

РУМУНСЬКІ ЧАКЛУНИ. ШКІДЛИВА МАГІЯ

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ROMANIAN SORCERERS. OFFENSIVE MAGIC

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Олтяну Антоанета. Румунські чаклуни. Шкідлива магія. Оскільки сфера магії в Румунії дуже різноманітна, у цій статті розглядаються виключно негативні сторони магичних практик, які здійснюють носії езотеричних знань. Спеціалізовані виконавці (румунською мовою вони зустрічаються під різними назвами, яким притаманні різні характеристики – чаклуни (*strigoii*), мертві чаклуни (*strigoii morți*), маги, відьми) у народних повір'ях видаються менш страшними, ніж їхні західноєвропейські відповідники, однак мають чіткі риси демонізму, які характерні для “чорної магії”. **Мета статті** полягає в описі та дослідженні вербальних магичних практичних дійств, що передбачають активний шкідливий вплив на людей і тварин з умислу чаклуна та за допомоги потойбічних сил і відображені у румунському обрядовому і музично-словесному фольклорі. **Новизна статті** полягає у сконденсованому вибіркового аналізі тих зразків етнологічних знахідок, що належать само до шкідливої магії, що досі не було розглянуто саме в порівняльному ключі. **Методи і матеріали.** В основі статті стали дослідження з праці “Соломонова школа. Ворожіння і чаклунство в порівняльному контексті”, тож базовим методом є порівняльний і зіставний підхід. **Висновки.** Починаючи з процесу становлення таких істот (*чаклунів, відьом*) – від народження чи ініціації – ця стаття має завдання надати короткий виклад негативних магичних практик (чорної магії та ін.), які виконують чаклуни, залишаючи остеронь практики у виконанні “аматорами”, які були зацікавлені в покращенні свого добробуту або в зворотних практиках, призначених для скасування заклинань або зняття заклять, накладених чаклунами.

Ключові слова: румунська магія, чаклунство, чаклуни, відьми, чорна магія, мертві чаклуни, шкідлива магія.

1. Semantic differences. The status of the sorcerer changes quite fast in the history of mentalities from the most reliable person, from an official priest, a messenger of the divine to an outcast, an unofficial, obscure practitioner of certain rites, which were once all-important to the well going of the fortress. The association of white magic, in fact, of magic in general, with black magic and to Church desecration, began to be viewed as a common point of view in the description of their practitioners, of the sorcerers. If, in Western Europe, the hunt for the witches serving the Devil represented the main theme of the battle the Church waged against the non-believers, in the East, magic gained appreciable ground and included not demonic pacts, but the acquiring of malefic knowledge, aimed against peers.

Generally speaking, when mentioning traditional societies, we must make a distinction on one hand, between *sorcerer (vrăjitor)* and *enchanter (fermecător)*, and, on the other hand between *sorcerer* and *disenchanter (descîntător)*, in other words, between defensive and offensive magic. Closely related to the first difference, but without being generated by it, we must emphasize a second disjunction, which is especially mirrored in the intrusion of the Church in the magic reality. It is the *demonic, satanic sorcerer* and the *sorcerer-representative of the ancient cults of fertility*.

For this purpose, Margaret Murray, in her works, *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) and *The God of the Witches* (1931) states that in the 17th century there were still traces of the ancient fertility cults, which were later demonized. In its turn, British anthropology proposed differentiations and definitions of the concepts of *witchcraft* and *sorcery*. E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1937), who opposed for

the first time the two terms, says that magic activities are not a priori the subject of approval or disapproval by society: they are socially and morally “neutral”. Whether or not they are exercised or not by experts, they try to control the impersonal and supernatural forces, which influence the course of events. The essential difference between *sorcerer* and *witch* is related to the fact that the first one uses magic in order to perpetrate his evil doings, while the latter acts through supernatural powers, which are specific to her personality. Aarne Runeberg (1947) believes that magicians, grouped in real societies, had inherited from a distant past the formulas and masses (nocturnal ones) capable to induce fertility or to strike enemies. J. Russell (1972) has a similar point of view. In his opinion, millenary rites and masses meant to ensure fertility, including dances, banquets and erotic unwinding, were turned into sabbat days under the pressure of Christian society. As they were a form of rebellion against the social and religious conformism, these nihilist groups were the product of an oppressive Christian civilization and especially of the Inquisition. The one who shades some real light on the representatives of the ancient cults of fertility is, undoubtedly, Carlo Ginzburg (1966). He attests, after one thousand years of official Christianity, the survival of the fertility cults. The *Benandanti* were men born with the amniotic membrane, which they carried, tied to their necks, as an amulet. On solstice days, they were imagining that they went out at night – when they were apparently in a cataleptic state – armed with dill bunches and in organized groups, to fight sorcerers, who were also organized and endowed with bird seed ears. They said that this ritual battle was important for the crops and harvests.

¹ The material presented in this study is to be found in our work, *Școala de solomonie. Divinație și vrăjitorie în context comparat (School of Solomon. Divination and witchcraft in comparative context)*, Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, 616 p. [in Romanian].

In Romania, S. Fl. Marian was the first to ever try to differentiate sorcerers from enchanters, meaning those who cast spells and those who use charms: “The sorcerers and the witches are generally viewed by people as unlawful, people who have renounced God, who have many connections with devilish spirits, because, in their incantations, instead of addressing God, the supreme and almighty being, asking for help in order to attain the aimed purpose, they generally turn to devilish spirits or mythical beings, in order for them to provide the necessary help and to fulfil their wish”². The distinctions made by Marian do not really clarify the essentially malefic nature of the sorcerer. In general, the difference between *sorcerer* (*strigoi*, *living sorcerer*) and *charmer* is relative – the difference is not made by the action, but by the particular attributes of the two characters. The demonism of the sorcerer would be represented by the adopting of an explicitly malicious attitude, related to “black” magic, which also includes the pact with the demon.

Although the definitions of those who have tried to analyze the activity of the demonized do not concretely reflect the essence, from an examination of the magic practices performed by the sorcerer, we can say that, for the Romanian popular beliefs, it is not compulsory to activate his “black” demonic side (the same as in the Western mythologies); the same as the charmer, with whom he is confounded, the sorcerer is characterized by the performance of some malefic magic acts, aimed at disturbing of the balance of the peers, either related to sending illnesses, fate spells (the calling, binding, conjuring away of the partner), stealing the milk and field “benefit”, etc. Let us not forget one thing: by virtue of the *coincidentia oppositorum* principle, even the concepts of *good* and *evil* are relative: the things that were good to someone could be bad for the one lacking a constituent element of his way of life. Not only the sorcerer (charmer) could do good and bad; in its turn, according to the addressee, good could be bad for the person who had lost it (for instance, in the case of the practices meant to take away the benefit of a farm).

Furthermore, we are to present the aspects of Romanian sorcery – namely, the use of malefic magic, mainly with negative connotations, – in traditional societies, while positive magic – the divinatory, oracular one, the one meant to redirect charms and illnesses, etc. is to be described in another study. Also, we mentioned those practices performed by specialized characters and not by individuals, who, by observing some indications of the experts, can practice themselves acts of magic.

2. Types of sorcerers. If we were to begin our analysis with the main performers, the sorcerers, we could realize that there are two distinct types of malefic beings with different power intensities: on one hand, the innate sorcerers, who received the demonic power at birth, without them asking for it, and, on the other hand, the sorcerers,

who, consciously, in their mature age have shown a desire to make contact with the evil forces.

a) The innate sorcerers

Receiving the sorcerer's attributes by birth proves to have various causes. It is said that the witch “was conceived at a weak hour”. “The pregnant woman who will drink impure water from devilish slaver will give birth to a vampire”³. A series of widely known beliefs related to sorcerers say that they are children born with *a tail*. One knows that a new-born is to become a vampire “by the small tail hidden either in the armpit or behind the ear, where you cannot see it”⁴. By tradition, the sorcerers grow a tail, a shorter one at the beginning and later a longer one; sometimes mentioned as such: they have a dog tail⁵. The presence of the *caul* (of the amniotic membrane) in the case of the new-born is an indubitable sign of sacred designation, of election from the very birth of the initiated sorcerer. Such a child is born by a woman who gets out at night without covering her head: “At that moment Satan comes and places on her head a red cap, like its own, and in due time the child will be born wearing the sorcerer cap”⁶. Sometimes the midwife fulfils the role of the fate women and assumes the decision of negatively marking the child's fate, by confirming its witch potential anticipated by the presence of the caul: “When the midwife sees the child with a caul, she names it as a sorcerer over the animals, the grains or the fish. Only after she has decided its fate, she can remove its caul”⁷. In other cases, the child only becomes a sorcerer if it swallows the caul. The sorcerers called *solomonari*, upon reaching a certain age, by wearing the magic caul, they can become invisible or can activate their magic powers.

b) The initiation of sorcerers.

The consecration, the initiation into the secrets of magic, into the manipulation of the sacred forces is to be performed through numerous procedures.

Initiation performed by another sorcerer. The initiation following apprenticeship is not included among Romanian beliefs. The most frequent procedure, the involuntary acquiring of malefic powers, can be performed upon the death of a sorcerer. The sorcerer was compelled to pass all his knowledge, which he could not take with him to the grave. The passing on of the knowledge was performed by *sharing it with an apprentice*, to a young man – often the son of grandson of the magician –, who swears under oath to pass on this secret information, or *by passing it to a chosen one*, who is not familiar with the power he received (through contagion, he receives from a moribund a certain object and absorbs all the knowledge).

Initiation with the help of the demons. Many legends tell that it is not very difficult to establish a connection with the devil, which may come without delay, as it is very excited by the availability of someone willing to learn the secrets of sorcery. Sometimes a simple call is sufficient to approach the Evil one.

² Marian S. F. Vraji, farmece și desfaceri. Descânțece populare române [Spells, charms and undoing of spells. Romanian Popular Incantations], Bucharest, 1996, P. 9 [in Romanian].

³ Candrea I. A. Privire generală asupra folclorului român în legătură cu al altor popoare [General Overview of Romanian Folklore compared to the folklore of other peoples], Bucharest, 1991 [in Romanian].

⁴ Scurtu V. “Cercetări folklorice în Ugocea românească” [Folkloric Researches in the Romanian Ugocea], *Anuarul Arhivei de folklor*, VI, 1942, P. 40 [in Romanian].

⁵ Mușlea I. Tipologia folclorului. Din răspunsurile la chestionarele lui B.P. Hasdeu [Folklore Typology Based on Answers Given to Hasdeu's Questionnaire], Bucharest: Minerva, 1970, P. 246 [in Romanian].

⁶ Pamfile T. Mitologie românească. I. Dușmani și prieteni ai omului [Romanian Mythology. I. Man's Enemies and Friends], Bucharest: Romanian Academy, Socec, 1916, P. 130 [in Romanian].

⁷ Mușlea I. Tipologia folclorului..., op. cit., P. 245.

When a woman needs the devil and calls it – in order for it not to harm her, she places in her belt, all around her waist, nine spoons, nine knives, nine axle pins – so that it cannot come closer. She calls it at midnight, through the chimney, at the hearth, it comes and she sends it wherever she likes. [...] The day she wants to call it, she does not bathe, she does not talk to anyone, she does not eat salty food, she sweeps the floor counter-clockwise, she does not bring water from places used by everyone, but from deserted ponds [...] and it comes by night. If someone does as such during the entire Passion week, on Easter Eve, at dawn, he/she should go to the crossroad and the devil will surely appear to him/her⁸.

The school of Solomon. If, in the case of the proper witches, the initiation is somehow a mystery, in the case of the *solomonari* – who are also a type of sorcerers, shamans, dragon slayers, if we consider that they bring hail and heavy rain on the crops and cause serious damages to the people – things are much better. In Romanian mythology, their authorized initiation is performed only under the direct guidance of the devil. The Evil One lives underground, where he also has a diabolic school, called *Șolomanță, Solomonărie* or *School of Solomon*, where one can learn all the languages of the living beings, all the mysteries of nature and all the magic formulas, charms and incantations (witchcrafts). In that place he receives only ten apprentices (eventually, children abducted from the earth) and the teacher is the devil himself; after seven years of learning keeps one of the apprentices, who then becomes a *solomonar*: Riding a dragon he goes above the clouds and brings rains, storms and hail. The classical script of the *solomonar* legends included the following elements: the initiation at the school of the dragon; the learning of all the languages of the animals and of all magic formulas; the school accepts the entrance of only ten apprentices – but only nine of them get out; the existence of a special instrument – the book of the *solomonar*, which he used to achieve his purpose; taking the dragon out of the lake; riding of the dragon to the clouds; domination of the atmospheric elements. Some say that these *solomonari* are not pure men, but they were doomed by God, they sold their souls to the devil in exchange for power over the air⁹.

c) Demonic helpers

In some cases, the proper witch was not in possession of the demonic power, but was her demonic helper was. Her special ability involved establishing the contact with the demonic representatives of the other world, which would then be asked to serve the human.

The witches go to lakes, stews and brooks, take out their clothes and remain naked, with their hair on their backs and over their eyes, and with a wooden stick in their hands, they beat the gravel around the water saying: “You, Old Scratch, you gimpy one, come to me for I have something that needs to be done¹⁰”.

The goblin (Rom. spiriduș). The helper-geniuses of the

goblin-imp type, which often take the shape of a chicken, fully belong the malefic area, by origin (and are obtained following unorthodox practices, from an egg which was hatched in a certain way), but also through action: not having something to do or even for mere pleasure, they bring troubles to the owners:

The Romanians believe that the goblins are a kind of small imps, which belong to some old women and witches, who use them to cast spells. The goblin is used for all types of spells; they bring back the lovers to their sweethearts and can cure illnesses. Long time ago all old women had goblins, but nowadays they are scarcer¹¹.

...the goblin is a little imp owned by some old women and some sorcerers, which are used to cast spells. The goblin is somehow a servant of a devil, which possesses the old woman or the witch, who uses charms. The goblin is lent to some sorcerers for a certain period of time; some have a lifetime goblin and they agonize for a long period of time before death¹².

It was said that in some cases the goblin could be produced by the solicitor, who is a connoisseur. One must search for an abandoned egg of a black hen, which is to be hatched by that person by holding it in the armpit for three to six weeks, and the resulting chicken is a goblin. It must be kept in a clay pot and must be well fed with breadcrumbs and nuts¹³. The purchasing of the goblin is an additional method used to obtain a demonic helper, which is a lot easier and appeared after the adoption of market relations and the increase of the value of money in rural exchanges; “In those times, the goblin could be sold especially at the drugstore (pharmacy)”¹⁴, “The witches buy it from Storojineț; there is an old lady there who hatches them on purpose and on market days she brings them in a bushel to sell them”¹⁵. The cases which mention a small number of demons, which cannot be multiplied on request, are scarce. In these cases it was thought that, in order to take possession of an imp, one could buy it from a dying old witch¹⁶.

3. Specific actions. The flight. For Western theologians, the sabbath flight of the witches was a travel *in spiritu*, as the soul was the one taking this journey and not the actual witch. Indeed, we can imagine that the magician would double himself in order to have a substitute in his place, while he would go somewhere else.

According to mythological representations, the Romanians believe that, at night, the witches after having greased their bodies with a kind of ointment, “leave their houses for the fields and mountains and harvest part of the crops”¹⁷. In the case of the Romanians, the magic flight is only attested twice a year, on Saint George’s night (April 23) and on Saint Andrew’s night (November 30). The Romanian witches were also convinced that it was a spiritual journey and that their soul remained at home until their return. The spirit left the house through the chimney or the keyhole, through the

⁸ Niculiță-Voronca E. *Datinile și credințele poporului român, adunate și așezate în ordine mitologică* [Romanian Customs and Beliefs in a Mythological Order], Cernăuți, 1903, P. 472–473 [in Romanian].

⁹ Candrea I. A. “Preminte Solomon. Legendele solomoniene în basmele și credințele noastre” [Preminte Solomon. Legends about solomonari in our fairytales and beliefs], *Cercetări folclorice* [Folkloric Researches], Bucharest: Casa Scoalilor, 1947, P. 104 [in Romanian].

¹⁰ Mușlea I. *Tipologia folclorului...*, op. cit., P. 174.

¹¹ Ciușanu, Gh.F. *Superstițiile poporului român în asemănare cu ale altor popoare vechi și nouă* [Romanian Superstitions as compared to those of other Ancient and New Peoples], Bucharest: Romanian Academy, 1914, P. 227 [in Romanian].

¹² Zanne I.A. *Proverbele românilor din România, Basarabia, Bucovina, Ungaria, Istria și Macedonia. Proverbe, zicători, povățuiri, cuvinte adevărate, asemănări, idiotisme și cimilituri, cu un glosar româno-francez* [Proverbs of the Romanians from Romania, Besarabia, Bukovina, Hungary, Istria and Macedonia. Proverbs, sayings, admonitions, true phrases, similes, idioms, riddles, with Romanian-French Glossary], Bucharest: Socec, 1901, T. VII, P. 192 [in Romanian].

¹³ Olinescu M. *Mitologie românească* [Romanian Mythology], Bucharest: Casa Școlilor, 1944, P. 421 [in Romanian].

¹⁴ Zanne I. A. *Proverbele românilor...*, op. cit., T. VII, P. 192.

¹⁵ Niculiță-Voronca E. *Datinile și credințele...*, op. cit., P. 467.

¹⁶ Marian S. F. “Mitologie daco-română. Spiridușul” [Daco-Romanian Mythology. The Goblin], *Albina Carpatilor*, 1878, 3/3, P. 40 [in Romanian].

¹⁷ Mușlea I. *Tipologia folclorului...*, op. cit., P. 248.

doors and window chinks. Riding a broomstick, a swingle, etc., the witches would go to a meeting place which had been established beforehand, where they resumed their human shape and started fighting each other – often involving a lot of blood – which lasted until the first cockcrow. Then they came back to their homes and re-entered their bodies. Some even add that if meanwhile someone moved the cataleptic body, the wandering spirit could no longer find it. But, when they returned they ought to find their body just as they left it, in the same position, because their spirit is *blind* and they can no longer find the exit place¹⁸.

The demonic riding. The devil's horse. Who cannot think of the familiar image of the witch riding a broom during a magic flight? Indeed, as she is surrounded by the malefic, it was not difficult for her to use, for the desired purpose, any object from the household microcosm. If a real animal was not available, a conventional means of transportation, the witch found her way out of the situation in various ways.

Whether performed in the realm of the dream or in real life, the demonic voyage of the witches at the sabbath or on very malefic nights, could involve, as means of transportation, objects different from the traditional magic ointments, brooms or rolling pins: when a witch wants to torture a man or bring trouble to his household, she “rides” him, meaning that often, while he is asleep, she sits on top of him or on the roof of his house. The victim feels bound and exhausted upon awaking. Also horses can be ridden as such: they are found in the stable, all frothy. In order to prevent such an aggression, people must take necessary measures, especially during certain moments of the year:

The sorcerers or the living strigoi, in the belief and oral tradition of the Romanians from Banat, do not walk, they fly into the air high above the ground, so high that they can barely be heard and they ride certain horses made of people, who to their disgrace left their houses without covering their heads on the eve of the Saint George's feast of cows. That is why on that evening no one must leave the house without a hat because he can be easily caught by the witches and turned into one of their horses; a sorcerer might be lying by the door of the person leaving the house without a hat and when he steps out, it places a bridle on his head and he starts to run as fast as it commands him and to go where it takes him, and when it lets him go he is exhausted¹⁹.

The Sabbath. The term of *sabbath*, understood as a witches' meeting, was transferred due to a tendentious cause – Jews, witches and Muslims were by tradition the subject of attacks by the Catholic Church. Accusations, including sexual orgies, incest or cannibalism within the meetings of the “sorcerers” were made against Christians by the pagans. In the 3rd century, Christian authors began to accuse the pagans of performing perverse and cannibal rites. The concept of sabbath was elaborated during the 14th and 15th centuries, when the image of the demonic sorcerer could not be separated from his participation to the infernal sabbath.

Just as the Western witches, the Romanian ones also met and held noisy parties at the top of mountains, but it is true that they did it more rarely. Thus, on Saint George's night actual sabbaths of the living sorcerers were organized in the Retezat mountains, (quite seldom, as said, once in seven years).

Romanian representations of the sabbath differ. First, there is the traditional-demonic vision of the sabbath:

Their sabbath is held only once a year (...). All the devils, evil spirits and all those who sold their soul to the devils, meaning sorcerers, old charmers, people who have goblins are present and start a feast so noisy that all the earth hums with activity. On that night, on Saint Andrew's, they plan all the evil actions in that year and share among them the people, the villages and the places. Afterwards they start partying and dancing in a trollopish manner, until the third cockcrow. At that moment they all scatter and return to their places²⁰.

There were also beliefs regarding some fights, actual battles between various characters, as it happened in Southern Europe. It was believed that on consecrated nights (especially on Saint Andrew's), the spirits of the dead leave the tombs together with the living sorcerers, and “which on this night abandon their dwellings, without being aware of it”²¹.

The metamorphoses. With respect to the sorcerers, theriomorphic appearance is a typical leit-motif. The witches turn into a dog or a cat only when discovered by the owner of the cow. Also, “werewolves (Rom. *pricolici*) are people who can turn into animals during their lifetime. Most of them are werewolves with a will of their own, meaning sorcerers, who for a certain purpose can roll over their heads and turn into a certain animal, as they wish, either to scare someone or to perpetrate evil deeds, such as drying up the fountains, taking away the milk “benefit”, scaring children and others”²².

4. Malicious activities.

a) Meteorological magic

The field of meteorological magic has always been one of the favourite attributes of the sorcerers. In this case also, just as in the other fields of magic, similarity and contagion play a very important part. Whether it deals with expert performers or mere mortals, they are all part of a game of cosmic size, based on the competition principle. Here we have, perhaps more clearly than in the other fields, the couples of characters, who command the cosmic powers at the same time or in turns.

Rain production. Because God could not be blamed for the lack of rain or excessive precipitation, the malefic image of the human rain controllers appeared out of necessity: “God releases only the light and useful rains, saying “fall down, rain”, while the heavy rains with storms and hail are sent by the *solomonari*”²³. Another aspect of rain demonism is rain accompanied by sunshine. The rain controllers can also be represented by living *strigoi* (the sorcerers). On their attitude depends the starting and stopping of the rain; and by being aware of the fact that they have this power, they can harm the community through ritual bathing: it is said that the sorcerers can take the dew from the grass and can even stop the rains.

Rain bonding. The drought. In the usual way, in this case too witches possess the necessary knowledge which they applied as follows:

In order to stop the rain, the sorcerers put all kind of grains in a bowl, and on top of them they add hemp seed and an egg and mix them to make a cake. As long as they keep the cake in the oven, there will be drought, and if they keep it in a damp place, it will rain²⁴.

If they want a drought, the living strigoi avoid bathing, because as soon as they get into the water, the rain starts to pour²⁵.

¹⁸ Olinescu M. Mitologie românească..., op. cit., P. 499–500.

¹⁹ Marian S. F. Sărbătorile la români [Romanian Holydays], Bucharest: Romanian Cultural Foundation, 1994, Vol. II, P. 259 [in Romanian].

²⁰ Olinescu M. Mitologie românească..., op. cit., P. 40.

²¹ Pamfile T. Mitologie românească. I. Dușmani și prieteni ai omului [Romanian Mythology. I. Man's Enemies and Friends], Bucharest: Romanian Academy, Socec, 1916, P. 127 [in Romanian].

²² Olinescu M. Mitologie românească..., op. cit., P. 445.

²³ Gherman T. Meteorologie populară [Popular Meteorology], Printing House of the Greek-Catholic Seminar: Blaj, 1928, P. 60 [in Romanian].

²⁴ Olinescu M. Mitologie românească..., op. cit., P. 496.

²⁵ Pamfile T. Mitologie românească. I. Dușmani și prieteni ai omului..., op. cit., P. 191.

Actually, the connections of the sorcerers with rain and water are much more intimate. In many cases, drought appears without the witch having cast her charms.

Hail. The popular representations of the appearance of hail, of stony rains differ. They occur as a result of a demonic battle between two supernatural spirits (spectres, *vilve, hale*) – actually, people who have two souls which leave their human shape and rise up towards the sky, where they fight for fertility, either as specialized demons or storm personifications of their ambivalent nature. In the myths related to meteorological magic, hail is produced consciously by its controllers, the *solomonari*, who can send it to the places on earth they want. At other times, the dragon and the *solomonar* are a couple, and the participation of each of them in the magic act is all-important:

*Holding out the solomonar's book, both the solomonar and the dragon pray until they both sweat. After the water from the lake freezes, the solomonar rides the dragon which grinds the ice with its steel boots until the solomonar tells it to stop*²⁶.

b) Stealing the milk and field "benefit"

In the works dedicated to the world of the sacred, the power concentration, the "benefit" (Rom. *mana*) specific to all objects and beings in the universe, is the active element of all humans' actions and all that they believe in, in relation to magic. This is how the behaviour of the demonic beings, who often set out hunting for this power, must be understood.

Stealing crops from the fields. The coming of spring, the rebirth of all nature was thought to be the essential moment for acquiring the field power. The first written mention referring to taking away the field "benefit" in Romanian literature seems to be that in the *Small Code of Laws* from Govora (1640), where one indicates the punishment for this kind of sorcerer:

*Whoever takes the power of the wheat or something else of the kind, knows the work of the devil, or of the wine, or the bread, or something else of the kind, and if he commits such action, he shall be punished to perform one hundred rosaries for four years*²⁷.

It was believed that there were "food" witches, which with one single glance at the crops were able to cast away the power of the crops²⁸. The witches gather on Saint George's night at the borders of various villages, where they share the field power. "One can take the crops power if it gathers the dew of the ears before dawn and throw it away onto another crop"²⁹. Ritual nakedness, by rolling over on the field covered in favourable energy on Saint George's night was also a typical motif:

The witch who wants to steal the crops power takes off her clothes on Saint George's night and then holding a new pot in her hand and a newly-woven cloth, which had been swingled, spun and sewn at night, before cockcrow, goes out on the pasture, in gardens, orchards trailing along the cloth, gathers the dew, puts it in the pot, wets the husk and the salt and then feeds it to her cattle, sprinkling them with dew. And then the cattle grazing in places where the witch

*gathered the dew will no longer give milk and butter, while the sorcerer's cattle will give plenty*³⁰.

Stealing the milk. The magic act involving the taking of the milk can be finally reduced to an act of stealing the "benefit", of the sacred power lying in all the natural elements. The practice is easy to explain as it is mainly performed at moments of temporal breaching, when ritual meetings of the demonic forces take place. After the waging of the magic battles (let us not forget that some of these clenching episodes were especially dedicated to fertility), they were really weak and, therefore, they needed to regain the lost strength with the help of cattle, crops etc. power.

Magic practices performed through direct contact with the beast. "Some witches milk directly the milk which they use in certain spells and then the respective cow loses their power, meaning the milk, or the milk becomes thinner and blue"³¹. In other cases, it was enough for the witch to have an object, an element which had been once in contact with the beast and which allows her to act upon it: "Others only take hair from the rumps or the udder of the cow" (*idem*; let us not forget that hair had a special significance and held the entire strength of the owner). Even if the witch was near the animal, her presence was not enough for the success of the demonic act and therefore she cast a charm and required the help of the demon she served:

*Other witches only touch the udder of the cow with a hazel tree stick or a small bag, saying: "I touch you with this small bag, the devil touches you with the stick, I take the milk with me and the remaining one will also follow me, because this is the wish of all my masters from above and from below. Farewell, for the milk will follow me to the udder of my cow and will be spread only as I wish". Afterwards, she goes back home unseen and begins milking her cow*³².

Remote magical practices. In this case, it is not compulsory for the witch to be near the beast the moment the milk is stealed. According to their type, these practices can be separated as following:

– through contact (although the witch is not present in person near the animal during the magic act, the presence of some elements/magic objects is necessary as they have the role of demonic agents). If the distance increases, the verbal formula is all-important:

*Other witches stroll at night through the village, especially on holidays, and with a stick they knock at the gates behind which are the cows from which she wants the milk and calls out it, but only a small quantity from each of them, as otherwise her cow would burst*³³.

– if contact cannot be established (or, in other words, contact is established by way of air and thus the energetic fluid of the desired beast is activated; also, contact is necessary in the final stage of the spell, when the proper transfer is performed towards the addressee beast):

²⁶ Pamfile T. Văzduhul după credințele poporului român [The Air in Romanian Beliefs], Bucharest: Romanian Academy, Socec, 1916, P. 131 [in Romanian].

²⁷ Pavelescu Gh. Mana în folclorul românesc. Contribuții pentru cunoașterea magicului [Mana in Romanian Folklore. Contributions to the Knowledge of Magic], Sibiu: Krafft & Drotleff, 1944, P. 22 [in Romanian].

²⁸ Cuceu I. "Obiceiuri și credințe în legătură cu ocupațiile tradiționale la Gîrbou, județul Sălaj" [Customs and Beliefs related to the Traditional Professions in Gîrbou, Sălaj County], *Anuarul Muzeului Etnografic al Transilvaniei* [Yearbook of the Ethnography Museum of Transylvania], Cluj-Napoca, P. 446 [in Romanian].

²⁹ Bocșe M. "Grâul – finalitate și simbol în obiceiurile cu caracter agrar din Valea Barcăului" [Wheat – finality and symbols in the agrarian customs from Barcău Valley], *Anuarul Muzeului de Etnografie al Transilvaniei* [Yearbook of the Ethnography Museum of Transylvania], Cluj-Napoca, 1977, P. 269 [in Romanian].

³⁰ Marian S. F. Sărbătorile la români... op. cit., T. II, P. 259 [in Romanian].

³¹ Pavelescu Gh. Cercetări asupra magiei la români din Munții Apuseni [Researches on Magic among the Romanian Inhabitants of the Apuseni Mountains], Bucharest, 1945, P. 67 [in Romanian].

³² Pavelescu Gh. Mana în folclorul românesc ..., op. cit., P. 60 [in Romanian].

³³ *Ibidem*, P. 67.

When they want to steal the milk from cattle, the witches take a dogwood stick and go to the field where the cows graze or even into the stable and signalling with the stick the cows which give a lot of milk, they say: "From here less, from here more, from here all of it!" Then they carve signs on the stick indicating the number of cows from which milk was taken. Afterwards she goes home, they unbraided the manes and surround nine times the cow which will receive the milk stolen from the others, uttering the following words:

With this stick I do not surround this cow,
but the milk power from the cows marked on it!
Let milk come to this cow,
let milk run away from them
as sheep run away from the wolf and hens from the goshawk.

While she utters these words, she touches the back of the cow with the stick. After casting the spell nine times, the witch walks three times around the house and the well in the courtyard with the dogwood stick in her hand.

c) Charms

Love and fate charms. Fate. Right from birth, we could see that man's life was given a path which he had to follow willy-nilly. The Fatae sister destined the man even with a life partner, marriage happiness or unhappiness, the number of children he would have and so on, things which even if not revealed in advance despite all the efforts made during the pre-marriage mate-seeking rituals, could be deduced gradually. The concept of fate was extremely important in the case of love magic.

It is obvious that somewhere in the world every man has his soulmate. But fate could be tricky, so that totally incompatible persons could join their lives together. That is why folk philosophy thought it was necessary to mention a few things:

The foreordained wife refers to every man's wife. It is believed that a man has three such foreordained wives. That is, he is entitled to three women during his lifetime. If, for marriage, I happen to choose the third one, then I will live with her until death do us apart. If I happen to choose the second, then, after a certain period of time she will die and the man will take the third. If he happens to choose the first, then three women will cross his life. When a couple become separated, it means that the man did not happen to choose any of the three foreordained wives and married another stranger³⁴.

No one can get married outside this fate law (even if it is inappropriate and does not observe the true choice): "No one can get married until he finds his foreordained wife. If he cannot find her, then he will remain a bachelor. When a girl or a boy does not marry it means that her/his foreordained husband/wife died, meaning the person she/he was destined to marry."³⁵ Sometimes a man marries twice and still does not find his soulmate; it is said that that man is cursed or that he is charmed and must be disenchanted. Thus one can easily understand the marriage requirements of the young men and women in traditional societies. The imperative need to find the foreordained wife made them ask for the help of experts, old fortune tellers and witches, who could guide the self-willed ones towards the soulmates which were anxiously awaiting them.

Bringing the foreordained husband. We will now present a few fragments of the charms meant to bring back the foreordained husband and to regain love within complex magic rituals performed on this occasion. We have to say that all of these practices are performed by a specialist, a well-known witch together with the interested person.

More often than not, in such cases, one was to perform a magic ritual similar to the one used in necromancy, except for

the fact that the called entity was not a dead person, but a living person (although, the resemblance to the first one lies in the mentioning of the unnatural pale shade of the skin of the men conjured as such, as well as the mentioning of a milk libation meant to calm the soul of the one called from afar). One of the procedures intended to bring the delayed foreordained husband was the manipulation of a ritual wood (a piece of firewood, a rolling pin, a pole, a perch, etc.) assimilated to a demonic horse sent by the witch or by the person requiring the presence of the foreordained husband. The sympathetic magic acted in this case too: the woman who rode the magic "horse" and uttered the traditional incantations, implicitly offered the man a means of transportation in order for him to be able to perform *in spiritu* the journey to the soulmate.

The clay pot (the pipkin). In the practices of love magic, the respective act is called "the use of the chip", "the performance with the pipkin". As usual, there were active practices in which the charmer or the petitioner had the determinant role, being the ones who effectively manipulate the conjured young man, or passive, when all the young woman did was to start the tracing mechanism with the help of the "demon" from the magic recipient. There are a series of practices, which effectively belong to black magic, both in relation to the materials used during the casting of the spell, as in relation to the aggressiveness of the performed gestures:

The one on which the chip is used must urinate in a new pot. Then it is well covered and heated by the fire. The heated and covered pot starts to rumble and it is said that the sounds it makes at that moment reveal the name of the boy who will marry the girl. While they are heating it in the fire, they beat it with a bunch of hazel, dogwood and maple twigs and utter all kinds of incantations:

I am beating you with the dogwood stick,
So that you bring it to me as an angel.
I am beating you with the hazel stick,
So that you bring it to me as a madman.
I am beating you with the maple stick,
So that you bring it to me as a stallion³⁶.

In other cases it is not necessary to deceive the foreordained husband, but to initiate the punishment procedure of the indolent soulmate, who so far did not pay any attention to the prayers of the girl. Sometimes, this pipkin is placed face down, and on its bottom a few coals are placed and only afterwards is the magic incantation uttered. Besides the magic act of return, of the circumgyration, the pot or the pipkin could serve as an essential attribute in casting love spells and this time it had the significance of a love "closer", an access confinement, a role of restricting movement.

Causing the death of the rival. Evil deed, malefaction. The use of the malefic power of an expert performer or on occasions, the evil deed or the malefaction (Rom. *fapt, făcătură*) represents one of the most dangerous magic practices, with a result which usually cannot be undone. Whether it deals with the re-establishing of some rights of the petitioner, or with a crude theft, the fate practices have the purpose of driving away the rival in love in order to reunite the desired pair of the petitioner with the wanted man. The fate spells cast upon someone place the witch on a superior level of power: this time she does not just take a look into the other world in order to communicate to the interested parties the future course of their lives; now she can change lives in a final manner and can even cut the thread of the life of one of her pairs.

Before presenting some of the magic practices from this last category, we wish to mention the significance of this act in

³⁴ Zanne I. A. Proverbele românilor din România ..., op. cit., P. 210–211.

³⁵ Mușlea I. Tipologia folclorului..., op. cit., P. 473.

³⁶ Zanne I. A. Proverbele românilor din România..., op. cit., P. 512.

the popular mentality. “The fact that it is not an illness given by God or some other accidental events, but it is, as believed, the result of some charms or women’s spells. If someone, especially a woman, envies another one, in order to get revenge she resorts to this means also, namely *she does her in*.”³⁷

Unlike other types of magic means, the *evil deed (the malefaction)* emphasizes the practical side: the signal word is *activity* – it is active, it is produced in order to set in motion in its turn, following the pattern of contagion and similarity, the unfavourable power of the sorcerer. The evil deed represents the *cause*, while the bringing over, the casting upon are *effects* of the magic act performed by the initiator. “People believe that the evil deed is not the same as other illnesses, but the man’s enemies put in his way a broken or chipped pot or some dud full of impure elements. Whoever steps on them instantly attracts the evil deed and agonizes for a long time”³⁸.

There are a large number of magical fate practices. According to the desired result, they can inflict either temporary suffering or death. Maybe to a larger extent than the other types of magic acts, fate relies on the magic of similarities: without necessarily being in possession of an object belonging to the future victim, by replacing her with various animals or human substitutes (puppets, statues made of various materials), the witch takes possession of the body and soul of the respective person, whom she tortures as she wishes:

*The fate spells are performed as such: she catches a frog and sews its mouth with a red silk thread, keeps it locked in a pot, keeps charming it and pricks it with a knife until it dies and when the frog dies, the old ladies say that the lying-in or pregnant woman also dies. If this happens and her husband married again within forty days of her death, then it is said that the woman died from a fate spell and the second woman caused the death of the first one*³⁹.

Sending quicksilver. Although, par excellence, its initial function is that of doing evil, as it is the main element used in charms or spells by virtue of the same mentioned ambivalence, usually quicksilver is seen as an apotropaion. In the case of charms, quicksilver is not a transportation means for the spell, but a symbolic expression of the unfavourable power of the charmer:

*The witch charms the quicksilver and sends it to whoever she was commanded. The quicksilver leaves the witch’s place on its own and, reaching the destination house, it spreads into wooden pails, in bowls, in sheets and all the things in the house. Sometimes those in the house see it, but cannot do anything to remove it. Of all the people in the house only the one destined by the witch falls sick. The sick person feels some sort of cramps throughout the entire body and is covered by prickly rashes, which exude a kind of liquid resembling water. He/she can only be cured by disenchantments and smoke*⁴⁰.

Manipulating of the footprint. The sacralized space is any space which has been in contact with a sacred bearer, with an object or a character defined through a great intensity of this specific force. This includes the footprint.

The spells, which could be cast with the help of the footprint, implied various levels of aggression on the victim. The inflicted damages did not entirely include the respective person, they could be limited only to the region of the legs:

If a woman envies another and wishes to harm her, she takes dust from her right footprint, with which she anoints the entrance of the oven, saying: “Her heels should burst the same as the hole of this

oven”⁴¹.

Very often the manipulation of the footprint implies the killing of the respective person. This also happens because the footprint, which was removed from the ground, represented such a fragile representation of the person, which especially through drying (excessive), can lose its consistency. If it was thrown into water, its destruction and that of the person to which it belonged was inevitable. The sorcerers can remove the footprint of the respective person from the ground and throw it into a tree; the illness will not go away until the tree dries and together with it the man “dries” (dies) too. When many elements are used, the spell is stronger; on the other hand, due to a smaller weight of the specific element (the footprint of the person attacked) the final point of the spell could not involve the death of the rival, but only a general lack of balance.

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³⁷ Candrea I. A. Folklorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică [Comparative Romanian Medical Folklore. Overview. Magical Medicine], Casa Scoalelor: Bucharest, 1944, P. 177 [in Romanian].

³⁸ Marian S. F. Vräji, farmece și desfaceri. Descânțece poporane române [Spells, charms and undoing of spells. Romanian Popular Incantations], Coresi: Bucharest, 1996, P. 149 [in Romanian].

³⁹ Leon N. Istoria naturală medicală a poporului român [Natural Medical History of the Romanian People], Bucharest, 1903, P. 151 [in Romanian].

⁴⁰ Candrea I. A. Folklorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică..., op. cit., P. 178–179.

⁴¹ Gorovei A. Credinți și superstiții ale poporului român [Romanian Beliefs and Superstitions], Grai și suflet – Cultura națională: Bucharest, 1995, P. 111 [in Romanian].