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**Reflexes of apocryphal literature in Romanian popular culture**

**SUMMARY**

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- adjuvant
- apocrypha
- blessing
- curse
- canonical
- dichotomy
- speech
- imaginary
- mediatrix
- binary opposition
- reflection
- discursive strategy

## ARGUMENT

For a long time, the apocryphal productions were considered to be either secular, either religious. In a baneful time, nearly 50 years of communism, these productions - alongside religious texts - were excluded from the comments, as happened with the caroling phenomenon, which was considered eminently secular.

In the present work, we aim to offer you a systemic vision, as far as possible, on the apocryphal texts compared to the canonical ones, to highlight the elements specific to traditional Romanian thinking reported to a part of the apocrypha's corpuscle.

In our opinion, the apocrypha *of the New Testament* are writings that were not inserted in canon, but are claiming and are insinuating a canonical authority. There is, moreover, a special genre of texts (legends, fairy tales, carols, etc.) which have circulated in oral form for a long time in the Christian communities, originally called *agrapha*. They were collected starting with the 19th century and published in academic journals or volumes.

Especially in Romanian literature a few valuable contributions are recorded regarding canonical - apocrypha intertextuality. At the heart of this activity lies, without any doubt, the work and personality of Hasdeu; it was followed by works of Moses Gaster, then Ion Bianu's, Ioan Bogdan's, Ovid Densusianu's, Nicolae Iorga's, Nicolae Cartoian's. Known as historians of our old literature, in their studies, they don't have necessarily in mind to reveal the apocryphal elements, the generic values, typical for "anthropological structures of the imaginary".

I consider that it's time to get rid of any prejudices and to proceed in our work to a correct and fair reevaluation of the structures that are producing traditional culture. We need to objectivity analyze both the role of ancestral structures and, especially, the contribution of Christianity, which is to be put on its wright place in the genesis and evolution of our popular culture. This contribution was negated in an utterly unjustified way, pushing the oral forms of cultural expression almost exclusively toward mythological landmarks "Thraco - Dacian - Latin". It was deliberately removed the Christian element, with its Romanian specifics, neglecting its role in shaping the Romanian spirituality.

Responding to the justified urging of Sabina Ispas (1995:152-153), "we believe that one of the tasks of the present ethnology and folkloristic is, among others, to rethink, eventually to rewrite, for completing, the traditional Romanian cultural history, from which should not miss the comments of the ancient Christian specificity", I turned into an interesting approach within the apocryphal literature, watching the becoming of traditional structures and looking at the model of of

Virgin Mary's Virginity and Motherhood, "Mother of all humanity in the ontological sense" (Ispas 1994:104) in a series of apocryphal legends.

It is known the fact that the Romanian people are among the oldest Christian peoples of Europe and had known Christianity during its genesis process itself, Christianization which has been operated on a nation in formation, to which it marked spiritual profile.

Christianization of Romanians was made without coercion, gradually in the deep layers of the people, where it was voluntary accepted. It was a natural process, which favored its organic assimilation and the realization of a opening toward a wider osmosis with the ancient manifestations, so called " magic – ritualistic" of which many ethnologists, historians, specialists have spoken far too much. Virtually, all the areas of our traditional culture present infusions of Christian elements.

It has been talking about a "cosmic Christianity", a religious belief, an original folk conception, but based, however, on dogmas and concepts in accordance with the religion of Christ. In folk literature, this form appears particularly in the species and genera with the apocryphal character, in carols, in legends about the journey of God on Earth (accompanied by St. Peter), or in the ones about Virgin Mary's journey, including those related to the birth of the Savior.

About these texts we tried to achieve an excursus in a semiotics perspective (canonical text - apocryphal text) as a mediating factor in relation to the collective mentality, distinguishing between three major categories: myth, legend, and fairy tale in relation with the miracle.

We will try to comment the texts contained in the thematic cluster (stories) that develops motives related to Virgin Mary's life and actions. As we mentioned, the legends about Virgin Mary were neglected for a long time, and then tendentious interpreted, cancelling in this way their artistic value, but especially their integration in the medieval culture and the systematic emptying of any Christian meaning.

I considered that it is appropriate to address the subject of Virgin Mary, since in the canonical texts of the Holy Scriptures the presence of the Virgin Mary is relatively unobtrusive, revealing the depth of the ascetic experience of the holiest being from earth, as an expression of humility and love. This discretion and this image of the goodness and the gentleness of open the hearts of God lovers, giving birth to the need to expression the joy and the faith in the apocryphal texts abundance, which circulated through the ages, in various forms.

In our approach, we have structured the researches, considering the influence of the Virgin Mary in relation to everything that means the reflection of God's love, embodied in the wholeness of creation. Thus, we analyzed the relationship of Virgin Mary with the human beings, as a crown of creation called for reaching perfection, then with the animal and the vegetal plan, on which the

influence of the Virgin Mary is determined by the world's changings and becoming. Another theme was structured taking into consideration the access ways, the initiating roads, sighted in Virgin Maris's Apocrypha.

Medieval culture phenomena need to be researched and studied from a wide perspective, in close contact with neighboring peoples, that belong to a family with strong influences from Byzantine Orthodox culture.

Alongside the Holy Tradition, which has a special materialization in the folk legend, in order to make an analysis as good as possible, mythological signs are needed, no matter if they appear in solemn and, eloquent contexts and structures or in minor emergencies and correlations, apparently marginal.

In the spotlight of our work stand the writings with special position, collections, publications, text driven by major cultural codes, but also information and helpful hints in traditional customs that I've picked from the Transylvania Northwest during my investigations here, in 2002-2005. Thus, I have noted here etiological legends, apocryphal legends in poetry and prose, chants, carols, spells, threnody, but also fairy tales, anecdotes, lyric poetry, sacred and apocryphal scenes from wood and glass icons.

Finally, we cannot neglect the mythological perspective of some winter customs or the roots of some practices from the popular feasts of the Roman times or the influences of the solar cult that are present in the primary Christianity and not only those.

What I'll want on perspective would be to reopen the discussion over some Romanian folk traditions through relations with ancient Jewish practices, which have been ignored so far.

## Chapter I

In the first section of chapter one (*Canon and Apocrypha, two opposite notions*) we presented the origin of the term *canon* resorting to the Hebrew lexicon, because it constitutes an initial testimony in the Western world about a thought on the canon (*qaneh*).

The word has a series of figurative meanings, becoming to mean "norm," "criterion", "rule", "law". Theological criteria based on which the Canon was established were stated at the end of the 1st century (A.D.), but were not put into practice until the end of the 2nd century (A.D.).

These criteria are very important for our work because they will allow us to properly define the term *apocryphal*. The first criteria are related to the apostolicity of the holy texts, aka *The Old* and *The New Testament*, the second criteria, the catholicity, the universal nature of the texts; all Christian communities must agree in accepting them as sacred, the Holy Church has accepted and recognized as the canonical the four Gospels from *The New Testament*, and then, by the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325) another twenty-six, this Council establishing three classes of texts:

- universally accepted and used texts;
- texts discussed and supported by some Christian communities, but rejected by others;
- heretical texts, which are not supported by the Church.

This brings us to the term *Apocrypha* (from Greek *apocriphos*), "hidden" texts around which is hovering an air of mystery and whose purpose, say the Gnostics, only the initiates are able to understand. In addition to the basic meaning, there is also another meaning, the "fake" or "suspect", "inauthentic" and refers to the writings of the heretic considered unorthodox.

In the next chapter (*The corpuscle of neotestamentar Apocrypha's*) I have brought into question the three distinct types of Apocrypha, after the models and the circumstances from which they have been inspired.

The first type is the so-called synoptic gospels, which are replicas of the three canonical gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke. They have appeared in the Judeo-Christian environment, in the communities of early Christianity who have not yet been separated by the law of synagogues. We can mention among others *the gospel of Peter*, *the gospel of the Hebrews*, *the gospel of the ebionites*, that appear in Jordan, and *the gospel of Nazoreans*, that appeared in Syria.

The second type is the gnostic gospels, from the Nag Hamadi, divided into thirteen books, and comprising a series of texts considered apocryphal, among which: *the secret book of John*, *the wisdom of Jesus*, *the gospel of truth*, *the gospel of Thomas*, etc.



The third type are the texts arising from simple human imagination which is curious to know as many details about the lives of the saints, of divine individuals and of the Holy Family: *Life of Joseph the carpenter, the gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, the proto-gospel of Iacob, the gospel of Peter*.

Early Christians wished to know something extra about the Virgin Mary, about her parents, her childhood, her ascending to heaven, etc. The *proto gospel of Iacob* is the oldest (proto) prthodox apocrypha that is trying to answer to these questions and influenced the extra-canonical texts about Mary and Christ. The author allegedly is Little Jacob, the younger brother of the Lord.

Subchapter *The Apocrypha of Virgin Mary's life* refers to *proto-gospel of Iacob* and to the first mention about the new feast of the Virgin Mary, The Entrance in the Church or "Vovidenia", feast that commemorates the day in which Maria's parents Joachim and Anna take her to the Jerusalem Temple. This feast was imposed later, in the year 1585 under the papacy Sixtus the Vth.

The other feasts of Virgin Mary are justified by the canonical gospels: Annunciation and Assumption (Sântămăria Mare) and birth of the Virgin Mary (Sântămăria Mică).

In the apocryphal it is said that the Virgin Mary ascended in the third day after her death, when all the Apostles alive come on the God's clouds from all corners of the world to take farewell from the Mother of the Savior, which was raised to Heaven by angels.

In the Romanian folklore, the personality of Virgin Mary created a series of writings by apocryphal nature: ballads, legends, carols, stories. Simeon Florea Marian has put together a collection for this purpose, under the title *Legends of the Virgin Mary* (1904), which contains an epic cycle of mythical-religious oral texts, in verse and prose, such as: the birth and infancy of Christ, the Jews, escape in Egypt, the mother of God and the spider, searching for the son, Assumption, etc.

An apocryphal that circulated in the Romanian space is *Virgin Mary's trip to hell*, which outlines the torments of sinners in the eternal fire of hell, that are amplified with the entry of the Virgin Mary deeper into the realm of darkness.

*The apocalypse of the Apostle Paul* recounts the events through which he was converted to Christianity. The tendency of *apocalypse* is to present the contrast between heaven and hell and what awaits after death.

An interesting section is the one concerning *The Apocrypha of Saints' life*, where their authors used the material given by the folk tradition, processed and overtaken by the popular imagination in which the geographical boundaries disappeared, some facts have been dimmed, stressing this way its miraculous side of life, the fight against the worldly temptations, as well as the separation of the soul from the materiality body grasped by divinity : *The legend of St. Sisinie, The legend of the Holy Friday, The legend of St. Alexie* , etc.

First caption is a gloomy tale about Saint Sisinie, who is seeking the devil for kidnapping his nephews and reaches him on the seabed, where he beats the devil with the mace in order for him to say his name and in which forms he is metamorphizing when he does wrong. This legend has entered in folklore as the chant "against the devil", to oust him from the house and from the body.

*The legend of the Holy Friday* recounts her troubled life and how she was punished to death because he preached the teachings of the gospel. The apocrypha of Holy Friday had strong influence on carols (Monica Brătulescu, 1981:175).

*The legend of Saint Alexius* reveals a destiny full of ups and downs, a true ascetic, who finally became a "man of God".

Another legend inspired by the *gospel of Matthew* deals with the struggle between these two principles, the good and the evil, illustrated by the dispute between the Savior and the Satan in the desert. Satan cannot be killed, he is forgiven, but arrived on Earth enters in Caiaphas's soul and causes the crucifixion of the Lord.

*The legend about the wood of the cross* is a narrative text that makes the link between *the old and new Testament* and it was born by restructuring certain elements from the written tradition, from the Jewish folklore, from the apocryphal Christian literature (*the gospel of Nicodemus*) and from elements of Romanian folklore. The wood from which it was carved the Savior's cross is very old and originated in Creation; it grew from the tree of heaven, of which Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, so from the primal sin. It was woven into the wreath of Adam when he died, from the twig put into ground a tree grew, from which the cross of Jesus Christ it was carved. The cross was the one who redeemed the sin of mankind.

Apocrypha about the wood of the cross influenced the Romanian folklore, especially in fairy tales. It's about the tale of *Deathless Glabrous* (□ăineanu, 1895:345), *The legend of the Gruisanger*, a story about a robber who killed his father one night, not knowingly, and he is punished to wet with water carried in his mouth the bark on which his father layed, until it will flourish.

A similar story is the one with the title *Manea the thief*, in which Manea kills his father and is condemned to wet with water carried in his mouth an iron walking stick from the forest until it will become green.

An interesting parallel from popular traditions combines the theme of planting a tree from a dry wood with the theme of two robbers between who Jesus was crucified.

*The Virgin Mary trip to hell* it is a subtitle which refers to the Virgin Mary's desperate call for forgiveness of sinners, she being troubled by the pangs and the work to which they were subjected in the underworld. Apocrypha expresses the orthodox idea that relate the two testaments.

The second part of *the journey* presents a journey to Heaven. Mary manages to obtain from Christ a ray of mercy for sinners, from Easter until Ascending, after which she ascends to heaven taken by angels, where he finds "enjoyment and rest" for those without sins. The apocrypha had an extensive circulation in different areas and settlements, because it was believed that one who knows it, tells it and carries it will be safe from evil and disease and have good luck.

The apocryphal writing *Assumption* is a prayer book that helps women in childbirth and newborns to steer away from mischief. It is an act of magical therapy, not only because of the beneficial incantation but also because of the contact between the ill area of the body with the word materialized through writing and kept close to the body, that can be touched and represents a tangible hope.

Another category of texts in circulation during the 14th century and 16th century is presented in subchapter *The popular books in Romanian literature*. There are medieval writings addressed to a wider audience than just the readers of religious, historical or juridical literature. They include the religious apocryphal literature that consists of "heresy" that faced the official church or from legends imaginatively composed around Bible stories.

Also, popular books are the moralizing or fantasy novels, with wider actions, with more complicated plot, stylized by scholars from oral literature of popular masses; these writings have roamed through translations into many languages all over the medieval world.

The best known popular novel is *Alexandria*, written in Greek, with an intense circulation in Hellenistic Egypt. The book circulated in our country in all layers of society, thus living traces in literature and popular traditions. Circulating also orally, the novel has assimilated the beliefs, traditions and elements of Romanian fairy tales about fairies or "iele". The phenomenon also occurred vice versa, from the novel toward Romanian legends and beliefs.

*Varlaam and Iosaf* it is a book that has at its center the theme of destroying the human life, the futility of this life, empty rises in opposition to asceticism and recollecting in the wilderness. Episodes from this novel we'll find in *The teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodose*.

Another popular book widespread in Medieval Europe and read until today is *Aesopia*, which is in the heart of the action the wise slave Aesop, which narrates in a series of preachy fables, spiritual stories, parables and advices. "The evil always comes between people, because it sits closer, and the good that comes down from heaven, occurs more rarely" (*Alexandria, Aesopia* 1960:104).

## Chapter II

For centuries, there has been a great development of the Mariology, constituting a problem for Biblical exegesis. The bibliography about the Virgin Mary is truly overwhelming. In late 1995, Yale University Library catalogue included a list of 2424 books on this topic, not including articles, papers or communications.

An important role in the expansion and development of the Mariology had the apocryphal works, which provided important data regarding the biography of the Virgin Mary.

The doctrine and worship of the Virgin Mary appeared and flourished in the Christian East, emphasizing the quality of Mary to be the "Mother of God". The Catholic west revealed in its Maryal cycles the dogma of "immaculate conceptions", especially in the writings of St. Augustine. The east and the west are treating differently the distinction between nature and grace (Augustin XXXVI: 42).

Virgin Mary appears relatively different in star songs, in religious carols or in apocrypha. In the star songs is represented after the teachings of the Church and with some influences from apocryphal literature.

Popular carols about the birth of Jesus amplify freely the gospel thesis at the courts of Christmas. Mary, accompanied by Joseph, ask Christmas for shelter to give birth. This is a mean, sullen and arrogant man that sends her into the stable. She gets help, however, from the lady Christmas as well from the animals.

Category of "host characters" is binary structured, depending on how they receive the refugee heroes: lady Christmas vs. Christmas, the bull, the sheep, and the donkey vs. the horse and the plants: the apple and the poplar, which are assessed through their hospitality or hostility. Therefore, there are two worlds, two principles: good and evil. But the evil is not the opponent of the good, but of the intermediate Lord from whom it comes (Culianu 2002:331).

The classification of animals and trees after the binary blessed - punished is done after some Byzantine influences, manifested more or less. The mythological figure of the bull blessed by Virgin Mary is complex and interesting (subchapter *The mythological figure of the bull*). The eulogy of the bull is targeting his work strength, gentleness and efficiency of its hard work. In the legends of Christmas, the bull is present as domestic and wild.

The bull has cosmogonic functions, associated to cataclysmically unstoppable elements, winds and storms. He does not fear of apocalyptic wind.

The symbol of the bull in *the Gospel of Luke* it is difficult to determine, since we have little information about it. The bull represents the strength of the Christian faith, which cannot be beaten by any catastrophic force.

After v. Frănilă (1985-91), "grey bull" from carols is a folk etymology for "aurochs", where the disappearance of this animal recalled losing its significance.

In subchapter *The symbolic figure of the horse* I highlighted the ambivalent structure of the horse, structure deeply contradictory of its fundamental attributions, through the game of opposed categories. He defines from cultural perspectives and through different taxonomic criteria, but also in terms of the different codes: economical, mythological, magical or epical codes.

Of emblematic manner, the Romanian folklore associates the horse with the brave, with the virginity, with fantastic hero, expressing the bravery, pride, power and prestige.

Subchapter *Riders of the Apocalypse* represents the Antichrist, the War, the Famine and the Death. In gospels no. 4 suggests the idea of universality.

*The symbolic figure of the donkey* is the beneficial part of the horses, which is blessed by the Virgin Mary as a holy animal that "has the cross on his back because he carried on its back the one who carried the cross" (Papahagi 1979-81).

The apparent vulnerability of the sheep, its sacredness, but especially the element around which is focused a specific model of archaic Carpathian culture are present in subchapter *The sheep from Virgin Mary's legends*. In addition to these qualities of the sheep, it bears the divine damnation of Virgin Mary, who could not rest to give birth to Christ because of the noise, "the yelling of the sheep and jumping of lambs". Divine sanction has no point to push the sheep into evil or condemning her to live under seal of evil. The penalty explains the precarious condition of this animal, its helpless victim status.

It is appropriate to point out, as do numerous studies of ethnology or cultural anthropology, the old tandem *canon - apocryphal*, the original base of spiritual manifestations in archetypal society. And in this magical - religious spiritual conglomerate, the apocryphal creation can play the part of "level zero", the intersection of two ways of assuming the world and the self.

*The legends of Christmas* point out an interesting epic quintessence in which the sacred and profane attributes are combined in order to create a specifically local character who rules over the winter holidays, a mythical and ritualic pattern. He is part of the two worlds, laic and sacred.

The laic Christmas does not permit to the Mother of God to give birth in his stable, but she is accepted by lady Christmas, which helps her to give birth. Christmas, finding out about what Iova did, cut off its hands at the elbows. Mother of God put her hands back and "made them more beautiful and more brilliant" (S. Fl. Marian 2003:72). It is the moment when Christmas becomes

Christian. It is obvious that the duality of Christmas person is expressing the struggle between two different worlds.

The legend of Christmas acquires a "modern" look, speaking of a character beloved by children who brings gifts every Christmas holiday.

Lady Christmas, the wife of Christmas, also known as Iova, is presented in the texts as a good and faithful woman, terrorized by her sullen and peevish husband. She becomes Christ's midwife. Since then the midwives are respected in traditional communities.

Subchapter *The legends about the quest for Jesus Christ* points out that their structure has a relative stability and similarity, irrespective of the Romanian provinces where they were collected.

In all the variants of the legends we'll find the motif of the frog, the motif of meeting the craftsmen who created the torture tools for the passion of Christ, the motif of construction of the Church in which Mary lived a part of her life, "mother of the Church". This episode is probably apocryphal, but construction of the Church is based on an elder model started in the early days of Christianity.

The presence of the frog reinforces the idea that animals and other living things have had an important role in the birth of the Savior. It's an unexpected, complex, symbolic occurrence, that's to be explained on several levels of significance.

The frog appears in the cosmogonic process, has the function of messenger or spy, sent by God to see if there is no ground on the seabed. The profound ambivalence of the frog allows it to be mediator between water and earth.

In the legends about Virgin Mary frog occurs in the Searching for the Son cycle, when it assumes a comforting role for Virgin Mary, caressing her in distress by telling the story about the death of its young ones. Furthermore, the frog and its remaining son after the accident provokes laughter of the sorrowful Virgin Mary because of their bizarre apparition.

In *The symbolism of the bee*, this insect is integrated to the material cycle of the quest, having a liturgical dimension in the cosmic sense and being regarded as a blessed being, pleasing to God, holy and pure. Her unusually purity is manifested not only in the order of sacredness, but also in that of beings. According to popular beliefs, she refuses the excesses of the Eros, multiplying differently than other living things, in an essential mode, sexless, almost divine. The legend about the bee tells about the antinomy specific to the bee life, that between honey and venom.

*The spider and the Virgin Mary* get into a conflict about a contest of weaving. Virgin Mary was skilled in spinning and weaving, but the spider was the perfect and devoted practitioner of these occupations. The spider boasts this talent and it calls a competition with the Virgin Mary and he surpassed her in spinning.

Virgin Mary get angry and cursed it to spin all its life "without gain" and to always be killed by people. This text underlines the paradox of this race where, even though the spider wins, it is actually defeated. His canvas, although perfectly woven, is useless because no one can use it as clothing.

In the Marian legend, the motif of anger and course of the Virgin Mary is integrated in another context, that of the narrative about the search of the son; the spider who brags how he undertook to weave the rope with which Christ is to be hanged.

In a development of the dramatic itinerary of Virgin Mary in search of the son, an interesting episode is the meeting with craftsmen who worked on the Jesus' torture instruments (*Holy Mother and craftsmen*). Holy Mother of destiny them to live after indulgence or pity with which have acted in the dramatic act of crucifixion, or after the malice and fury with which they watched the passion of the Lord.

From the same cycle about search of the son, we separate several episodes that relate to the ethnic and ethical legendary characteristics of the Jews that caught and crucified Christ. The episodes are part of section *Ethics and ethnic imaginary of the Jews*.

A legend of etiologic nature explains why don't Jews eat pork, another explains why they have freckles and reddish hair. *Folk legend about the Jews* comment on their anthropogenesis, a species which preceded the actual people and populated the Earth prior to their appearance. They were of colossal size, the body was thick, the head was big, the eyes were bloody, the teeth like the mill stones. The Jews were giants with supernatural powers. About the existence of the giants speak both the canonical texts of *the old Testament* and the apocryphal texts (*the book of Enoch*).

*Cursed and blessed trees* is a subtitle under which I granted to the tree an infinity of values, giving it magical powers and qualities. In the Romanian arboretum space, the fir, the poplar, the lime, the apple has a privileged and chosen place, with mythical and symbolic meanings.

*The poplar* is punished because he didn't offered shade to the Virgin Mary so she could give birth and because it didn't make a bridge for her to cross the Jordan River. *Yew* and *Walnut* are blessed because our Virgin Mary could rest in their shade. The scene is repeated in the case of other trees: sanger - olive tree – lime tree - fir, etc.

The tree is a synthetic image of the vegetal and it can be represented by *the tree of life, the tree of heaven, the tree of dead, the maypole, Christmas tree, the apple* etc.

The funeral trees are also called psychopomp; it is referring primarily to fir which makes the connection profane – sacred and helps the soul to recover from certain ritual obstacles, a symbol took over, it seems, from the Romans, who put on the front house of the dead one a tree, usually a cypress. Often instead of cypress it was a fir (Pliny, *Historia nat. XVI*).

The fir is older than Christianity and was Christianized later.



### Chapter III

This chapter begins with an exposition of some views about the apple tree, considered as a symbol of the center (M. Eliade, 1939, no. 9), "axis mundi", loaded with sacred forces. It is the symbol of love, ecstasy, fertility and wealth.

Apple tree related practices are based on a botanical totem, as well as a magical – vegetal symbolism. People have pursued in particular the real qualities of the trees, but also the sacred, supposed ones, therefore crossing the named qualities and developing the concept of "totem tree" (R. Vulcănescu, 1987).

Apple tree holds an important role in the mythology of life and death, based on the principle that every man has a vegetal double in life, that is becoming "the tree of destiny" with application to all the three great rites of passage: birth-marriage-death.

This chapter emphasizes the presence of apple tree behind the carols. The apple tree, a cosmic tree that is the orchard model what sums up a good portion of the spiritual activities of the religious order of our people. As such, it includes the its crown, its trunk and its roots all the cosmos, overlooking the paradise space as well with its goodies (tables settled, tables with an apple in the middle).

Apple becomes the symbol of immortality, "an obsessive ontological datum". In the legends of Virgin Mary, through its wood (strain), the apple tree means the cross, an instrument of torture but also of liberation, bringing together into a single image the two meanings of the symbolism of the tree.

In many variations of the Marian series there is an episode regarding the golden apples carried to Heaven by angels and given to the souls from the other world. The apples had their origins in the tears of the Virgin Mary:

"Tears dropping from the eyed

That as soon as they felt

Become Golden Apples"(S. Fl. Marian 2003:235).

*The men – tree* subchapter stresses the relationship man - tree, which offers to the first a chance of survival through the second. *The maypole* it is a celebration of vegetation, having a green branch as a symbol or even a green tree sat at the porch of the household.

The Christmas tree is a custom that the exegetes connect it with a faith of the German people who noticed that some trees are blooming and flourishing near Christmas (November 1).

It is the birth of the custom of putting in the courtyard trees decorated with ribbons and apples, then into homes and even churches. In our country the Christmas tree was confirmed at the end of the 19th century in Bucharest.

Subchapter named *Divine stairs* describes the ascension on a symbolic stair, referred to since the pre Christianity era, and which lasts until today both in the funeral songs, in the fairy tales and legends. The motif of the stair appears in the funeral ceremonial (the dead tree, the dough stair, the fir of fairies).

In the Romanian folk tales from the ascension to heaven is done by climbing on a miraculous tree or on a plant which grows up to the sky. In Christmas carols God descends on a "stair made from the word", and sometimes the divine power makes it possible that God climbs or descends without any stair. Also in the Christmas carols appear the "wax stair" or even "God's shoulder".

I. P. Culianu believes that moving in the air is one of the most important faculties of thaumaturgies from the ancient tradition and that this movement is realized with the body or with the soul (Culianu 1984:83).

There are in the legends of Virgin Mary episodes in which she, mistress of spells and cures, descends on a silver stair to the sick one or the one who invokes her. The magic text circumscribes the image of the Virgin Mary to a complex of symbols that emphasizes its uniqueness. Sacred stair lies in a mythical place where communication earth-sky is possible.

*Virgin Mary and the spell* tells about the representation of the world as a network of *hydrophanes* which, at the time of them being broken, the rupture is believed to have a transcendent cause. Healing is obtained by giving the ill one a new birth, that one can only be done by the Mother of God. The always cherished presence of virgin Mary in spells constitutes the central axis of the positive imaginary, with beneficial attributes.

Sabina Ispas (1998:104) points out that from the godly nature of Virgin Mary " is issued the attribute to mediate along God for people and their forgiveness. Those mediation actions offer substance for the chapter of Virgin Mary's miracles: healing the mutilated wife of the pagan Christmas, the crucified thief who is saved and who was, according to the legend, the milk brother of Christ, the sick children of the thief healed when Virgin Mary baits them beside baby Jesus."

*Astral symbols of divinity* came from the searches of Virgin Mary for her Son, pointing out its radiance on the face as the Sun and the heavenly clothing, a cosmic manifestation of God's Son. The ceremonial clothing of Christ is similar to the celestial vaults with the Sun, moon, stars.

In a legend of the Virgin Mary appears *Chrismation and Holy Eucharist*, which was made from the blood spilled by the crucifixion nails (wine) and from the sweat splashes of the body (wheat, bread).

In the subchapter tells about the *azyme* as archaic food with magical meanings, that helps the hero in desperate situations. Of particular importance in the spiritual life of orthodox Romanians is *the wafer*, which is eaten at the Eucharistic meal. *Little breads*, used in the anaphora and bearing the seal of a special sign, as well as the round wheat bread which becomes the face of Christ are other ritual food, items of worship capable of sacred virtues.

In some Marianas legends we'll find the origin of the red colored eggs, which are painted for Easter. The Jews were chasing Virgin Mary throwing stones. She picked up stones and throw back, and the stones were transformed in red colored eggs.

Referring to wine its and role as a symbol of communion, as the blood that it replaced in a number of rites, we'll stop a minute for the *ceremonial Cup*, "golden cup," a family good with a difficult to find origin, but who takes the place for the heavenly chalice, the heaven from which comes the human's salvation. This cup transmissible from generation to generation is used at major holidays, such as Christmas. This cup is also called the "Christmas Cup" and appears in the carols as a reflex of old practices within the winter's holidays.

The cup is very expensive and the host refuses God himself, who can't resist the temptation of buying it.

*Virgin Mary's holidays* is structured on two Maryal hypostasis: Assumption (Sântămăria Mare - August 15) and the birth of the Virgin Mary (Sântămăria Mică - September 8). Virgin Mary's holidays together with The Cross day (September 14) are forming the ritually scenario of time renewal on biblical new year, celebrated around autumn equinox.

The Assumption, feast which is a part of the twelve great feasts of the Eastern Orthodox Church, appears in byzantine iconography surrounded by the twelve apostles, and in the center of the image is Christ holding the child Virgin Mary in his arms.

In the Marian legends it is said that Virgin Mary was bodily ascended to heaven. In some legends there is also the idea that Virgin Mary ascended to heaven only in soul.

In 1950 it was issued a Papal Bull, a solemn proclamation, which promulgated as dogma of the Roman Catholic Church the ascension of Virgin Mary to heavenly glory with both body and soul.

The importance of the Virgin Mary in Christian culture is not at all exaggerated when her birth is celebrated, birth which is said to have been announced to her mother by an angel, as she was announced about the birth of Christ.

*The fairy tale and the legend in the vision of text theory*

In the cycle *The Quest of the Lord Jesus Christ* the first part is referring to the Virgin Mary who is searching for Christ using a *book*, usually a white one, that may reveal the whereabouts is the Holy Son. This discovery is done by the act of reading and pro-reading.

Decrypting this phenomenon is quite difficult. It is obvious that this book constitutes a more recent element and that it substitutes an earlier method for discovering the son. The fact that the mother of God cannot find Him anywhere among the living, is "a metaphor for the descent into the underworld", into nonexistence, a hiding impossible to detect (Frazer, 1980:420). The phenomenon is specific to the action from the fairy tales having "the difficult tasks" motif (Propp, 1973:387).

In the action enters *the mirror* and the verb *to see*. It's a well-defined relationship; *the book sees* as the *mirror* does. In the mythical conception of the fairy tale the living cannot see the defunct. During the action of the legend, the term *to see* is repeated together with the question: "have not you see / have not you heard?".

Virgin Mary remains in her untouched integrity under the work of the Holy Spirit, but at the same time she gives birth to God. Only in this condition she *sees* Christ, she can approach Him and she can ask Him why He agreed to be crucified.

*The Immaculate Conception* is a chapter that develops a series of theological doctrines and debates concerning the bodily birth of Jesus and the virginity of Virgin Mary. The virgin birth of Christ from a woman who was born from sin didn't seem to answer the question how could be Jesus without sin. It is said that the Virgin Mary was purified exactly through the birth of Christ; not the way she was born, but by how give birth is distinguishing her as Mother of God.

## CONCLUSIONS

The narrative structures are based on two opposite proceedings. Almost all apocryphal legends (and not only) that form a system, or belong to a system's structure, are based on the dichotomies that are or that become mobile. Binary oppositions that appertain to a hierarchical system structure can come off easily and can enter, as isolated units or as elements of construction, in the composition of another system, be it hierarchical or not.

There is a pattern of interactive action among the systems that I've chose to classify as independent, such as *canonical* and *apocryphal*. These two systems, however, have a common base system, where different options activate, therefore are prospects within the same system (I. Culianu 1992:42). The duality good craftsmen – evil craftsmen or the duality hostile animals - benevolent animals is attested in oral literature belonging to some medieval European cultures (I. Culianu 1992:379-381).

The Virgin Mary herself becomes a mediator between the suffering, vicious and sinful humanity and good and forgiving divinity. Sabina Ispas (1998:104) argues that the divinely nature Mary "is issued from the quality of intermediate alongside God for humans and for the forgiveness of their sins".

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