mais il meurt foudroyé par la colère divine et revient en tant que dibbouk. Pourquoi doit-il mourir et revenir en tant qu'un dibbouk, alors que son intention poussée par son amour pur pour Léa semblait innocente?

### La magie plaidée coupable?

La magie pratique est plutôt réprimandée dans le film de Waszynski. Henokh s'inquiète pour son ami Chanan qui, pour pouvoir récupérer Léa, essaye des formules de la kabbale magique pour créer de l'or. Il prononce des incantations dans un bain spirituel et s'inflige des mortifications. Henokh avertit son ami que se vouer à Satan est dangereux ce à quoi Chanan répond: «dans chaque péché il y a une part de sainteté», «Dieu a créé l'Ombre et du moment qu'il est une facette de Dieu, il doit avoir en lui de la sainteté». Enfin, Chanan s'expose à la colère divine en chantant les paroles saintes du *Cantique des cantiques* pour exprimer une déclaration d'amour pour Léa. Or, selon le Zohar ce texte sacré exprime «une plénitude de désir»<sup>20</sup> de l'homme pour Dieu dont la «Splendeur ne se dévoile en rien, mais elle se tient dans la contemplation du cœur, car le cœur la connaît et la contemple...»<sup>21</sup>. Si l'erreur de Chanan est d'utiliser des formules magiques et des textes sacrés dans un but pratique et de faire référence au nom de l'ange déchu, pourquoi ne meurt-il pas à ces moments précis?

L'analyse de la scène de la mort de Chanan nous apportera d'autres éclaircissements concernant sa transformation en dibbouk. Cette scène commence avec l'arrivée de ce jeune étudiant de yeshiva à la synagogue. En voyant l'Arche Sainte (Aron Kodesh) ouverte, il se tourne en direction de la caméra, pour signaler qu'il interprète cela comme un message de l'au-delà. Le hors-champ derrière la caméra marque un espace de l'au-delà auquel s'adressent Chanan et Léa. Dans la scène finale, quand Léa marche vers la

<sup>20</sup> *Le Zohar. Cantique des Cantiques*, 61d–62a, traduit de l'araméen et de l'hébreu, annotation et introduction par Charles Mopsik (Lagrasse: Editions Verdier, Collection *Les dix paroles*, 1999), 58.

<sup>21</sup> *Zohar*, 62a, 60.

caméra qui s'éloigne en même temps, elle se dirige pour rejoindre l'âme de son amoureux qui a quitté son corps.

Dans la scène de la mort de Chanan, la caméra s'approche de lui, l'image se resserre sur son visage pour saisir le bouleversement provoqué par l'annonce des fiançailles de Léa avec un riche jeune homme. Ses yeux sont grands ouverts, fixent un point derrière la caméra, il parle vite, avec de l'excitation, comme s'il était obsédé par la recherche d'une solution immédiate. Le mariage de Léa étant prévu pour le lendemain, il compte, à voix haute, les rouleaux de la Torah et les additionne aux nombres correspondant aux lettres des prénoms Chanan et Léa. En espérant récupérer Léa, le jeune homme utilise les techniques de Gematria, «l'herméneutique se rapportant à l'interprétation de la Torah»<sup>22</sup> pour trouver un sens caché dans les prénoms des mortels. On peut le comparer à un magicien kabbaliste, pour qui, selon Moshé Idel «la connaissance du mécanisme supérieur n'est qu'un moyen pour des buts plus pratiques»<sup>23</sup>. En effet, le but de Chanan n'est pas celui d'un mystique qui contemplerait les textes sacrés pour s'approcher de Dieu, mais celui d'un homme qui utilise ces textes et techniques dans un but pratique pour s'unir avec une femme mortelle. Le regard de Chanan dirigé vers le haut, hors champ, suggère qu'il s'adresse à une présence surnaturelle en espérant qu'elle l'aide. Lorsqu'il découvre que le prénom Léa peut signifier: «pas de Dieu», il se pose la question à laquelle il répond par la suite: «de qui alors? de Satan!». L'Arche, qui paraît majestueuse filmée en contre-plongée, se ferme, ses rideaux viennent de la cacher. Ce plan montre que la parole de Chanan était dirigée vers la Torah et qu'il a offensé Dieu en prononçant le nom de Satan. Lorsqu'il s'aperçoit que Dieu ne veut pas l'aider dans son entreprise, c'est Satan qu'il appelle à son aide.

Les plans où Chanan propose à Satan de lui offrir son intelligence, son corps et son âme en échange de Léa alternent avec ceux où les invités de Sander s'extasient dans une danse joyeuse, remerciant Dieu pour les fiançailles de Léa. Ces images de joie, qui caractérisent les Juifs hassidiques, contrastent avec l'obsession gravée sur le visage du jeune étudiant de yeshiva. Chanan tombe mort au moment où il crie: «Devant moi se révèle le Mystère du grand Nom de Dieu! Je le vois. J'ai réussi une fois de plus!» Ces paroles font allusion à ses incantations et à ses mortifications précédentes. Le jeune homme est mort à ce moment précis et non pas avant car c'est à cet instant qu'il attire la colère divine sur lui en prétendant avoir trouvé le chemin pour

<sup>22</sup> Gershom Scholem, *La Kabbale*, 511.

<sup>23</sup> Moshé Idel, *La cabale. Nouvelles perspectives*, traduit de l'anglais par Charles Mopsik (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1998), 402.

approcher Dieu et connaître le mystère de son Nom. Ce n'est pas l'usage de la magie qui a provoqué sa chute, mais son ego. Or, dans le hassidisme, pour s'approcher de Dieu, il faut tout d'abord effacer son «Je»<sup>24</sup>. Dans le plan suivant, le travelling avant nous conduit vers Sander qui danse encerclé par ses invités. Il s'agit de freylekhs<sup>25</sup>, une danse traditionnelle chez les Juifs hassidiques où les hommes groupés en cercle avancent enlacés en levant les yeux vers le haut pour saluer Dieu. La caméra traverse le cercle pour se poser en face de Sander qui se trouve au milieu, comme si elle voulait désigner un autre coupable de la mort de Chanan. Ce montage dialectique suggère l'existence de deux responsables à ce malheur.

## Deux responsables

La responsabilité de Sander tient à la promesse rompue faite à son ami Nissan, le père de Chanan, de marier leurs enfants. Ce serment a été prononcé au début du film et bien avant que Léa et Chanan soient nés. Si le film se compose en majorité de plans d'ensemble et à plusieurs personnages, on peut remarquer quatre scènes composées du procédé champ/contre-champ, qui créent un sens ensemble. Ces images marquent les points de pivot du récit sur les conséquences du serment oublié et confirment la responsabilité de Sander.

Le premier jeu champ/hors-champ apparaît dans la scène de la rencontre entre le riche Sander et le pauvre Chanan. Sander manque de renverser Chanan avec sa calèche, conduite par son employé. Le jeune étudiant de yeshiva marche sur la route en lisant un livre, avec toutes ses affaires accrochées à un bâton qu'il tient dans une main. Les deux types d'aveuglement de ces deux personnages sont annoncés. Sander se précipite pour conclure une affaire et ne voit Chanan qu'au dernier moment, juste à temps pour arrêter la calèche. Chanan est absorbé par la lecture d'un livre et ne regarde pas son chemin. La caméra fait rentrer le Messenger du monde surnaturel dans le champ de Chanan pour suggérer à Sander de déposer le jeune homme à Brynitz. Ceci lui évitera d'être en retard pour Shabbat. Le Messenger commente la rencontre ainsi: «à présent tous se déroulera comme prévu», en rappelant le serment qui a été prononcé au début du film par Sander et Nissan.

<sup>24</sup> Rachel Elior, *Mystyczne źródła chasydyzmu* (Kraków/Budapeszt: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2009), 143.

<sup>25</sup> James Hoberman, *Bridge of Light. Yiddish Film between Two Worlds* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 281.

Cette apparition inattendue montre que l'au-delà veille à ce que la promesse soit tenue pour éviter l'irréversible.

Le deuxième champ/contre-champ se déroule entre Sander et Léa, dans leur maison. À ce moment, après avoir entendu sa fille interpréter *Le Cantique des cantiques* que chantait à l'époque son ami Nissan, Sander devine en discutant avec sa fille, l'identité de Chanan. Ce garçon a chanté pour Léa *Le Cantique des cantiques* pour lui déclarer son amour, le chant que son père décédé Nissan avait pour l'habitude de chanter pour déclarer son amour mystique envers Dieu. Sander fait alors le lien entre Chanan et son ami Nissan qui chantait à la demande de Tsadik Azriel *Le Cantique des cantiques* au début du film. Malgré cette découverte et le souvenir du serment qui lui revient, il maintient le mariage de sa fille en disant «c'est trop tard». Sa responsabilité est engagée à ce moment-là.

Le troisième jeu champ/contre-champ se déroule au cimetière, après la mort de Chanan et avant le mariage de Léa. À ce moment, le Messenger apprend à Léa l'existence des dibbouks. Léa invite l'esprit de Chanan à son mariage, au titre de fiancé.

Le quatrième jeu champ/contre-champ a lieu pendant la danse entre Léa et la Mort. Il annonce l'arrivée du dibbouk de Chanan qui apparaît en fondu enchaîné à la place de la Mort. Les visages en gros plans qui se succèdent de ces deux amoureux mettent l'accent sur leurs regards et sourires retrouvés. Léa ne voit plus la mort en face d'elle, mais son bienaimé.

L'ensemble de ces images pensantes expose le problème de la promesse prononcée par les hommes, non tenue par ses initiateurs et saisit les conséquences qui en découlent. Il en désigne les responsables, aveuglés par leurs buts individuels, par leur ego. Pourtant, la magie et les incantations pratiquées par Chanan ne sont pas remises en cause en soi. Ces pratiques peuvent être autorisées par certaines orientations kabbalistiques de la religion juive comme l'a démontré Karl Erich Grozinger, elles peuvent notamment servir à créer un Golem<sup>26</sup>. Cependant, l'enjeu de la création d'un Golem est de s'approcher de Dieu. Dans le film de Waszynski, c'est l'intention d'utiliser la magie dans un but pratique pour assouvir son ego et son désir et non pas pour créer le lien mystique avec Dieu, recherché par la foi hassidique.

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<sup>26</sup> Karl Erich Grozinger, «Between Magic and Religion – Ashkenazi Hasidic Piety», in *Mysticism, magic and kabbalah in ashkenazi judaism* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 28–43.

## Tsadik Azriel et le mysticisme

Dans *Le Dibbouk* (1937), les superstitions, l'utilisation pratique de la magie sont réprimandées, mais ne sont pas interdites. Quand le futur mari de Léa annonce à son enseignant qu'il a peur des autres, celui-ci utilise des formules pour enlever le mauvais œil. Le père du jeune homme en voyant la scène crie: «On ne récite pas de formules ici!» et se met ensuite à raconter la nouvelle sur l'annulation du mariage qui semble plus importante. En revanche, se vouer à Satan est très mal perçu. Deux villageoises assises dans une ombre expressionniste commentent l'enterrement de Chanan: «Va te douter qu'il faisait le commerce avec la Mauvais. Que Dieu nous garde. Un type comme ça il faut l'enterrer derrière la clôture». Lors de l'enterrement de Chanan, tout le monde craint de dire le kaddish pour lui.

Le film de Michal Waszynski met en scène également la magie cérémonielle et le mysticisme qui sont autorisées et intégrées dans la religion. Sander emmène sa fille Léa possédée par un dibbouk chez un mystique, le Tsadik Azriel de Miropole. Guidé par la lumière divine, il est en mesure de communiquer avec les morts et c'est lui qui découvre l'identité du dibbouk – Chanan. Le Tsadik Azriel de Miropole descend de la lignée de Baal Shem Tow (1698–1760), le rabbin qui est à l'origine du hassidisme au XVIIIe siècle, une orientation mystique du judaïsme basée sur la kabbale et née au sud-est de la Pologne, dans les anciennes régions géographiques appelées à l'époque Podolie et Volhynie<sup>27</sup>. Baal Shem Tow pouvait guérir les malades et accomplir des miracles. Le hassidisme fondé sur l'enseignement de Baal Shem Tow est un mouvement égalitaire car l'accès au monde divin n'est pas réservé à l'élite, Dieu est présent dans chaque lieu et moment<sup>28</sup>. L'expérience spirituelle se fait dans la joie mystico-extatique. Chacun peut s'élever à Dieu s'il est prêt à abandonner son «je» pour s'unir avec le Tout Puissant *dewekut*<sup>29</sup> en abandonnant l'expérience du monde matériel grâce à la pratique de la contemplation des lettres et des pensées, de l'ascèse et de l'amour mystique et inconditionnel<sup>30</sup>. Pour s'approcher de Dieu, il faut créer un lien spirituel avec Tsadik, le médiateur entre Dieu et les disciples, un canal entre le monde matériel et l'infini. Les communautés hassidiques sont centrées autour d'un Tsadik, qui est aussi un intermédiaire entre les morts et les vivants, un sage qui peut guérir les êtres

<sup>27</sup> Rachel Elijor, *Mistyczne*, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Rachel Elijor, *Mistyczne*, 147.

<sup>29</sup> Rachel Elijor, *Mistyczne*, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Rachel Elijor, *Mistyczne*, 149.

vivants et morts, qui accompagne dans le processus de la purification des âmes<sup>31</sup>.

Dans le film de Michal Waszynski, le Tsadik Azriel de Miropole sait guérir les âmes et les corps. Il a réuni autour de lui une communauté, des disciples et les gens viennent le voir pour être entendus. Il utilise la magie uniquement dans le but d'aider ses frères humains à s'approcher de Dieu, comme dans le cas du rituel magique de l'exorcisme du dibbouk de Chanan, où il s'agit également de purifier son âme en peine. Tsadik Azriel utilise la magie une fois qu'il a compris qu'il était le dibbouk et lorsque les moyens de persuasion de quitter le corps de Léa n'ont pas été efficaces. Il semble comprendre la psychologie des âmes perdues: «les âmes humaines dans de grandes peines et douleurs, au travers de nombreuses réincarnations, comme l'enfant vers le sein de sa mère, sont attirées vers les Hauteurs, vers leur source, le Trône de Gloire. Or, il arrive que lorsqu'une âme gravit des degrés très élevés, elle tombe, sous l'emprise du démon, elle devient pervertie et tombe». C'est pourquoi il exprime de la compassion envers l'âme perdue de Chanan.

Comme le remarque Ira Konigsberg, il ne s'agit pas de chasser un mal qui menace le bien, comme dans *l'Exorciste* (1973) de William Friedkin, mais de purifier une âme qui s'est perdue entre les deux mondes et de l'aider à retrouver le chemin qui mène vers Dieu<sup>32</sup>. C'est ce que compte faire le Tsadik Azriel. D'abord, il échoue lors de l'interrogatoire du dibbouk qui ne veut pas quitter le corps de Léa, ensuite il perd le procès rabbinique contre cet esprit résistant, et enfin il procède à l'excommunication du dibbouk de Chanan de la communauté d'Israël en prononçant l'anathème pour le chasser du corps de Léa. Ensuite il enlève l'anathème pour que cette âme puisse retrouver son chemin vers Dieu. Pour terminer le rituel, le Tsadik dessine le cercle de protection magique que Léa ne doit pas franchir. En entendant la voix de l'âme de Chanan elle sort du cercle pour s'unir à jamais avec son bienaimé. Ira Konigsberg évoque les rites de la kabbale pour unifier Dieu et le peuple d'Israël par l'unification des divinités mâles et femelles, *Yihudim*. On utilisait le *Yihudim* qui représente l'union sacrée pour exorciser le dibbouk<sup>33</sup>. Comme l'observe Ira Konigsberg *Yihudim* n'a pas été utilisé pour chasser l'esprit de Chanan. Cette observation confirme que le dibbouk de Chanan n'était pas un esprit malsain. Elle laisse libre aussi l'interprétation de cette dernière scène. Peut-être que les efforts de Chanan et de Léa les

<sup>31</sup> Rachel Elijor, *Mistyczne*, 160–189.

<sup>32</sup> Ira Konigsberg, «“The Only ‘I’ in the World”: Religion, Psychoanalysis, and “The Dybbuk”», *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (Summer, 1997), 30.

<sup>33</sup> Ira Konigsberg, 35.

ont finalement conduits à trouver le chemin vers l'union sacrée, en réalisant l'union (de leurs âmes) d'un homme et d'une femme.

### ***Le Dibbouk – la magie filmique de la culture yiddish***

«J'ai oublié qui je suis, seulement à travers tes pensées je peux me souvenir» – voici comment Chanan avertit Léa qu'il est en train de disparaître, après avoir été chassé de son corps. Hanna Krall, auteure d'une nouvelle sur un Américain, vivant en harmonie avec le dibbouk de son frère mort dans un ghetto durant la deuxième guerre mondiale, considère qu'une nation entière peut posséder son dibbouk: «aujourd'hui nous savons qu'il ne faut pas chasser le dibbouk, il est notre mémoire»<sup>34</sup>. Si le dibbouk est notre mémoire, nous pouvons avancer qu'analogiquement *Le Dibbouk* de Michal Waszynski, grâce à la magie permise par le cinéma, fait revivre pendant le temps de la diffusion du film la culture yiddish d'avant l'Holocauste. Cette mémoire magique est une trace d'une autoreprésentation esthétique de ce monde disparu qui vit encore à travers quelques éléments, énumérés et commentés plus bas:

#### *La musique et la danse*

Parmi les danses présentes dans le film, la danse macabre entre Léa et la Mort est la plus marquante. Cette danse expressionniste articulée avec les vrais gestes des danses folkloriques hassidiques a été chorégraphiée par Judith Berg. La Mort semble hypnotiser Léa. Une deuxième danse marquante est celle des mendiants. Judith Berg semble reproduire la chorégraphie expressionniste de Vakhtangov pour la pièce de théâtre jouée par le Théâtre Habima. En lisant l'article de Giora Manor sur cette représentation, on retrouve dans le film de Waszynski les mêmes mouvements des animaux associés aux mendiants et la même impression d'un sabbat de sorcières caricaturées<sup>35</sup>. Hoberman compare les personnages de cette danse aux personnages misérables de l'enfer de Bruegel<sup>36</sup>. La danse entre la fiancée et les femmes insistantes qui veulent toucher la vierge car cela porte bonheur, c'est un autre élément magique.

<sup>34</sup> Entretien avec Hanna Krall et Krzysztof Warlikowski, «Bez dybuków będziemy gorsi i głupsi», *Rzeczpospolita*, 4 octobre 2003, numéro 232.

<sup>35</sup> Voir Giora Manor, «Extending the Traditional Wedding Dance: Inbal's Yemenite Wedding and the Beggars' Dance in Habimah's *The Dybbuk*», *Dance Research Journal*, Vol. 17/18, (Autumn, 1985-Spring, 1986), 74.

<sup>36</sup> James Hoberman, *Bridge of Light*, 283.



Toutes ces danses soulignent la différence entre les riches et les pauvres dans un shtetl<sup>37</sup>. Les danses des pauvres alternent avec celles des riches. Tandis que les pauvres bougent maladroitement, les danses des riches sont plus harmonieuses. Les danses traditionnelles<sup>38</sup> devant les fiancés, des hommes dans une pièce et des femmes de leur côté, la veille de leur mariage, associées à la musique composée par Henoeh Kon, rappellent l'atmosphère des shtetls. La mémoire des shtetls est également évoquée par les notes des violons et du klezmer. La danse et la musique envoûtantes, font ressentir le pouls de ce monde disparu. Henoeh Kon a coopéré avec Gerszon Sirota, le premier cantor de la Grande Synagogue de Varsovie, qui interprète le *Cantique des cantiques* dans le film.

### *La scénographie et les costumes*

La scénographie expressionniste du shtetl a été conçue par Jacek Rotmil et Norris. D'abord, le shtetl de Kazimierz Dolny où le film a été tourné<sup>39</sup> ressemble à un cimetière au milieu duquel se trouve la sainte tombe des amoureux assassinés par des cosaques en 1648, comme le montre Rachel Elior<sup>40</sup>. Elior rappelle les pogroms des Juifs entrepris par les troupes de Chmielnicki, les persécutions des Juifs russes de l'époque d'Anski et renvoie à la situation de la Pologne des années 1930.

Au cimetière, les tombes et les arbres sont déformés, une ombre noire couvre la tombe de Chanan, tandis que les autres tombes reflètent la lumière. Le fort contraste entre le noir et le blanc renvoie à la mise en scène de la pièce de théâtre *Dibbuk* par Evgueny Vakhtangov au Théâtre Habima de Moscou. Selon Daria Mazur, ce spectacle a pu être vu à Varsovie en 1926, lors de la tournée mondiale du Théâtre Habima qui a dû quitter l'Union Soviétique pour s'installer définitivement en Palestine en 1928<sup>41</sup>. La scénographie reproduit l'architecture d'un shtetl avec une place centrale et la synagogue

<sup>37</sup> Les shtetls étaient des bourgades, des hameaux juifs en Europe de l'Est, qui existaient jusqu'à la deuxième guerre mondiale. Anski lors de son expédition a étudié 17 shtetls de Podolie et de Volhynie.

<sup>38</sup> James Hoberman a identifié trois danses traditionnelles hassidiques présentes dans le film: freylekhs, patshtants, toytntants, Voir: *Bridge of Light*, 281.

<sup>39</sup> Eric A. Goldman, *Visions, Images and Dreams. Yiddish Film – Past & Present* (New Jersey: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 2010), 87.

<sup>40</sup> Selon Rachel Elior, *Mistyczne*, 14, le hassidisme était une réaction au vide spirituel laissé par les pogroms des Juifs par les cosaques de Chmielnicki.

<sup>41</sup> Pearl Fishman, «Vakhtangov's *The Dybbuk*», *The Drama Review: TDR*, Vol. 24, No. 3, Jewish Theatre Issue (Sep., 1980), 43.

au milieu, le cimetière se trouvant à proximité<sup>42</sup>. On peut aussi se projeter dans l'intérieur du yeshiva et des maisons, s'imaginer à quoi ressemblaient les costumes traditionnels et religieux lors des cérémonies.

### *La reproduction des fêtes religieuses*

L'action du film se déroule dans le contexte des fêtes religieuses juives, ce qui suggère que les personnages agissent en étant animés par une cause métaphysique. Les deux pères font leur serment à Hochaana Rabba, le septième et dernier jour de la fête juive de Souccot. Léa et Chanan se rencontrent le jour du sabbat, un jour saint symbolisant l'unité et l'harmonie où les forces du mal n'ont aucun pouvoir sur le monde. À ce moment même, selon le Zohar, l'œuvre maîtresse de la kabbale, les éléments divins, le féminin et le masculin, fusionnent<sup>43</sup>. Tout comme les deux amoureux dans scène finale.

## Conclusion

*Le Dibbouk* de Michal Waszynski met en scène des images pensantes deleuziennes qui composent une autoreprésentation du mysticisme et de la magie des Juifs hassidiques d'avant l'Holocauste. L'analyse filmique a montré une catégorisation des actes magiques et le degré de leur acceptation en fonction de l'intention de celui qui les réalise. Ces images expriment un besoin du contact avec le sacré dans un contexte de persécutions et de menace de la fin de tout. Daria Mazur voit *Le Dibbouk* comme une trace de l'intérêt porté pour les doctrines mystiques lors des périodes de pogroms<sup>44</sup>. La représentation de la magie, du mysticisme et de la figure du dibbouk nous rappelle l'existence d'un monde disparu, de ses traditions, de ses coutumes et de ses croyances. La magie qui s'exprime à travers ce film est aussi celle d'avoir éternisé, durant une période difficile, le travail des artistes du théâtre et du cinéma yiddish, emportés pour la plupart par la Shoah. La mémoire de ce monde disparu a été préservée grâce au travail de conservation des copies de ce film, considéré comme l'un des films les plus importants du corpus du cinéma juif en Pologne (1911–1979) qui comprend environ 70 œuvres (fictions et documentaires), selon Natan Gross<sup>45</sup>...

<sup>42</sup> Pour une lecture complète sur les shtetls, voir l'ouvrage suivant: Agnieszka Sabor, *Sztetl. Śladami żydowskich miasteczek* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Austeria, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Esther Starobinski-Safran, «La *Chekhina*, figure du féminin», *Pardès*, vol. 43, no. 2 (2007), 147–148.

<sup>44</sup> Daria Mazur, *Dybuk*, 18–19.

<sup>45</sup> Natan Gross, *Film żydowski w Polsce* (Kraków: Rabid, 2002), 14.

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# La transmutation de la représentation de la sorcellerie *Du Château de l'Araignée à Millennium Actress*

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ZIYIN CHEN\*

THE TRANSMUTATION OF THE REPRESENTATION OF WITCHCRAFT  
FROM *THRONE OF BLOOD* TO *MILLENNIUM ACTRESS*

**Abstract:** When Akira Kurosawa adapted Shakespeare's *Macbeth* in *Throne of Blood* in 1957, he was probably not able to anticipate that, almost half a century later, in 2001, his film would be used by Satoshi Kon in his animated film *Millennium Actress*. From the English theatre play of the seventeenth century, to the black and white Japanese classic epic, then the feature animation film, the witchcraft has undertaken a long trip both cultural and symbolic. The three witches in *Macbeth* became firstly a monster in Kurosawa's film and ended up as a phantom in Kon's animation. As the key element of these two Japanese films, the witchcraft was not only at the core of the cultural adapting work, but also an essential element which enabled the two directors to manifest their own definition of destiny. Introducing a cinematographic vision enlightened by the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, this work presents an analysis of the representation of the witchcraft and its functions in these two Japanese films. Whether the monster that represents the accursed desire which the protagonist obeys, or the phantom that embodies the terrible anxiety of the main character, it seems that the images we give to witchcraft sometimes too rashly are in fact fundamentally desires from which we want to escape.

**Keywords:** representation, adaptation, witchcraft, destiny, aesthetic, psycho-analysis, symbol, cinematography.

Fait de croyance, phénomène social, pratique rurale – la sorcellerie existe dans presque toutes les sociétés. Chaque société dispose de différentes

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manières de reconnaître, définir et représenter la sorcellerie. Celles-ci sont souvent conditionnées par les modes de vie, les cultures, les religions et les croyances propres à chaque culture. En tant que symbole qui embrasse une longue histoire de pratiques culturelles, en tant qu'image emblématique du malheur et de la perversité, la sorcellerie est un élément multifonctionnel – diégétique, métaphorique, symbolique et esthétique – fréquemment utilisé dans les œuvres des arts du spectacle, notamment dans le théâtre et au cinéma. Lorsque, en 1957, Akira Kurosawa adaptait le *Macbeth* de Shakespeare en réalisant *Le Château de l'Araignée*, il n'était très probablement pas capable d'anticiper que, presque un demi-siècle plus tard, en 2001, son film serait repris par Satoshi Kon dans son film d'animation *Millennium Actress*. De la pièce de théâtre anglaise du XVII<sup>ème</sup> siècle, au film d'épopée noir et blanc du cinéma classique japonais, jusqu'au long-métrage d'animation du début des années 2000, les spectateurs n'auront pas été les seuls à effectuer un long voyage. Un élément présent dans *Macbeth* a été repris par les deux cinéastes japonais: la sorcellerie, incarnée par trois sorcières dans *Macbeth*, prend d'abord la figure d'un monstre dans le film de Kurosawa pour finir sous la forme d'un fantôme dans l'animation de Kon. S'agit-il d'un changement fortuit ou bien d'un ajustement cinématographique élaboré et conscient? Quoi qu'il en soit, cela est loin d'être une modification négligeable de la part des cinéastes. Quel est donc le rôle de la sorcellerie dans les deux films et à quoi sert-elle concrètement? En introduisant un regard cinématographique éclairé par la théorie psychanalytique freudienne, ce travail propose une analyse de la sorcellerie et de ses fonctions dans ces deux films japonais.

De *Macbeth* à *Millennium Actress*, en passant par *Le Château de l'Araignée*, se produit un dépaysement temporel et culturel manifeste. Si Kurosawa propose une esthétique formaliste et une mise en scène pro-théâtrale intégrant des références au théâtre nô dans les scènes-clé du film, Kon abandonne cependant des éléments esthétiques renvoyant au théâtre et construit un espace-temps multi-dimensionnel grâce à des dispositifs spécifiques à l'animation. En tant qu'élément-clé de la création des deux films, la sorcellerie se trouve d'abord au centre du travail d'adaptation culturelle, en plus d'être l'élément essentiel qui définit le sens fondamental des œuvres.

Pour réaliser son *Macbeth* japonais, Kurosawa reprend la pièce de Shakespeare dans sa quasi-totalité – la même intrigue, les mêmes relations entre les personnages et presque la même fin: dans le Japon du XVI<sup>ème</sup> siècle, le Général Washizu (qui incarne Macbeth), sous l'influence de la prophétie énoncée par un monstre (figurant les trois sorcières) et de la provocation de

sa femme Asaji (lady Macbeth), trahit d'abord son maître Tsuzuki (Duncan) puis son ami Miki (Banquo) pour s'emparer du pouvoir avant de rencontrer une mort tragique à la fin du film. Parmi les modifications subtiles propres au travail d'adaptation, deux modifications bien précises concernent la sorcellerie – l'état de la représentation de la sorcellerie et l'ordre de la narration.

Shakespeare ouvre *Macbeth* sur trois sorcières qui émettent trois prophéties: leur rencontre avec le chevalier victorieux, l'avenir de Macbeth et celui de Banquo. Cette représentation de trois sorcières capables de prophétiser, renvoie de manière assez évidente aux mythes des déesses du destin que l'on retrouve dans différentes mythologies – les Moires grecques, les Parques romaines ou encore les Nornes nordiques<sup>1</sup>. Incarnée dans la mythologie grecque la plus ancienne par une seule Moīρα (*Moira*), elle finit par prendre la forme de trois sœurs. Cette évolution «se fit probablement à l'instar d'autres divinités auxquelles les Moires sont apparentées, telles les Grâces, les Heures»<sup>2</sup>. Cela perfectionne le sens du destin. Les premières sont symboles de fécondité et de créativité, tandis que les secondes incarnent le temps et les lois de la Nature. Ces «trois inflexibles déesses, maîtresses du destin, qui orientent l'existence humaine à la naissance et en coupent matériellement le fil une fois son terme achevé»<sup>3</sup>, sont associés à quelques concepts fondamentaux: la naissance, l'ordre et la mort. «Clotho, la fileuse, personnifie la trame de la vie [, ...] Lachésis, [...] la chance, la part de hasard à laquelle chaque homme a droit, et Atropos, [la mort,] l'inflexible destinée, contre laquelle nul ne peut rien.»<sup>4</sup> Elles sont remplacées par les trois sorcières de *Macbeth*: les figures divines, qui décident des heurs et malheurs de l'humanité, cèdent la place aux sorcières, qui renvoient au malheur et au satanisme.

Ces trois sorcières maudites deviennent, dans les deux films japonais, des figures non-humaines, qu'il s'agisse d'un monstre dans *Le Château de l'araignée* de Kurosawa, ou d'un fantôme dans *Millennium Actress* de Satoshi Kon. Ces changements qui semblent superflus sont en fait très probablement essentiels pour les spectateurs japonais en raison des cultes et des croyances qui leurs sont propres. Dans le *Shintō*, croyance à la fois polythéiste et animiste,

<sup>1</sup> Félix Guirand et Joël Schmidt, *Mythes et Mythologies Grecques* (Paris: Larousse, 1996), 217.

<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Essais de psychanalyse appliquée*, trans. Marie Bonaparte et Mme E. Marty (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), 95–96.

<sup>3</sup> Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge et Gabriella Pironti, «Les Moires entre la naissance et la mort: de la représentation au culte», *Des Fata aux fées*, no. 3–4 (2011): 93–114, doi:10.4000/edl.143. <https://journals.openedition.org/edl/143.html>

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Essais de psychanalyse appliquée*, 95–96.

le terme *Miko*, littéralement «la sorcière» désigne en fait des «servantes de divinité»<sup>5</sup>, des jeunes femmes vierges qui officient en tant qu'assistantes des prêtres pour de nombreux services<sup>6</sup>. Cette fonction religieuse qui renvoie à la pureté, à la divinité et à l'idée de sacré se trouve à l'opposé de la perversité, de la fourberie et de la perfidie que Kurosawa et Kon confèrent à leurs personnages. Pourtant, le monstre dans la forêt de l'Araignée renvoie au monstre *Yamaumba* (ou parfois *Yamamba*, littéralement «la sorcière des montagnes», monstre féminin jaloux et honteux qui dévore les humains<sup>7</sup>, souvent représenté dans les pièces du théâtre nô sous les traits d'une vieille sorcière laide à la chevelure blanche), figure culte nipponne qui incarne non seulement parfaitement les caractéristiques des trois sorcières de Shakespeare, mais se fait également l'intermédiaire idéal entre les deux cultures en alliant les définitions antagonistes de chacune. Kon, qui cite le film de Kurosawa dans son œuvre pour réaliser sa propre rétrospective de l'histoire du cinéma japonais à travers la vie d'une actrice, reprend également cet être non-humain. Il l'utilise en tant que fil conducteur du récit, en le transformant en fantôme qui hante non seulement le château mais également toute la vie du protagoniste.

Ces transformations de la représentation des sorcières, cependant, ne servent pas uniquement le cadre culturel, car elles se trouvent au fondement même de ces œuvres. Ces deux films japonais, l'un en proposant le récit d'un homme confronté à son désir de mal et l'autre en essayant de reconstruire l'histoire du cinéma japonais à travers la vie d'un individu, partagent en fait le même sujet – le destin. Dans la culture occidentale – la source culturelle et de pensée philosophique essentielle de *Macbeth*, qui inspire d'abord Akira Kurosawa et dont on trouve encore la trace de manière indirecte dans le film d'animation de Satoshi Kon, la question du destin est abordée depuis l'Antiquité, aussi bien dans les arts du spectacle que dans d'autres pratiques artistiques. Dans la mythologie grecque, la capacité d'anticiper le destin est réservée aux divinités, et le destin est considéré comme une épreuve obligatoire voire nécessaire à affronter. Et pourtant, il est présenté comme prédéterminé, inéluctable et irréversible, et ce malgré la désobéissance et la révolte de celles et ceux qui y sont soumis.

<sup>5</sup> Takashi Tsukada, «Les religieux mendicants d'Ôsaka durant la période prémoderne», *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales* 4, no. 66 (2011): 1053–1077, doi: 10.3917/anna.664.1053. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-Annales-2011-4-page-1053.html>

<sup>6</sup> Jean Herbert, *Aux Sources du Japon. Le Shintô* (Paris: Éditions Albin Michel, 1964), 220–221.

<sup>7</sup> Noriko T. Reider, *Japanese Demon Lore* (Utah State: University Press of Colorado, Utah State University Press, 2010), 61–63.



En même temps que la transformation des figures du destin dans ces œuvres – des Moires aux sorcières, puis aux êtres non-humains –, c'est la nature du «destin» que les réécritures de l'œuvre ont bouleversée. Le destin annoncé dans les prophéties, qui ne sont plus prédites par les déités ou les trois déesses du destin, mais par les sorcières ou même par des figures surnaturelles non-humaines rusées et sataniques, prend un aspect radicalement différent de celui qu'il revêt dans les œuvres d'origine. Il semble davantage s'inscrire dans une perspective freudienne (développée plus tard par Lacan) qui définit le destin comme la conséquence du désir. Pour Freud, «le destin, c'est-à-dire le rapport de l'homme à cette fonction qui s'appelle le désir ne prend toute son animation que pour autant qu'est concevable le morcellement du corps propre, cette coupure qui est le lieu des moments élus de son fonctionnement»<sup>8</sup>. Et ce désir désigne «[une] pulsion [...], une excitation pour le psychique, une excitation qui ne vient pas du monde extérieur, mais de l'intérieur de l'organisme lui-même»<sup>9</sup>, une excitation pulsionnelle que seule sa satisfaction peut supprimer. Autrement dit, si les œuvres de Kurosawa et Kon renvoient à ce principe, seule la réalisation de désirs que les personnages portent en eux est susceptible d'accomplir leur «destin». Et ce dernier n'est en effet jamais prédéterminé, il est forgé au fur et à mesure des décisions. Si ces théories psychanalytiques freudiennes sont des clés pertinentes pour analyser les œuvres de Kurosawa et de Kon, et si le destin n'est plus ni prédéterminé ni irrésistible, quel rôle les être surnaturels jouent-ils dans les deux films?

Plusieurs dispositifs de narration et de mise en scène concernant le monstre aux oripeaux de sorcière ont été mis en place par Kurosawa pour renforcer le lien entre le choix et le «destin». *Macbeth* s'ouvre sur la scène des sorcières, un dispositif narratif qui permet de signifier l'importance et l'effet dominant du destin dans l'intrigue de la pièce de manière explicite. Kurosawa, quant à lui, propose dans son adaptation une structure différente. Il supprime la scène au cours de laquelle les trois sorcières prédisent leur rencontre avec Macbeth, puis ajoute une scène dans laquelle le Maître de château Tsuzuki doit faire un choix. Il s'agit d'une scène où Tsuzuki, réuni dans la cour du château avec des généraux et des nobles, reçoit des nouvelles du front. Cette scène introduit la première alternative que le film réserve à Tsuzuki: sortir de la cité et se battre

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Jacques Gorog, «L'Anatomie, c'est le Destin», *Champ lacanien* 2, no. 17 (2015): 71-774, doi: 10.3917/chla.017.0071. <https://www.cairn.info/revue-champ-lacanien-2015-2-page-71.html>

<sup>9</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Métapsychologie*, trad. Jean Laplanche et J.-B. Pontalis (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 13-14.

ou y rester pour la défendre? Même si la question n'a finalement pas eu à être tranchée en raison de l'annonce de la victoire, du point de vue du dispositif narratif, cette modification de la structure du récit souligne explicitement l'importance de l'acte de choix dans le film.

C'est après cette scène de choix qu'arrive la scène de rencontre entre les généraux Washizu (Macbeth) et Miki (Banquo) et le *Yamauba*, être non-humain, dans la forêt de l'Araignée. La rencontre est à la fois fantastique et effrayante, «une union indissoluble existant entre la nature et le surnaturel, le temporel et l'éternel»<sup>10</sup>. Semblant marquer l'entrée vers un autre espace-temps, les éléments naturels – le brouillard épais et lourd, l'orage étrange et inopiné – forment une force magique qui trouble les deux amis et semble les mener inexorablement jusqu'au cœur d'une forêt de branches mortes, fines et faussées, toile d'araignée sylvestre qui dévore les deux samourais. Perdues dans ce labyrinthe naturel, les flèches tirées par Washizu tombent en vain. Au fond de leur prison métaphorique, Washizu et Miki se retrouvent devant un nid éclairé d'une lumière étrange dans lequel un monstre tisse mécaniquement le fil en chantant une chanson sur le destin avec une voix rocailleuse. Sarcastique, le monstre récite un poème qui compare la vie à l'ombre et se moque du désir de pouvoir avant d'annoncer les prophéties concernant l'avenir des protagonistes. Après la disparition du monstre, les deux samourais retournent dans le brouillard épais – annonciateur d'égarement total et d'aveuglement absolu – comme pour mettre fin au cauchemar tricoté par le monstre et retrouver enfin le monde normal. C'est en remettant en question la réalité des prophéties et de l'existence du monstre qu'ils finissent par retrouver le château. Mais le désir de pouvoir des personnages et la suspicion réciproque qui s'installe entre les deux amis semblent s'incarner dans la métaphore filmique proposée par le cinéaste. Au fond de l'image derrière le brouillard, au milieu d'un plan général avec profondeur de champ, se tient un château, symbole de pouvoir. En arrière-plan, les deux généraux occupent chacun un côté de l'image. Malgré la manifestation de loyauté, le désir de pouvoir et la tension de la lutte se dévoilent à travers la mise en scène proposée par Kurosawa. «C'était comme un rêve», dit Washizu. Si un rêve, selon les théories psychanalytiques de Freud, exprime les désirs refoulés du rêveur sous forme de fiction<sup>11</sup>, le monstre n'est plus seulement un dispositif diégétique qui fait progresser le récit ou un élément culturel qui aide l'adaptation, mais également le déclencheur de désirs inconscients.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Estève et al., *Akira Kurosawa* (Paris: Lettres modernes Minard, 1998), 78.

<sup>11</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Métopsychoanalyse*, 125–146.

Mais quitter le monstre n'implique pas la fin de la perte et du doute car Asaji «the Lady Washizu», assurant la relève de ce monstre de désir, fait tout pour convaincre Washizu de commettre l'irréparable. Dans la chambre vide, où l'obscurité règne malgré le grand soleil que l'on devine au-dehors, Asaji essaie de pousser son mari à la révolte en lui soumettant la deuxième alternative du film: tuer ou être tué? tentant ainsi de rendre légitime le meurtre de Tsuzuki. Elle expose ensuite la troisième alternative du film lorsqu'elle contraint son mari à assassiner Miki et son fils pour protéger leur enfant à naître (un ajout de Kurosawa qui ne figure pas dans l'œuvre de Shakespeare): votre propre enfant ou l'enfant d'autrui? Les arguments d'Asaji sont simples mais cruciaux: il est dans la nature du samouraï de désirer le pouvoir, de même qu'il est dans la nature du père de chercher à protéger son enfant. Au début du film, Washizu se trouve en position passive, en proie à de lourds dilemmes moraux. Mais dès qu'il s'empare de la lance et tue Tsuzuki, le destin tragique est lancé. Washizu se dépêtre progressivement de sa culpabilité, et finit par travailler activement à la réalisation de son désir de pouvoir. Avec le choix effectué par Washizu, ses désirs, inconscients ou refoulés, se trouvent actés de manière consciente, le «destin» prend forme. Le protagoniste croit aux prophéties du monstre ou plutôt il obéit à ses propres désirs, choisit de réaliser les prophéties qui lui plaisent et de lutter contre celles qui le menacent. Tandis qu'Asaji, qui au début s'efforçait de pousser Washizu à choisir le mal et à réaliser les prophéties à tout prix, se retrouve dévorée par la culpabilité jusqu'à la folie. Au lieu de la considérer de manière simpliste comme l'exact opposé de Washizu, il serait plus pertinent de la comprendre comme, d'une part le prolongement du monstre au niveau de la stratégie narrative, et d'autre part, dans le cadre psychanalytique, comme l'alter-ego de Washizu. Elle est extrêmement motivée, déterminée et inflexible lorsque Washizu hésite, et ressent un profond sentiment de culpabilité lorsque Washizu se trouve au plus mal.

Après la crise de folie d'Asaji, Washizu se trouve seul à envisager les «révoltes». Pour gagner en confiance et en affirmation de soi, il retourne dans les montagnes trouver le monstre afin de confirmer l'authenticité de son beau destin. Dans le brouillard épais, trônant au milieu de crânes humains, le monstre lui donne encore un fois des pistes favorables et équivoques en convoquant trois fantômes de samouraïs qui poussent Washizu à se battre pour la «victoire». On pourrait alors aller plus loin, considérer que ce monstre à l'apparence de sorcière est l'incarnation de désirs sombres et opaques, sinistres et dangereux, et qu'il se répand en belles paroles afin de mieux faire sombrer le protagoniste vers la culpabilité et le malheur. Se donne

alors à voir un rapport entre les trois personnages qui pourrait être défini en empruntant au langage freudien: le monstre – le désir refoulé, Washizu – le Moi, et Asaji – l’alter-égo<sup>12</sup>. Lorsque les désirs impulsifs poussent le protagoniste à faire ses choix, le destin se forme simultanément, dirigeant inexorablement le protagoniste vers une fin. Si le destin n’est pas prédéterminé, les choix qui l’engendrent le sont.

Dans *Millennium Actress*, Chiyoko, la protagoniste, trouve elle-aussi la mort à la fin de l’œuvre. L’ensemble du film est consacré à une rétrospective de la vie de Chiyoko à laquelle sont mêlés les moments phares de l’histoire du cinéma classique japonais. Le réel et l’imaginaire, le présent et le passé s’entrecroisent à la faveur des dispositifs de la mise en scène stylistique de Satoshi Kon, qui construit avec habileté un univers composé de plusieurs espace-temps. La transformation des objets, les motifs dynamiques, les gestes et les déplacements des personnages, etc., sont autant d’outils cinématographiques qui permettent à Kon de relier entre elles les différentes strates d’espace-temps, hallucinatoires comme véridiques: d’abord l’espace-temps du présent qui montre Chiyoko en entretien avec Genya, puis les différents espaces-temps du passé imaginés par Genya, sous forme de séquences composées de souvenirs de différentes périodes de vie de Chiyoko et d’extraits des films qui correspondent respectivement aux périodes emblématiques de l’histoire du cinéma classique japonais. D’abord, la période nationaliste et militariste de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, puis la renaissance du cinéma japonais classique d’après-guerre, ensuite l’âge d’or des grands studios de production des années cinquante, et enfin la période de creux du cinéma classique japonais à la fin du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle. D’une certaine manière, la vie de Chiyoko témoigne du développement du cinéma classique japonais sur presque un siècle en même temps qu’elle en est l’incarnation. En conséquence, le récit avance sur deux rails – le processus menant le cinéma classique japonais de l’épanouissement à l’agonie et le trajet de la vie de la protagoniste. Dans *Le Château de l’Araignée*, le général Washizu croit aux prophéties du monstre assez facilement malgré un bref moment de doute; tandis que Chiyoko, elle, semble ne jamais se conformer aux exigences d’une vie arrangée, ni céder au «destin» prédit par le fantôme qu’elle rencontre dans un de ses films. Elle a un objectif défini à atteindre pour lequel elle réalise inconsciemment un trajet d’affirmation de soi.

Pour analyser le rôle de la sorcellerie dans *Millennium Actress*, il convient

<sup>12</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Le Moi et le Ça*, trad. Dr. S. Jankélévitch (Amazon Media EU S.à r.l.), 2113–3698.

de s'intéresser d'abord au générique du film, qui dévoile très tôt la définition du destin proposée par Kon. Il s'agit d'un extrait de film de science-fiction dans lequel Chiyoko décide d'embarquer pour un voyage sans retour dans l'espace en ignorant l'avertissement de son collègue. Son but est de trouver quelqu'un – un homme. Le tremblement du lancement de la fusée fictive est soudainement redoublé par un tremblement de terre dans le 'réel'. L'image est alors arrêtée par Genya, qui se trouve dans son petit studio en attendant le tournage de son documentaire sur Chiyoko. Le générique nous annonce donc un message-clé: il va s'agir d'une recherche de quelqu'un ou de quelque chose tenu(e) par une volonté déterminée, par une impulsion à la fois puissante et dangereuse – le lancement de fusée et le tremblement de terre – qui relie l'univers fictif et l'univers du réel. En suivant la progression du récit, on se rend compte qu'en fait cette impulsion déterminée, en plus de définir tous les personnages que joue Chiyoko, est également ce qui la soutient, la fait agir et choisir de manière active à chaque tournant de sa vie. L'impulsion déterminée (ou autrement dit, le désir impulsif), le choix et les moments de rupture, en bref c'est la même définition du destin que celle proposée par Kurosawa qui semble apparaître dans le film d'animation de Kon. Pourtant, ce désir impulsif est incarné par le monstre à l'apparence de sorcière dans *Le Château de l'Araignée*, tandis que dans *Millennium Actress*, cette impulsion qui détermine le destin se trouve contenue chez le protagoniste. Alors, si le fantôme (la sorcière), qui est à l'origine du monstre dans *Le Château de l'Araignée* et repris par Kon dans son œuvre, ne se charge plus du symbole du désir, à quoi sert-il dans le film de Kon?

Le deuxième élément qui nous permet de décrypter l'utilisation de la sorcellerie dans *Millennium Actress* est un autre personnage significatif du film: le peintre – un homme sans visage, mystérieux, un artiste qui n'arrive jamais à achever son tableau idéal, une rebelle chassée par la gendarmerie, un résistant contre la guerre et encore probablement un communiste opposé au règne de l'Empereur du Japon, pour conclure, une représentation de l'ensemble des résistants japonais opprimés par le pouvoir pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale<sup>13</sup> – que Chiyoko sauve fortuitement dans la rue et qu'elle passe sa vie à rechercher après leur séparation. Elle court dans la vie et dans les films, traverse des strates d'espace-temps pour atteindre un objectif clair – le retrouver. Superficiellement, on pourrait considérer cette recherche incessante du peintre comme le simple témoignage d'un amour fou, mais cet acte s'avère

<sup>13</sup> Shunsuke Tsurumi, *An Intellectual History of Wartime Japan, 1931–1945*, trad. Qiu Zhenrui (Beijing: Beijing Daily Press, 2019), 262–460.

bien plus significatif que cela. Car cet homme, le tableau qu'il n'a pas encore fini mais qu'il a promis de montrer à Chiyoko une fois terminé et particulièrement la clé qu'il lui a laissée, forment une trinité symbolique qui cristallise toutes les valeurs portées par le peintre – la détermination, l'ouverture d'esprit, le courage, l'indépendance, l'insoumission, la paix et surtout l'affirmation forte de soi – tout ce dont Chiyoko a besoin pour se réaliser et s'accomplir. Pour le retrouver, elle décide d'accepter l'offre de Ginei Studio, et se fait actrice afin de pouvoir partir au Manchukuo, un Etat fantoche mis en place et contrôlé par l'empire du Japon au nord-est de la Chine entre 1932 et 1945. Il s'agit de la première décision qu'elle prend d'elle-même, à partir de laquelle elle manifeste pour la première fois son insoumission – la vie idéale arrangée par sa mère ne lui convient pas, le militarisme n'est pas non plus assez convaincant pour qu'elle se détermine à agir contre la volonté de sa mère<sup>14</sup>. Mais c'est le peintre, ou autrement dit, le symbole d'idéal qui pousse Chiyoko à prendre une série de décisions qui construisent en retour son propre destin.

C'est pendant le processus de la recherche d'un idéal, surtout après le premier échec rencontré par Chiyoko, qu'intervient le fantôme à l'apparence de sorcière. Il apparaît en deuxième partie du récit, quand Chiyoko est déjà une jeune actrice connue au Japon. Dans l'extrait évoquant *Le Château de l'Araignée* de Kurosawa<sup>15</sup>, qui ouvre la deuxième partie consacrée à l'âge d'or du film d'épopée, Chiyoko se trouve dans une scène de guerre qui rappelle la dernière partie du récit du *Château de l'Araignée*. Elle incarne le personnage de la fille du Maître de la cité (Washizu), qui n'existe pas dans *Macbeth* et qui a été inventé de toutes pièces par Kurosawa dans son film. Ce personnage mort en couche dans le récit originel, revient à la vie dans le film de Kon. Elle est déterminée, fidèle et fanatique, comme dans la plupart de ses rôles, et comme dans la vie réelle. Prise au piège, assaillie par les flèches et les flammes, noyée sous d'épaisses fumées, Chiyoko traverse les couloirs déda-léens pour trouver son père. Au milieu d'une énorme salle, funèbre et vide, rappelant la salle où l'ancien maître du château s'était donné la mort dans *Le Château de l'Araignée*, la princesse (Chiyoko) trouve le corps de son père tombé par terre à plat ventre, tué par une flèche. Bouleversée et désespérée, la princesse (Chiyoko) se tourne vers la mort.

<sup>14</sup> Le fait de participer à la réalisation de films de propagande est considéré comme un acte de service à la Patrie. Cela devient, dans le film, l'argument principal du producteur de Ginei Studio pour convaincre la mère de Chiyoko de la laisser exercer la profession d'actrice.

<sup>15</sup> Il faut remarquer que Kon a modifié l'ordre chronologique de différents événements: le film qui renvoie au *Château de l'Araignée* (1957) auquel l'extrait appartient a été placé après la reddition du Japon (1945), qui termine la Guerre sino-japonaise.

Mais au moment où elle s'apprête à se suicider en tenant une dague contre son cou, l'apparition du fantôme sous les traits du monstre du film de Kurosawa l'interrompt. Au milieu de la fumée tourbillonnante, il tisse mécaniquement un fil derrière un rouet, le visage fermé, raillant d'une voix rauque le geste de suicidaire de la protagoniste. Les deux personnages se retrouvent face à face, engloutis par le brouillard, de même taille et presque de la même posture. «Je vous connaissais même avant votre naissance», dit le fantôme tandis qu'il la pousse à boire le «thé de mille ans» afin de la condamner à «être brûlée à jamais dans les flammes d'amour immortel». Bien qu'elle s'évapore après avoir annoncé cette malédiction quasi-prophétique, elle hante l'esprit de Chiyoko comme elle hante le château dans le reste du film. Le fantôme apparaît à chaque fois où Chiyoko (ou les personnages qu'elle joue) résiste(nt) aux difficultés physiques ou psychiques, ou bien lorsqu'elle rencontre des obstacles qui l'empêchent de continuer ses recherches pour retrouver le peintre. Elle apparaît furtivement, à moitié transparente ou sous forme de reflet, si bien que seule Chiyoko est consciente de sa présence. Sa dernière apparition a lieu dans la dernière partie du film, lors d'une séquence où Chiyoko contemple le portrait d'elle jeune, sur lequel se reflète également son visage actuel, beaucoup plus âgé, mis en abyme par le cadre de photo. Dans la contemplation, les deux Chiyoko se rencontrent à travers le temps et l'espace, et les souvenirs et les émotions débordent. Pourtant, cela n'est pas un simple dispositif de mise en scène qui souligne les traces du temps qui passe et favorise la réapparition des souvenirs, c'est aussi un dispositif qui construit une atmosphère de mystère de manière fluide et fantastique. Lorsque le visage de Chiyoko prend soudainement les traits d'un fantôme éploré, on se rend enfin compte qu'il n'y a en réalité personne d'autre que Chiyoko elle-même. Le fantôme qui a poursuivi Chiyoko toute sa vie n'est rien d'autre que son propre reflet, qui donne à voir ses sentiments subjectifs, et particulièrement son anxiété, une névrose qui ne peut que se manifester sous la forme de ce personnage fictif annonciateur de malheur que la protagoniste a rencontré dans l'un de ses films. Dès lors, cette figure devient l'incarnation de tous ses désespoirs et angoisses, une ombre qui revient sempiternellement.

Chiyoko, le peintre et le fantôme à l'apparence de sorcière sont unis par un rapport à la fois symbolique et psychanalytique. Un processus d'affirmation de soi et d'auto-réalisation est à l'œuvre dans le récit: ce que Chiyoko recherche toute la vie avec une détermination inébranlable n'est rien d'autre que l'idéal qui renvoie à toutes les valeurs auxquelles Chiyoko aspire et à l'alter-ego auquel elle voudrait s'identifier. Tandis que le fantôme, lui, incarne



tous ses sentiments négatifs, particulièrement l'inquiétude, le pessimisme et la névrose de la protagoniste lorsqu'elle rencontre des achoppements qui l'empêchent de retrouver le peintre – son alter-ego.

Comme le fil sans fin tissé mécaniquement et éternellement par le monstre et par le fantôme, Kurosawa et Kon proposent respectivement une structure de narration où la fin du film rejoint l'ouverture, boucle fermée du mal sur lui-même et une continuité sans fin du temps (on pourrait suggérer qu'ici Kon fait encore une fois référence au film de Kurosawa). Dans *Le Château de l'Araignée*, «c'est en vain [que Washizu] tente d'échapper à son destin»<sup>16</sup>, c'est bien pour cela que le film débute et se termine par les mêmes plans de paysage filmés avec les mêmes dispositifs de mise en scène – des montagnes emplissant tout l'horizon de leurs plis enveloppés de brume épaisse, un panoramique lent, et le monument du Château de l'araignée ressemblant une stèle funéraire; tandis que la «boucle» proposée par Kon qui semble une structure de narration visuellement fermée, est au fond une véritable ouverture dans laquelle s'inscrit le processus de poïesis. «Après tout, c'est le processus de poursuite que j'aime fondamentalement», dit Chiyoko à la fin du film, où l'on se retrouve une nouvelle fois à la scène du lancement de fusée. Le lancement de fusée du générique ainsi que le tournage de cette scène au milieu du film sont interrompus à cause du tremblement de terre. Tandis qu'à la fin du film, la fusée est enfin lancée avec succès et vole sans retour vers une source de lumière vive qui s'étend jusqu'à envahir totalement l'écran pour clore le film. Finalement, ce n'est ni le peintre – l'illusion d'idéal – qui la donne du sens à sa vie, ni le fantôme à l'apparence de sorcière – l'angoisse et la névrose – qui conditionnent l'avenir de la protagoniste, mais chaque moment de recherche soutenu par une volonté forte, par la détermination et la persévérance qui permettent au protagoniste de rester dans un état dynamique. Même si elle n'est pas consciente pendant le processus de recherche, elle réalise toujours un Moi en développement incessant, qui s'approche infiniment du Surmoi.

Pour conclure, les deux cinéastes proposent respectivement leur propre définition du destin ainsi que leur réflexion sur le rapport entre l'acte de choisir et le destin. Pour eux, le destin n'est ni prédéterminé ni irréversible. Pour ce qui est de la représentation de la sorcellerie, pour l'un elle n'est rien que le désir maudit auquel le protagoniste a obéi, et pour l'autre la névrose profonde que le personnage doit affronter. Des déesses de la mythologie gréco-latine aux sorcières dans *Macbeth*, et aux figures du monstre ou du fantôme dans les deux films japonais, se manifestent des mutations transculturelles de la

<sup>16</sup> Michel Estève et. al., *Akira Kurosawa*, 83.

représentation de la sorcellerie. Cette dernière s'exprime non seulement dans ses apparences, mais surtout dans les sens et les symboles qui lui sont attribués. Qu'il s'agisse de sorcières ou d'êtres non-humains, l'essence ne change pas car même la sorcellerie n'est au fond qu'une image donnée, qu'une représentation. Comme l'écrivit Eric de Rosny: «Dire qu'elle n'existe pas, c'est nier tout simplement et avec une certaine naïveté l'existence de la perversité dans ce monde. Pour employer une image, la sorcellerie maléfique est comme le vêtement qui habille cette perversité fondamentale. Enlevez-le et la perversité demeure.»<sup>17</sup>

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# De *Medea* à *Antichrist*: l'archétype de la Grande Mère de Dreyer à Von Trier

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FROM *MEDEA* TO *ANTICHRIST*: THE GREAT MOTHER  
ARCHETYPE FROM DREYER TO VON TRIER

**Abstract:** As repeating figures, the witches directed by Carl Th. Dreyer are inspirational sources both thematically and aesthetically, for director Lars von Trier. Assuming this filiation, especially in *Medea* (1988) and *Antichrist* (2009), Von Trier offers developments of Dreyerian witches as the incarnation of the Great Mother archetype. Defined by Carl Gustav Jung as ambivalent because it always has two opposing and complementary poles, archetype can profoundly shape artistic creations. Through various images offered by Von Trier's films, the witch would thematically and visually embody the Great Mother archetype, both protective and destructive. Using a script written by Dreyer and never filmed, *Medea* visually cites works of silent cinema such as *Leaves from Satan's Book* (Dreyer, 1920) and *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (Dreyer, 1928). Through a variation on female infanticide, *Antichrist* gives raw and violent images, illustrating the hyper-sexualization of the witch. This article analyses *Medea* and *Antichrist*, aesthetically and thematically, in order to examine the progression of the archetypal pattern of the witch, as an ambivalent, abject, sexualized, nurturing or infanticidal mother.

**Keywords:** *Medea*, *Antichrist*, Carl Th. Dreyer, Lars von Trier, Great Mother, witches, archetypes, Jung.

Figures récurrentes dans ses œuvres cinématographiques, les sorcières mises en scène par Carl Theodor Dreyer sont une source d'inspiration autant thématique qu'esthétique pour le réalisateur Lars von Trier. Dans *Medea* (1988) et *Antichrist* (2009), Von Trier propose une évolution des sorcières dreyeriennes en tant qu'incarnation de l'archétype de la Grande Mère,

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comme il est défini par les théories de psychanalyse jungienne. Ambivalent car il présente toujours deux pôles opposés et complémentaires, l'archétype se devine dans les images de création artistique<sup>1</sup>: sous les différentes formes offertes par les deux films de Von Trier, la sorcière incarnerait thématiquement et visuellement l'archétype de la Grande Mère, à la fois protectrice et destructrice.

Reprenant un scénario jamais filmé de Dreyer, *Medea* cite visuellement des œuvres du cinéma muet telles que *Pages arrachées au livre de Satan* (Dreyer, 1920) et *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Dreyer, 1928). Autour d'une variation sur le thème de la femme infanticide, *Antichrist* impose des images crues et violentes, illustrant l'hyper-sexualisation de la sorcière<sup>2</sup>. À travers une analyse esthétique et thématique de *Medea* et *Antichrist*, cet article interroge l'évolution d'un modèle archétypique de sorcière, sous les traits d'une mère ambivalente, parfois nourricière, sexualisée, ou infanticide. L'étude de *Medea* en tant qu'hommage aux œuvres de Dreyer révèle néanmoins une transformation de la figure de la sorcière, qui revient à des versions antérieures du mythe et annonce la variation moderne qu'offre le personnage féminin d'*Antichrist*.

### ***Medea* de Dreyer à Von Trier**

Après avoir trahi les siens en aidant les Argonautes à voler la Toison d'or, Médée s'enfuit de Colchide avec Jason. Elle vit désormais à Corinthe avec son mari et leurs deux fils, quand Jason la répudie pour épouser Glauqué, la fille du roi Créon. Bafouée, Médée fomente une redoutable vengeance: à l'aide de ses compétences de magicienne, elle provoque la mort de Glauqué, puis tue ses propres enfants, afin de faire souffrir Jason.

Réalisé en 1988 pour la télévision danoise, *Medea* est le troisième long-métrage de Lars von Trier. Créé à partir d'un scénario jamais filmé de Carl Theodor Dreyer et Preben Thomsen datant de 1959, ce film lui inflige pourtant de nombreux changements parfois très significatifs. Néanmoins, Lars von Trier y propose une figure de sorcière inspirée, thématiquement et esthétiquement, par les œuvres de Dreyer. Proche d'une étude visuelle

<sup>1</sup> Voir notamment Terrie Waddell, *Mis/takes. Archetype, Myth and Identity in Screen Fiction* (Londres, New York: Routledge, 2006); Carl Gustav Jung, *Sur l'interprétation des rêves* (Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1998); Christopher Hauke, *Visible Mind. Movies. Modernity and the Unconscious* (Londres, New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Voir notamment le traité contre les sorcières d'Heinrich Kramer et Jacob Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum* (s.l.n.e., 1486).

comme la définit Nicole Brenez, malgré l'absence du film original, *Medea* offre une interprétation de la femme dreyerienne en tant que figure archétypique, c'est-à-dire matrice de thèmes et de schémas<sup>3</sup>, qui prendra différentes formes dans ses œuvres futures.

Au pessimisme caractéristique du cinéma nordique et des œuvres de Dreyer pourtant constituées de happy-ends approximatifs, s'ajoutent la mise en scène d'une figure de sorcière rappelant les personnages dreyeriens: telle Dame Marguerite dans *La Quatrième Alliance de Dame Marguerite* (Dreyer, 1920), Jeanne dans *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (Dreyer, 1928) ou encore Anne et Marte Herlofs dans *Jour de Colère* (Dreyer, 1943). Médée est une femme fière – à l'instar de Gertrud dans le film éponyme (Dreyer, 1964) – prête au sacrifice de ses propres enfants, pour venger l'affront que lui a fait subir Jason.

À travers le personnage de Médée, sorcière et magicienne<sup>4</sup>, Lars von Trier met en scène une mère ambivalente, à la fois douce et bonne tant qu'elle se préoccupe de ses enfants, mais aussi monstrueuse mère infanticide. Dans les œuvres de Dreyer, cette ambivalence se manifeste généralement par la mise en scène, non plus d'un seul mais de plusieurs personnages féminins. En effet, excepté dans *La Quatrième Alliance de Dame Marguerite* où la veuve est à la fois mauvaise sorcière et bonne mère qui s'occupe de la jeune Marie et se sacrifie pour le couple, dans *Le Président* (Dreyer, 1919), la bonne mère a été abandonnée par le père et la mauvaise mère chasse la jeune femme devenant elle-même infanticide; dans *Aimez-vous les uns les autres* (Dreyer, 1922), la bonne mère de Hanne-Liebe est contrebalancée par la directrice de l'école qui fait figure de mère négative; dans *Le Maître du logis* (Dreyer, 1925), Ida, la bonne mère prête au sacrifice pour le bien-être de sa famille est opposée à Mads, l'ancienne nourrice et mégère cherchant à humilier l'homme; dans *Vampyr* (Dreyer, 1932), la femme vampire fait figure de mère destructrice alors qu'une religieuse veille la jeune femme en transformation. À l'instar de Hanne-Liebe d'*Aimez-vous les uns les autres* ou encore d'Anne de *Jour de colère* (Dreyer, 1943), Médée est une étrangère à son milieu, aliénée à son environnement<sup>5</sup>.

*Medea* rend un hommage non seulement thématique mais aussi visuel

<sup>3</sup> Viviane Thibaudier, «Archétype», in *Le Vocabulaire de Jung*, ed. Aimé Agnel (Paris: Ellipses, 2011), 24.

<sup>4</sup> Riita Sirola, «The myth of Medea from the point of view of psychoanalysis», *The Scandinavian Psychoanalytic Review*, n°27 (2004), doi: 10.1080/01062301.2004.10592947.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Schrader, *Transcendental Style in Film: Ozu, Bresson, Dreyer* (Berkeley: University of California Press, [1972] 2018), 66.

aux films de Dreyer. Bien que Lars von Trier ne reprenne pas de séquences du film préexistant, puisque le scénario original n'a jamais été tourné, il s'approprié des figures et des plans de toute l'œuvre de Dreyer. Ainsi, *Medea* s'approche d'une étude visuelle comme la définit Nicole Brenez, c'est-à-dire «d'une rencontre frontale [...] entre une image déjà faite et un projet figuratif qui se consacre à l'observer, autrement dit, d'une étude d'image par les moyens de l'image elle-même»<sup>6</sup>.

Au-delà du choix des acteurs<sup>7</sup>, l'hommage esthétique de Lars von Trier à Dreyer se fait notamment à travers le traitement du son: le bruit du vent, omniprésent dans *Jour de colère* accompagne la rareté des paroles qui vise à créer un effet de film muet<sup>8</sup>. Par ailleurs, divers effets visuels tels les ombres, les surimpressions et les rétroprojections semblent s'inspirer de *Vampyr*, tout comme la présence d'une brume épaisse, également visible dans *Jour de colère*, et qui manifeste la présence d'un personnage féminin malfaisant, vampire ou sorcière. L'envol des oiseaux, à la mort du cheval, lorsque Glauqué revêt la couronne empoisonnée, fait écho à la mort de Jeanne, accusée de sorcellerie, dans *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*. Les travelings latéraux, notamment sur les visages des hommes de Créon, rappellent aussi les plans sur les bourreaux de Jeanne. Enfin, la scène entre Médée et Jason de part et d'autre du métier à tisser reprend une scène de *La Quatrième Alliance de Dame Marguerite* bien qu'elle soit alors vidée de son caractère comique.

La reprise visuelle se fait aussi au travers des choix d'échelles de plan et d'angles de prise de vue. Ainsi, insistant sur son incontestable qualité de sorcière, certains plans de Médée la rapprochent de Jeanne d'Arc: ajoutés à sa tenue vestimentaire et à son bonnet, les plans rapprochés-épaules en contre plongée de Médée rappellent le souvenir de Jeanne, aux cheveux courts puis rasés alors qu'elle est sur le bûcher.

Ces reprises peuvent être considérées comme les éléments d'une étude visuelle car le film de Lars von Trier semble proposer une interprétation du

<sup>6</sup> Nicole Brenez, *De la figure en général et du corps en particulier. L'Invention figurative au cinéma* (Bruxelles: De Boeck Université, 1998), 313.

<sup>7</sup> Preben Lerdorff, dans le rôle du pédagogue, a joué Johannes Borgen dans *Ordet* (Dreyer, 1955) et Martin dans *Jour de colère* (Dreyer, 1943) alors que Baard Owe jouant Egée et Vera Gebuhr qui incarne une vieille femme ont interprété respectivement Erland Jansson et la femme de ménage des Kanning dans *Gertrud* (Dreyer, 1964).

<sup>8</sup> Alors que les films de Dreyer sont très chargés en paroles, même lorsqu'ils sont muets comme en témoigne le jeu des acteurs, qui parlent bien qu'on ne les entende pas, et le nombre élevé d'intertitres saturés de texte, Lars von Trier réalise un film sonore où l'action prime sur la parole. En témoigne notamment la scène d'amour entre Médée et Jason, qui n'est plus parlée comme dans le scénario de Dreyer mais agie.



type même du personnage féminin dreyerien, hésitant entre une féminité esclave de son rôle de mère nourricière et une volonté d'émancipation se traduisant par des actes moralement répréhensibles. Cette interprétation se situe dans la différence au sein des images de reprise et permet à Lars von Trier de figurer un archétype de Grande Mère, par le retour au mythe de Médée.

### Retour au mythe: figure archétypique

La théorie jungienne définit les archétypes comme les structures de la psyché, des «forme[s] vide[s]» accessibles en tant qu'«images archétypiques», notamment «dans les mythes, les contes, les œuvres artistiques tout comme dans les rêves de chacun ou les délires psychotiques [...]. Tout en ayant la même signification de fond, ils se déclinent à l'infini en fonction du lieu, de la culture ou de l'époque où ils apparaissent»<sup>9</sup>. Les archétypes possèdent toujours deux pôles opposés et complémentaires, l'un positif et l'autre négatif. Par ses origines mythologiques, Médée est une figure archétypique dont le récit est sans cesse actualisé par nombre de réécritures<sup>10</sup>. Mère infanticide bien qu'aimante, comme en témoigne notamment le monologue de la tragédie d'Euripide, lors duquel les considérations de Médée à l'égard de ses «enfants chéris» aux «adorables bras»<sup>11</sup>, oscillent entre moyen de vengeance et objets d'amour, chacune de ses personnifications offre une objectivation de l'archétype de la Grande Mère. Correspondant au «maternel *primordial*»<sup>12</sup>, capable de donner la vie et de la reprendre, la Grande Mère est à la fois réconfortante, tant elle est nourricière et protectrice, et effrayante par son aspect destructeur: la figure de la sorcière en offre une occurrence particulière.

L'interprétation du scénario de Dreyer faite par le film de Lars von Trier traduit cette dualité de l'archétype de la Grande Mère. Selon Bodil Marie Thomsen, le style de *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* imite la peinture médiévale dans laquelle le premier plan est crucial<sup>13</sup>. En effet, dans la grande majorité des

<sup>9</sup> Viviane Thibaudier. *100% Jung* (Paris: Eyrolles, 2011), 34–35.

<sup>10</sup> Pour n'en relever que quelques versions, outre celle d'Euripide, on peut citer celles de Sénèque, Pierre Corneille ou Jean Anouilh.

<sup>11</sup> Euripide, *Médée*, trans. René Biberfeld (s.l.n.l., 2014).

<sup>12</sup> Viviane Thibaudier, «La notion de Grande Mère dans l'optique jungienne», *Cahiers jungiens de psychanalyse* 2, no. 57 (1988).

<sup>13</sup> Bodil Marie Stavning Thomsen, «On the Transmigration of Images: Flesh, Spirit and Haptic Vision in Dreyer's *Jeanne d'Arc* and Von Trier's *Golden Heart Trilogy*», in *Northern Constellations*, ed. C. Claire Thomson (Londres: Norvik Press, 2006), 43–58.

plans du film de Dreyer, il n'y a pas de profondeur de champ, pas d'arrière-plan. Dans les plans du film de Lars von Trier, figurant Médée et rappelant Jeanne d'Arc, il arrive qu'un arrière-plan s'impose, ou que certains éléments apparaissent au premier plan, devant le visage. Ainsi en est-il d'un plan de Médée et ses enfants lors duquel les corps des deux garçonnets, en rétroprojection au second plan, s'approchent du visage de Médée par un zoom. Ce plan transmet, d'une part, l'idée de Médée comme mère protectrice pour qui ce qui importe le plus sont ces enfants, qui remplissent son plan, et d'autre part, l'idée de Médée comme mère négative – si on interprète ce plan en comparaison aux plans de Dreyer – car la rétroprojection rappelle les surimpressions de *Vampyr* où le personnage maléfisant est une femme. Par ailleurs, l'éloignement esthétique de *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* manifeste un éloignement des actes de Médée par rapport à ceux de Jeanne: la sainte héroïne devient Mère Terrible. Cette interprétation transparait également dans une image où une cordelette au premier plan annonce une des principales modifications effectuées par Lars von Trier sur le scénario de Dreyer: la fin tragique réservée aux enfants de Médée. Alors que la Médée de Dreyer tuait ses enfants par empoisonnement et non plus en les poignardant comme chez Euripide, Lars von Trier rend le meurtre visuel puisque Médée tue ses enfants par pendaison. Cette intensification du caractère négatif de Médée en tant que mère est encore accentuée par le prologue auquel elle fait écho, également absent du scénario original.

Le film s'ouvre sur un plan de Médée allongée sur le sable. Après une respiration profonde, la mer l'immerge peu à peu, jusqu'à ce que Médée jaillisse de l'eau en prenant une grande bouffée d'oxygène. Bien que la scène puisse être interprétée comme une renaissance, rappelant la résurrection d'Inger, figure de bonne mère dans *Ordet* (Dreyer, 1955), elle présage aussi l'asphyxie des enfants et annonce ainsi le pôle négatif de Médée en tant que figure de Grande Mère. A la suite du prologue, le titre du film apparaît: le D de *Medea* y prend la forme d'un arbre aux branches duquel sont pendus deux corps d'enfants, signifiant l'interdépendance entre la résurrection de Médée par aspiration d'air et la mort de ses fils par étouffement. L'apparition de Médée dans l'eau, élément omniprésent tout au long du film, accentue son rapprochement d'une figure de Grande Mère. En effet, selon Jung, l'eau est un symbole de l'inconscient alors que la représentation de l'archétype de la Grande Mère témoigne d'un retour à l'inconscient, d'une renaissance, souvent accompagnée de l'élément eau<sup>14</sup>. L'association de Médée à une figure

<sup>14</sup> Voir notamment Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychologie et Alchimie* (Paris: Buchet Chastel, [1944] 1970) et Viviane Thibaudier, «La notion de Grande Mère dans l'optique jungienne».

de bonne mère donne lieu à un retour aux versions du mythe antérieures à celle d'Euripide, dans lesquelles Médée ne tue pas ses enfants ou les tue accidentellement. Mais après avoir été rapprochée de Jeanne d'Arc, Médée est comparée aux bourreaux: alors que Jeanne ramasse le lien destiné à la ligoter au bûcher, le fils aîné de Médée attache lui-même la corde qui va servir à son exécution, après avoir aidé sa mère à pendre son jeune frère. Incarnant l'archétype de la Grande Mère dans toute sa complexité, la sorcière Médée inspire d'autres personnages de Lars von Trier, notamment la femme d'*Antichrist*.

### Variation d'*Antichrist*

Annonçant les futurs personnages féminins de Lars von Trier, selon Roberto Lasagna *Medea* résulte d'une démarche qui consiste à «s'appuyer sur le scénario de Dreyer en innovant sur le plan formel», anticipant ainsi le Dogme 95<sup>15</sup> tant «il s'agit de vérifier à quel point on est capable de se plier à certaines contraintes, tout en éprouvant la nécessité de se dérober»<sup>16</sup>. Suivant une esthétique respectant sommairement la règle du Dogme 95 qui commande de filmer caméra à l'épaule, accompagnée de plans hyperstylisés, *Antichrist* présente un personnage féminin évoquant Médée. Le film met en scène un couple qui s'isole dans un chalet au milieu d'un bois, afin de faire son deuil à la suite de la mort accidentelle de son garçonnet. En reprochant à son mari de ne s'être jamais intéressé, ni à elle, ni à leur fils, la femme semble revendiquer son droit à la justice. «Egalement capable de secourir et de détruire», comme Médée, «elle se situe au-delà du bien et du mal et elle obéit à une autre logique, dont le principe majeur affirme l'égalité des sexes»<sup>17</sup>. Tandis que la femme s'intéresse à l'histoire de la sorcellerie, des événements surnaturels se produisent, l'enfonçant de plus en plus dans la folie,

<sup>15</sup> Créée en mars 1995 par Lars von Trier et Thomas Vinterberg, le collectif Dogme 95 remet en cause le langage cinématographique conventionnel. Dix règles sont alors à respecter par les cinéastes: tourner en extérieurs; sans décors ni accessoires ajoutés; en prise de son directe et sans musique additionnelle; en caméra portée à l'épaule; en couleur et lumière naturelle; sans effets spéciaux quels qu'ils soient; sans actions superficielles; sans disjonctions spatio-temporelles; en 35 mm standard; le réalisateur ne doit pas être crédité et les films de genre sont interdits. Voir la reproduction du manifeste Dogme 95 publié à Copenhague le lundi 13 mars 1995, signé Lars von Trier et Thomas Vinterberg, distribué lors du colloque «Le cinéma vers son deuxième siècle» (Stig Björkman, *Lars von Trier. Entretiens* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 2000), 161-162).

<sup>16</sup> Roberto Lasagna, *Lars von Trier* (Rome: Gremese, 2003), 105.

<sup>17</sup> Jacques Boulogne, «Pour une approche systémique de la mythologie grecque. Le cas

jusqu'à ce qu'elle soit elle-même associée à une sorcière responsable de la mort de son enfant.

À l'instar de Médée, sauvage venant d'une terre barbare et allant d'exil en exil<sup>18</sup>, le personnage féminin d'*Antichrist*, inadaptée à la société, est une figure d'altérité. Obsédée par la persécution des sorcières, elle a débuté une thèse sur le sujet et semble s'identifier à ces femmes. Elle accumule des informations, regroupées dans un grenier lugubre ressemblant davantage à une cachette de tueur en série qu'à un bureau de recherche universitaire. Parmi les dessins et gravures représentant des exécutions de femmes accusées de sorcellerie, se trouve notamment l'image accompagnant l'opuscule intitulé *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches*<sup>19</sup>. La gravure présente les trois femmes pendues, Joan Cunny, Joan Upney et Joan Prentice. Elle illustre également certains détails de leurs confessions: on y voit deux des farfadets de Cunny, les crapauds d'Upney, et Prentice, assise sur une chaise, laissant le diable, sous forme d'un furet, boire le sang de sa joue. Alors que la gravure évoque le meurtre d'une enfant, tuée par le furet après que Joan Prentice lui a seulement demandé de pincer la fillette, la pendaison des sorcières fait écho à celle des fils de Médée. La culpabilité de la femme concernant la mort de son enfant est aussi mise en évidence lorsqu'elle découpe une reproduction de cette gravure. Entendant des pleurs et paniquée à l'idée qu'il s'agisse de son fils, elle le cherche à l'extérieur du chalet. Dans la grange, l'enfant ne pleure pas mais les sanglots sont toujours audibles. La mère referme alors la porte et le laisse seul, jouant avec une bûche à côté de ce qui semble être un bidon de produits nocifs. Témoin de la négligence de la femme envers son enfant, le spectateur découvre qu'elle le maltraitait, notamment en inversant ses chaussures. Figure de Mère Terrible, à l'instar de Médée, le personnage féminin d'*Antichrist* est une mère destructrice qui ramène le nouveau-né vers la mort. La violence du geste de la femme est exacerbée dans des plans qui l'associent au sexe: l'enfant meurt pendant que ses parents ont une relation sexuelle, la femme, qui le maltraitait, mutile son mari puis s'excise elle-même en très gros plan. Cette prégnance du désir sexuel de la

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Médée», in *Les Systèmes mythologiques*, ed. Jacques Boulogne (Paris: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1997), 221.

<sup>18</sup> Pascale Paré-Rey et Christine Mauduit, «D'un exil l'autre: Espace et temporalité tragiques dans la *Médée* d'Euripide et la *Médée* de Sénèque», *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaume Budé*, no. 2 (2013), 19–81, doi: 10.3406/bude.2013.7005.

<sup>19</sup> *The Apprehension and Confession of Three Notorious Witches. Arreigned and by justice condemned and executed at Chelms-forde, in the Countye of Essex, the 5. day of Julye, last past.* Sans nom (s.l.n.e., 1589).

femme, qui traduit sa réaction au deuil, manifeste l'hyper-sexualisation des sorcières auxquelles elle s'identifie à travers son rapport à la nature, et l'assimile davantage au pôle négatif de la Grande Mère. En effet, bien qu'il soit dénommé Eden, l'espace de la forêt, qui entoure le chalet d'une végétation haute et dense, est un lieu engloutissant et destructeur. Faisant référence à l'archétype de la Grande Mère en tant que Mère Nature, cette forêt est un prolongement du personnage féminin, qui est persuadé que «les femmes ne contrôlent pas leur corps, c'est la nature qui le contrôle». Elle ajoute que «la nature est l'église de Satan», précisant qu'il ne s'agit pas seulement de la «nature extérieure» mais aussi de «la nature humaine» et que «si la nature humaine est mauvaise, c'est valable aussi pour la nature féminine». Alors que des ectoplasmes de sorcières assassinées stagnent dans la brume et les arbres entourant le chalet, leurs bras sont visibles durant une scène de sexe se déroulant au pied d'un arbre aux racines tortueuses. Reprenant les termes de Huysmans à la manière de Bachelard, les racines peuvent être considérées comme du «fil souterrain fonctionnant dans l'obscurité de l'âme»<sup>20</sup>: accompagnées des spectres de sorcière, elles témoignent de la noirceur psychologique de la mauvaise mère en proie à ses démons intérieurs. Enfin, le mari tue sa femme par strangulation, en écho au geste infanticide de Médée, puis met le feu à son cadavre, rappelant le sort de Jeanne d'Arc, brûlée vive après avoir été accusée de sorcellerie.

## Conclusion

Présentées comme des sorcières, les personnages féminins de *Medea* et d'*Antichrist* n'en sont pas moins des mères bouleversées par la mort de leurs enfants. Esthétiquement et thématiquement, elles font figures de mères aimantes tout autant que malfaisantes. Responsable de la mort par pendaison de ses fils, la Médée infanticide de Lars von Trier est néanmoins rapprochée de la représentation de Jeanne d'Arc par Dreyer, en tant qu'héroïne victime d'hommes malintentionnés. *Antichrist* met en scène la mort accidentelle de l'enfant, auparavant victime de la maltraitance de sa mère, qui semble abattue tout au long du film par la perte de son fils. Elle se venge sur son mari. Bien que la mort de l'enfant, filmée dans une séquence en noir et blanc à l'esthétique maniériste, soit visuellement moins insupportable que celle des garçons de Médée, *Antichrist* propose en général des images plus dérangeantes par leur crudité, exacerbant l'aspect maléfique de la sorcière

<sup>20</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *La Terre et les rêveries de la volonté* (Paris: José Corti, 1948), 198.

possédée par le diable (ici, il s'agit de la nature, dénommée ironiquement Eden). Ces deux pôles opposés composant chacune des femmes en font des objectivations de l'archétype de la Grande Mère, tout autant capable d'amour que de haine envers sa progéniture. Cette qualité archétypique des deux personnages est intensifiée par les influences desquelles elles sont constituées: alors que les archétypes structurent l'inconscient collectif et sont à l'origine des mythes et des œuvres d'art, le retour de *Medea* et d'*Antichrist* à la mythologie grecque, à l'Histoire de l'Inquisition et à un passé cinématographique par les références aux œuvres de Dreyer, offre des variations de l'archétype de la Grande Mère, notamment en ce qu'il a de comparable aux figures de sorcières.

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# *The Blair Witch Project* and the Mockumentary Approach

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ALEXANDRU STERIAN\*

**Abstract:** In this article, we wish to shine a new light on the stylistic and the visual language elements that determined the unexpected success of an independent production, which became a cult film of the horror genre: *The Blair Witch Project*. By means of the simulation-simulacrum ambivalence, the directors manage to construct a presumptive picture of the supposed witchcraft practices in Maryland, United States. By making use of this paradigm, the authors emphasize two distinct recording mediums which through alternation invest the making-of camera (video Hi8) with truthfulness, and become the authentic version of the story. In this context, we are left to figure out how much reality can be fictionalized and what is left of the observational or investigative documentary strand proposed in the film's main plot. By presenting both the real and hyper-real perspectives at the same time, the authors gradually highlight the fictional diegetic structure by opposing it to the documentary one. At the same time, through the film-wide adoption of intertextuality, the viewer is facing multiple path narrative choices: he or she is asked to evaluate the fictional meta-documentarist structure resulted from dialogues and the parallel narrative plots, or the duality of implicit real-hyperreal approaches, constructed by alternating the objective and the POV perspectives of the two cameras.

**Keywords:** witchcraft, mockumentary, *The Blair Witch Project*, Iosif Demian, Dogma 95.

The diegesis of *The Blair Witch Project* is one of the first examples of fictionalization of the existent documentary strand from the initial plot of the film. The continuous balance between fictional and observational documentary style defines and propels the film to the top of the most profitable horror

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movies ever made. The premise of the film starts from the idea of illustrating actual facts that happened in October 1994. The simulacrum support at the beginning of the movie is the opening title itself that reads: "In October of 1994, three student filmmakers disappeared in the woods near Burkittsville, Maryland, while shooting a documentary. A year later their footage was found."<sup>1</sup>

The three main characters, Heather, the director, Mike, the sound engineer, and Josh, the cinematographer, are presented via the two parallel narrative levels: the objective one, of the 16 mm camera, and the subjective one described in a POV manner through the making-of camera that Heather uses throughout the movie. "*The Blair Witch Project* was originally conceived of as a more traditional mock-documentary with the footage shot by the actors only meant to feature in the last part of the documentary on the course of the Blair Witch through the ages."<sup>2</sup>

The director's decision to visually separate the two narrative levels is continuous throughout the film's diegesis. Its structure and the degrees of subjective involvement go up until the moment of Josh's disappearance in Black Hill's house of horrors. The narrative perspectives are successively confirmed or rejected from the beginning of the movie, when both cameras follow the narrative thread completing each other's story. Later on, the diegetic meanings of the two cameras drift away until reaching total opposition in the moments before the discovery of Rustin Parr's house.

The simulacrum and dissimulation blend together throughout the actions depicted in the movie. Therefore the fictional story has the support of dissimulating simultaneously the real and the false, leaving the viewer to set his own version of reality. "Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the "true" and the "false", the "real" and the "imaginary"."<sup>3</sup> With this ambivalence the directors succeed to build a reality through a false assumption.

The objective approach of the 16 mm camera is at times contradicted by the POV interventions of the making-of camera, contrast that helps the viewer follow the "authentic" succession of events. This dichotomous relation with the narrative reality is structured on divergent levels from the moment when Heather and her colleagues realize they are lost in the Black Hill forest. It is also important to observe that both perspectives contribute

<sup>1</sup> Peter Turner, *Devil's Advocate, Blair Witch Project* (London: Auteur Press, 2014), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Turner, *Devil's Advocate, Blair Witch Project*, 18.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* (University of Michigan Press, 1994), 4.

to the denouement and help clarify the fate of the three filmmakers, images that remain imprinted on both the two cameras and on the viewer's retina. From a stylistic perspective, the climax is constructed following the classic steps of a cumulative feature film structure. The events and the protagonist's reactions are integrated into what ultimately becomes a visual alliteration. Through constant repetition, the accumulation becomes the key to the induced tension, to the danger which in the end helps certify the witchcraft "legend" and the strange disappearances. The hidden threat, unseen and incomprehensible danger accompanies the young filmmakers all the way to the place of their fateful ending. The editing semantic function is visible at the beginning of the movie, bringing together the denotative and the connotative meaning as well. The spatial and temporal function is overlapped with parallel diegesis, causality and comparison throughout the whole movie<sup>4</sup>.

In addition to the visual input and the continuous suggestion that the facts being presented are authentic, the editing is adapted to the obvious improvisation of the shot material. Its structure alternates between analytical and poetical with the narrative level being constantly enriched through surprise and unknown facts. The main analytical approach in the beginning of the movie fades and reveals poetic accents, strategy through which the directors continuously reconfigure the narrative causality relation. The consequence of these lengths, decided by the structure of the raw material, is that the spectator is faced with a limited choice, "reality" being presented to him in an unequivocal manner. The making-of camera assume the main "uninvolved" observational narrative thread which separates the objective, detached version from the visual emotional level, Heather's personal approach. The length of the shots and the choice of editing in this analytical structure go against the improvisational aesthetic approach. In turn, the counterpoint is represented by the cumulative structure and shot lengths which are longer than the usual norm, continuously single shot in which the temporal jump cuts are the only solution to solve the length of the take.

The total improvisation paradigm is sometimes opposed to this editing structure. Oftentimes, the certainty of the veracity of the shot materials is questioned by the alternation of total improvisation shots and analytically cut ones. This visual construct commonly evolves from the beginning of the movie through making-of sequences that don't differentiate themselves from a stylistic point of view from those shot on the 16 mm camera. In the

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<sup>4</sup> Jacques Aumont, Alain Bergala, Michel Marie, Marc Vernet, *Aesthetics of Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 50.

Burkittsville interviews, the shots of the two cameras are similar, with compositions sometimes overlapping and being used in editing through camera stop effect. The evolution of this point of view for the two cameras, or, more precisely, the separation of their relevance starts with the forest incident when the filmmakers realize for the first time they are back in the same spot they left in the morning.

The visual level is continuously completed by sound effects that simulate “unwanted” night time interventions in the campsite. Mick goes on to suspect that through these actions the locals aim to make them give up their project. This secondary plot becomes a false lead that the viewers can go back to up until the end of the movie. The intent of the two directors/screenwriters is to construct a possible escape for the three characters from this situation by exposing the actions as “harmless pranks” pulled by the residents of Burkittsville.

By alternating the two mediums, the 16 mm film camera and the video Hi8 one, the directors aim to mediate the transparency, or the feeling of immediacy, of the shot materials. This approach helps increase the tension and feeling of danger up until the end of the movie. The making-of camera will thus accompany the characters and describe their reactions from the tranquil moments in the beginning of the movie all the way to the paroxysmal shots in the end.

Although the approach and structure in *The Blair Witch Project* is that of an action film, the documentary plot is built on two complementary visual levels: the objective one of the 16 mm camera and the subjective one that shows Heather’s insight into the story of the expedition. In the case of the making-of camera, composition and movement norms are constantly being ignored, which helps to further differentiate the two mediums (film negative and video). By using this visual antithesis, the filmmakers manage to construct the “real” reference level of the events being shot; reality which is always at risk of being denatured by the interventions of the 16 mm camera. This suggestion, introduced by the very first movie’s opening credits, is thus constantly enriched with visual and sound design elements.

The aesthetic differences between the objective-subjective levels are obvious to the viewers. Colour versus Black & White, the film granularity versus the lack of it in the video camera footage combined with the stylistic and compositional particularities of the two cameras help us identify easier the image source. The feeling of immediacy conveyed by the video format transpires through the style in which the takes are shot, using the automatic exposure and autofocus features and most of all the zoom functionality.

The video camera serves as an expedition partner from the beginning; the first shots filmed with it are there to convince the viewer of the harmlessly and natural simplicity of the trip the trio is planning. They are captured in the intimacy of their houses, packing their bags or joining their colleagues in Josh's car. This innocent, accidental approach continues with the town interviews approach which can suggest improvisation or the attempt to find logical connections to the events that happened there more than 60 years ago. We observe that in the case of the video camera, the compositional norms are ignored. Hand-held shooting, central composition and inadequate head-rooms are being manipulated as to emphasize the feeling of spontaneity. The interviewee is either looking at the interviewer or straight into the camera, showing an ever-changing relationship with the narrator. Even if, as part of the analog-video paradigm, the 16 mm camera is sometimes used, the image appearance is structurally different. Discrete photochemical elements are highlighted through means of granularity, negative base fog, stop camera effects and deliberate under or over exposure.

In terms of camera handling, the two cameras are different and this difference is aesthetically exploited. The reaction to the proximity and sizes of the video camera thus becomes obvious and is represented by the approach to the camera's movements present in the journal, which sometimes are "chaotic". There is a clear propensity towards the shooting inserts of macro shots with obvious technical flaws that stem from the video camera's limits. One such example is the supermarket scene when Heather focuses on the marshmallow packaging detail, shot in which the limits of the video camera's auto-focus are seen. This technical restriction will help make the difference between the two mediums even more abrupt.

For the beginning part of the documentary, as well as the opening scenes to the alleged documentary, the 16 mm format is used. The camera movement, composition and lighting are all used adequately. The "document" materials, which are presented to the viewer right at the beginning of the movie, are being used in a direct temporal relationship with the documentary-like narrative thread, respecting the way the events unfolded from a "criminalistic" perspective. This means that, from the perspective of the viewer, the continuity of events is not questionable. The analytical editing approach follows the "undeniable" version of the events and the narrative thread develops in steps without intervening with flash-back or flash-forward narrative plots. An example of this is the set-up of city interviews, a singular presence in the film's narrative structure. These quickly become dissonant in relation to the rest of the movie, the interviews are mainly approached in a "Vox Pop" manner.

Having premiered after Lars von Trier's *The Idiots* or Thomas Vinterberg's *The Celebration*, *The Blair Witch Project* appears to be a movie that adheres to the "Dogma 95" manifesto. Shot entirely on location, using of diegetic sound only, hand-held camera style and natural lighting environment (during nighttime scenes) and last but not least having employed a style of continuous improvisation in acting and camera style, it is safe to say that *The Blair Witch Project* is a distinguished member of the "Dogma 95" gallery.

In contrast to *The Blair Witch Project*, in *The Celebration*, the video camera is used from a neutral, unobtrusive perspective and as single point of view version of the story. The neutrality of the camera is implicit however, the movement and composition remain tributary to classical aesthetical norms. Therefore the immediacy experienced in *The Celebration* is filtered by the camera approach (also home-movie style) which had to be small enough to fulfill the director's expectations. The MiniDV picture, delivered by the camera used in *The Celebration*, had to be successively degraded in order to reach the look that the DoP and the director wanted. Anthony Dod Mantle, the DoP, declared: "I felt that this image too, as an electronic image, had to be broken down and destroyed so that a new kind of organic emotional message could appear on the screen."<sup>5</sup> In opposition to *The Celebration*, the freeing of the camera from all norms or constraints in *The Blair Witch Project* is clear. Here, the camera takes in turn an analytical or observational function and an undeniable amateur approach as part of a parallel narrative construct. The lack of intervention in mediating the action, or the apparent lack of intervention in the classical sense from an editing and academic film language standpoint (camera movement, the use of lighting and the alternation of camera lenses) help certify the "Dogma 95" aesthetic influences in *The Blair Witch Project*. One of the requirements of this movement is shooting in natural light, without adding artificial light sources or modifying the relevance of the chosen moment of the day (day, night, twilight, etc.). Thus, the daytime key light and especially the nighttime one are in accordance with the restrictions of the Danish manifesto. During the night sequences, the only light source is a "diegetic" one (the on-camera lamp or the character's flashlight), light effect which is visible when the director's subjective perspective (video camera) is doubled by the cinematographer's "objective" one (16 mm camera).

Announcing the mockumentary shooting style of *The Blair Witch Project*, Iosif Demian builds a similar paradigm in *A Maiden's Tear* (1980). In this

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<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age* (Wallflower Press, 2009), 66.



production, the documentary plot is subsequent to a fictional one and the interviews have a direct address to the events that happened in the real space of the village. The veridical approach of the interviews and the truth of the content are intertwined with the fictional narrative level, therefore the interviewees contribute to this feeling of “immediacy” that the 16 mm TV camera adds to the film diegesis. The meaning of the two perspectives, objective and subjective, takes place through the TV camera used as a ‘document’ for the investigation initiated in the case of a crime. In this sense, overlapping the narrative threads is used to separate and outline the two versions: that of objective reality (35mm camera) and that of truth revealed in this comparison (16 mm TV camera).

The stylistic approach in *A Maiden’s Tear* bears many similarities to that of *The Blair Witch Project*. In the diegetic construction of the objective-subjective levels the 16 mm camera used by I. Demian becomes the pendant of the video camera from *The Blair Witch Project*. The TV camera, the support of the narrative construction of *A Maiden’s Tear*, becomes the intermediation source of the objective space shot with the 35mm camera. The dichotomous interpretation of reality from a narrative perspective is obvious from the reactions and statements of the interlocutors captured in the subjective-official version (16 mm) or in the objective version (35mm). The stylistic consistency that I. Demian uses in the two representations, the 16 mm TV camera and the 35mm objective camera, is remarkable. Adjusting the story based on fictionality and reality which just happened in the village where Demian shot the movie, makes more believable their reactions. In a way, the actors and extras planted for all the interviews in *The Blair Witch Project* and *A Maiden Tears* build the authenticity of the characters depicted in the movies<sup>6</sup>.

In the case of the TV camera, the accidents and intrusions of the shooting technology are obvious. The stop camera fog, the “accidental” presence of the lighting equipment into the shot or the presence of the ubiquitous microphone into the shot are constantly used to separate, from a diegetic point of view, the visual levels. At the same time, the use of a compositional new style emerges from a potential impressionistic visual current in which the rules are erased and replaced by the experimental, freestyle norms. Atypical compositional headroom and dutch-camera compositions are common, camera moves no longer support diegetic, analytical logic, and the extra-compositional space is ignored in outdoor scenes. The synchronous or

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<sup>6</sup> Peter Turner, *Devil’s Advocate, Blair Witch Project*, 25.

asynchronous sound acquires the expressiveness used by J.-L. Goddard in *Pierrot le Fou* and certifies the doubts of the viewer regarding the honesty of the interviewees. This ambivalence is present alternately in the two media (TV camera and 35mm), a sign that I. Demian questions not the sincerity of the actors but the simulation mediated by these two formats. The entire narrative construction develops dichotomously, and the objective-subjective perspectives alternatively take on the simulation and simulacra moments constructed through them.

In *The Blair Witch Project*, the relationship with the camcorder is more intimate. This is one of the witnesses of the evolution of the group relationships, of the dangers present or induced by the environment passed by protagonists but also the only witness of the “confession” of the director who is considered guilty for the death of her colleagues. Stylistic innovations continue by adapting diegetic lighting to climax points. A conclusive example in this regard is the moment of Heather’s confession before they find Josh’s traces in the haunted house. The on-camera lighting effect amplifies Heather’s stress and surging mood. This uncommon Extreme Close-Up of the face and the atypical low angle also certify the climax of the movie. In shot editing jumps and cutting out the dialog lines from her monologue also contribute to the transfer of this pseudo-haptic feeling that defines the entire scene. This intimacy build with the viewer is mediated by the camera itself and the shooting style. “Also, there is the increased intimacy that these cameras allow and the fact that they can be operated by non-professionals. Like Neo-Realist, New Wave and *vérité* filmmakers... They invite intimacy, as seen in the confessional moments of the film where the camera is positioned in Heather’s face as she cries and apologies to her family.”<sup>7</sup>

Until this climax point, the visual improvisations are subtly added, and the differences between the two cameras being cumulative, but from the moment of Josh’s disappearance, the stylistic difference between this two perspectives is blurred. The consequence with which the directors accumulate the frustration of the characters, transfers strong and unfiltered emotions to the spectator, creates a type of addiction similar to that of watching a reality show. The shooting structure that Dogme 95 introduced is tightly linked with the camera approach on any reality show. “The searching, handheld, shaky camera in the digital era – in films and television shows ranging from *Homicide: Life on the Streets* to *The Blair Witch Project* to *The Celebration* to *Tape* – was considered almost hysterical in the new millenium, before

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<sup>7</sup> Peter Turner, *Devil’s Advocate*, *Blair Witch Project*, 15.

9/11.”<sup>8</sup> Morbid curiosity deflects rational connections and the movie diegesis becomes a background on which characters are displayed without complexes. Thus, towards the end of the movie, the voyeuristic gaze is integrated organically into the narrative structure, the directors manage to convey to the viewer sensations of distorted intensities. The similarities with the reality-show format, very popular in United States in the '80s, create a gallery of “hypermediacy” elements in *The Blair Witch Project*. No obvious exterior influence doesn't filter the interaction between the protagonists nor interfere in this meta-documentary structure of the film. This aesthetic approach to reality show adds an extra layer of truth to the movie. The shooting style changes from a documentary-observational approach (the time when they're getting ready to leave for Burkittsville) to the frenzy and panicking moments experienced every night into the tent. The weight and the length of the materials shot with the camcorder becomes a priority over the ones shot with the 16 mm camera, the official version for the school. The veracity of their actions is not in doubt and the parallel narrative structure is accessed only towards the end of the movie when both cameras are witnessing the outcome of the adventures of the three young filmmakers.

The signs of the “magical” intervention in the intimate space of the three protagonists appear increasingly challenging; stone totems, woodoo like puppets and crosses hanged into the trees. These accidents, as parts of the journey, are aptly described by Heather. The insistence of the repetition, at first disturbing in the narrative structure, finds its answer in the final part of the movie where these compositional and content excesses are justified by the strategy of accessing the climax. The documentary plot of witchcraft practices in Maryland is hijacked and reconfigured. Finally, we find the protagonists captive in the hypnotic protocol of Rustin Parr's crimes.

The degrees of surprise, frustration, anger, helplessness or despair are gradually accumulated. At the beginning of the expedition Heather, from an unintended narrator's posture, describes a potential ritual scene placed in front of a cave. This becomes the first relationship with mystical influence. The state of immediacy is thus gradually and decisively built into visual style until the end of the film. The sight and sound spaces are invaded by the pseudo-haptic experience, a scene in which the viewer becomes immersed with the moment of Heather's monologue. The sensory elements I mentioned are closely related to the state of hyperventilation and girl's panic from the recording moment, an effect that the spectator physically feels when watching this part.

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<sup>8</sup> Nicholas Rombes, *Cinema in the Digital Age*, 119.

The use of the on-camera lamp and the flashlight, in both versions captured on video or film, adds to the anxiety and despair of the protagonists in the night sequences. This condition is gradually replaced by helplessness and panic. The frontal key lighting, or more precisely its inefficiency in the outdoor night frames, has the role of highlighting the fragile limit of stress resistance of the team. This diegetic lighting, which excels stylistically in the monologue-forgiveness sequence of the director, adds consistency and reality to the entire context shot with the video camera. The diary is confirmed as a personal, undeniable, version of Heather, in which the reactions and consequences of the director's actions are subsequently confirmed by the denouement. The black screen inserts in these sequences are accompanied by suggestive diegetic sound (shaken breathing and hyperventilation), elements that increase the viewer's anxiety. "Using the darkness to its fullest also privileges sound over visuals. If the dark is all encompassing then other senses become more important to the viewers and the characters."<sup>9</sup>

The end is a predictable extension of the accumulations up until then. And in this case the sound plays a decisive role. The discovery of the "house of horrors" is announced through sound, completing the image and finally certifying the inevitable end. The camcorder with the 16 mm camera as well anticipates the denouement through the supposed diegetic sound that accompanies the 16 mm camera path. The roles are currently reversed, Mike takes the camcorder and Heather the 16 mm camera. The change is motivated by the sound architecture, in this case represented by the uncontrolled Heather's screams. The aimless route of the two filmmakers is resumed, the central theme of this rehearsal is the traces of the alleged victims held captive in the house discovered by them. The walls of the access stairs are "carpeted" with the signatures of the children brought to this space. As a last-ditch attempt to forget, their handprints on the walls surface are showed by both cameras. The viewer is in front of an abstract representation of the lack but also of the certainty of the facts that happened before the documentary proposed by the young filmmakers. The signs of Parr's guilt are thus depicted as a prehistoric synthesis, a representation of the struggle between the killer's irrational accesses and the obliteration that blurs the children's faces. The viewer, through Mike's point of view, is guided to what becomes the conclusive composition of the film, the insert shot captured after the camera falls on the ground. The narrative time, which at this moment is overtaken by the approximate overlap of the two visually-sound perspectives, puts the viewer

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Turner, *Devil's Advocate, Blair Witch Project*, 44.

in a doubtful position. The obvious traces of the presence of children in the house (the signs of the hands left on the walls) are doubled by the sound that becomes either diegetic or non-diegetic. Its source becomes questionable, the screams of the director are doubled by what could be the noise of the crimes produced in this space. The *mise-en-scène* is subtly introduced into the equation of the film through the set design and props, the lack of improvisation and the choreographed camera movements.

The elements of the analytical montage are reintroduced at this time, the classic editing and the alternation of objective-subjective plans being resumed with the intention to underline the directorial intervention. The subjective perspective is taken in 16 mm format to outline its official, non-invasive-personal view. The resumption of the route, or more precisely the reenactment of the route of the children held captive in the basement of the house, represents a premonition of the end. At the end of this camera movement, this time simultaneously captured in analog and video, we'll find Josh in a position similar to that of the children who were forced to witness the murders (facing the wall). The basement where Josh is rocked in a catatonic position is also the place of their supposed murder where the shot materials will be found a year later. This last frame of the film attests to the wicked presence of the witch, the mystical interventions and the perpetuation of the Black Hills legend. On a room tone sound effect, the camera captures the last seen picture of the massacre produced in the sinister basement, which is mediated by the 16 mm camera mechanical error (the instability of the negative in the camera gate).

The diegetic structure and visual approach the film proposes make *The Blair Witch Project* a perfect case study for the capacity of adapting the visual language to the content. Of course, for a Hollywood studio production, the emotions and sensations conveyed through the shooting style chosen in *The Blair Witch Project* could be compounded by complex visual effects. The efficiency of the concept, the actors' performance and the sense of authenticity of the actions described are proof that their impact is cumulative. The actors become significant parts of the narrative structure, the acting and reactions being emphasized through the visual style and the diegetic sound architecture. The success of the movie is confirmed by choosing the cumulative narrative structure in which elements of reality show, mockumentary and fiction are alternatively accessed.

The continuous reconfiguration of the shooting style also contributes to the success of the film. At the beginning of the movie, the use of lock-of shots, in the case of the 16 mm camera, is in counterpoint with the POV

approach of the camcorder. This relation of subordination of the meanings of the material captured with the video camera in relation to the 16 mm camera is subsequently reversed. The use of the common shooting positions for the two cameras and the similar compositions from the beginning of the movie undergo a major change since the visual meanings of the two media, analog and video, are separated. The involvement in the diegetic construction of narrative discourse is major. In film editing, the structuring of the raw material “discovered” after the disappearance of the filmmakers becomes gradual. The moments of improvisation are shown in both versions, analog 16 mm and Hi8 video, but the exception of using the entire take, not useful in the final edit, is justified by the confirmation of this structure of unedited raw material. Once the viewer is familiar with this paradigm, the weight or retention of the moments of preparation or of the final ones is gradually eliminated, which stylistically filters the emotional impact of the edited takes. This is obvious in the scene of shooting the beginning of the documentary with the 16 mm camera in which Heather controls her posture, diction and attitude by focusing on the relevant dialogue part for the subject.

The beginning and the end part of the shot (stop camera) are gradually eliminated from the editing although, in the initial narrative structure, these interventions are timely. The directors intervene steeply in the structure of the final edit, the track of improvisation and the truth of the raw material, unedited, found in Parr’s house, is left behind. The paradigm shift occurs as soon as the young filmmakers enters the Black Hills forest, so that alternating the observational or fictional documentary perspective is overlaid with the reality show-type improvisation transmitted through the ubiquitous making-of camera. In the structure of the raw footage (shot), the preparation and the conclusive moment of the take is diegetically separated by the narrative significance of the composition, the movie set space and the actor’s performance. In the case of *The Blair Witch Project*, the actors, as an aesthetic sign, are in a continuous transition between fictional and observational realm, and become the supporting elements of the signifier. The temporal significance of the shot is limited by the moment of the beginning of acting, by the word “action”, and the end of it expressed by “cut”. The diegetic elements are wholly contained within these temporal limits, thus ignoring the significance of the extra diegetic space and the elements that govern the interactions and the acting techniques. In this logic, the actors themselves are gradually introduced, the relationships and dialogues are played in subjective-POV perspectives from the video camera or in objective/detached levels captured with the 16 mm camera. The intensity with which the viewer

can challenge the reality of an assumed concept is also related to the intervention of these discrete elements that outline an obviously dichotomous approach. Thus the viewer, who is not familiar with the editing techniques, cannot properly evaluate the basic structure of the film's construction. The initial approach, assumed by the directors, is represented by the discovery of the raw materials of the expedition in the basement of Rustin Parr's house. In the economy of such materials there are discrete signs of the directorial intervention or of some physical representations of the shot material. The visual structure of the two versions are in an obvious opposition – the Black & White negative and the video TV colour structure of the Hi8 camera.

The whole visual construction of *The Blair Witch Project* is based on the transition and approach of classical narrative structures of documentary and fiction films alike; in a linear-cumulative or parallel construction with analytical, poetic, alliterative and observational influences. The results of these aesthetic and stylistic choices also converge in what the spectator discovers by viewing the finished work, a complete creation composed cumulatively of independent narrative layers which are revealed successively in the temporal unfolding diegesis. The real and imaginary levels are continuously reconfigured through the archetypal intervention of the unseen and the unknown, which are exploited to the limit of the bearable. The viewer is oftentimes in extreme tension, which is why the film was given the title of best horror movie of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, ahead of blockbuster films with incomparably more generous budgets.

In the end, *The Blair Witch Project* is a movie in which the visual style happily completes the narrative thread and the choice of illustrating the narrative on two complementary visual levels, and structures the story in an everyday language, accessible to the average viewer. The impact of norms and representations of observational documentary style, docudrama, reality show or meta-documentary in an alternative metafictional or hyperreal level, impresses the viewer directly and in an unfiltered manner. This fact is a state of self-consciousness of the characters showed simultaneously shooting each other, which resembles with a double mimesis approach. "Though the audience is watching a fiction film, the characters believe they are making and starring in their own documentary that turns into more of an amateur video about them getting lost in the woods. For this reason, *The Blair Witch Project* resembles metafiction."<sup>10</sup> His experience while watching the movie is fulfilled and the influence of personal story that is illustrated linearly, without obvi-

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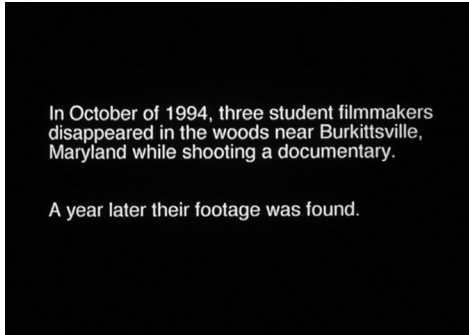
<sup>10</sup> Peter Turner, *Devil's Advocate, Blair Witch Project*, 47.



ous invasive-directorial interventions, increases the viewer's empathy. The mentioned structure appeals to the archetypal fears described above, the fear of the unknown, the unseen or the incomprehensible, to which are added the elements of immediacy inserted through the video camera. Heather's intimate, personal perspective immediately becomes the viewer's as well, the consequence being the total transparency of the experiences and fears she exhibits without restrictions on the cinema screen.

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**Appendix:**  
**Screen shots from *The Blair Witch Project***

Figure 1: The opening credit of the movie



Figure 2: One of the last shots of the movie, Mike caught in the same posture that Rustin Parr used to force his victims to wait their murder.



Figure 3: Heather during her final forgiveness monologue. The addressability and viewer involvement are extremely strong.

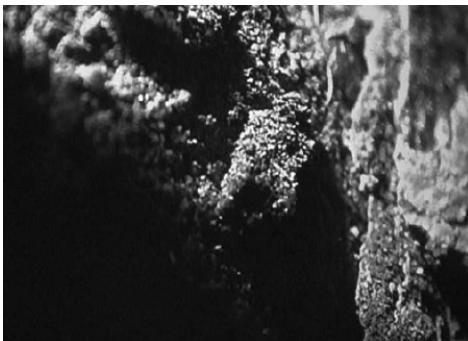


Figure 4: The last shot captured with the video Hi8 camera right before the movie ends. The autofocus system is again highlighted.

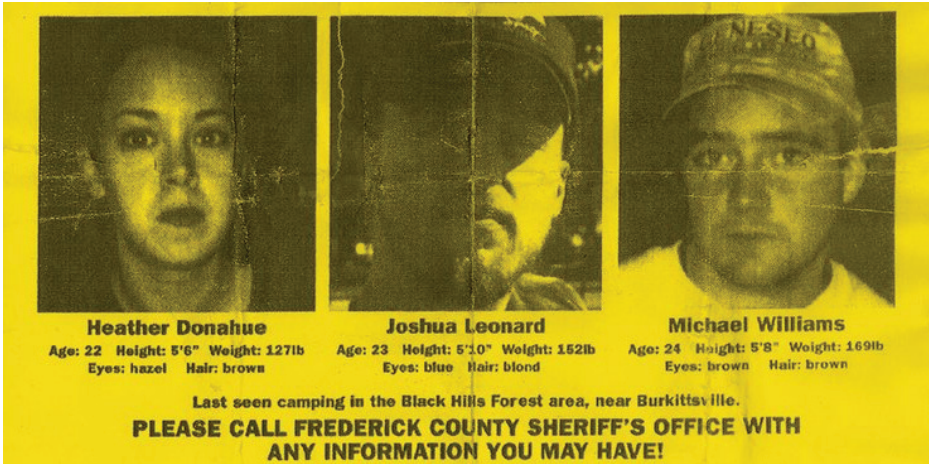


Figure 5: Promotional flyers used for the theatrical release of the movie.

# L'image de la sorcière dans la création de Paul Ranson, peintre nabi

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ANDREEA APOSTU\*

## THE WITCH'S IMAGE IN PAUL RANSON'S PAINTING

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to analyze the way in which Paul Ranson, a member of the Nabis artistic group, portrayed witches in his paintings from the 1890s. Greatly influenced by occultism and the *fin-de-siècle* artistic milieu, he doesn't transpose a traditional image of the witch, but adapts it to the Symbolist context of his epoch. Instead of living in the woods, in the mountains or near insanitary swamps, the witch practices her rituals in modern, contemporary apartments, being thus reintegrated in the society that hundreds of years ago had exiled her. No longer a menace for society, the witch becomes a metaphor of a complex and strong feminine ideal. Also, instead of being a solitary or rare appearance, the witch infuses Paul Ranson's entire creation.

**Keywords:** witch, Symbolism, Paul Ranson, cultural transfer, French painting, Postimpressionism.

À la fin du XIXe siècle, le paysage culturel français où les Nabis ont vu le jour, en tant que mouvement artistique, ressemblait à leurs compositions: diversité d'approches et d'influences, fluidité des contours, confusion des lignes, production d'œuvres sujettes aux interprétations multiples. L'éclatement des formes et des couleurs semblait s'échapper de la toile pour toucher tout le plan artistique, devenu fourmillement continu, propice à l'expérimentation sans entraves. La succession accélérée des «-ismes» du siècle suivant (fauvisme, cubisme, futurisme, dadaïsme, expressionnisme, etc.) est annoncée par l'émiettement de la peinture qui suit le moment impressionniste: néo-impressionnisme, synthétisme ou symbolisme, néo-traditionnisme, Art Nouveau.

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Adeptes passionnés du symbolisme en peinture ou du synthétisme, dans le sillage de Gauguin, qu'ils considéraient leur maître, les Nabis ont fait de la synthèse la clé de voûte de leur démarche artistique. Ils se sont adonnés non seulement à la synthèse des lignes et des couleurs (simplification des formes, utilisation de la couleur pure), mais aussi à la synthèse, plus générale, des arts. Synthétistes jusqu'au bout, ils envisageaient de créer une fusion entre la tradition et la modernité (le nom de leur mouvement, «néo-traditionnisme», attestait cette volonté), tout en étant, peut-être sans le vouloir nécessairement, les unificateurs des tendances de leur époque: l'ésotérisme, la fascination pour la Bretagne et les Primitifs, le «byzantinisme», la magie, le satanisme, le japonisme<sup>1</sup>. C'était d'ailleurs une époque où des traditions diverses étaient récupérées et amalgamées, formant parfois des synthèses extravagantes et décadentes – un temps où le transfert culturel<sup>2</sup> était mis à l'honneur, devenant une pratique courante dans les cercles littéraires et artistiques.

Influencés par l'hétérogénéité culturelle de l'époque, les Nabis puisaient leur inspiration dans plusieurs traditions picturales, utilisées pour respiritualiser un art perverti, selon eux, par l'académisme. Ce dernier promouvait, selon le groupe, un réalisme sec et superficiel, une imitation «bête» de la nature<sup>3</sup>. Le livre de chevet des Nabis était *Les Grands Initiés* d'Édouard Schuré<sup>4</sup>, ouvrage fondé sur une équivalence des religions et figures prophétiques. L'auteur mettait en évidence les similarités et la continuité entre les initiés des grandes religions, qui auraient tous transmis la même vérité – l'âme comme seule réalité et «clef de l'univers», à l'aide de laquelle on arrivait au «foyer vivant de la divinité»<sup>5</sup>. Le sous-titre de cet ouvrage n'était que l'énumération de ces «prophètes» qui, malgré les différences formelles, ont eu, selon Schuré, des discours similaires sur la connaissance divine: «Rama

<sup>1</sup> Sur les tendances qui animèrent le groupe des Nabis, voir Charles Chassé, *Les Nabis et leur temps* (Lausanne et Paris: Bibliothèque des Arts, 1970), *Artistic Brotherhoods in the Nineteenth Century*, dir. Laura Morowitz et William Vaughan (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2000) ou Claude Jeancolas, *La Peinture des Nabis* (Paris: FVW, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Michel Espagne, «La notion de transfert culturel», *Revue Sciences/Lettres*, no 1, 2013, mis en ligne le 01 mai 2012, consulté le 25 juin 2018, URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/rsl/219>; DOI:10.4000/rsl.219: «Tout passage d'un objet culturel d'un contexte dans un autre a pour conséquence une transformation de son sens, une dynamique de resémantisation, qu'on ne peut pleinement reconnaître qu'en tenant compte des vecteurs historiques du passage.»

<sup>3</sup> Maurice Denis, «Définition du néo-traditionnisme», *Théories. Du Symbolisme vers un nouvel ordre classique* (Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *La peinture des Nabis*, 176.

<sup>5</sup> Édouard Schuré, *Les Grands Initiés* (Paris: Perrin, 1921), XI-XII.

– Krishna – Hermès – Moïse – Orphée – Pythagore – Platon – Jésus». Cette approche faisait éclater les limites de la tradition judéo-chrétienne et permettait la mise en place d'une vision syncrétique de l'histoire des religions et la récupération d'éléments anciens très divers. Dans le cas des Nabis, on pourrait mettre la coexistence dans leurs peintures de figures et symboles comme le Bouddha, Jésus, les mères de la terre et les esprits celtiques, la croix en tau, le lotus, le pentagramme, le cercle des pratiques magiques, les sorcières en relation directe avec leurs lectures théosophiques.

Parmi les traditions et les croyances récupérées par les Nabis, le judaïsme a eu une place privilégiée, leur nom même signifiant, en Hébreu, prophètes<sup>6</sup>. Sorte de confrérie artistique secrète, ils utilisaient un langage codifié, formé de mots français, latins et hébraïques qui désignaient leurs ateliers (*ergasterium*), leur lieu privilégié de rencontre, la maison de Ranson (le Temple), leurs adversaires profanes (les *pelitchim* ou *quedeschim*) ou les frères prêcheurs (les *cohènes*)<sup>7</sup>. Les pratiques et enseignements occultes et ésotériques ont été aussi très appréciées, les artistes manifestant un intérêt particulier pour la cabale et la sorcellerie. Presque tous les membres ont intégré dans leurs créations des éléments issus de ces domaines: «Tous les Nabis introduisirent dans leur peinture des symboles, fleurs significatives, instruments, couleurs, nombres et signes étranges, références aux écrits religieux et cabalistiques et puis ces triangles, carrés, cercles eux aussi porteurs de sens qui ouvriraient la voie à l'art abstrait du XXe siècle, lui aussi se voulant spirituel. Même quand ils semblaient parler du quotidien, s'inspirant du réel, les Nabis parlaient d'un autre monde et l'inventaient.»<sup>8</sup>

Le goût prononcé du milieu parisien pour le satanisme et la magie, qui a sans doute influencé le groupe, s'explique, tout comme le goût pour la théosophie, par la réaction de la sphère artistique et littéraire contre le matérialisme et le positivisme scientifique du siècle: «Révolution industrielle, changement du système économique, théories de l'évolution, désacralisation des pouvoirs politiques, remise en cause des traditions religieuses... l'heure était à la Science et au progrès. Les philosophies positivistes et rationalistes fleurissaient. Leur échec à expliquer l'existence et lui donner un sens avait engendré, par réaction, une curiosité pour l'irrationnel, l'occulte et le mystique. Swedenborg, Goethe, Balzac, Hugo, Baudelaire avaient cherché dans cet inconnu surnaturel, suivis d'une intelligentsia qui présentait la faillite du

<sup>6</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *La peinture des Nabis*, 169.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Denis, *Le Ciel et l'Arcadie* (Paris: Hermann, 1993), 211. Voir aussi *Maurice Denis (1870-1943)*, ouvrage collectif, (Paris: RMN Musée d'Orsay, 2006), 76.

<sup>8</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *La peinture des Nabis*, 171.

système officiel. La génération de 1860, celle des Nabis, fut baignée à ces aspirations du mystère qui devaient engendrer le symbolisme, entre autres.»<sup>9</sup>

Réaction contre la reproduction technologique en masse (car il soutenait la singularité, le secret, le caché – autrement dit, une culture de l'*underground*), le goût pour l'occulte suscitait, de manière paradoxale, une offre de plus en plus grande d'œuvres censées le satisfaire. En fin de compte, malgré son caractère caché, le mouvement a produit une avalanche de livres, d'œuvres de fiction et d'articles sur le sujet<sup>10</sup>. Tout comme dans le cas de la théosophie, ce champ a eu ses propres *bestsellers* à la fin du siècle: l'ouvrage de Stanislas de Guaita, *Au seuil du mystère*, de 1890, celui du Docteur Bataille, *Le Diable au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, de 1892, et surtout celui de Jules Bois, *Le Satanisme et la magie*, de 1895<sup>11</sup>. Huysmans joue à son tour un rôle important, car il publie en 1891 le roman *Là-bas*, qui articule ce courant important de l'époque. D'ailleurs, il avait eu aussi ce rôle de catalyseur pour le médiévalisme de la fin du siècle avec *La Cathédrale*.

Paul Sérusier et Paul Ranson ont été parmi les plus grands amateurs de littérature occulte du groupe. Le premier a réalisé même un portrait du second en guise de prophète, où les symboles chrétiens sont juxtaposés aux éléments occultes: «la crosse d'évêque avec un serpent symbole de la force et du pouvoir, l'auréole dorée derrière la tête, une pierre précieuse en pyramide, l'étoile à cinq branches dans la crosse représentant la tête humaine qui contrôle la vie et maîtrise les forces des éléments, deux boules qui peuvent signifier le cycle éternel, les signes du zodiaque en col de vêtement. Sur le livre ouvert que pointe Ranson, d'autres signes: étoile et marques invisibles, géométries magiques comme ces triangles qui symbolisent la vérité par la rencontre des trois mondes, physique, intellectuel et moral.»<sup>12</sup>

Plus qu'un prophète, Paul Ranson est portraitisé dans ce tableau comme un magicien, un initié. Il était un connaisseur de Schuré et de Papus, ayant lu aussi d'autres livres secrets. Il avait été introduit dans la mystique hébraïque par son ami Cazalis, pratiquant un syncrétisme religieux absolu. Dans ses toiles, Ranson mêlait des éléments issus de traditions diverses, afin de créer un monde nouveau, un territoire inconnu. Cet amalgame est parfois déroutant, en raison de la quantité de symboles amassés, qui ne sont pas

<sup>9</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *La peinture des Nabis*, 168.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Ziegler, *Satanism, magic and mysticism in fin-de-siècle France* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 15–60.

<sup>11</sup> Musée départemental du Prieuré, *Paul Ranson: fantasmes & sortilèges* (Paris: Somogy, 2009), 25.

<sup>12</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *La peinture des Nabis*, 176.



compréhensibles par le grand nombre: «tout devient donc initiatique, tentations, chutes, purifications, rédemption et ses tableaux débordent de signes d'origines éclectiques.»<sup>13</sup>

Parmi les figures récurrentes de la création de ce peintre, on retrouve la sorcière, représentée assidument durant les années 1890, mais aussi plus tard, au début du XXe siècle, même si le style du peintre subit des transformations importantes. D'où vient cette fascination pour la femme et ses mystères? Ce penchant est présent chez tous les membres du groupe, qui font de la femme un personnage-clé de leurs toiles, capable de médier le contact entre l'ici-bas et l'au-delà (les femmes bretonnes qui «officient» des rituels dans les toiles de Paul Sérusier, les religieuses qui vont à la rencontre de Dieu dans les forêts de Maurice Denis, etc.), de régir la vie et le destin des hommes (les bretonnes fileuses de Paul Sérusier, images des Parques de l'Antiquité grecque, la femme mère de la terre de Georges Lacombe), de cacher un secret fondamental (la femme au jardin clos de Maurice Denis), de donner corps à la divinité (la figure de la Vierge est très fréquente dans leurs compositions). Alors, il est clair que les sorcières de Ranson viennent s'inscrire dans ce sillage, même si elles semblent s'opposer radicalement aux femmes pures, vierges, de Maurice Denis, qui rappellent les pucelles médiévales. L'opposition n'est qu'apparente, selon nous, car ces figures féminines évoluent autour du même axe sémique de médiatrice entre l'ici-bas et l'au-delà<sup>14</sup>.

Selon nous, la manière dont Ranson représente les sorcières dans ses toiles n'est pas spécifique, mais s'étend aussi à d'autres figures féminines. C'est-à-dire, la sorcière n'est pas une apparition exotique, mais un idéal féminin pour le peintre, ses traits se retrouvant dans un nombre important de compositions aux sujets issus de la vie quotidienne. Nous analyserons les toiles dont le titre ou la mise en scène comportent explicitement des éléments renvoyant à la sorcellerie et les toiles au sujet quotidien, qui n'en comportent pas, afin de déceler les similitudes et les différences.

Avant de commencer l'analyse, il faut expliciter deux termes que nous utiliserons à profusion: le signe iconique ou l'icône, qui renvoie à un objet ou un être, et le signe plastique, qui est immanent à la toile, ses trois manifestations étant la couleur, la texture et la forme<sup>15</sup>. La série de sorcières que Ranson commence à peindre au début des années 1890 présente des signes iconiques et plastiques presque identiques. Dans les toiles du nabi, la sorcière (signe iconique central) est souvent jeune et nue, tournant complètement ou

<sup>13</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *La peinture des Nabis*, 176.

<sup>14</sup> Musée départemental du Prieuré, *Paul Ranson: fantasmes & sortilèges*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Groupe µ, *Traité du signe visuel. Pour une rhétorique de l'image* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

partiellement le dos au spectateur. Cette image très érotique et mystérieuse apparaît dans *Sorcières autour du feu*, *Sorcière dans son cercle*, *La Marmite*, *La Sorcière et le chat*, *La Sibylle*. À part la première composition, les personnages sont situés dans un espace clos, intime. Parfois c'est un espace indéfini, sans identité historique – dans *La Marmite*, la sorcière pourrait appartenir aussi bien à la période médiévale qu'à la fin du XIXe siècle. D'autres fois, le décor fait de papiers peints et de tapis nous révèle un intérieur moderne, contemporain au peintre. On rencontre alors un transfert culturel spécifique aux Nabis, qui reprennent systématiquement des images, personnages et symboles et les placent dans un espace moderne, afin de les resémantiser. Ceci fait partie de la conception de l'art cristallisée dans l'article-manifeste de leur mouvement, *Définition du néo-traditionnisme*, publié par Maurice Denis en 1890, qui s'efforce de créer une synthèse entre l'ancien et le nouveau et de respiritualiser et dynamiser l'art contemporain à l'aide du passé<sup>16</sup>. Grâce à ce procédé, *Sorcière dans son cercle*, par exemple, n'est plus une sorcière médiévale, mais symboliste, adaptée au monde artistique et littéraire de la fin du XIXe siècle.

Dans l'imaginaire traditionnel, la sorcière est une personne qui se trouve en dehors des normes et de la société. Ses refuges sont alors des espaces opposés à la ville, sauvages, insoumis. Elle habite des lieux inaccessibles, comme la forêt, les montagnes rocailleuses, les alentours des étangs<sup>17</sup>, loin du regard des hommes. Alors, sa transposition dans un appartement de la fin du XIXe siècle vient à l'encontre de cet imaginaire, réintégrant la sorcière dans la société qui jadis l'avait exilée. Une personne comme toutes les autres, elle vit maintenant une vie double, entre le jour et la nuit, entre la banalité et les rituels magiques, auxquels elle se livre dans l'intimité de son foyer. Un attribut traditionnel subsiste, pourtant: la solitude. Presque toujours seule dans une chambre, la sorcière n'est accompagnée que d'êtres inhumains, hybrides, monstrueux. Lorsqu'elle reprend ses pratiques et rituels magiques, la proximité des hommes est impossible.

Le cas de la peinture *Sorcières autour du feu* (Fig. 1) est assez particulier du point de vue spatial, car, même s'il s'agit d'un espace ouvert où les femmes se réunissent autour du chaudron, le spectateur le ressent toujours comme un espace clos, voire même encombré. Cette impression est due, sans doute, à la palette chromatique utilisée par le peintre, qui choisit de colorier les femmes en orange et de laisser le décor dans les ténèbres. Sur cet arrière-plan

<sup>16</sup> Maurice Denis, «Définition du néo-traditionnisme», 1–13.

<sup>17</sup> *Images de la magie: fées, enchanteurs et merveilleux dans l'imaginaire du XIXe siècle*, dir. Simone Bernard-Griffiths, Jeannine Guichardet (Paris: PUF, 1993), 92.

obscur fait de bleus et de noirs, on voit se dessiner des silhouettes curieuses et inquiétantes, comme celle d'un oiseau, peut-être un corbeau, qu'on peut apercevoir à gauche. Une correspondance chromatique s'instaure entre le feu infernal du chaudron et les corps des femmes, sources de vie, de mort, mais aussi d'un érotisme bouleversant. La violence de la couleur et le contraste puissant entre l'orange et le bleu semblent annoncer déjà le fauvisme du siècle suivant, notamment la *Danse* de Matisse de 1910.

Deux sorcières portent sur leurs têtes les chapeaux pointus qui leur sont caractéristiques depuis le Moyen Âge: «Les sorcières dans *Les Sorcières autour du feu* sont nues comme elles le devaient pour le sabbat, rouges, couleur des initiés, l'une porte le bonnet conique de la sorcellerie qui veut dire la magie noire et la domination de la matière, sur ce bonnet les symboles de l'alchimie, de la magie noire comme ce pentagramme esquissé, cercle surmonté d'un croissant de lune et porté par une croix pointant vers le bas; elles surveillent et attisent le chaudron magique où bouillent d'étranges mixtures d'où s'exhale un fumet qui prend forme de tentacules ou de diables...»<sup>18</sup>

Autour du feu, les femmes sont réunies dans un cercle qui reproduit le cercle magique de protection utilisé lors de l'invocation du diable, des esprits ou des démons. On retrouve la même position dans la toile *Réunion dans la forêt* de Paul Sérusier, où les Bretonnes sont assises en cercle sur le sol du bois, dans un cadre marqué par un contraste bichromatique similaire, orange-violet. Cette forme géométrique est non seulement protectrice, mais propice au secret et au mystère, grâce à sa clôture et à sa perfection qui articule un espace séparé du monde. Le dos tourné, réunies en cercle auprès du chaudron, les sorcières de Ranson sont parfaitement isolées du monde. L'absence de repères du décor, noyé dans les ténèbres, suggère à son tour une sortie du monde quotidien, un *locus* liminaire, à mi-chemin entre l'ici-bas et l'au-delà. Le feu du chaudron ardent, situé au milieu des femmes, semble une sorte d'*omphalos* d'où l'univers peut recommencer ou en tout cas être changé, voire métamorphosé.

Vers la fin de la décennie, on voit apparaître chez Ranson des sorcières au sein des bois, comme dans *Étoiles tombées*, *Sorcière au chat* et *Nu à la carcasse*. Toujours nues, elles ne tournent plus le dos au spectateur, leurs seins sont visibles, leur nudité plus explicite. Le *topos* de la forêt avait été constamment associé à la féminité par Paul Sérusier et Maurice Denis, membres proéminents du groupe des Nabis, au début des années 1890, ce qui influence sans doute leur collègue Ranson.

<sup>18</sup> Claude Jeancolas, *La peinture des Nabis*, 177.

La complexité signifiante de la forêt dans le monde occidental s'explique par la superposition de plusieurs traditions, ce qui en fait un *topos* foncièrement ambivalent. Ainsi ce *topos* mêle-t-il l'héritage gréco-latin, le bagage symbolique celtique et des réminiscences du monde biblique. Siège de l'irrationnel et des pulsions secrètes dans la conception de la Grèce ancienne, la forêt était l'endroit propice pour mettre en scène le rituel délirant des bacchantes. Associée à Dionysos, divinité à double naissance, dieu de la végétation et des bêtes sauvages, elle devient aussi un espace régénérateur. La philosophie platonicienne utilisait d'ailleurs le terme *hylé* (signifiant, à son origine, «forêt»), pour désigner le chaos informel qui a précédé le cosmos. Dans l'Ancien et le Nouveau Testament, l'espace qui s'opposait à la ville, au monde des hommes, était celui du désert. Lieu de l'étrangeté et de l'éloignement des hommes, où les initiés se réfugiaient afin de se rapprocher de la divinité, le désert n'est pas exempt de forces obscures, devenant à la fois lieu du salut et piège pour les esprits faibles. Dans le monde occidental, un des espaces les plus opposés à la ville médiévale et les plus hostiles aux hommes était, selon Corinne J. Saunders, la forêt. Faute de désert, les européens se sont vus obligés de trouver un *locus terribilis* équivalent du point de vue symbolique, sinon physique. Impropre à la vie sociale, remplie de bêtes sauvages, d'une étendue effroyable, située au-delà des agglomérations humaines, la forêt a gagné toutes les significations spirituelles du désert testamentaire, suite à un transfert culturel des sens, projetés sur un espace qui n'était pas identique, mais équivalent<sup>19</sup>.

À ces deux axes signifiants s'ajoute la religion celtique, où le bosquet était un espace sacré et rituel par excellence pour les druides<sup>20</sup>. De même, la forêt était, dans les contes celtiques, un lieu propice à la manifestation des esprits et des créatures d'outre-monde. Dans les toiles de Paul Ranson, la forêt est un espace ambivalent, habité par des forces obscures, d'un au-delà incertain et épouvantable, qui ressemble notamment au bois celtique plein d'apparitions surnaturelles et de rituels étranges. Mais, chez Ranson, il est aussi un espace de la liberté radicale, où la femme ne sent plus le besoin de se cacher – elle ressemble aux déesses antiques qui se baignaient sans souci au fond des bois, loin des regards mortels. Dans la forêt protectrice, la sorcière peut enfin se reposer, le corps contre le tronc d'un arbre, dévoilant tranquillement sa nudité.

<sup>19</sup> Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Brocéliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1993), 17.

<sup>20</sup> Carole M. Cusack, *The Sacred Tree: Ancient and Medieval Manifestations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholar Books, 2011), 59.

Dans d'autres toiles, les femmes non seulement tournent le dos au spectateur, mais ont aussi le visage caché, étant présentes dans le tableau seulement à travers leur corporéité. Ceci met en avant leur côté sensuel, la sexualité déchaînée étant depuis longtemps un attribut de la sorcellerie. Pendant le Moyen Âge occidental, la femme en général était associée à la tentation et à la luxure, suite à l'épisode biblique du jardin d'Éden. Sa proximité au diable et sa perméabilité au discours satanique sont d'autres traits qui la stigmatisent dans l'imaginaire chrétien. Pour ce qui est des sorcières, ce bagage signifiant connaît une exacerbation, virant vers l'orgie, la relation sexuelle contre nature, voire l'accouplement avec le diable: «la sorcière est succube, fécondable par le Malin et susceptible de donner naissance à des êtres démoniaques en transgressant les lois naturelles de la procréation»<sup>21</sup>.

On rencontre des êtres fantastiques qui appartiennent à l'imaginaire classique de la sorcellerie dans toutes les compositions de Ranson: le chat noir, le serpent, le hibou, l'araignée, le corbeau, le diable lui-même avec ses cornes. D'autres silhouettes, surnaturelles, incertaines, y surgissent, comme issues d'un cauchemar. Ces créatures bizarres qui accompagnent les sorcières semblent en effet être leurs progénitures. L'accouplement est suggéré, dans la toile *Sorcière dans son cercle* (Fig. 2), par la présence d'une plante inhabituelle, au bouton surdimensionné, phallique, orienté vers le corps de la femme. Cette présence masculine, réduite au règne végétal inconscient, inférieur, semble à son tour apparentée à l'imaginaire médiéval, où la sorcière était une projection des angoisses masculines: «Sur le plan de la psychologie, les sorcières révèlent en creux les angoisses profondes de l'imaginaire masculin: elles sont supposées sectionner le membre viril des hommes (à des fins rituelles) ou attenter à leur puissance sexuelle.» Au bouton surdimensionné s'ajoutent le serpent bleu situé à droite et le tuyau d'un narguilé, qui sont à leur tour des symboles phalliques. Même si la femme est séparée de ces éléments masculins par le cercle magique, la procréation est suggérée par un œuf qui vient d'éclore.

Aux apparitions animalières ou végétales s'ajoutent des symboles ou des caractères hébraïques, comme c'est le cas dans le *Suppost de Sathan*, qui sont utilisés de manière fantaisiste, sans faire du sens et sans transmettre un message cohérent. Paul Ranson semble amasser les symboles pour forger une composition aux contours indécis. Au lieu d'y croire profondément, il les utilise et resémantise à son aise, au service de son imagination, les prenant

<sup>21</sup> Lionel Obadia, *La Sorcellerie* (Paris: Cavalier bleu, 2005), 72.

comme point de départ pour ses rêveries picturales. Les lettres deviennent alors les signifiants généraux de l'occulte et du mystère.

À part les signes iconiques déjà mentionnés, on rencontre aussi chez Ranson des signes plastiques similaires dans presque toutes les représentations de la sorcellerie. Le peintre joue notamment sur l'opposition et la complémentarité de l'orange et du bleu: si le corps des femmes est toujours jaune-orange, le décor, les créatures ou les symboles phalliques sont bleus ou noirs. La couleur chaude du corps féminin renvoie à toutes ses potentialités: elle est source de vie, mais aussi de mort (l'orange renvoyant au sang), image de la sensualité ardente, mais aussi du feu infernal. Le bleu et le noir sont à chaque fois utilisés pour exprimer l'inquiétant au-delà, invoqué par la sorcière à l'aide de la magie et qui fait irruption dans notre monde en le bouleversant. Seuls les yeux scintillants du diable sont orange, comme le corps des femmes, instaurant une correspondance complice.

Les toiles inspirées par la vie quotidienne des femmes, notamment par leur intimité, partagent certains éléments avec celles du monde de la magie. Par exemple, dans *La Chambre bleue* (Fig. 3), on rencontre une femme complètement nue, qui nous tourne le dos, tout comme dans les représentations des sorcières. Son corps orange est allongé sur un lit bleu, dans un contraste qui rappelle les compositions déjà analysées. Une plante aux feuilles monstrueuses se trouve devant la fenêtre, ressemblant à la fleur phallique de *Sorcière dans son cercle*. Le pot est rempli de symboles, à la fois végétaux et animaliers, ayant, à son centre, une créature cornue. S'agit-il d'une image du diable ou d'un démon familier? On ne peut que le supposer. Un autre récipient, à contour indéfini, situé sur la table de chevet, comporte des symboles similaires qui, vu leur linéarité, font penser à des hiéroglyphes. Tout comme les caractères hébraïques utilisés dans les toiles aux sorcières, ils deviennent les signifiants généraux de l'occulte. «Cette chambre cache un mystère» semble vouloir transmettre Ranson aux spectateurs.

Dans *Lustral* (Fig. 4), on aperçoit une femme penchée, en train de se laver. Son corps est orange, son sexe est caché, ainsi que son visage. Le geste de croiser les pieds, dans une position assez inconfortable, suggère l'existence d'un secret qui refuse de se révéler. Même si elle est surprise dans l'intimité, sans se savoir vue, cette présence féminine ne veut pas se montrer. Le vase, l'évier, l'éponge et le savon sont les symboles de la purification rituelle qu'elle est en train de réaliser à travers le lavage. Tous les éléments du décor sont bleus, à part l'éponge, le savon et une fleur étrange située sur le mur: aux feuilles vertes et aux pétales jaunes, au nombre de trois, cette plante est sans doute un symbole. Serait-elle un lys stylisé, image de la pureté? Un renvoi à la

Trinité divine? L'espace ne contient plus de simulacres d'écritures anciennes, mais est rempli quand même de signes décoratifs, notamment le tapis et le vase. Le rideau tordu, plié, présente à son tour des arabesques.

*Suzanne et les vieillards* (Fig. 5), illustration de la scène biblique, utilise le même antagonisme bleu-orange. Le corps orange et nu de la femme occupe toute la verticale de la toile – situé au centre, il est le cœur palpitant de la composition, source de vie qui semble nourrir l'abondance végétale du paysage environnant. Deux arbres bleus, à droite et à gauche, lui répondent, créant un équilibre structurel et chromatique. Le jardin où l'on voit cette femme en train de se baigner comporte toutes les caractéristiques du *locus amoenus*: la verdure, la présence des arbres et d'une source d'eau<sup>22</sup>, la fontaine bleue qu'on voit au-dessous de Suzanne. Sur la fontaine on voit une inscription en hébraïque, cette fois-ci correcte, porteuse de message: *Shoshannah*, c'est-à-dire Suzanne. Cet espace sacré est délimité par un enclos, qui le transforme dans une sorte de *hortus conclusus* mystique. L'enclos a le rôle de séparer et de cacher le corps féminin du regard masculin curieux et avide. Tels les imprudents mortels qui ont regardé la déesse Artémis se baigner, les vieillards osent jeter leurs regards dans la direction de la femme nue. Leurs visages sont orange comme le corps de la femme, instaurant une correspondance semblable à celle de *Sorcière dans son cercle*, établie entre la chair féminine et la fleur surdimensionnée et phallique.

Un rituel similaire de l'intimité est surpris dans *Deux femmes se coiffant* (Fig. 6). Avec sa bordure stylisée, remplie d'arabesques, et ses couleurs fanées, la composition rappelle les tapisseries médiévales. À son cœur on trouve deux personnages féminins, un debout, l'autre assis, en train de se coiffer. La femme assise nous tourne le dos, tandis que la seconde se penche vers la droite, ce qui fait qu'on ne peut pas voir leurs visages. Le spectateur peut contempler seulement les corps jaunâtres et insoucients livrés à leurs activités quotidiennes. Tout autour, il y a un drap noir fantastique, dont les plis et les arabesques s'étendent vers le haut de la toile. L'espace compositionnel est par ailleurs plein de signes, de motifs décoratifs aux contours étranges et ondoyants. Ranson met en pratique ici le synthétisme pictural prôné par les Nabis, qui suppose à la fois une simplification de la ligne et un usage des couleurs voyantes. Une fois les silhouettes simplifiées, réduites à l'essentiel, le dessin devient un jeu permanent des lignes. La banalité du geste des femmes est contrée par la présence de créatures issues du répertoire magique: un chat

<sup>22</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), 193–202.



noir, à droite, et un oiseau, toujours noir, apparemment un cygne, à gauche. L'existence de ces femmes est en fait double: d'une part, on voit le côté paisible, quotidien de leur vie, d'autre part, les messagers de l'au-delà qui y font irruption. Chez Ranson, la féminité est toujours double, douée d'un substrat mystérieux et inquiétant.

Plus tard, même si le style de Ranson s'éloigne du principe de la pureté et du minimalisme chromatique, la femme nue en train de se laver continue de le hanter. Les scènes sont cette fois situées au cœur de la forêt, au bord d'une source d'eau. Il s'agit de femmes seules ou en nombre de deux et de trois, en train de se baigner ou de se reposer sur le sol plein de végétation. *Nu se coiffant au bord de l'étang* (Fig. 7), de 1897, nous met devant une image très similaire à la toile *Deux femmes se coiffant*, analysée plus tôt. Au premier plan, une présence féminine nue tourne le dos aux spectateurs, regardant l'eau. Elle occupe une partie de la verticale, sa silhouette étant prolongée par un tronc d'arbre qui lui répond. De l'autre côté de l'étang, on voit des femmes nues ou se déshabillant, assises et debout. Les arbres nombreux, dont les branches remplissent l'espace compositionnel, semblent protéger la scène et la cacher aux regards indiscrets. L'atmosphère, suspendue dans le temps, est lourde, porteuse de mystère. La surface de l'eau vient renforcer cette impression – couverte d'arabesques, elle semble agitée, troublée par un élément qu'on ne peut pas apercevoir. Il ne peut s'agir du vent, car les feuilles des arbres sont parfaitement immobiles. Alors, c'est peut-être une force obscure qui anime les flots et cette scène surprise au fond des bois. Si l'on se rappelle que les étangs étaient un des refuges privilégiés des sorcières, on peut lire le tableau de Ranson à la fois comme une simple baignade en nature et comme une réunion magique.

*Trois baigneuses aux iris* (Fig. 8), de 1900, est presque identique à la toile précédente. Trois femmes, complètement nues, se trouvent dans une forêt, auprès d'un étang: l'une est assise, le dos tourné, une autre est allongée à l'ombre des arbres et une troisième se trouve au milieu des flots. La silhouette du premier plan se trouve auprès d'un arbre qui prolonge son corps un peu courbé, la présence des troncs, ainsi que la palette un peu sombre créant le sentiment d'un espace clos et caché. La surface de l'eau est tout aussi troublée que dans *Nu se coiffant au bord de l'étang*, tandis que la jeune femme aux cheveux blonds qui se trouve au milieu lève les mains et les pose sur sa tête, dans un geste assez inhabituel. Réunion de fées ou de sorcières, la scène comporte un côté étrange et inquiétant. D'autres fois, les femmes se baignent dans un cadre fantastique, au bord d'un temple gardé par de grands lions en pierre. Leurs corps nus s'étendent sur des tissus rouges, couleur de la luxure, de la

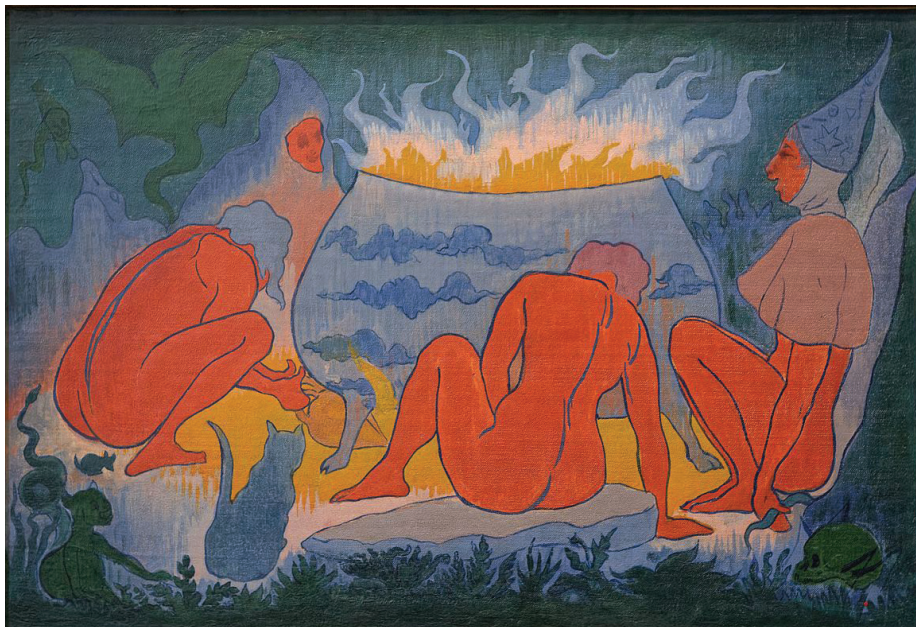
volupté et de la sexualité. Tout autour, on voit une végétation abondante, une fécondité inouïe des plantes, aux tiges hautaines, aux feuilles énormes. Les tiges qui s'élancent vers le ciel pourraient être, tout comme dans *Sorcière dans son cercle*, des symboles phalliques. La toile *Nu aux lions* respire l'air lourd, riche, des forêts tropicales, où la féminité s'épanouit à l'ombre des arbres monstrueux et avides.

Connaisseur de Papus, adepte d'un syncrétisme religieux absolu, Paul Ranson crée des tableaux intriqués, où la densité des symboles est parfois surprenante. La sorcière est une des figures centrales de son œuvre à partir de 1891, cessant d'être une menace pour la société et devenant la métaphore d'une féminité complexe, puissante, un peu inquiétante pour les hommes. La sorcière est surtout, chez Ranson, une médiatrice entre l'ici-bas et l'au-delà: elle communique avec les êtres d'outre-monde, elle donne naissance à des monstres, elle invoque des démons et des chimères. Ranson ne transpose pas une image traditionnelle de la sorcière, mais opère une adaptation au Symbolisme de son époque. Au lieu de vivre au sein des bois ou auprès des étangs, comme au Moyen Âge, la sorcière apparaît parfois dans un appartement contemporain. De cette façon, elle est réintégrée dans la société qui jadis l'avait exilée. Sa vie devient alors double, entre le jour et la nuit, entre la banalité quotidienne et les rituels secrets de l'intimité. Mais la sorcière transgresse aussi la série de toiles qui lui est dédiée et infuse durablement la création du peintre. Idéal féminin, elle se décline sous des formes diverses, parfois paradoxales, lustrales.

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**Fig. 1.** *Les Sorcières autour du feu*, 1891

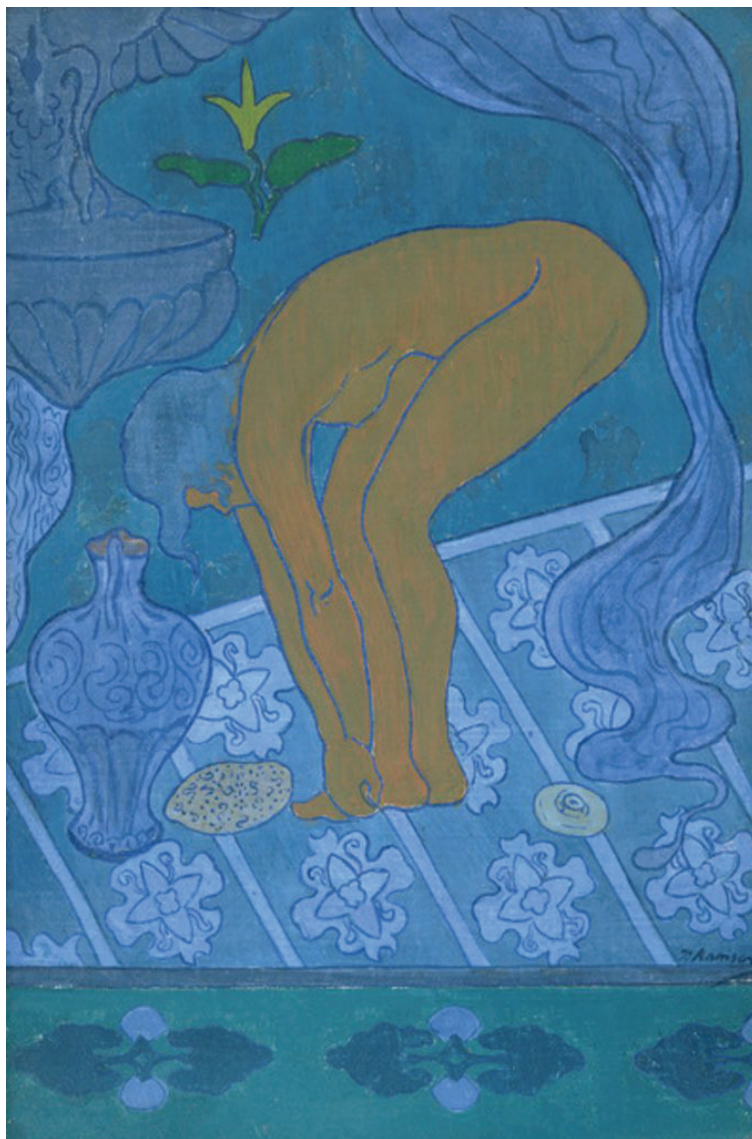


**Fig. 2.** *Sorcière dans son cercle*, 1892





Fig. 3. *La Chambre bleue ou Nu à l'éventail*, vers 1891



**Fig. 4.** *Lustral*, 1891

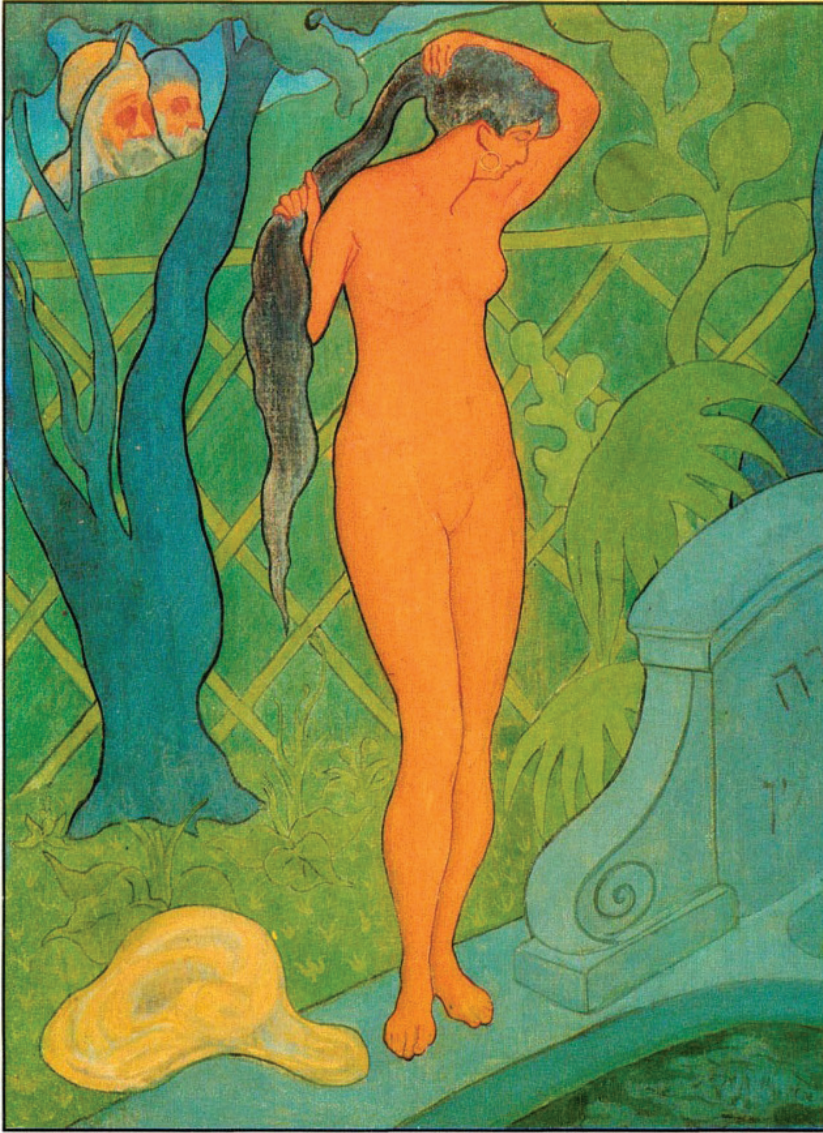


Fig. 5. *Suzanne et les vieillards*, 1891





**Fig. 6.** *Deux femmes se coiffant*, 1892



**Fig. 7.** *Nu se coiffant au bord de l'étang*, 1897





**Fig. 8.** *Trois baigneuses aux iris*, vers 1900



# Witches, Wizards and Witchcraft in Comic Books

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GELU TEAMPĂU\*

**Abstract:** This paper deals with the representation of witches, wizards, and other magic dealers in the comic-book medium. A rather young form of art, comic books have borrowed their narrative content from other media, and adapted it in their own paradigm. Being almost exclusively dedicated to entertainment, comic books have created a certain narrative and artistic codes that were occasionally borrowed by other media in their turn (films, cartoons, video games etc.). The representation of magic dealers and their spells play a great part in the industry of comic books since it offers the pretext of imaginative storytelling and drawing, not inhibited by realistic norms. After placing comic books in the context of other entertaining branches of media, we shall identify and analyze the image of the magic dealer as it appears in this industry (from superheroes and villains who use magic in their endeavors to secondary characters who produce it). We shall also look into the depiction of spell-casting and magical beings and objects, as they are usually highlighted by using certain graphic markers. A separated insight will be dedicated to a sub-genre that made career in the comic book medium and in which magic plays a major role, but respecting certain tropes: heroic fantasy. Finally, we shall investigate the link between magic and Satanism, a theme which is not very common in comic books, but it appears occasionally in horror stories. It is important to follow the origin of some generally accepted codes used in depicting magic all over the entertainment industry, some of which have first been used in comic-books.

**Keywords:** comic books, art, entertainment, magic, superheroes, storytelling, heroic fantasy, Satanism.

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## Introduction

Comic books are a form of art which is considered to have been introduced into the (American) cultural landscape roughly at the same time with photography and film, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. Often referred to as “the ninth art”, one would expect comic books (or “comics”, as they are mostly called) to be accepted as such, and their status as a form of art to no longer be debated. Yet, people are still reluctant to consider them an art form and a valid research field. It still happens that we have to defend this status against all sorts of accusations, from artistic irrelevance to bad psychological influence and social destructiveness<sup>2</sup>.

It has to be said loud and clear: comics are a form of art, with its own craft, tropes, codes, and public, requiring, to use Bourdieu’s concept<sup>3</sup>, certain “cultural competences”, in creating as well as in consuming it. Of course, comparing them to masterpieces from other artistic fields, such as great novels, great paintings or great movies is a methodological error and says nothing about anything. Nobody forbids anyone from creating great comics, and bad comics do not affect other fields. Just as in any other medium, most part of them are mediocre, while some are execrable and some are genius work. Therefore, comics should not be evaluated for what they are not or do not accomplish, but for what they are and intend to be<sup>4</sup>.

From a technical perspective, comics raise some particular issues (a certain entwining of text and drawing, suggesting movement, sounds or scents in a static and silent manner, narrative space and time management etc.) and have come up with various solutions, some of them being borrowed into other media<sup>5</sup>. It

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the early years of comic-books, see James Steranko, *The Steranko History of Comics*, vol. 1 (Pennsylvania: Supergraphics Publications, 1970) and James Steranko, *The Steranko History of Comics*, vol. 2 (Pennsylvania: Supergraphics Publications, 1972). For a focus on DC Comics, see Les Daniels, *DC Comics. 60 Years of the World’s Most Favorite Comic Books Heroes* (Boston: Bullfynch Press, 1995). For an exhaustive overview of the Golden Age comics production, see Howard Keltner, *Golden-Age Comic Books Index 1935–1955* (Gainesville: Howard Keltner, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see Bradford W. Wright, *Comics-Book Nations. The Transformation of Youth Culture in America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Lisa Barnett and Allen Michael Patrick, “Social Class, Cultural Repertoires and Popular Culture in the Case of Film”, *Sociological Forum*, 15, no. 1 (2002), 147.

<sup>4</sup> An extensive discussion on the links between comic-books, popular culture and myth, in Gelu Teampău, *Mit și bandă desenată* (Iași: Institutul European, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> The most comprehensive work on the technicality of comic-books is Scott McCloud, *Understanding Comics. The Invisible Art* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002).

is important to note that if some people try to place them under the umbrella of various, more “respectable” media channels or art-forms (they have been considered very slow films, illustrated texts or “texted” images, serial caricatures and so on), comics have become a particular medium, in their own right. Moreover, they do not need to gain respectability by being placed in the filiations of such highly-regarded media, neither do they benefit from retrospectively “inventing” comics before they even existed (such as Hogarth’s paintings, the Bayeux tapestry, Trajan’s column or even prehistoric cave-drawings – McCloud being a supporter of this trend). As some researchers have noted, comics are dependent, by definition, on the dissemination methods, practices and support<sup>6</sup>. They have appeared in newspapers and even after getting their “independence”, they still have kept this trait of serial, periodic narratives. Depending on the cultural sphere and market habits, they are issued regularly, in short facsimiles (16 to 32 pages mostly), as it is the case for the American scene, or in larger volumes, after a longer period, as it happens in France or Japan. This aspect is relevant, because it generates certain habits of production and consumption, and also influences the narrative and artistic techniques.

As it relates to the narrative content, comic books have started as short funny stories in newspapers, depicting the American everyday life in a humorous manner. We may speculate on whether the first great creators (Outcault, McKay, etc.) ever envisaged the full potential of their work and its future cultural relevance, economic profitability or social influence. We know for sure that after gaining the public’s interest, they have evolved into more complex stories, requiring more space and artistic abilities. Being a popular form of art, addressed mainly to a middle-class public from the American suburbs, comics took their narrative substance from other non-pretentious media, such as popular novels, urban legends, and folk tales. Comics did not appear in a vacuum and they manifested into and exploited a certain imaginary ambient, common in Western societies at the crossroads of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In order to attract and keep attention, they had to use plots, characters, tropes, and narrative strategies that had been proved efficient in selling the written word.

Sensationalist short-stories have quickly become the norm, along with humorous and satirical ones. Crime and detective stories, adventure and even horror scenarios have gained more and more space in the comic-book scene. Artistic prowess was not the purpose in the early age of comics (although some high-quality pages have been produced, McKay’s *Little Nemo* being

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<sup>6</sup> Bradford Wright, *Comic-Book Nation*, 29.



considered today one of the finest titles ever), and so the accent fell on the narrative part, which also was aimed at getting quick and easy access to the larger public. Complex stories, profound concepts, deep characters, rich cultural references, and textual subtleties were, thus, not usual in such products. It is of no wonder, then, that common places in a popular culture flooded the early comic-book scene, operating in cheap clichés. As it happened in other popular media, the writers often entered grotesque or ridiculous areas, to attract attention, to entice, to shock and to motivate further consumption. And, as it also happened (and still does) in various media channels, the plots went beyond rational and mundane causalities, wandering into the unquantifiable area of the occult. The mysteries involved not only a very intelligent criminal mastermind, or strange, yet physically explainable events, but supernatural entities, such as vampires, ghosts, werewolves, zombies, mummies and many other creations of gothic imagination<sup>7</sup>.

### Witches, Wizards and Witchcraft in Popular Culture

In the context of global insecurities and faced with new anxieties, emerged as a result of technological progress, of quick and extensive communication and of authority loss traditional institutions faced, scared individuals are searching for hope, promises and personal links with the help of sects, astrologists or mages, referred to as “dealers of serenity”<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, irrational explanations and representations of complex phenomena and concepts are still present in communication.

Witches and wizards played a big part in the entertainment industry, in all sorts of scenarios, which were closely following certain folk traditions and well-known literary and artistic works (one of the forefathers of artistic entertainment, namely Dürer, used the image of the witch in many of his engravings<sup>9</sup>) or, on the contrary, free-floating in new stories which offered the possibility of fantasizing on any subject. Films, novels, music, comic-books, theater plays, magic shows, all were offering such hypotheses to the public, stimulating its appetite for the supernatural. In a short time, the

<sup>7</sup> For studies focusing on vampires and werewolves in comic-books, see Gelu Teampău, “Faces of the Vampire in Comic-Books”, *Echinox* 21 (2011), 307–17, and Gelu Teampău, “Gheare, colți și pureci. Licantropia în banda desenată”, *Orma* 20 (2013), 53–76.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Muchembled (ed.), *Magia și vrăjitoria în Europa din Evul Mediu până astăzi*, trans. Maria and Cezar Ivănescu (București: Humanitas, 1997), 329.

<sup>9</sup> Dieter Breuers, *O istorie puțin altfel a vrăjitoarelor și a prigonirii lor* (București: Rao, 2014), 345.

enormous quantity of such (inevitably repetitious and reductionist) products leads to further and wider speculations, needed for the enriching of narrative tropes. All these hypothetical entities gained variability, flexibility, complexity. They got separated into classes, families, traditions, functions or aspects, behavior, abilities, mentality, and so on. For example, vampires were not simply vampires anymore, but of different types, belonging to noble families or being solitary abominations, drinking human and animal blood or eating flesh and different plants, gorgeous or hideous, cultured or beastly, strong or weak, endowed with different powers, abilities, frailties, and idiosyncrasies.

The same happened with magic and its purveyors. If magic offered the perfect alibi for unexplainable events, actions, or characters (and eluded the need for an explanation), it became so complex that it resulted in thorough specialization. Practitioners of magic followed various “schools”, each with different skills and effects, either over the environment, over others or over self. Today, in a fantasy work, it is not enough to just call something “magical”, but it is necessary to go deeper into spell taxonomy: destruction, enchantment, illusion, alteration, conjuration, protection, divination, necromancy, restoration and so on. The classical (and not very rigorous) classification into the four “elemental” attributes (earth, water, air, and fire) still stands as a paradigmatic landmark. Another delimitation of magical practices follows the ancient dichotomy of Order and Chaos (sometimes referred to as white and black magic), and all of these categorizing items may be combined in the search of attractive and lasting characters.

It has to be noted that in the abundant literature on magic, sorcery, and witchcraft, there is not an agreement on all of these terms, many authors using different criteria in classifying them and identifying various differences which are not all convincing. Some consider magic to be eminently intellectual, requiring the knowledge of great mysteries (such a vague concept that it is practically unmanageable), while letting witchcraft deal only with minor mysteries<sup>10</sup>. Materialists consider magic and witchcraft a feat of the credulous, superstitious and obscurantist primitive mind, defeated by scientific progress, although some credit occultism with the function of a “social valve”, when science did not yet provide all explanation for reality<sup>11</sup>. Magical thinking is considered by some to be a consequence of the feeling of anxiety, sometimes taking pathological form, entering the field of mental disease<sup>12</sup>. On

<sup>10</sup> See Jean Palou, *Vrăjitoria*, trans. Ofelia Screciu (Timișoara: Editura de Vest, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Gh. V. Brătescu, *Vrăjitoria de-a lungul timpului* (București: Editura Politică, 1985), 285.

<sup>12</sup> Colette Arnould, *Istoria vrăjitoriei în Occident*, trans. Mărgărta Vavi Petrescu (București:

the other hand, some authors acknowledge the importance of magic and witchcraft in the evolution of the human mind, sorcerers, together with astrologists, alchemists and mystery-hunters being the precursors of today's scientists.<sup>13</sup> From another perspective, magic is seen as a performing art, visually defined and a major entertainment practice, with a tradition as old as human history<sup>14</sup>; its practitioners are supposed to have transformed ancient sorcery into modern magic<sup>15</sup>. For the purpose of this paper, all of these terms shall be used interchangeably, since we are not interested in semantics, but in the graphic representation of the same basic principles.

Since no cultural product or media channel exists independently of others, just hanging by itself in a cultural void, these tropes travel from one to other, in different forms of expression. Nowhere is this phenomenon more prevalent than in the abundant industry of video (and board) games, which are considered the newest form of telling stories. All these narrative codes and conventions have been fully brought and developed into electronic visual arts. Comics have greatly contributed to this, by trying to depict spells, spell casting and their effects.

Another aspect that needs to be taken into account is the linguistic richness involved into describing this phenomenon and those involved in it. We all know that there are mages, sorcerers, wizards, shamans, clerics, and other entities that deal with magic. Although there is no strict delimitation between their profiles and competences, various products (novels, films, comics, music, or games) place them in distinct hierarchies, according to their proficiency, abilities, and moral stance. Sometimes wizards, highly intellectual, are stronger and more virtuous than sorcerers, which may be more instinctual and rudimentary. Mages usually represent civilization, while shamans are usually the agents of barbaric societies. The hierarchy is neither strict nor rigorous, varying according to each author or "imaginary space".

Another distinction involves gender. There are sorcerers and sorceresses, wizards, and witches, but only mages, be them, males or females. Traditionally, if not weaker, the female dealers of magic were seen as more dangerous and unstable. Folk tales and popular novels have exploited the image of the evil witch more than of the evil wizard. Wizards doing good

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Editura Lider, 2008), 298.

<sup>13</sup> Georges Charpak and Henri Broch, *Lecții de vrăjitorie. Știința și paranormalul*, trans. Dana Florean (București: Humanitas, 2007), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Noel Daniel (ed.), *The Magic Book* (Köln: Taschen, 2009), 14.

<sup>15</sup> Mike Caveney, in Noel Daniel (ed.) *The Magic Book* (Köln: Taschen, 2009), 131.

deeds were not something unusual (sorcerers, on the other hand, were more present in nefarious acts). This view of the woman as being more dangerous than the man had a huge impact on popular culture, and even as of late, when good and beautiful witches have appeared into a lot of products, the same perception is functional, even if turned upside down.

Another point that has to be brought into the topic is the distinction between the major popular fields of fantasy and science-fiction. As close as they might be, many authors and artists get involved in both scenes and many fans follow them both (as it may be seen in periodical events, such as *Comic Con*), some differences being vital in understanding the narrative and artistic mechanisms operating in these fields.

One apparent distinction regards magic, its conceptualization, and use: no fantasy scenario can be conceived in the absence of magic, magical creatures and agents of magic, whilst sci-fi, due to its “scientific” idiom, casts all of that aside. But, as Reynolds<sup>16</sup> astutely observed, magic is not absent in sci-fi, but draped in various seemingly scientific verbiages. In sci-fi we deal, in fact, with a kind of “magic of science”, the futuristic common places having less to do with science than with magic (time-travels, faster than light-speed travels, impossible weapons, abhorrent genetic engineering, extremely developed robots reminding of the magical golem and so on – see fig. 1).

By their nature, fantasy and sci-fi works deal with the supernatural and

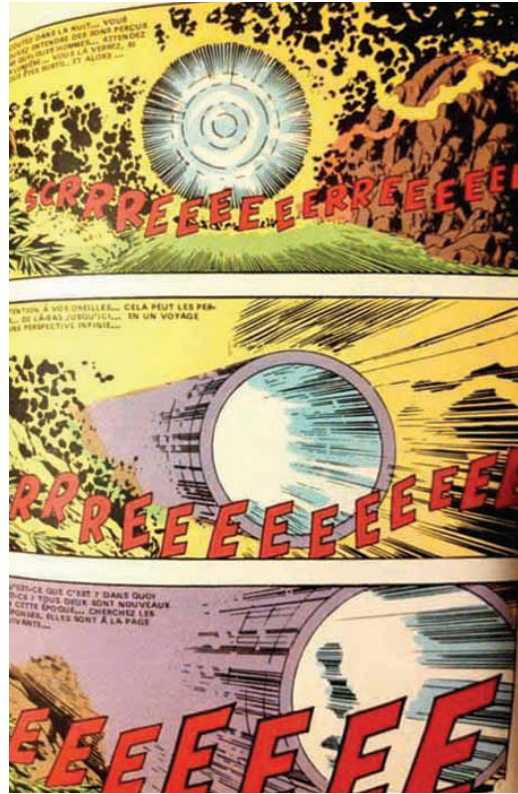


Fig. 1: Jack Kirby’s imagining of time travel (the magic of “pseudo”science). Source: *Comics Parade No.6*. Arédit, 1986, 38.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Reynolds, *Super-Heroes, A Modern Mythology* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1992), 54.

with the unknown, used as narrative hooks to catch the attention of the consumer. These plots have to be out of the ordinary, they are expected to trespass the limits of settled knowledge and to raise extreme hypotheses and speculations, often giving up on any grip on reality and thrashing any semblance of common-sense. If their artistic form is attractive and manages to impose the product on the market and satisfies the general taste (or influences it), such tropes penetrate the general conscience and get expression in other, if not all, media channels, creating “imaginary spaces”, with their own rules, habits, codes and expectations (*Conan the Barbarian*, *Lord of the Rings*, *A Game of Thrones*, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, or the super-hero universe generated in the comic-book medium and so on). Magic, sorcery, wizardry, or whatever name the phenomenon of influencing the medium by personal actions takes, constitutes a privileged narrative tool used in many popular culture products. Resorting to supernatural and occult parameters is always an enticing and intriguing (yet sometimes quite lazy) solution for a successful novel, film, comic-book, or video game. The major instances magic is presented and conceptualized in comic-books shall be presented further.

### **Main Characters that Use Magic (Superheroes, Villains and Specialists)**

The super-hero is the concept that first made its appearance in the comic-book medium and turned it into a major channel of communication and entertainment. In its absence, we may almost certainly make the supposition that comics would have vanished into oblivion, without having reached a state of even minor relevance. But once Superman made his debut in 1938, comic-books became the most important entertainment channel for an important period (the *Golden Age* of American comics almost perfectly overlapping the Second World War).

Super-heroes already are an out of the ordinary type of character, reminding of old mythological and legendary constructs. They vary in aspect, motivation, modus-operandi, abilities and so on (although this variation only entails a limited number of elements, combined in different ways – super-strength, super-speed, super-vision, the ability to fly, mineral, vegetal or animal contaminations etc.). Some of the most important super-heroes have an explicit magical origin, powers, and artifacts. Even before Superman entered the arena, Mandrake was a star of comics series, although he did not possess super-powers, behaving more like an illusionist. But Captain Marvel, created soon after Superman’s own birth and being his equal in strength, has magic



as a central aspect of his mythos: little boy Billy Bateson gets struck by lightning and turns into the almighty and hunky (yet somewhat goofy) Captain Marvel every time he utters the word SHAZAM (an acronym of ancient gods and heroes – Samson, Hercules, Achilles, Zeus, Atlas and Mercury).

Not of magical origin, but a master of magic and sorcery is the Vincent Price lookalike Doctor Strange, the one who acquired his knowledge and craft in the mystical Orient. Conceived and accepted as the ultimate spell-

caster, he manages to use all types of magic so as to combat disturbances and redress order (fig. 2). Another super-hero using magical powers is Scarlet Witch, a wielder of chaos magic, which she got from a demon known as Chthon (and it should be noted that her powers prove dangerous and hard to control, endangering everybody, including herself). Their counterpart in the DC universe (Dr. Strange and the Scarlet Witch belong to Marvel, the other major comics publishing house) is Zatanna, a beautiful witch, who also uses her spell-casting abilities for the cause of good. Also a part of the DC universe, Green Lantern uses a magical ring that has the ability to create anything its wearer imagines. In fact, there is supposed to be a so-called Green Lantern Corps, an intergalactic team of such ring-bearers, coming from all races imaginable, striving to maintain the universal balance or to redress it once it has been upset.

Of course, super-villains can also use magic and almost every super-hero battled such entities. Dr. Strange, for example, had to fight many wielders of magic, and the pages depicting their actual conflict occasionally offer



Fig. 2: Dr. Strange and his acolyte killing cultists (notice the difference between light and fire magic). Source: *Album Docteur Strange No.1*. Arédit, 1981, 14.

interesting, intriguing and even plainly beautiful displays. Different kinds of magic, or the same kind, but used in different ways, provide an excellent excuse for the artists indulging in alert, colorful and dynamic storytelling and illustrating (fig. 3).

There is no strict distinction between heroes and villains in their use of magic (nor between their motives, as of late, the unproblematic original



Fig. 3: Also Dr. Strange in a page full of spells. Source: *Docteur Strange No. 2- Aux confins des dimensions*. Arédit, 1981, 21.

positive or at least understanding light cast upon him, in the high-quality series from the seventies<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> See Gelu Teampău, "Faces of the Vampire".

Manichaeism in comic-books getting blurred over time, at pace with the need of more complex characters and stories). There are fiery or frosty villains, as well as heroes (one of the first super-heroes was, in fact, Marvel's Human Torch), and nobody could expect a certain kind of magical profile to determine a certain kind of acting or moral stance. This is even more so when characters that use dark or dubious features with good intentions are involved, such as Ghost Rider (once considered to be Satan's pawn and getting his powers as a result of having signed a contract with the ruler of Hell). Even Dracula, the odious vampire lord, sometimes had a



Sometimes, the use of (certain types of) magic takes its toll on the casters, depleting their lively energy, causing mutations or affecting their mental capacities and, therefore, their moral stance and behavior. In a Faustian manner, using unclean (unholy) powers corrupts the individual or the group, leading to virtuous heroes turning periodically or definitively to the “dark side”, or at least causing mayhem (as it happened with the above mentioned Scarlet Witch). In some cases, magic or witchcraft are seen not only as ways of knowing or doing things, not only as knowledge or technique, not only as discipline or lore, but as abstract entities, endowed with will and power, affecting the physical and moral worlds by using the wielders as their tools (The Force in the *Star Wars* universe being a proper example of such a principle).

Superman himself had his share of wizards to battle and, in the canon, magic is one of his few weak-points (along with kryptonite). Although he can swallow physical fire to put it out, Superman finds a great challenge in dealing with magical fire (indeed, comic-book writers are not among the most epistemologically rigorous intellectuals). In fact, one of his archrivals is Mr. Mxyzptlk (fig. 4), a trickster dwelling in the 5<sup>th</sup> dimension, who uses magical abilities in order to run havoc in Superman’s world in a cartoonish way (confirming once more the relative lack of constraint for comic-book creators). DC creators even felt the need to conceive stronger heroes than Superman, one of these being the magic-using Spectre, a god-like character, which later got more complex, having issues controlling his immense powers and becoming morally ambiguous.

The recent depiction of witches and other magic users in a more positive light can be easily observed through all media channels, the old cliché of them being all-out evil and irrational giving way to a more nuanced approach. Besides magic-wielders fighting alongside accepted champions of good and virtue (such as classical super-heroes), some series present them as the only ones capable of defending the natural order of things. For example, the Italian series *W.I.T.C.H.*, issued from 2001 until 2012 and aimed at a young female public, saw a group of girls in the position of guarding the center of the universe (a rather pretentious and out of proportion premise) from anyone trying to cause harm to it. The girls, whose initials compose the acronym (Will, Irma, Tarance, Cornelia and Hay Lin), are endowed with magical powers corresponding to the five natural elements: water, fire, air, earth, and energy. The loose premises and the lack of need for factual veracity allowed the creators to indulge into beautifully drawn (in *manga* fashion), funny and cute action stories, which gained enormous sympathy

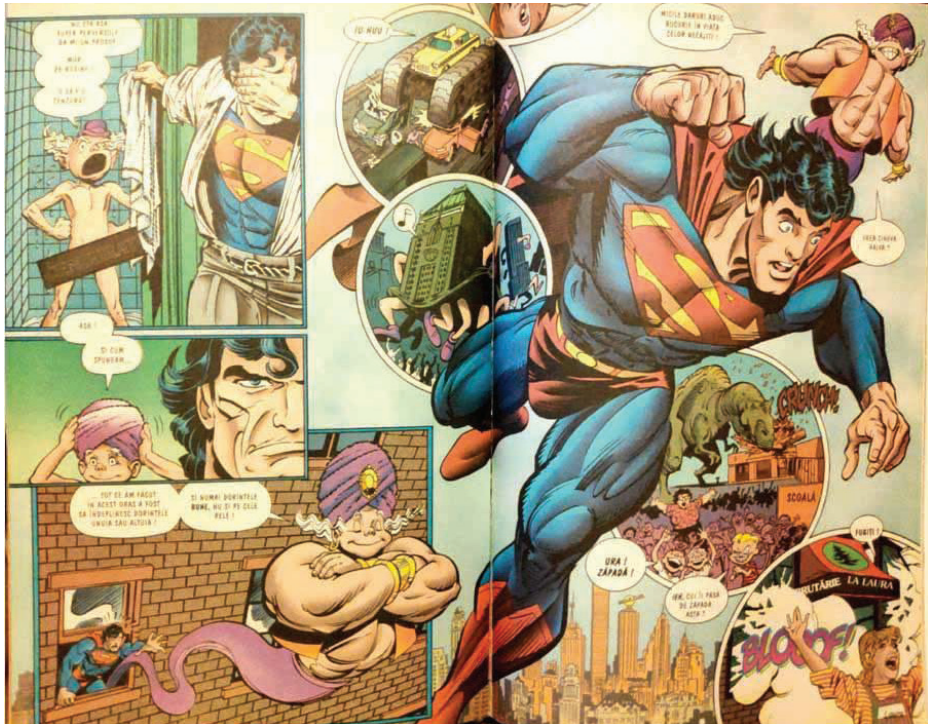


Fig. 4: The annoying Mr. Mxyzptlk and the troubles he brings for Superman.  
Source: *Superman 1938- 1998*. Egmont România, 1998, 72–73.

among fans. As a result, the series got transposed into an animated series and also in a video game, the creators even getting into a (lost) legal fight with Disney Studios over the initial rights to *W.I.T.C.H.*

The supposed eroticism of young beautiful witches is exploited all over the entertainment field, of which comics are a relevant part, and at times it is used to produce lubricious content. One such example would be the Japanese *Bible Black* erotic video game issued in 2000, and the animated series that followed it. The plot revolves around some high-school students who find an occult tome in the school basement, which grants them extreme sexual attributes via the use of black magic. In the tradition of Japanese erotic *manga* and *anime* (mostly known as *hentai*), the series are an illustrative example of how contemporary satanic pornography is conceived. It is true that this particular title did not make a career in the comic-book genre, but it is relevant for the topic, due to its use of clichés which are to be found in other lesser-known products: the sexual appeal of young people,

the unexplainable nature of sexual attraction and prowess, the intriguing relation between sexuality and the occult, the promiscuity of magic users and so on<sup>18</sup>.

Not all main characters are involved in a physical or mental conflict, though. There are some series that use storytelling frames, such as characters narrating the plots, in a multi-layered scheme. Most are focused on mystery, crime and horror stories and various acceptances of magic and witchcraft are present at all times in these short graphic tales. *The Witching Hour*, published by DC between 1969 and 1978, but also *House of Secrets*, *House of Mystery*, *The Unexpected*, and others, contain horror stories introduced to the public by such hosts, among which are the brothers Cain and Abel, Crypt Keeper, or The Three Witches, also known as The Furies, The Kindly Ones or The Hecatae. The latter is portrayed as the incarnation of vengeance, starting as three women at different ages (young Cynthia, middle-aged Mildred, and old Mordred), and later being revived by Neil Gaiman in the *Sandman* series as a single supernatural entity with three aspects. Shakespearian and biblical references are not the only ones associated with this group, them also having been referred to in mythological terms, as The Erinyes, The Moirai, The Parcae of Rome, The Wyrd Sisters, Morrigan (Nehman, Badb, Macha), Mut (Maat, Hathor, Nekhbet), Hecate Trioditus (Hecate, Artemis, Luna), or Juventas the



Fig. 5: The Three Witches and Abel gathered to tell horror stories. Source: *Le manoir des fantômes No.3 – Vision d'horreur*. Arédit, 1982, 3.

<sup>18</sup> As stated before, media are not evolving separately, but closely intertwined; thus, themes, techniques and narrative content which gather attention in one particular medium soon permeates others. The most appreciated form is not necessary the original.

virgin, Juno the mothers and Minerva the wise crone<sup>19</sup>. They do not possess any super-powers (except for being able to predict the future), but use the classical witching paraphernalia (brooms, cauldrons, potions, talismans etc.) and are not directly involved in the stories they tell, although they may have their own introductory and ending parts which consist of jokes, morals or warnings. They engage in friendly contests, as to who is able to tell the most horrifying story, and their presence in the comic-books resembles more to a chatty gathering, a meditating tea-party Sabbath, than to the action-packed pages the medium is well-known for (fig. 5). Other horror series, such as *Ghost Manor* (published by Charlton Comics from 1968 to 1984), use the same narrative strategy, introducing other “hosts”, such as Old Witch and Mr. Bones.

### Magical Entities

Alongside protagonists and main characters, comic-book stories that deal with magic are populated by secondary characters and entities which play various roles and fill various narrative functions. Many wizards, mages, and sorcerers have magical companions, so-called “familiars”, which help them in their endeavors or are simply kept as pets. They are summoned in animal form (cats, dogs, wolves, bears, owls, frogs, pigs, sheep, crows, bugs etc.), or come from fantastic bestiaries (griffins, dragons, imps, goblins, demons and so on). They can also be inanimate objects temporarily or permanently imbued with life (weapons, tools, books, rocks) or elemental entities in human or abstract form (water, light, energy, fire, smoke etc.). Some skilled magicians can even summon a double (or more) of themselves, parts of human-animal bodies (hands, feet, paws, skulls), or revive dead persons and animals for personal use, but this always falls under the category of necromancy and is seldom considered to bear any positive aspects.

The myth of the golem has its many avatars in comic-books, from the classical guardian to various constructs build in almost any material (clay, wood, rock, metal, water, air, and so on) and animated by magical means (fig. 6). They may be used for good or bad, depending on the will of their master, and sometimes they break loose, gaining their own will. Of course, golems are a common occurrence in fantasy stories, but the same logic (or lack thereof) applies to science-fiction when all kinds of robots are involved.

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<sup>19</sup> DC Database: Three Witches, accessed March 03, 2020, [https://dc.fandom.com/wiki/Three\\_Witches](https://dc.fandom.com/wiki/Three_Witches)



Golems are mostly created by magical means (conjunction, manipulation or life-inducing spells), and sometimes they use magic in their turn for defending their master or attacking.

A host of other magical creatures that populate comic-books are borrowed from various folk traditions, and they play roles of lesser or bigger importance, depending on the will of the writers. Genies are a usual occurrence, the most known being the one residing in Alladin's lamp (which got its most popular representation in Disney's products, such as films, animated series, comics, video games, and so on). Other genies may prove to be malign, or at least playing the trickster part, having to be dealt with by the protagonists. The same happens with other creatures in the realm of magic, such as fairies, fees, nymphs, leprechauns, unicorns, dragons, ents and others, which may keep the traits that have been bestowed upon them by the folk traditions that created them or can gain new ones, in accordance to the imagination and the will of the writers. Sometimes the magical nature of some creatures may be underlined by a surrounding glowing halo, drawn in white, yellow, green, blue, red or other colors, usually suggesting their elemental nature (blue for water, brown or green for earth, red, orange or yellow for fire, white or light-blue for air and so on).



Fig. 6: Zatanna creates a magical prison for a summoned fiery creature. Source: *Les géants des super-heroes No.2 – Piège pour Firestorm*. Arédit, 1981, 23.

## Magical Objects

Magic is supported, in almost any story that implies it, by a vast range of objects. They can be used in spell-casting, as resources or triggers, or can be enchanted and able to generate magic independently of their wielder's will. In a magic-imbued world, anything can be the carrier of magical features,

from beings and objects, to scenery, but there are some particular objects that are regularly used in such settings.

Everybody knows about the *Lord of the Rings* (even those not having read Tolkien's novels or having watched the films). Rings are a favorite example of magical objects among comic-book writers. Besides the fore-mentioned "star" in the panoply of enchanted rings, almost any time the story focuses on a ring, it is a magical one (or at least one of the highest symbolic importance). Green Lantern, the mighty DC hero, has all of his amazing powers reside in the magical green ring (and to be noted that one of his arch-rivals, Sinestro, uses a similar yellow ring) (fig. 7).

Some rings provide certain magical abilities (invisibility, speed, various resistances etc.), while others enhance some traits the bearer already

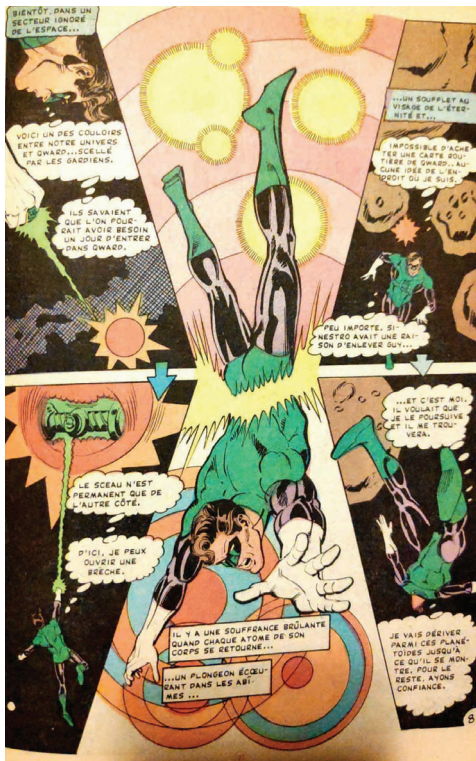


Fig. 7: The multi-function ring of Green Lantern. Source: *La Ligue de Justice No.8 - Les prisonniers du temps*. Arédit, 1984, 20.

has (strength, intelligence, dexterity etc.). Some rings only work in ensembles (composed of several rings or other attire elements), one having to possess all in the set to be able to benefit from their corroborated features, or to cooperate with characters who possess other items of a certain set. It happens that certain rings have their counterparts and their putting together must be avoided at all costs, lest cosmic disasters should occur (as stated before, writers have all the liberty they need in such stories).

Of course, other garment items can be enchanted in various degrees: amulets, earrings, headbands, gloves, glasses, shoes, shirts, and so on. Their magical attributes are varying within the same parameters, though, granting more or less the same powers: immunity to harm, invisibility, super-strength, speed, telekinesis,

telepathy, ability to predict the future or to speak to animals or other beings, flying etc. Enchanted armor sets are usually found in fantasy stories, most of

them protecting the wearer from all sorts of damage. For example, Mordred's cuirass bearing the Grail symbol immediately heals any wound and regenerates any lost limb or body part, in the sci-fi-fantasy exquisite reinterpretation of the Arthurian cycle in the *Camelot 3000* series (to be noted that, after defeating the valiant Lancelot and almost killing him, Mordred could be defeated only by the absolute mage, Merlin, who dismantled his armor with a strong spell – fig. 8).

Not rare in comic-books are enchanted empty walking armor sets, put into motion by magical means and used as guardians or attackers (necromancers can use corpses or skeletons for the same purpose, druids can gather armies of animals and plants, while other sorcerers can surround themselves with elemental or abstract fighters).

Magical weapons are also a constant presence in comic-books. Many such items have names and even dedicated stories, playing the main part regardless of their wielders. Mjolnir, the well-known hammer of Thor, grants its master godlike powers, and the role of Thor in the Marvel universe has been played by various characters who were able to lift and use it. Excalibur, the illustrious sword from the lake, also contains magical powers that get transferred to the ones handling it, granting them royal status. Elric, the albino warrior, uses a sword that transfers to him the strength of his defeated enemies, making him more powerful with each obtained victory. Wonder Woman, although not owing her powers to magic but to her mythical, divine origin, makes use of her enchanted lasso, which forces anyone caught to tell the truth (an imaginary projection of the polygraph machine, which was invented by Wonder Woman's creator, William



Fig. 8: Merlin ending Mordred's promising career. Source: *Camelot 3000* No. 5 – *L'accomplissement*. Arédit, 1985, 29.

the ones handling it, granting them royal status. Elric, the albino warrior, uses a sword that transfers to him the strength of his defeated enemies, making him more powerful with each obtained victory. Wonder Woman, although not owing her powers to magic but to her mythical, divine origin, makes use of her enchanted lasso, which forces anyone caught to tell the truth (an imaginary projection of the polygraph machine, which was invented by Wonder Woman's creator, William



Moulton Marston). Many wizards, sorcerers, mages, druids or shamans use canes or staves to cast or to dispel spells (and some use them more bluntly, as melee weapons too). There are also magical weapons that fight by themselves, not needing a wielder, and usually, they can only be defeated by magical means.

Any other object can be used in the story as a support, a carrier, or a source of magic. Clocks that can hold time still, or make it go faster, or



Fig. 9: Panoramicus and the effects of his magical soup. Source: *O aventură a lui Asterix eroul galilor*, vol. 1. Egmont România, 1994, 18.

be the magical potion prepared by the druid Panoramicus to render Astérix's village unconquerable (fig. 9). The recipe for the potion is only known by the Gaul druids (we only know that it contains mistletoe and that all ingredients must be gathered by the use of the druid's golden cutlass).

In the case of attire, in the vast majority of cases, we may tell which characters deal with magic just by looking at their garments. Not necessarily a

backwards, are not scarce. Bells that can provoke various magical effects are also easily found. Almost all spell-casters use spell-books or scrolls in their activity, and many times we are informed that these are one-issue editions. Extremely rare books containing very dangerous spell formulas bring into the present the medieval myth of satanic tomes endowed with their own will. Some are borrowed from story to story and from medium to medium, such as the infamous *Necronomicon*. Also, almost all dealers of magic use potions that they concoct themselves or obtain from different sources. The most known in the comic-book universe must

uniform (the pointy hat and the starred robe are only used in humorous instances), the clothes a magic-dealer wears are always thinner and more colorful than a fighter, a thief, or any other type of character does. Mages only rarely use heavy armor (as intellectuals, they are supposed to lack the constitution and the stamina to wear it), and even when involved in battle, they rely mostly on avoiding damage than in resisting it. Robes seem to be a spell-caster's favorite attire and they come in all colors and models, from grey and dark blue to purple, white, or yellow.

A somewhat different situation involves battle-mages, very common in heroic-fantasy stories (fig. 10), who are a combination of mages (or rather shamans) and warriors, who usually wear leather and fur armor. They seem to be stronger and better built than the regular spell-caster, but compared to the fighters of their own ilk (human barbarians or imaginary races), they also prove to be less prone to heavy equipment. As a general rule, mages, sorcerers, wizards, druids, shamans, and any other magic-users are physically weaker than almost any other characters depicted in comic-book fantastic stories (and also, they are almost always older). Female spell-casters are necessarily beautiful when they are young and they dress up accordingly, in lascivious fashion, and almost exclusively hideous when they are old, defined by long bent noses,



Fig. 10: The recurrent themes in heroic fantasy.

Source: *Conan le barbare No.4 – Les cachots de Mullah-Kajar*. Arédit, 1980, 44.

dirty white, and uncombed hair, skinny skeletal hands, missing teeth and occasional moles on their faces. The theme of the evil old witch is still present in comic-books, playing the same part as in traditional folk tales, but in the modern entertainment industry, the young, beautiful and sexually enticing witch has gained a lot of attention from the part of creators and from the public alike. Today, witches are depicted more like this than the traditional way (and we might wonder how can these two images be conciliated, in other words, how can such gorgeous women become hideous crones in their old age; are they not the same or is it that the use of magic corrupts the body and the soul?).

As in the case of magical beings, magical objects are usually highlighted by a surrounding glowing halo, which points to their supernatural essence. Usually, magical items are also more colorful than their regular counterparts (with notable exceptions, of course – for example, The Holy Grail may be a modest wooden cup instead of a golden one), and that underlines once more the special status magic bestows upon things.

## Spell Depiction

An important aspect that requires examination is the depiction of spell-casting in comic-books. Magical persons, beings, or items are usually visually highlighted and magic is simply a given in almost all fantasy (and sci-fi, as it has been stated) stories. The way artists choose to suggest magic production and spell-casting is more diverse and requires the tacit cooperation of the reader in deciphering these graphic codes.

Most spell-casters use various hand gestures to generate magic and to cause various effects to the environment, to other characters, or to objects. Some point their finger toward the target, some use more fingers in distinct combinations, while others just use the full hand (a spell cast with a full hand is supposed to be more powerful, as it would be expected, while a single-finger spell is expected to be weaker, but more precise – we may follow Dr. Strange's activity to draw this conclusion). Some extraordinary powerful spells may be cast by using the whole body, suggesting a bigger focusing effort, an accumulation of magical energy or mana, and its cataclysmic release towards the target. Such spells may fill whole pages with colors and shapes, depending of the artist's intent and the narrative pacing (some results of this extended spell-casting moments are surely impressive – fig. 11).





Fig. 11: Arion demonstrates a full-body destructive spell.  
Source: *Arion No.2 – La quête du mage*. Arédit, 1984, 19.

Sometimes additional words, tools, gestures, or facial expressions are needed for successful spell-castings. Zatanna, for example, utters her desired effect backward, while other casters simply name the spell they are releasing (“fireball”, “thunder”, “turn into a frog” and so on). The staff is the most common tool used in casting spells, but some use a shorter, smaller version of it, the baguette, borrowed from the very popular modern entertainment form, the “magic” show (in fact, Zatanna also wears a top hat and a tuxedo, reminding of the revered “magicians”). Of course, books are also used, but in modern comics, as alert, fast-paced action stories unfold, spell-casters rely less on them and more on memorized knowledge.

The graphic code for certain spells is still not universally agreed upon, and different artists have opted for different solutions. When it comes to mind dominance or object manipulation, there are no clear visual indicators for the presence of magic, other than the narrative context (fig. 12). Blurry



Fig. 12: Lethal gestures of a powerful wizard. Source: *Arak No. 2 – La hache et l'épée*. Arédit, 1982, 21.

lines may be used to indicate the spell caster's influence, but only showing his/her fixed eyes or facial expression can also be sufficient. Graphic markers in the "talking" bubbles, such as different margins, different fonts, different letter color, or brackets and quotation marks may suggest the fact that the caster uses a different voice or certain "magically charged" words.

Sometimes spells are dubbed by sound markers. It is generally accepted that an energy-based spell should sound like "bzzzt", or that a fire-blast should go "ka-boom". When someone appears or disappears there is always a "poof" (but a devil may be more impressive with a "bamf"), and a miscast spell goes "fizzle". The intensity of a spell can be suggested by these sound-markers, besides their shape and color. A weaker spell is expected to be dubbed by sounds marked with smaller fonts, while a powerful one requires no less majestic lettering. The length and the power of a spell can be augmented by multiplying a letter or more in the sound marker, usually the vowel ("boom" is bound to be less powerful than "boooooom"). Also,

various such interjections allude to spell intensity (for example, “bzzzt” is less intense than “boom”).

A character, an animal, or an item affected by magic may be explicitly marked as such, or its behavior may indicate the modified state. For example, mind-controlled people may have small pupils or blank eyes, or they may walk in particular ways to show their possession or may talk in strange ways. Objects may fly or operate by themselves. The presence of magic is usually observable in the unnatural behavior of humans, animals or objects and, of course, in the ever-present halo (which sometimes the reader is suggested to be the only one able to identify, unlike other characters in the story, and therefore functioning as a metatextual marker). The halo may surround the character or the object as a whole, or it may be placed on a particular spot, to suggest the initial or the ending point of spell-generating (fig. 13).



Fig. 13: Transformation spell: from woman to cat (pretty convenient for Warlord). Source: *Warlord* No. 6 – *Le pays des titans*. Arédit, 1984, 58.

## Might and Magic

A specific type of fantasy scenario imposed itself in the comic-book medium, as well as in other media, and is mostly referred to as “heroic fantasy”. This type of story is usually placed in a barbaric setting and is mainly populated by two types of characters: the ones who use brute force, and the



ones who resort to magic (this fantasy sub-genre is also known as “might and magic”, and has its passionate fandom). The underlying idea is that there are two layers of reality, a physical one, immediate and tangible, and a magical (mystical) one, intangible, abstract, invisible. The two aspects of the world are incommensurable, irreducible, and are in a constant state of tension. Many times characters belonging to one of these planes are irrec- oncilably opposed to their counterparts, and when they collaborate, their alliance is contextual (they never fully trust or at least they have difficulties understanding each other).

The first major success in this line was *Conan the Barbarian*, a popu- lar novel series in 18 volumes, created by Robert E. Howard. The character and his imaginary world were then borrowed into comic-books, film, music, cartoons, and video games, motivating the creation of many such products in all the aforementioned media channels. The best, the most enduring and long-lasting adaptation of Conan’s mythos happened in comic-books, many of the top writers and artists having contributed to it for decades (Roy Thomas, John Buscema, Sal Buscema etc.). A plethora of heroes as such filled the comic-book industry (Kull, Claw the Unconquered, Arak the Son of Thunder, Warlord and so on), and they all followed, more or less, the same paradigm: strong warriors with imposing physique in a savage violent world, scantily clad gorgeous women, magic users as enemies or allies, and sometimes fantastic creatures such as dragons, hydras, gorgons, vampires, zombies, and others, borrowed from folk-tales and literature.

A general trend in this type of fantasy is to explicitly or implicitly favor the physical aspect, sometimes doubled by the intense despising of magic. In one adventure, Conan fights alongside Elric and, after the latter draws through his magic sword the force of the enemies he killed, he tells him in a frank manner: “Only magic makes you strong? That is dishonoring.” (fig. 14). Such heroes who only rely on their physical strength and cunning regularly manage to defeat many powerful enemies who use all sorts of magic which, theoretically, should render them invincible. This is not so much demeaning of secret or specialized knowledge as it is a favoring of the skills and abilities a person accumulates through individual effort. Conan defeats powerful wiz- ards not because he is stronger, but because his strength is his own personal gain, while the wizards get their powers as a result of various occult pacts, corruption or accidents. This principle is also valid in sci-fi and other stories. For example, Superman and Batman are usually considered to be equally important in the comic-book universe, although logically Batman would stand no chance against the godlike powers Superman possesses. But since



Superman got his by an accident of birth (born on the planet Krypton, which revolved around a red star, he was sent in a shuttle by his parents before the catastrophic destruction of his home planet and landed on Earth; our yellow Sun providing his immense powers), Batman got his via personal training, determination, and perseverance. Batman, as well as Conan and all the other physical fighters, are the effigies of self-made heroes, who only rely on their force and intelligence, which are not dependant on accidents, context, or the supernatural. They are, therefore, more suitable to be considered models for young readers. Magic, as the uncontrollable and unscrutinized resource that it is, is less reliable than muscles.



Fig. 14: Conan expresses his contempt for Elric's magic. Source: *Conan color no. 4 – Réveil Démoniaque*. Arédit, 1984, 5.

## Witches, Sabbath, Satan

The motif of the Sabbath is also present in comic-books, in various settings, and with various motivations, but it has lost its direct link to the theme of the witch. It is true, witches may still congregate to celebrate Sabbath and invoke and conjure Satan or other demons and supernatural entities, but over time, witches have “emancipated” themselves from his authority. Sects and cults are present in the comic-book universe and their gatherings follow



Fig. 15: A typical satanic ritual. Source: *Le manoir des phantômes No. 7 – La porte de l'enfer*. Arédit, 1983, 8.

similar rules and entail the same elements: temples or places of meeting, priests, “sacred” objects and formulas, uniforms (the omnipresent hooded long robe, in different colors: grey, blue, red or purple). Paraphernalia is immediately recognizable (candles, skulls, pentagrams, sacrificial daggers and so on – fig. 15), while their interaction is banal (they call themselves “brother” and “sister”, they salute Satan or the invoked entity with “hail!”, they cover their faces, they dance or pray etc.). This is a rather traditional way of illustrating occult gatherings, but it is an easy (and quite cheap) strategy to create an atmosphere, send a message, or provoke certain emotions.

Satan or other conjured entities may appear and his image is more or less in accordance with traditional representation. He may be depicted as a horned beast, with preeminent fangs, hoofs, and tail, or he can be a smooth gentleman, wearing a tuxedo and behaving in a polite, yet subversive and callous manner. He may be huge, breathing fire (although this image was so much used that it has lost its potential of surprise), or he may be a seemingly small and frail entity (but never less threatening). Satan does not play the protagonist part many times, being mostly used as a motivating factor, as a plot-starter or simply as an element of the scenery (making fun of the devil has become commonplace) and we may encounter threats even bigger than him. Brother Blood, one of the strongest and vilest enemies of the Young Titans super-hero group, is such a satanic figure and the leader of its own cult, kept alive by priestesses in the middle of modern American cities (he draws

his vitality and power from the victims' blood he bathes in – fig. 16).

## Conclusion

Resorting to magic in certain plot developments or character creation, comic-book writers and artists may elude the need of strict narrative coherence or factual credibility, finding a perfect strategy to lay on paper all figments of their imagination. The reader has to acquiesce to this premise in order to get the full narrative and artistic implications of the story. In other words, even though nobody can tell precisely what magic is, it is used as an excuse to ignore strict narrative and factual limitations. Anything can be “explained” away by resorting to magic.

Comic-books, as part of the larger entertainment industry, follow the general trends operating on that scale, and borrow, interpret and carry the most successful tropes from other media, while also creating their own and occasionally imposing them on the public's cultural diet. In dealing with the image of the witch and of magic, comic-books have their particular way of depicting this subject. Given the visual, static, and bi-dimensional nature of comics, certain codes of defining and illustrating spells have been created over time and some have even penetrated other media channels, such as film, cartoons or video-games. The image of the spell-caster (corresponding to many denominations, function, or specialization) is a high-profile one, characters as such always bringing more dynamism, color and intrigue into



Fig. 16: Brother Blood raises to lead his congregation.  
Source: *Les Jeunes T.* No. 12. Arédit, 1986, 21.



the storylines. Although the basic clichés in depicting spell-casters are taken from various folk and literary traditions (mostly Western) or from other media, such as the image of the old witch or of the wise sorcerer, some types of characters have been firstly or more successfully represented in comic-books, such as battle-mages (in the heroic-fantasy sub-genre).

Comic-book writers and artists encountered specific issues in managing the illustration of magic, since well-established codes of graphically representing it did not exist prior. In this aspect, comic-books have contributed to creating largely accepted ways of conceiving and drawing spells, their casting and effects, as well as expanding the notion of what magic was and how it should be expected to work. Magic was (and today is even more so) the main ingredient in fantasy stories (and some argue in sci-fi too) and it may provide an alibi in the plot, a narrative frame, or the sheer narrative substance.

The image of the witch has evolved in comic-books as in all entertainment industry, coming a long way from the malevolent or mischievous old witch, a common presence in popular novels during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, to the beautiful and revered magic-wielders of today who save humanity, the planet or the Universe on a daily basis (from Harry Potter to the many male and female super-heroes who use magic in comics, films, anime, novels, theatric plays, and video games).

Comic-books, although having lost their first place in Western entertainment (a place they held in the Golden Age of comics, during the Second World War) to other media, such as film and mostly video-games, may still be relevant as an art form and they can still propose interesting narrative and technical topics, including dealing with magic and magic-wielders. Magic, its uses, effects, and producers will remain intimately linked to the imagination as long as there will be undiscovered, unknown, strange, and intriguing aspects of reality, and that is for the foreseeable future.

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# Witches in the Historical Fiction Works by Doina Ruști, Andreea Răsuceanu and Simona Antonescu

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CRISTINA BOGDAN\*

**Abstract:** This study investigates the significance of the presence of gypsy witch, fortune teller, or healer in historical novels authored by three outstanding contemporary writers – Doina Ruști, Andreea Răsuceanu and Simona Antonescu. The portrayal of these literary characters parallels the representations provided by historical research (such as the studies centered on the diaries of foreign travellers), the on-site research conducted by sociologists and anthropologists or the studies of art historians, addressing the scenes of damned sinners' torment within the broader iconographic program of the *Last Judgment*. The presence of witches in historical novels set in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is a literary device likely to create the reality effect and to situate the plot more firmly within the respective epoch, by means of such characters testifying to a particular mentality and practices associated with it. Just as history is reconstructed from a number of *traces*, which the historians' discourse assembles in order to create the impression of a coherent whole, literature reconstructs a particular epoch by means of the language specific to it as well as the figures which left the imprint of their unsettling, different, original nature.

**Keywords:** Gypsy witch, fortune-teller, healer, historical fiction, reality effect, Doina Ruști, Andreea Răsuceanu, Simona Antonescu.

One of the basic rules by which historical fiction operates is that *it converts the past into text* and is predicated on a *reality effect*. Various strategies concur in creating this impression and, implicitly, a sense of authenticity: placing the plot within a setting where time and space are recognizable, by

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correlating imagined events with actual documents of the times; introducing real-life characters borrowed from a different epoch; using a language that reveals hidden or long-gone layers of history, and including outdated (and often forgotten) words or phrases. All these are frequently added the highlighting strategies by which emblematic figures of a particular period or mindset are brought to the foreground. Like the antiquated manner of speaking, they trigger the readers' nostalgia and their irrepressible urge to turn to a past which is not directly accessible, but which they attempt to reconstruct by piecing fragments together.

The reality effect created in historical fictions by such characters as *the gypsy sorceress*, *the fortune-teller* (a gypsy woman able to divine both the past and the future, by chiromancy or by casting lots), *the enchanteress*, *the healer*, *the sagewoman*, becomes evident when we compare the figures populating literary texts, to those emerging from documents or from popular beliefs perpetuated throughout the centuries, or to those present in the religious iconography of monuments dating from the respective times. These figures of witches, as they appear in the novels authored by Doina Ruști<sup>1</sup>, Simona Antonescu<sup>2</sup> and Andreea Răuceanu<sup>3</sup>, belong to the sphere of *unsettling otherness* – one of the sources that generate the *feeling of insecurity in the Romanian society*, as historian Toader Nicoară entitled one of his works. This unsettling feeling of insecurity is manifest in various ways in Romanian pre-modern society, while its causes are equally diverse: the hostility of environment (perturbed climate, earthquakes, epidemics, etc), political insecurity (both in aulic circles, and among the noblemen or boyars), taxation (levies, tolls, tithes), *otherness*, and wars.

With regard to the *otherness*, T. Nicoară only mentions the *ethnic* dimension – more precisely, he investigates only the Greek ethnicity, especially during the Phanariot era, and provides a detailed analysis of the anti-Greek, anti-Phanariot discourse, failing to mention other categories likely to elicit negative reactions or discomfort, such as the *gypsies*. However, the travelogues of foreign visitors to our country do mention people's fear of gypsies, suspected of engaging in *black magic* (or even some forms of ritual cannibalism – a charge more often brought against the Jews, beginning since the late Middle Ages<sup>4</sup>):

<sup>1</sup> Doina Ruști, *Manuscrisul fanariot* [The Phanariot Manuscript] (Iași: Polirom, 2016); *Mâța Vinerii* [The Book of Perilous Dishes] (Iași: Polirom, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> Simona Antonescu, *Hanul lui Manuc* [Manuc's Inn] (Iași: Polirom, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Andreea Răuceanu, *O formă de viață necunoscută* [An Unknown Form of Life] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Andrei Oișteanu, *Imaginea evreului în cultura română. Studiu de imagologie în context*

“The Romanians despise these harmless, ragged poor parasites with bare chests and keen hearing, but are afraid of them because of their dealings with Black Magic, of their well-known acquaintance with its father – the devil, and of their ability to cast the evil eye. It is believed that these dark, restless figures will return together with the Antichrist on the Last Judgment day, in order to torment the Christians and devour their children alive.”<sup>5</sup>

The above-mentioned historian also ignores another type of alterity – the gendered otherness, which also generated fear as Jean Delumeau has shown, by including the women among the perceived *agents of Satan*, in his seminal history of *fear in the West*, between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>6</sup>.

If we subscribe to the definition of otherness as provided by Lucian Boia<sup>7</sup>, including the *foreigners*, *the minorities*, and *the marginalized*, we will find that the focus of our research – namely, the female characters of gypsy ethnicity, with the attributes characteristic to witches –, perfectly match these categories. The woman embodies the otherness *par excellence*, as she concentrates all the essential attributes of alterity: she is *marginal*, *untamed* and *incomplete*. Moreover, at the time when the protagonists of the novels under investigation live – the 18<sup>th</sup> century – “witchcraft is always associated with the feminine”<sup>8</sup>, according to the pertinent remark of Constanța Ghițulescu, who has thoroughly analyzed real-life cases found in archival documents: “Polkovnic [regiment commander] Constantin had sued his wife Anica and the trial had been going on for three years. He was furiously asking for a divorce, and accused her of poisoning him with mercury, *to kill me, he claimed, damaging my entire body and ruining my health, so that I’ve been bed-ridden for a long time*. The neighbours of Maria, a dweller of Fântâna Boului suburbs, accused her of casting spells in order to kill her husband. Old Sanda of Broșteni – the slums where they had lived for a few months, presented to the Metropolitan the pouch full of magical ingredients found

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*est-central european* [The Image of the Jew in Romanian Culture. A Study of Imagology in Central-East European Context] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001), 364–383.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Berger, in *Călători străini despre Țările Române* [Foreign Travellers About the Romanian Principalities], New Series, V, ed. Daniela Bușă (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 2010), 420.

<sup>6</sup> Jean Delumeau, *La peur en Occident, XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles. Une cité assiégée* (Paris: Fayard, 1978).

<sup>7</sup> Lucian Boia, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului* [For a History of the Imaginary] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2000), 113.

<sup>8</sup> Constanța Ghițulescu, *În șalvari și cu ișlic. Biserică, sexualitate, căsătorie și divorț în Țara Românească a secolului al XVIII-lea* [Shalwar and Ishlik. Church, Sexuality, Marriage and Divorce in 18<sup>th</sup> century Wallachia] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2004), 272.

in their room. She also stated that during the two months while the couple had lived in her house, Maria would *walk bare-breasted at night, doing her sorcery – devilish acts.*<sup>9</sup>

Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink identifies an anthropological dimension of the perception of *Otherness* in literature<sup>10</sup>. This perception is based on the group identity and its instantiations are: the fascination with *the other* (manifest especially in the description and aesthetics of different lifestyles); denial, or the exclusion from the sphere of *civilization*, and the strategies for physical and spiritual avoidance.

All these three types of responses are elicited, to varying degrees, by the gypsy witches present in the historical fiction works under discussion. While the medieval West attempted to keep at bay or even annihilate the *Jewish enchanteress*, the Eastern world has had its own fears of the *Gypsy witch* – as both figures represent, “in the mentality of peoples who have been living in close interdependence with the respective ethnic groups, major stereotypes of collective imagination, clichés which merge historical realities and fictitious ideas, visceral fears and disdain for everything *different* and *alien*”<sup>11</sup>.

Doina Ruști chooses the Phanariot era as the matrix setting for several of her novels (*Manuscrisul fanariot*, *Mâța Vinerii* and, more recently, *Homeric*), and succeeds in reconstructing, by means of a literary discourse that engages all the readers’ senses, the atmosphere of a Bucharest sunk into oblivion for over two centuries. In the *Phanariot Manuscript* (whose title introduces the reader into the era from the very outset), the star-crossed love of Leun and Maiorca – ultimately able to destroy traditions and break customs –, is the main strand of the plot, accompanied however by other, fascinating subplots (those involving Arghir and Tilu Băjescu, Zoica – the daughter of jeweller Mantu, prince Alecu Moruzi, or various boyars and their rivalries).

The author discovers a manuscript from 1796, which contains the story of a man born in Thessaloniki (Ioanis Milikopu, who becomes known as tailor Leun due to the turn of events), arriving in Bucharest in search of fortune. But once he finds himself there, he falls in love with a slave girl Maiorca

<sup>9</sup> Constanța Ghițulescu, *În șalvari și cu ișlic* [Shalwar and Ishlik], 272–273.

<sup>10</sup> Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, “La perception de l’Autre: jalons pour une critique littéraire interculturelle”, *Paradigmes critiques*, no. 51 (1996), 51–66, <https://doi.org/10.7202/025904ar>.

<sup>11</sup> Ioan Pop-Curșeu, *Magie și vrăjitorie în cultura română. Istorie, literatură, mentalități* [Magic and Witchcraft in Romanian Culture. History, Literature, Mentalities] (Iași: Cartea Românească / Polirom, 2013), 184.

(aged 14), who is owned by a boyar named Dan Brașoveanu Doicescu, the landlord of the Coltea district and one of the pillars of the Bucharest aristocracy. According to the law, if a free man marries a slave woman, he will become a slave in his turn, being added to the possessions of his wife's owner, along with his family. In order to be allowed to marry Maiorca, Leun agrees to become a slave himself for half of every year – between St. Demetrios and St. George's feast days.

Maiorca's mother, Tranca, is a very powerful gypsy witch, as Leun himself discovers, noting her ability to ensnare people of all walks of life, by means of a devilish brew:

“Leon recalled all the formidable abilities of the witch. She could kill people from afar, just by sprinkling them with cricket water. She possessed the herbs of life and death, and had a secret covenant with the lord of darkness himself. With hairs taken from the Bespectacled Devil, she had concocted an elixir which enabled her to make anyone into her puppet. A single drop of that potion made you Tranca's slave for life. Should she want you to snatch someone's purse, you did so at once. Should she command you to fetch her rings and quivering gems – you went to the ends of the earth to find them for her. Anything she set her eyes on, she could have. Bucharest was full of people she had bewitched (...)”<sup>12</sup>.

The relationship with the devil is explicitly indicated by two kinds of ties – kinship, or consanguinity, on the one hand; and consubstantiality, evoking the creation of Eve from Adam's side: “Tranca was the devil's sibling, she had been made of his rib (...)”<sup>13</sup>

The Romanian folklore provides a wealth of proverbs and sayings which uphold the notion of a mysterious connection between woman and devil (*The woman is devil's hobbyhorse*; *The woman is the devil himself*; *There is no worse devil than the woman* etc), while religious iconography accepts these ideas and gives them visual expression within the scene of the *Last Judgment*, where witches, sorceresses, women who put spells on cows to steal their “manna” (abundance of milk)<sup>14</sup> as well as those who abort babies or refuse to nurse them, adulterous wives or whores, are all tortured by the

<sup>12</sup> Doina Ruști, *Manuscrisul fanariot* [The Phanariot Manuscript], 150–151.

<sup>13</sup> Doina Ruști, *Manuscrisul fanariot* [The Phanariot Manuscript], 151.

<sup>14</sup> Gheorghe Pavelescu, *Mana în folckorul românesc. Contribuții pentru cunoașterea magiului* [Manna in Romanian Folklore. Contributions to a Study of Magic] (Sibiu: Kraft & Drotleff, 1944).

devils (who in some instances<sup>15</sup> ride them, pulling on their hair instead of reins, illustrating the first of the above-mentioned proverbs).

Returning to Doina Ruști's portrayal of the gypsy witch – Tranca – it is rounded out by the description of her shelter, equipped with the whole repertoire of devilish contraptions, as well as ingredients of both vegetal (*mandrake*<sup>16</sup>) and animal nature (*the black rooster*<sup>17</sup>), known in Romanian folklore for their magical attributes:

“Tranca had a warrior's hideout, underneath a thicket of bushes, so that at first sight it did not even look like a shelter, but seemed to be a barren spot overgrown with thistle and weeds. (...) In the afternoon light, the alveolar bolt-hole looked like a clay cavern, where Tranca kept her treasury. Pieces of string, satchels of herbs, large bunches of dried basil, bowls soiled with various rotting substances, small pots, and many jugs capped with red corncobs. (...) Here she would brew her mandrake, in a cauldron, to distill drops that cured baldness. At times she kept a black cock, which in moments of dire need she slaughtered to collect its blood in a mug from which no one had ever drunk before.”<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, this witch also engages in necromancy, which means she mutilates corpses and uses parts of them in order to achieve her goals: “She carried this mug with her into the graveyard, when she needed to find a dead man's hand.”<sup>19</sup> Her powers even enable her to become invisible when

<sup>15</sup> For instance, the scenes painted in early 19<sup>th</sup> century inside the porches of the churches of Fărtățești-Giulești (Vâlcea county) or Turcenii de Jos (Gorj county) – the latter repainted in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some such scenes show a woman ridden by the devil, and the captions explicitly title her *sorceress* – as in the churches of Ceaușu-Horezu (Vâlcea county), Curtișoara and Cleșnești (Gorj county). More rarely, the roles are reversed and it is the woman who rides the devil – as in the painting of Bâscenii de Jos church (Buzău county), dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For an exhaustive list of these representations, across Romania's territory, see the compilation authored by Ștefana and Ioan Pop-Curșeu (currently under print), as a result of their on-site research conducted over several years. This volume is an iconographic continuation of the broader project started by Ioan Pop-Curșeu with his book *Magie și vrăjitorie [Magic and Witchcraft]*.

<sup>16</sup> All works on ethnobotanics published in Romania mention the mandrake (Simeon Manguica, Simeon Florea Marian, Artur Gorovei, M. Lupescu ș.a.). For a systematic presentation of the research into the uses of mandrake, see Andrei Oișteanu, *Mythos și Logos. Studii și eseuri de antropologie culturală [Mythos and Logos. Studies and Essays in Cultural Anthropology]* (Bucharest: Nemira, 1998), 36–46.

<sup>17</sup> Ivan Evseev, *Dicționar de magie, demonologie și mitologie românească [Dictionary of Romanian Magic, Demonology and Mythology]* (Timișoara: Amarcord, 1998), 89–90.

<sup>18</sup> Doina Ruști, *Manuscrisul fanariot [The Phanariot Manuscript]*, 152–153.

<sup>19</sup> Doina Ruști, *Manuscrisul fanariot [The Phanariot Manuscript]*, 153.



necessary, offering a drop of her own blood in exchange: “This tiny flask could make her invisible. But everything comes at a price – and the bottle asked for a drop of blood in return.”<sup>20</sup>

In the final part of the novel, the witch meets her end (not by burning at stake, as in the medieval West, but by inglorious, disgraceful hanging, surrounded by a crowd of onlookers), while the charges announced by the town crier illustrates the popular beliefs about the evil powers of the sorceress:

“The town crier sounded his horn to make known the ill deeds of Tranca, as a witch feared by many – the vipers she had sent to kill people, her spells and, not least, the people who had gone missing, such as Leun the valet and Ilie, the superintendent.”<sup>21</sup>

Her killing is anticipated by a prolepsis – the stoning of another witch, a flashback experienced by Leun as a childhood memory coming to his mind. In his imagination the two women, so far apart in time and in space, merge into a single one due to their similar practices and their eventual punishment:

“Out of his blurry childhood memories, he suddenly recalled a *maghesnică* from Căţol, stoned to death in the Fishmongers’ Market. *Maghesnică* was the Aromanian word for *witch*, and in his mind, Tranca became one with the witch of Săruna.”<sup>22</sup>

In the novel *Mâţa Vinerii* [The Book of Perilous Dishes], the story – set in the Bucharest of the Phanariot princes and the Enlightenment – shifts seamlessly between the real events of the year 1798 and the imagined mysteries of a cult of magicians (adepts of the great Sator) whose culinary legacy brings to light the flavours of archaic life and the refinement of a magical cuisine.

One relevant episode may be selected from this otherwise highly elaborate novel: it describes the iconographic rendition of a witch, in the painting of the church in Olari, one of the Bucharest suburbs. The visual description of the infernal scene, with the witch tortured in a cauldron full of boiling tar, is reminiscent of similar representations in the painting of certain wooden churches in Sălaj or Maramureş counties, which show devils watching the boiling cauldrons where the damned sinners are tormented: “The people stopped their cart before the church, to show me the witch. The Hell was painted on the porch wall, and in its very midst an old hag was simmering

<sup>20</sup> Doina Ruşti, *Manuscrisul fanariot* [The Phanariot Manuscript], 159.

<sup>21</sup> Doina Ruşti, *Manuscrisul fanariot* [The Phanariot Manuscript], 254.

<sup>22</sup> Doina Ruşti, *Manuscrisul fanariot* [The Phanariot Manuscript], 162–163.

in the pot full of molten tar: the old woman's head poking out of it had bulging eyes and floppy dog ears."<sup>23</sup> The scene creates a reality effect: the female protagonist contemplates a type of representation which, in late 18<sup>th</sup> century, could belong to the *Inferno* iconographic program – part of the broader theme of the *Last Judgment*), depicted inside the porch of the masonry churches in the south of Romania, or in the narthex of the wooden ones, located in the north and north-west. This interplay of fiction and reality, by which one mirrors the other – fiction is reflected by reality, while reality is reflected in the fictional events – can be better understood in light of Paul Ricœur's explanations, of which we quote: "If it is true that fiction is only completed in life and that life can be understood only through stories that we tell about it, then an examined life, in the Socratic understanding of the term, is a life recounted."<sup>24</sup>

The history of another female character is built on the border between fiction and reality, in Andreea Răsuceanu's novel *O formă de viață necunoscută* [*An Unknown Form of Life*]. Her existence is attested to, and briefly mentioned in the votive inscription of Mântuleasa church in Bucharest: *This holy and divine Church, dedicated to the Holy Angels Michael and Gabriel, was founded by Maria, sister of Mantu the merchant, and by Stanca, and was built under the reign of Grigore Ghica V in September 1734.*

The novel's plot unfolds during three distinct chronological periods, corresponding to the biographies of its three female protagonists: Ioana, Elena and Stanca, each following her own destiny during a different epoch. The chapters of interest for the present study are those entitled *Stanca*, set in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the couple Stanca-Mantu the merchant live, and the church – adorned with Byzantine frescoes by priest Bratu and Iane, the church painter, – is being built. This religious edifice operates as a substitute for the husband who has left on a business trip and has vanished, now hovering between life and death. A kind of symbolic transfer is overtly or covertly unfolding: "Over the following months, as the wooden scaffolding was erected and the white walls grew higher, he was becoming the church and the church was becoming him."<sup>25</sup> or "To Stanca, the church was Mantu – finally a body which, although she could not mourn for and bury, she

<sup>23</sup> Doina Ruști, *Mâța Vinerii* [The Book of Perilous Dishes], 33.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Ricœur, "Life in Quest of Narrative", in *On Paul Ricœur: Narrative and Interpretation*, ed. D. Wood (London: Routledge, 1991), 20–33.

<sup>25</sup> Andreea Răsuceanu, *O formă de viață necunoscută* [An Unknown Form of Life] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2018), 139.

could see every morning raising all white, with its girdles twisting among the branches of the trees in her orchard.”<sup>26</sup>

Her worries about Mantu’s absence prompt Stanca to seek an answer by means of the divination practices of the gypsy women. Lot casting, chiromancy and the healing of particular ailments appeared to be familiar to the gypsies, as many of the travellers who visited Romanian lands noted in their diaries: “They possess the art of healing, and all their features and aptitudes seem to relate them to the old Egyptians, whom they like to claim as their ancestors. As fortune tellers, they are renowned across the entire Europe.”<sup>27</sup>

Andreea Răsuceanu casually mentions the divination abilities of some gypsy women (“they cast lots, or inspect animal entrails to tell the future”<sup>28</sup>), then goes on to describe the encounter between Stanca and a soothsayer known as *The Stranger*, as if to underscore her utter alterity and to maintain an aura of mystery, of foreignness (the character is not identified by any other name). However, this stranger (of different origin, ethnicity, social standing) is the best able to discern Stanca’s past and, moreover, even gains insights into her future, which however she refuses to tell, knowing fully well that the uttered words have the power to become facts:

“Stanca was mesmerized by that gaze and listened to the woman speak in a strange idiom, full of allusions and insinuations, about all her past. It was like she was speaking of something else entirely, yet Stanca could recognize her own story in the strange words coming in quick succession (...). But when she was about to tell of what had not yet come to pass, the gypsy stopped and looked at Stanca as if she was wondering whether to speak or not. Then in a different, silken voice, told her that the power of words is too great and sometimes words turn into actual facts, and it is better not to talk of the future at all. That her question had no answer anyway, and the one she expected was neither on his way back, nor on any way at all, that he was neither in this world nor in the other.”<sup>29</sup>

The last figure of an enchanteress to be addressed in the present study is old Niculina, in Simona Antonescu’s novel *Hanul lui Manuc* [*Manuc’s Inn*]. Her capacity as a *healer*, *midwife* and *exorcist* confers her special prestige

<sup>26</sup> Andreea Răsuceanu, *O formă de viață necunoscută* [An Unknown Form of Life], 212.

<sup>27</sup> F. S. Chrismar, in *Călători străini despre Țările Române* [Foreign Travellers About the Romanian Principalities], New Series, vol. III, eds. Paul Cernovodeanu, Daniela Bușă (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 2006), 77–78.

<sup>28</sup> Andreea Răsuceanu, *O formă de viață necunoscută* [An Unknown Form of Life], 124.

<sup>29</sup> Andreea Răsuceanu, *O formă de viață necunoscută* [An Unknown Form of Life], 245–246.

– that of a healer able to handle white magic. She is not a witch (in the dark, malefic meaning of the term), for *magic spells* differ from *incantations* intended to heal, as Ernest Bernea and a vast amount of studies explain. They

“differ in terms of attitude and intent; although they share the same (spiritual) nature and operate according to the same logic, they have opposite directions and divergent effects; the former have a predominantly destructive character, while the latter are healing acts. The phrase *medical magic* is frequently used to describe them.”<sup>30</sup>

Although she is urgently summoned for the critical moments such as birth and sickness, and is respected for her therapeutic work (often pursued at the cost of many personal sacrifices), old Niculina is – like any person handling occult forces, beyond the comprehension of common people, – regarded with reserve and isolated, shunned, even while she is attending the church:

“A healer, midwife and exorcist in the village of Mironești since Aurică was a young child who kept pestering her (...), old Niculina had minded her magic dealings for her whole life, although the women would move away from her in church, leaving her alone, and withdrawing from near her.”<sup>31</sup>

Actually, the text stresses the significant difference between the others’ perception of her, and her self-perception: “(...) and she was not a powerful witch, as rumours had spread far and wide, but merely a well-meaning, warm-hearted healer”<sup>32</sup>. It is implied that old Niculina practices a kind of *defensive magic* (in the terms of the distinction operated by Dan Horia Mazilu, between *defensive* and *aggressive magic*<sup>33</sup>), and in order to remedy some serious situations, she undertakes various self-imposed restrictions – from renouncing food (strictly fasting for 7 days) to taking the oath of silence. A number of episodes in the novel describe either the preparations for a magic ritual (“For the toddler of the Izbășanu family, living at the far end of the village, afflicted with epilepsy seizures that terrified his poor mother, old Niculina had been preparing for ten days her healing charms with broad bean and summerred

<sup>30</sup> Ernest Bernea, *Sociologie și etnografie românească. Ordinea spirituală* [Romanian Sociology and Ethnography. The Spiritual Order] (Bucharest: Vremea, 2009), 72.

<sup>31</sup> Simona Antonescu, *Hanul lui Manuc* [Manuc’s Inn] (Iași: Polirom, 2017), 46–47.

<sup>32</sup> Simona Antonescu, *Hanul lui Manuc* [Manuc’s Inn], 160.

<sup>33</sup> Dan Horia Mazilu, *O istorie a blestemului* [A History of the Curse] (Iași: Polirom, 2001), 181.

apple.<sup>34</sup>), or the performance of a therapeutic act, such as a healing incantation (“As she was chanting her incantation, the healer grabbed from the air above the child, with her crooked arms deformed by the gout, invisible things which she then threw into the nine glasses of water. Her fight against forces that could not be seen terrified Vlaicu, who would have drawn his sword if only he had known where the enemy was.”<sup>35</sup>)

Old Niculina is a character inspired by the realities of the Romanian rural life of times past, which preserved and perpetuated ancient knowledge able to keep a balance in the fight between the good and the evil forces (see also the episode of *St Andrew’s night*, which the young villagers spend in her cottage, precisely in order to be protected from the evil spirits believed to be roaming during this night).

When literature taps into history, it succeeds in creating not only a reality effect, but also extremely convincing, credible and life-like characters. The women mentioned above, although of secondary importance to the novels’ plots (some of them even appearing in a single instance, as does *the Stranger* in Andreea Răsuceanu’s text), are ingredients of authenticity. Thanks to them, the narrative is more credibly embedded into a particular epoch. By means of such characters, whose existence is validated by historians, sociologists or anthropologists who investigate either archives or living cultures, the story acts as a mediator, “conveying collective traditions and the history of memorable events.”<sup>36</sup>

Like history, which has no direct contact with the past but reconstructs it from the *traces* it is able to retrieve, literature re-creates a past long gone and fallen into oblivion, by means of characters who testify to a particular mindset or to the individual or collective practices and behaviours. Paul Ricœur considered that “legacies are passed down to the future mainly by means of the language”, for “the language we use to define a reality, contains both the shared knowledge, symbols and beliefs, and the rules by which we decipher and observe them”<sup>37</sup>. Indeed, language operates as a vehicle for superimposed layers of memory, while the presence in literature of certain characters belonging to ethnic and social categories with strong historical presence (in this instance, the *witch*) creates a sense of authenticity and anchors the narrative into a well-defined chronological setting.

<sup>34</sup> Simona Antonescu, *Hanul lui Manuc* [Manuc’s Inn], 46–47.

<sup>35</sup> Simona Antonescu, *Hanul lui Manuc* [Manuc’s Inn], 328.

<sup>36</sup> Andi Mihalache, *Trecutul ca text: idei, tendințe, controversă* [The Past as Text: Ideas, Trends, Controversies] (Iași: Editura Universității din Iași, 2017), 170.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Ricœur, *apud* Andi Mihalache, *Trecutul ca text* [The Past as Text], 170.

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# Witches and Witchcraft in Hungarian Literature

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KRISZTA SZABÓ-MATEI\*

**Abstract.** The study mainly focuses on the representation of witches in notable works of Hungarian literature. Previous research has shown that the popular belief in magic and witches runs deep in Hungarian culture. It has a great effect on the mentality of the population, making it a difficult topic to avoid when writing about day-to-day life in a rural setting. These studies often focus on the characterization of said sorceresses, even if they did not possess magical powers. We examine works ranging from fairy tales to poetry and novels, all of them featuring characters that bear magical powers, representing stereotypes associated with witches. Our hope is to shed light on the great variety of Hungarian literary works, be it lesser known or popular, that have witches and witchcraft as their main focus, or have a character whose behaviour fits the archetype of a witch.

**Keywords:** folklore, Hungarian literature; magical powers; mentality; witches; witchcraft.

## Introduction

The depiction of witches and witchcraft in Hungarian literature started with their appearance in folklore. Based on events that most of the populace could not understand or could only imagine, they centered around well-used tropes and themes. Some could be even found in other folklore, like the story of *Cinderella*, which has a Hungarian version<sup>1</sup>, or the story of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* and its Hungarian counterpart, *A papucsszaggató királykisasszonyok* (“The shoe-destroying princesses”)<sup>2</sup>. Both center around

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<sup>1</sup> “Hamupipőke”, accessed November 16, 2019, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/2-1052.html>

<sup>2</sup> “A papucsszaggató királykisasszonyok”, accessed November 16, 2019, <http://>

the same premises, and their plot runs the same course, although through different execution.

Folk-tales also inspired later literary works, although their mystique was slowly shed with the passing of time. Authors started straying further and further away from the imaginary, introducing a realist take on witches and the world surrounding them. However, the fear they instill remains a constant throughout the ages. Strong female characters could be intimidating, and they maintained some connections to their old origins, to folklore and even mythology.

Hailing from old Hungarian mythology, folklore is one of the few ways of discovering the belief system of the nomadic Hungarians. Maintained through oral tradition, this mythology separated the world into three spheres, all connected by the World Tree. These spheres are the Upper World, where the gods live; the Middle World, where humans and other creatures live and the Underworld, where bad souls and the Devil, the maker of everything bad for humans, live. The World Tree also has the Sun and the Moon in its crown alongside the Upper World, and can only be climbed by a chosen one, like in the folk-tale of *Világhírű Szép Miklós*, and can only be found by a *táltos*, or shaman<sup>3</sup>.

The Hungarian pantheon was divided between good and bad entities which could influence day-to-day life with ease. They were linked to elements of nature, and would come with counterparts, like Fire Mother and Fire Father. Witches were separate entities, born evil, unlike the *bába* (“old woman”), who were good fairies turned evil, but with the introduction of Christianity they got united into one single being, gaining thus the appearance of folk-tale witches<sup>4</sup>.

## Witches, Witchcraft and Magic in Folklore

Folk-tales frequently depict witches as mythical creatures, often linked to natural elements. Most of these women introduce themselves as maternal figures to natural elements, like the *Wind*, the *Sun* or the *Moon* (“Well, who and what is your son?” “The Sun, if you must know, you unlucky sod!”<sup>5</sup>).

gyermekkonyvtar.ekmk.hu/images/mesevetelkedo/1.\_fordul%C3%B3\_mes%C3%A9je-A\_papucsszaggat%C3%B3\_kir%C3%A1lykisasszonyok.pdf

<sup>3</sup> “Világfa”, accessed November 16, 2019, <http://mek.oszk.hu/02100/02115/html/5-1362.html>

<sup>4</sup> Vilmos, Diószegi: *A sámánhit emlékei a magyar népi műveltségben* (Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> “Jégország királya”, in Benedek Elek, *Magyar mese- és mondavilág I.*, accessed October 18, 2019, <https://mek.oszk.hu/04800/04833/04833.htm#56>

Others are the mothers of the Devil, or devils, who appear besides them as helpers, or minions when not directly related.

The old crones appear in these stories as deuteragonists, either as antagonists or as helpers. They either kidnap someone close to the hero, or the heroes themselves, kick-starting the plot and the journey, or they want something magical, only the heroes can retrieve, to use for nefarious purposes. In other cases, where the hero starts off their journey in order to improve their situation or to retrieve something important for them or their family, the witches they meet on their initiatic journey often help them out. If the protagonist stumbles upon their house, if he introduces himself respectfully to his host, and if the witch responds “You’re lucky you called me grandmother”, he will be able to continue his journey and maybe the homeowner will lend him a helping hand. This is done by letting him spend the night in their house, and in the morning pointing him in the right direction, and optionally giving him advice, tools or teaching him some magical skills that will help him out later, as presented in the tale *A csókalányok* (“The raven-girls”). The hero of this story, a young boy searching for his sisters, meets multiple witches, who offer him shelter for a night and send him to other witches if they are unable to help him. The last witch manages to give him answers, and also gifts him with two thin bones that will turn into a ladder when he reaches his destination, a red tower that can only be entered through a window<sup>6</sup>.

Forgoing the customary broom, witches in Hungarian literature, alongside devils, ride on flying shovels. Their magical powers are also often shared with devils, including shape-shifting by doing a somersault. This skill can also be taught to commoners too, the hero often using this trick to shake off the pursuing villains, as seen in the tale *Ábelesz Kóbelesz*, where one of the Devil’s servants flees with a kidnapped princess<sup>7</sup>. Witches could also talk to the fauna around them, for example gathering the birds of the world in order to collect information on the location of the hero’s missing sisters: “Just as the dawn broke, the old woman woke the boy, took out three flutes from the chest and went to stand in front of the door. There she blew into the smallest one, and all the smallest birds appeared in front of her. [...] Soon after came a raven, but it had a bleeding wing. The old woman chided it for coming later

<sup>6</sup> “A csókalányok,” in *Szerencsének szerencséje. Székely népmesék*, ed. Karádi Ilona (Budapest: Officina ‘96, 2013), 28.

<sup>7</sup> “Ábelesz Kóbelesz,” in *Az eltáncolt papucsok. Bukovinai székely népmesék*, ed. Kovács Ágnes, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://www.estimesevar.hu/component/mtree/mesek/tuendermesek/abelesz-kobelesz?Itemid=>

than the rest of the birds.”<sup>8</sup> There are tales where witches only get mentioned, their curses still influencing the storyline. Princes and princesses, beautiful teenagers turned into elderly people, animals and any other off-putting forms in order to make their life miserable unless they find true love or fulfill one of their goals. The story of *The Black Damsel* features a curse like this. Twelve princes, all of them brothers, are spurred on by an old man in a forest to go and see the world, and after they manage to convince their father to allow them to leave, they find a castle in another forest. There they discover twelve beds, twelve plates on the table and a well-kept stable for their horses, so they decide to spend the night at the castle. At night the oldest one, János (“John”), is woken by a pitch-black princess, who tells him that her and her eleven sisters were cursed by a witch to look like that. The curse can only be broken if twelve princes spend seven years, seven months, seven days and seven hours in the castle, never leaving it. The next day he tells his brothers this, but they do not believe him and try to leave, only to meet with twelve wolves. They return and try again the next day, but turn to stone, leaving John alone. He remains in the castle, and is tortured in the last three days by devils disguised as his family who try to lure him out. The princess heals him after every night, and when the curse is finally broken tells him to go to the Black City, her home, and never leave the path. He is tempted by a table full of delicacies, and falls asleep. The princess passes him when she herself is heading towards the city and writes him a note containing information on how to free his brothers and how they can reach the Black City. John has to break a nail in the stable, thus freeing his brothers. Afterwards they cross the Red-sea on a giant, whom John has to push back into the water, they reach the house of an old crone who accuses John of killing his daughter who had assumed the shape of a nail. They leave after that, reaching the Glass Mountains that separate them from the Black City, and that are uncrossable by normal means. A dwarf that lives there throws them over, still on horseback, after they anger him with their silence, and they can finally meet the princesses, and live happily ever after<sup>9</sup>. The witch never gives any motive for cursing the girls, and it could be categorized as an act of envy, similarly to what happened to the cursed princess in *A banya* (“The old woman”)<sup>10</sup>.

Similarly to the tales, ballads usually have folk-based origins, the same plot appearing in different regions with different wording, characters and

<sup>8</sup> “A csókalányok”, 27–28.

<sup>9</sup> “A fekete kisasszony”, in Benedek Elek, *Magyar mese- és modnavilág II*, accessed October 23 2019, <https://mek.oszk.hu/04800/04865/04865.htm>

<sup>10</sup> “A banya”, in Benedek Elek, *Magyar mese- és modnavilág II*.



timelines. These stories are often based on events that could happen in real life, twisted into becoming more interesting and frightening to the general audience at the same time. Centered around forbidden love, kidnappings, arranged marriages and sacrifices, these narratives usually only feature curses, magic and other supernatural events.

The ballad of *Kádár Kata* tells the tale of two lovers, whose fate is similar to that of Romeo and Juliet. Their parents disapprove their romance, Kata hailing from a poor family, while her lover, Miklós, comes from a wealthy one. His mother, in one version, tells him that she will have Kata thrown into a bottomless lake if he keeps up with this relationship. Miklós decides that he will leave the village instead of bowing to his mother's whims, and Kata wants to give him a white dress and a posy that will show him her fate ("Let me bring out my white dress,/ Let me give you a posy./If the white turns to red,/ If the posy starts fade:/ Kádár Kata will be dead."<sup>11</sup>). Miklós leaves, and only returns when he finds out that Kata was killed. He returns to their village and drowns himself into the same lake his lover was killed. Two waterlilies, one white and one red, grow from the places they died, eventually intertwining. But the mother sees this and has them removed. She has two marble coffins made for the dead, one red and one white, and has one buried in front of the altar, and the other behind it. Two lilies start to grow from the coffins, this time made of marble, and they once again reach each other, and they get removed again by Miklós' mother. This version of the ballad ends with Kata cursing the mother: "May your wheat grow one grain,/ And that to be empty inside./ May you never have bread,/ And yet nobody take pity of you./ May your bathwater turn to blood,/ Your towel spew fire./ If this curse reaches you,/ I know it will punish you"<sup>12</sup>. The ballad features magic similar to what was used in the tale of *Az aranyfogú királyfiak* ("The princes with gold teeth"), where one of the titular princes is alerted of the other's well-being via a rosebush<sup>13</sup>.

Another ballad, *Fehér Anna*, ends with a similar curse. In this story the titular heroine is informed about her brother's imprisonment for attempted horse-theft, and she decides to go and get him out of prison. László, her brother, is going to be hanged for his crimes, and Anna tries to persuade the judge, Horvát Miklós, to let her brother go. She offers him riches, but the judge refuses and asks her to spend a night with him instead. Her brother

<sup>11</sup> "Kádár Kata", accessed October 20, 2019, <http://mek.oszk.hu/06200/06204/html/manepbal00010.html>

<sup>12</sup> "Kádár Kata"

<sup>13</sup> "Az aranyfogú királyfiak", in Benedek Elek, *Magyar mese- és modnavilág II*.

tells her not to do it, but Anna doesn't listen to him. She spends the night with the judge, but László is still hanged. She confronts Miklós, who tells her he will make things better. Her response is cursing him, different versions of the ballad containing different versions of this curse.

In the version collected from Magyarpécska, Anna tells the judge “May your bread turn to stone,/ Your bathwater turn red,/ May your towels spew fire,/ May your knives turn against you!”<sup>14</sup>. The version from Siófok uses a similar curse, adding two more verses to it: “Thirteen pharmacies in a row,/ May empty out for you,/ Thirteen carts of hay,/ May rot in your bed./ Thirteen years from,/ May you be taken to the cemetery./ After thirteen years,/ They took Fehér Laci’s,/ Judge to the cemetery”<sup>15</sup>. In Vésztő they also use the number thirteen multiple times, this time Anna wishing a horse-riding injury upon the judge that not even thirteen doctors will be able to heal. And this is the only variant of the ballad where the judge is cursed to not get God’s blessing<sup>16</sup>. These curses all revolve around the livelihood of their subjects. They all target the essential parts of everyday life at that time. The adaptations where Anna uses the number thirteen as a curse also bend the unusually positive tones the number sometimes holds in Hungarian beliefs. Most often connected to love, the superstitions involving thirteen relate to finding one’s true love or future spouse. For example, if on Saint Lucy’s Day, which falls on the thirteenth of December, a girl who has reached marriageable age, writes down twelve male names on twelve pieces of paper and throws them one at a time into the fire every day until Christmas, the last piece of paper will contain the name of her future husband<sup>17</sup>. And other times, if a girl ready for marriage is making cabbage rolls, depending on the number of rolls she will find out if she will get married that year or if she has to wait for her destiny.

In the ballad of *Gyönyörű Bán Kata*, the tale of a wife taken away to the Ottoman Empire is presented. She goes willingly after she is offered riches, taking her two little children with her. But she leaves them to fend for themselves in a forest. When they reach her new home in the Ottoman Empire, her partner orders her to make dinner. Kata decides to leave and go back

<sup>14</sup> “Fehér Anna”, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://mek.oszk.hu/06200/06204/html/manepbal00090.html>

<sup>15</sup> “Fehér Laci, édes bátyám”, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://mek.oszk.hu/06200/06204/html/manepbal00093.html>

<sup>16</sup> “Fehér László”, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://mek.oszk.hu/06200/06204/html/manepbal00091.html>

<sup>17</sup> “Luca-napi babonák, népszokások és hiedelmek”, accessed October 20, 2019 <https://korkp.sk/cikkek/kultura/2019/12/13/luca-napi-babonak-nepszokasok-es-hiedelmek/>

home instead. And to stall the man from finding out she left, she uses her spit as a decoy. It answers in her voice when it is asked to hurry with the meal and to set the table. In the meantime, Kata reaches the forest where she left her children to be taken care of by the wildlife, and finds only bones. She returns to the home of her mother, who, when she identifies herself and asks to be let in, tells her that she does not have a daughter: “Leave, devil, leave,/ And don’t tempt me!/ I don’t have a daughter,/Nine weeks ago,/ Turning to ten/ Since the fishermen/ Search for her with nets,/ But can’t seem to find her!”<sup>18</sup>.

### Witches, Witchcraft and Magic in Literary Works

Based heavily on folk-tales, the most notable work of narrative poetry containing witches is *John the Valiant*, written in 1845 by the famous romantic poet, Petőfi Sándor. Born in 1823, Petőfi is considered Hungary’s national poet, and he was one of the key figures of the Revolution of 1848.

*John the Valiant* follows the life of the titular John, as he grows into manhood and saves the love of his life from the clutches of Death. First nicknamed Johnny Corn, since he was found in a field of corn, he works as a shepherd for a well-off family in the village. Johnny is enamored with a young girl, Iluska, who is also an orphan, and whose stepmother is going to be a minor antagonist in the story. The herd scatters while Johnny and Iluska are talking about their love for each other. Johnny has to return with only a fraction of the sheep owned, so he is chased away by his master. He leaves the village, and meets a company of hussar cavalrymen who are heading towards France to help with the Turkish invasion there. He joins the hussar on their quest, traveling across countries like Venice, Mongolia and India to get to their destination.

In France, Johnny saves the princess from capture, and the king offers up her hand in marriage and the kingdom for rule in his gratitude. Johnny refuses, citing his love for Iluska, so the king gives him a reward of gold and renames him as Sir John, or John the Valiant. John decides to return to his village, where he discovers that his love has been worked to death by her stepmother. He visits her grave, plucks the single rose growing from it and leaves to search for a glorious death to join Iluska in the afterlife.

He reaches the Land of the Giants, where he kills the ruling king, whose

<sup>18</sup> “Gyönyörű Bán Kata”, accessed October 20, 2019, <https://mek.oszk.hu/06200/06204/html/manepbal00018.html>

sons ask him to become their king in fear of him killing them too. He refuses their offer, and gets instead a flute that will summon them if he ever needs them. The next country he reaches is pitch black, with no source of light at all. This is the Country of Darkness, where witches are holding a worldwide meeting.

They gather in a cave, boiling different things in a cauldron. John steals away their brooms and summons the giants, and they begin wiping out the witches. The last crone to remain alive is the evil stepmother, who slips away from John's hold, but is caught by a giant who flings her to the edge of their village ("The giant obeyed, and he instantly plucked her,/ And high aloft into the air he chucked her./ This explains how that witch was found, flattened and dead,/ On Valiant John's village's border, they said;/ And since everyone hated that creature, and loathed her,/ Even crows wouldn't dig through the tatters that clothed her."<sup>19</sup>). And with the last witch dead, the Sun finally shines over the Country, and John burns the stolen brooms.

The next obstacle he crosses is a cemetery where he is tempted by the dead to join them in the afterlife, but they disappear when a rooster crows in the morning, and after that he slays a dragon. He finally reaches the Operenciás Sea, which is usually uncrossable by normal means. John summons a giant to help him across, and after two weeks they reach an island, the Land of the Faeries. There, he drops the rose in a lake that turns out to be the Water of Life, and Iluska is revived from it. The lovers are finally reunited, and afterwards the faeries crown them their new rulers.

The witch in this story never gets named, her main role being the evil stepmother of Iluska. She is never given a reason for her wrongdoings, only the fact that she's a witch. She's a stereotypical witch, plucked out of fairy- and folk-tales, but her role is only secondary. She acts like the old gypsy from *A tökváros* ("The pumpkin city"), killing the heroine, who later turns into a flower, for her own goals<sup>20</sup>. She's accompanied by many other magical elements, which often diminish her. Iluska's death is her biggest achievement, by which she sets off the second part of John's journey. Her death is also just a piece of a puzzle, with the giants and the hero freeing up the Country of Darkness from the coven's hold. This act cuts out every single possibility of a witch being neutral or good in the story. Witches only bring darkness here, which can only signify evil and bad. They can't be redeemed or turned into

<sup>19</sup> Sándor Petőfi, *John the Valiant*, accessed October 18, 2019, [https://www.babelmatrix.org/works/hu/Pet%20c5%91fi\\_S%20c3%a1ndor-1823/J%20c3%a1nos\\_Vit%20c3%a9z\\_\(teljes\)/en/58450-John\\_the\\_Valiant\\_\(complete\)](https://www.babelmatrix.org/works/hu/Pet%20c5%91fi_S%20c3%a1ndor-1823/J%20c3%a1nos_Vit%20c3%a9z_(teljes)/en/58450-John_the_Valiant_(complete))

<sup>20</sup> "A tökváros", in Benedek Elek, *Magyar mese- és modnavilág II.*

allies by a key-phrase, and the protagonist never tries to do so. It's a stereotypical battle between good and evil, light and dark, where only the giant represents a middle ground.

Returning to the folk-tale representation of witches, Vörösmarty Mihály's *Csongor és Tünde* play portrays a witch's actions kicking off the plot, only because she wanted to taste an apple from a faerie-planted tree. Written in 1830, it follows the titular hero, Csongor, in his search for happiness, represented by the fairy, Tünde. Inspired by *História egy Árgirus nevű királyfiról* (c. 1575; "The Story of the Prince Árgirus"), a *széphistória* ("beautiful story") written by Albert Gersei, Vörösmarty takes multiple elements from it and adds original elements, like three characters that don't appear in the one from the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>21</sup>.

The story starts in a garden, where Csongor finds a witch, Mirigy ("Gland") bound to a tree. He releases her and takes her place after she tells him what is special about one of the apple-trees in there. She had been chained up for three days then, trying to stay up to catch the faeries from collecting the golden apples the tree produces. Csongor decides he is going to take her place and try to keep vigil through the night, even though a magical breeze always knocks out those who watch the tree.

Csongor is not spared from that fate when two faeries show up to pick the apples. Tünde and her handmaiden, Ilma, are the ones that planted the tree, but Tünde gets distracted by the sleeping Csongor. She lays down next to him, and while she's asleep, Mirigy sneaks up to them and cuts off some of her hair ("I have it, I have it! With this hair,/ I'll cover my daughter./ Csongor will see her, and he'll be deceived,/ In her arms he'll be soothed,/ And then I'll be the one to rule."<sup>22</sup>). In the morning, the two lovers have to separate, since the two faeries have to return to their land. Csongor tries to convince the girl to stay, but no matter how much he pleads, they leave him, and he decides to go after them in order to be together with Tünde.

He meets three travelers, Vörösmarty's original characters, and asks them for directions to the Land of the Faeries, but the trafficker, the scientist and the lord laugh at his question. They believe that chasing happiness is worthless, and instead of searching for love and Tünde, he should be going after power, knowledge or wealth instead. These three are allegorical characters, representing everything a man wants and searches for mindlessly in the real world, ignoring everything else that would make his life easier and worth

<sup>21</sup> Lóránt Czigány, *The Oxford History of Hungarian Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 130.

<sup>22</sup> Mihály Vörösmarty, *Csongor és Tünde* (Gyoma: Kner Izidor, 1921), 16.

living. Csongor, in his quest, is searching not only for his happiness, but mankind's too. On his way back to the garden, he meets them again. The trafficker returns poor, the lord defeated and the scientist confused and full of doubt. Their pursuit of worldly values led them into failure, and while Csongor is still left searching for his love, they are left hopeless and with an uncertain future.

After his first meeting with the three travelers, Csongor is joined by Balga ("Foolish"), who is searching for his missing spouse, who turns out later to be Ilma, Tünde's handmaiden. Together they go through different adventures and interactions with Mirigy, Tünde and Ilma and three devils. They reach the Land of Dawn, and the faerie girls travel to the Country of Night, where Tünde asks the ruler of the land to take away her powers and turn her mortal, so she could be together with Csongor. Eventually, the two couples get reunited in the garden, where a castle appears on one of the hills, where they will live happily ever after, while Mirigy gets caught and tied up by the three devils.

The three devils, Kurrah, Berreh and Duzzog, are minor antagonists to the story, who only work against the main characters when angered by them or when paid by the witch. They are opportunists, who only catch and chain up Mirigy to get a reward from Tünde. They rarely work together, as seen in the First and Second Act. At first, they are chasing a fox-kit, so they consume it when caught. Mirigy shows, cursing them for doing that, since the kit was actually her daughter, who she had turned into that animal before the events of the play ("Every bite into anger/ Shall boil inside of you;/ May hatred flay you,/ Turn against each other:/ And you'll perish fighting each other."<sup>23</sup>). After she leaves, the three brothers start fighting each other over their late father's belongings. These are a cloak that will turn the wearer invisible and a pair of shoes that will take the person anywhere at the crack of the whip, the third item. They meet Csongor and Balga while still fighting, and Csongor tells them he will be the judge of their spat, and he will also hold onto the heirlooms for them while they race each other. He uses those to run away unnoticed by the devils, leaving behind Balga, and thus angers the brothers into hunting him down.

During this chase they partner up with the witch, only to leave her when their plans fail. This shows that they are only opportunists, not evil, unlike Mirigy. She is a character taken out straight from folk-tales, who is evil for the sake of evil. She acts aggressively towards Csongor ("May God bless you

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<sup>23</sup> Mihály Vörösmarty, *Csongor és Tünde*, 31.



— I'll have my revenge —/ For this good deed — I'd strangle you,/ If only I could — Be as lucky —/ As a devil wearing a priest's cap."<sup>24</sup>), only to plan on having her daughter, and later a prostitute, seduce the young hero.

Breaking away from the folk-influenced stories where old crones play the antagonists and are aided by devils, Madách Imre's *The Tragedy of Man* circles around the relationship between a human and the Devil, and has a female character possessing flaws that would make her a witch in another setting. First published in 1861, this work is considered to be one of the major literary oeuvres of Hungarian literature, often being compared to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, since both deal with similar themes of Biblical nature.

First starting the story at Creation, Lucifer is questioning whether it was a wise decision or not on God's part to create humans, since they will be able to recreate everything He did in their kitchen<sup>25</sup>. The Lord gets angered by Lucifer's questions and decides to banish the archangel from Heaven, and Lucifer decides that he will prove God wrong. The following scene cuts to the Garden of Eden, and to Adam and Eve, who are enjoying their peaceful life. They approach two trees, but God stops them, since those two are the one he has given Lucifer domain over. The couple at first listen to him, but after Lucifer approaches them and starts talking to them, they eat from the tree of knowledge but are stopped by a cherub when they try to eat from the other one. They are exiled from the Garden and begin rebuilding their lives. Lucifer approaches them again, and other supernatural beings appear to, like the Spirit of the Earth and some nymphs. The fallen angel once again starts talking to them, and when the two fall asleep, he takes time on a dream-trip across the ages, showing Adam what will become of mankind.

They journey through the ages and explore different ideals and beliefs, Adam eventually growing disillusioned by all of them. In ancient Egypt, he is a young pharaoh who learns to put others in front of him from Eve, who is a slave. In Athens, he is Miltiades returning victoriously to the city, only to be declared a traitor, his glory being unacceptable in a city where everyone should be equal. Eve is his wife here, who watches his fate unfold alongside their son, and wishes he'd turn his men against the masses<sup>26</sup>. Next comes Rome, where they party without caring about the plague ravaging the city. Here, Peter Apostle and the fear of death sway them onto the side of Christianity.

<sup>24</sup> Mihály Vörösmarty, *Csongor és Tünde*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Imre Madách, *The Tragedy of Man*, accessed on October 24 2019, <http://mek.oszk.hu/00800/00876/00876.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> Imre Madách, *The Tragedy of Man*, accessed on October 24 2019.

They end up in Constantinople, where Adam is part of the Crusade and Eve has joined a nunnery. Their love is fated for tragedy, Adam realizing this. He gets disillusioned with Christianity, and decides that science and knowledge have more worth. In these scenes the protagonists also meet a skeleton and some witches, who represent the sin they are close to falling in and the faith of Adam's romance, saying "That's me who will be in all/ Your wry kisses and in all your embracements. -"<sup>27</sup>. Following up Adam's realization, in the next chapter Adam is Kepler in Prague. Lucifer now is his famulus and Eve is his wife. Similarly to Constantinople, another person is burned in the background, this time being either a heretic, again, or a witch. This act is talked about by two courtiers, who talk about how this was a celebration in older days, and now people judge it.

In this world, he delves into the world of science, while he also dreams of Revolutionary France, where Adam is Danton and Eve is at first a noblewoman who gets executed, and later reappears as a plebeian woman who killed a man who, she claims, tried to kill Danton. Her efforts are only temporary though, since Danton himself gets executed and Kepler wakes up from this dream. He also grows disillusioned by science and wishes to see a new age where it is properly appreciated and not laughed at, thus entering the next stage, the author's contemporary London. There, Adam appears as an aged man, who at first revels in the new world. However, he finds out that this new era is not as perfect as he had imagined it, claiming that individuality and free will have tainted it. The other characters perform a death-dance, jumping to their death while explaining their life. Only Eve, as a young lady, doesn't die, rising above everyone in glory.

Lucifer and Adam appear as two chemists in a society based on Fourier's phalanstery. There, everyone has their own role and can't stray from it, this affecting famous individuals, like Luther, Cassius, Plato and Michelangelo, who are tasked with something not in their original field of expertise, like Michelangelo having to make the same type of chair-legs. Two children are brought up, one of them being Eve's son, who are going to be sent away to study for their future jobs. Eve protests this decision, and Adam joins her, but they are overwhelmed by the rest of the phalanstery. Lucifer takes them away, into the next scene, where they are flying in space. They are getting farther and farther away from Earth, just as Lucifer planned it, so Adam would die when the distance will be great enough. But the Earth's Spirit pulls him back before that could happen, at the same time reigniting Adam's belief in

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<sup>27</sup> Imre Madách, *The Tragedy of Man*, accessed on October 24 2019.

humanity. They return to Earth, into the far-off future, where the world is dominated by an ice-age. Here Adam, who was slowly aging with every passing scene, is now a very old, broken man, and Eve is the wife of the Eskimo they meet. Adam, disturbed by them, asks Lucifer to end this. Lucifer tells him to wake up, and they return to the outside of the Garden of Eden. Adam, saddened by the future of mankind, decides he will not let the future he dreamt of come true. His plan is foiled when Eve shows up to tell him she is with child, and an angered Lucifer tries to deal with them himself. God intervenes before anything could happen, chastising the angel and ending the play.

Dominated by Biblical and mythical elements, *The Tragedy of Man* delves into beliefs, ideals and the role of man and woman in the world and across the ages. The main female character, Eve is either shown as the purest one, or a prostitute, only her love and attraction towards Adam not changing at all. She has faults and makes mistakes, like an ordinary human; and even though there are witches mentioned already in the play, she could play the part too. Before *The Tragedy of Man* the stories clearly feature a divide between good and bad characters, and one could not cross over from one side to another. But Eve still manages to remain herself, a strong female character who represents women all across the world.

Further breaking away from folk-tales and their influence, the short-story *The Miracle of Bágy* by Mikszáth Kálmán and the novel *Stone falls into dwindling well* by Szilágy István show more humane and life-like situations. Appearing in the book *Jó palócok*, the short-story centers around the sentence “The stream will run sooner backwards than my heart will turn away from you.”<sup>28</sup>, uttered by the main character, Vér Klára. A red-headed woman married to a miller who is away from home, she swore to him that she will remain faithful to him no matter what. She keeps her word for a while, until Gélyi János catches her eye and one night the stream reverses course.

Klára is considered by the other women of the village to be a scarlet woman, most of them shunning her for her appearance. In their eyes she is a seductress who is fated to cheat on her husband. This is similar to what would have happened to someone of another nationality in the close-knit and judgmental small villages of that time. Anything that was foreign was considered bad and looked down upon, especially by those set in their way.

Szendy Ilka, the protagonist of *Stone falls into dwindling well*, is shown

<sup>28</sup> “A bágyi csoda”, in Mikszáth Kálmán, *Jó palócok*, accessed October 24 2019, <http://mek.oszk.hu/00900/00950/00950.htm#7>

succumbing into madness as the story progresses from March to September, when she is killed. In March she kills her lover in a fit of jealousy and possessiveness, since he was planning on going to America to find better opportunities. He throws the body into the titular well and drags the sty over it and starts dropping stones into it to cover the corpse. Ilka buys two piglets from her dead lovers' brother-in-law, and starts treating them like her children. She begins collecting rocks to throw into the well, and slowly unravels, ostracizing herself from her village.

She has no magical powers, her words bear no consequences in real life, and she is no old crone living at the edge of the village, and yet, she counts as a witch. She has a traumatic past, hallucinates about passed ages and manipulates the people around her into acting according to her beliefs. Eventually, her lies start to fall apart, alongside her reputation, and she is ultimately killed by one of her workers she refused to pay.

Ilka is an independent female character, who refused to marry and give up her family's wealth, and yet she still falls prey to time and nature. Her behavior, the things she does and goes through shape her into becoming someone akin to a real-life witch, someone controlled by her baser nature.

## Conclusions

Witches, just like Literature, evolved with time. Folk-tales dominated their portrayal, influencing future works into reusing the same characterization. Their role was mainly to instill fear and determine children to respect their elders, or simply to represent evil and human depravity, using witches as examples of what not to do.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century emphasis began to shift away from these almost cartoonish portrayals with the publishing of *The Tragedy of Man* and *The Miracle of Bágy*. These brought the witches into a new realm, one much closer to reality. They slowly became everyday characters, and not some old crones everyone would notice. This phenomenon can be linked to the removal of religion and superstition from the world of literature. Writers began to focus more on the world around them, rather than on the imagined one, thus changing the world's portrayal in their works. They saw the segregation happening in rural areas based on belief, how some characteristics were deemed good and other bad, and decided to show that side of the world instead of what they imagined it to be. Witches were no longer examples on how one should behave, or that there is only light and dark. They became grey areas anyone could fall into, and which no longer had the role of antagonists or helpers.

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