

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE GIPSY IN ROMANIAN FOLKLORE – THE VISION OF THE OTHER

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Abstract: The mythical-folkloric imaginary of the Romanian people assigns an important role to the Gypsy, revealing – often in a narrative space – elements that are specific to their own cultural code. Representations of this ethnicity, as encountered in various fairy-tales, traditional stories and riddles, are very complex, emphasizing certain identity, spiritual, and moral features. Being ironically considered coward, naive, stupid, and ugly, the Gypsy is at the same time appreciated for his courage, cleverness, and fearlessness, all qualities proven in relation to God. More often than not, he proves to be a real trickster in relation to the devil.

The present paper deals with several aspects regarding the way in which the collective mentality outlined in folklore the image of this minority. We will use a corpus of texts selected from the folkloric collections of Dumitru Stăncescu, Simion Florea Marian, Arthur and Albert Schott, Ion Pop-Reteganul, I.G.Sbiera.

Keywords: gypsy, identity, image, imaginary, collective mentality

Introduction

The Romanian mental collective offers to the gypsy, as character of fairytales, anecdotes, stories, superstitions and sayings, a not in the least negligible place, in the popular creations that were elaborated throughout the centuries by the ethnicities inhabiting this existential space (Jews, Gypsies, Serbs, Huțuli, Lipoveni, Ukrainians, Polish, Saxons, Szeckelys). The gypsy, either as an auxiliary character, a wrongdoer, still without being invested with attributes of pure demonism, or as a central, ambivalent character, enriches a chapter of the Romanian mythical-folklore.

Moreover, in a later phase, the Romanian myth-genesis includes, besides ogres, Giants, and Blajini, the gypsy and his pair, the gypsy woman, as an evil couple of “mythological, animal-changing characters” (Victor Kernbach: 324).

a. Who are the Gypsies? - a historical approach

Generally known as “nomads”, the gypsies do not have a very precise ethnic origin, most historians and linguists supporting the idea that this must be searched in the distant East, namely in India. Moreover, even folkloric sources reveal that in the 5th century, a. c. the Shangal rajah would have offered them, as musicians, to the king of Persia, Bahram.

It is known that the gypsies have migrated in the middle of the first millennium from India, to countries from the near East, wherefrom they were enslaved by the Tatars, brought throughout their invasion itinerary in the 13th century, and then scattered over the mythical continent, Europe, between the 14th and 16th century. According to Victor Kernbach's opinion, from *The mythical Universe of the Romanian* study (p. 136), “being brought for the first time by the Tatars, the Gypsies have scattered between the Russian steppes and Spain. Blacksmiths and farriers of the Tatars, they kept after that, in freedom, the skill in minor smithery, and they practiced other manual crafts, from wheel righting and spoons-making to soldering, copper-making, gold-processing and coarse silver-processing; some of the gypsies were bear-tamers; one of the four branches, the tribal “nobility”, have offered them as fiddlers to the countries of transit. However, the main job of the gypsies was theft and robbery, from

them being recruited, in more medieval countries, the executioners (the Romanian word itself is of gypsy origin: *kalo*). And if the elite profession is music, it is but a pragmatic music, of childish structure or inferiorly elegiac tone.”

The groups of gypsies that have renounced, partially or totally, the nomadic lifestyle, have been assimilated by the races in whose environment they settled and even formally embraced their religion (catholic Christianity, orthodox, Islamism, etc.). Nevertheless, most of them preferred remaining nomads as a form of freedom and lack of constraint, be it social or even religious. In this sense, Mihail Kogalniceanu, who was interested, during the 19th century, in the problems of the gypsies and studies their spiritual structure, asserts: “The gypsies do not acknowledge any religion; they are fetishists, in the sense that they worship a certain cult of whatever is helpful to them, for example: their tents, their wagons, bellows; like the Turks, they believe in fatality; in Europe, in the Christian countries, they pretend to follow Jesus’ laws; in Turkey they are Mohammedans and if a Kingdom of Judea would exist, they would be the sectarians of Moses. In Moldavia and Wallachia they ask the orthodox priests to baptize their children; but not because of religious reasons, but because of Don Basilio’s irresistible argument, because of the money they receive from the godfather and the godmother. This explains why they baptize the same child not once, but nine or ten times, in all the corners of the country; it is not rare the case in which a twenty year old gypsy comes to ask you to be his godfather” (Apud. Victor Kernbach: 138).

The uncertainty in respect to the ethnic-historical dimension, their strange character, inclined to *dolce far niente* and the habit of stealing goods from other people, which has become a „virtue”, represent defining features, emphasized by Dimitrie Cantemir (1973: 214) in the *Descriptio Moldaviae* monograph, written at the request of the Academy of Berlin at the beginning of the 18th century: „The Gypsies are spread throughout all the country; there is almost no nobleman that has not have many families of gypsies in his command. Wherefrom and when did this folk come in Moldavia, even they do not know and neither our chronicles remember. They have a language that is the same to all the gypsies from these parts, mixed with a lot of clearly Greek words and even Persian. Besides smithery and gold-processing, they do not have other crafts. They have the same temper and the same manners like those from other parts: their supreme virtue and their fundamental characteristic are theft and sloth.”

Their language, seemingly originating in central India, is auto-termed *romany* and, like it happened in the case of all the nomad races, it borrowed elements from the vocabulary of the cultural spaces they traversed throughout the years; therefore, the linguist Al. Graur (1978: 6) rightfully asserts that „the roads that were traveled by the gypsies can be set from their departure from India thanks to the fact that the nomads have introduced words in their language from all the languages they gradually came in contact.”

Also, it is worth mentioning the fact that the Romanian language has taken a series of terms from the gypsy language, like „barosan”= rich, „benga”=the devil, „a ciordi”=to steal, „mișto”=beautiful, puradăi=children, and words whose signification has a direct link with a characteristic of this minority group, the term „călău” being relevant here. In this regards, Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (1938: 265) makes the following commentary in the first volume of *Cuvente den bătrâni*: „The *calo* form throws an unexpected light upon this word, dismissing any hypothetical etymology. It is from the start to the end the gypsy *kalo* <black> an epithet they give themselves. Consequently, as fundamental signification, „călău”

<boureau> means <gypsy>, our executioners truly being almost always out of the gypsies. [...] Our ancestors were not capable of imagining that an executioner can be something else than a gypsy, that Varlaam Mitropoli's Homily represents a gypsy beheading Saint John the Baptizer!"

They did not accidentally name themselves *romi/ rromi*, a term meaning „people”. The affinity for this word justifies the desire of overcoming the borders of the marginal, of the differences that have been imposed throughout centuries by the Romanians and by other European nations that considered them slaves and treated them accordingly. In the Romanian space, the emancipation of the gypsies, in 1856, did not imply the gain of political, social and civil rights; moreover, in the Communist period when the 6th and 7th decade forced settling of the groups of nomads occurs, they were again left out. To the great majority, they have always been the Others, those without a country, with an uncertain situation and even without the status of „citizen”.

Given that the term „rom (gypsy)/ rrom” is known only for a couple of decades, we will use the term „gypsy”, introduced by the folk-creators in their creations.

b. The nicknames given to gypsies by the Romanians

During millennia of existence, from remote times up to the present, for the human being in particular and for every nation in general, the close One has always represented a curiosity and generated interrogation marks: Who is Him, the Other? How is He? Is for all that the Other a man like me, like us?

The vision and the attitude towards the human difference had largely remained unchanged. What did not belong to the European space was not considered valuable, receiving the attribute of inferiority. The image of the Other continues to be deteriorated, significant differences nurturing the social, cultural, and spiritual Universe of the human being.

In the face of the great historical nations, with a well-defined socio-economic and cultural dimension, the gypsy has a degraded image, being marginalized and circumscribed to a sphere of contrasts. It is egocentrism that permits every nation to consider itself the best, the most intelligent, and the language it speaks is the most harmonious, in comparison with the others, perceived like a “unarticulated jargon”, like a “hummed speech” (Ion-Aurel Candrea 2001: 171). Besides the “appellation of <mute, stuttering> that the nations give one another, in respect with their language, the nicknames they apply to one another in mockery relates to their physical appearance, their defects, their occupations, their attire, or finally, to their religion and origin”. (*Ibidem*).

Like any others, Romanians also apply nicknames to the other nations and to ethnicities with which they came and still come in contact, according to a general rule, a general symbolic code. The richest sphere of nicknames belongs, undoubtedly, to the gypsy, because, as Ion-Aurel Candrea states (2001: 172), “walking endlessly without a home, poor, without clothes, filthy, sometimes begging, frequently stealing to quench his hunger, the gypsy has always been the object of mockery and swearing of all the nations”. The nicknames that are attributed to the gypsies by the Romanians reveal physical, moral and behavioral characteristics, and also their specific “verbosity”. Thus, relating to the face of the gypsy, whose skin color is more dark, the Romanian nicknames him “cioara” (crow), and from this,

the derivatives “cioroi”, “cioroaica”, “cioropina”, “ciorpandel”, “ciorogac” (the derivatives do not have an English counterpart), etc. For this nickname, which is used through association with the bird whose feathers are black, Simion Florea Marian, in the study *Ornitologia poporană română*, published in Cernăuți in 1883, offers the following explanation: “But most of all, the gypsies are nicknamed with this nickname, because the skin from their cheek is black, like the feathers of the crows, then because of that, because the crows are very insolent and daring, that you ward them off in a direction and they come back on another, so do the gypsies, no matter how much you ward them off, no matter how hard you would try to get rid of them, they always come in your sight and ask you for what not. The Romanians invented lots of anecdotes, a lot of hilarious little stories, in which it is shown that the gypsies don’t even want to utter the name of these birds to avoid nicknaming and mocking themselves.” (pp. 32-33)

The whimsical opinion of some of the leaders of the gypsies according to which they would be of Egyptian descent, made the Romanians nickname them “pharaoh” and “Egyptian”, the first former often being encountered with in stories, fairytales and anecdotes.

From a spiritual point of view, the gypsy is perceived as a bad man, as spiritually black as physically, reason for which he is nicknamed “devil”, “torturer”, “horned”, all these being, in fact, the epithets of the sacred monstrous, of the Devil, transferred to the one that is considered inferior and is being looked at with contempt. Also, with a mocking effect the nickname “haramin” (with the feminine form “aramina”), which means “thief, burglar” and which emphasizes a characteristic of the gypsy that is considered fundamental, according to the mental collective. To this, we can add up “baragladină” and “balaur” (dragon) (the latter being for the musician gypsy). Because they talk a lot, fast, on a high tone, the folk nicknamed them “gaiță” (magpie), “ciocănitoare” (woodpecker), “cârâitoare”, “corcodină”. Moreover, the Romanian has invented nicknames for the gypsy’s children, called “danciu” (which is the proper name that the gypsies prefer), “ciorpandel”, “parpangel”, “puradeu”, “piradeu”, “graur”, “gangur”, “gărgăim”, “gănguraș”, “găngurel”. About the last ones, Simion Florea Marian (1883: 141) states the following: “Because almost all the gypsies, living with the Romanians, are incredibly poor, sometimes having not even a crumb of bread to quench their hunger, which consumes the poor little children, they not only once look pathetic: white as a sheet. The Romanian seeing these gypsy children, poor but merry, he nicknames them *găngurei* or *grăngorei*”.

All these aspects probe, after all, the profusion of the Romanian linguistic imaginary, the processing of the elements that resize its identity in the vast diversity and which helped him understand differences.

c. The gypsy in the Romanian mythical genesis

Living near or with the Romanian, the gypsy’s imaginary has been nurtured, reason why – by no means accidentally, he becomes a significant presence in the Romanian mythical-folklore.

The image of the gypsy, without being a deformed one in a „spectacle” of malice, reflects the ontological coordinate on which the Other is situated. The difference between Me and the Other underlines and enlarges Diversity in the space of the mythical narrative.

Important physiognomic and character-pertaining aspects, defined by the collective mental, are to be found in late folkloric narrative units, after the Christianization of the Romanians and after the arrival of the groups of nomad gypsies in the Carpatho-Danubian-Pontic space. The anonymous narrator tried to explain these features in a mythical scheme. Such a text is the legend entitled *The Gypsies* from the *Creation of Man* chapter of *Romanian Mythology*, gathered by Marcel Olinescu (2001: 128), with the following content: Noah has been the first human to have felt the „business friendship” with the maleficent divinity (The Devil). He also was the first drunk man. One day, exceeding common sense regarding the consumption of the „new wine of the Devil”, he got drunk and fell asleep in an inappropriate position, inappropriate to „a man with grizzled hair”. One of Noah's sons passed through the place where his father was, amused himself and, being a naturally blithe lad, who frequently joked, took a piece of dung, smeared his father's body and then concealed himself in a remote bush, curious of what was going to happen. Through that place immediately passed another son of the old Noah, known as being serious and very respectful towards his father. Seeing his father in that lamentable state, he covered him, and afterwards took some leaves with which he cleaned him and brought a jar of water and washed him. In that moment, the first son comes out of his hiding place and tells his brother that he should have let Noah filthy as he was, so he can laugh at him some more. The serious young lad who washed his parent rebuked his brother for his disrespectful deed and then Noah woke up and asked them why they were quarreling. The serious lad recounted him what happened. Of course, the father was offended and told the guilty: „Your skin become like this, how was the dung with which you have smeared me, and you become a laughingstock, just as you have laughed at me”. Romanians think that from this son has appeared the race of the gypsies, because they „are black and everyone's mockery”. To emphasize the intrinsic link between gypsies and damnable deeds in the history of mankind, the folk creator situates then in any historical time, in any geo-cultural space, because the end of the narrative goes as it follows: „The one that has beaten the nails in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ was also a gypsy. Because of that, all the executioners were made from gypsies.”

From this mythological narrative sequence, we ascertain that, in order to offer a logical explanation (in the logic of the myth, obviously) to the genesis of a race that the rich collective imaginary has tolerated throughout centuries in its own geographical, historical and cultural Universe, this collective reconfigures and resizes a mythical, archetypal character (Noah), enclosing it in the specific existential and behavioral Romanian pattern.

d. The representation of the gypsy in the Romanian folklore

The gypsy is often presented in Romanian fantastic fairytales as invested with "primitive guile" (Victor Kernbach: 324), with the "calling of upstartness" (*Ibidem*), with (sometimes violent) ambition, but also with intelligence. As a central character, he is put in relation with the Christian deity (God), with its followers (Saint Peter, Saint Friday), and also with the sacred monstrous (the Devil). The gypsy proves to be a trickster, the relation between the human being and the cosmic and evil forces being therefore rationalized. As a central character, the gypsy is almost never invested with Făt Frumos (Prince Charming) qualities (by excellence, the hero of the Romanian fairy tales); moreover, he does not pass through the common phases of initiation and does not acknowledge the process of anamnesis. Făt Frumos

is the prototype of ultimate heroism, who fulfills his mission without any hesitation and mistakes; he is the one chosen to restore the equilibrium that has been disturbed in the human universe. The things that he miraculously does “are ideal acts, because their producer is an archetype and these acts do not follow any personal interest” (*Ibidem*: 354). In contrast to this, the gypsy, as a fairytale character, is never an archetype; he only pursues his personal interest and very rarely does his action target the community in which he lives, or the society as a whole. Neither does he have guns or friends to help him, like Făt Frumos, because his existence is not circumscribed to a collective ideal; everything is related to his own individual human universe. A relevant fairytale in relation with these aspects is *The gypsy and the Devil* from Simion Fl. Marian’s anthology, whose content is the following: a blacksmith gypsy goes for wood in the forest, sees a devil tormenting an angel, gets infuriated, beats the devil, and frees the angel. The angel goes to God and tells the story. God, never letting a good deed unpaid, sends an archangel to see what the gypsy desires. He says that he wants three things: a chair on which who sits would not be able to raise but to his command, a bag in which who enters cannot escape only until he takes him out and a pear-tree in which who climbs cannot climb down until he says he can do so. God is forced to give him these three magical things. In short time, the devil that was beaten by the gypsy comes to him seeking revenge. The devil proposes to the gypsy to follow him in Hell to become a powerful man to “roast souls”, and, in return, he will be offered everything he wants. To convince him, the Hell’s emissary gives him money, but the gypsy asks him to come back in a year, because he has to spend the money he received. After a year, when he returns, the devil is invited to sit on the chair from God and he is released only for a sum of money, only to return in a year. The second time, the devil is cunningly determined to climb up in the magical pear-tree and again, the gypsy is given money and obtains another one-year postponement. The third time, the gypsy fakes his agreement to descend in hell and takes with him the bag from God. As the gypsy and the devil set on the road, they reach a wide water, the devil enters the bag. The gypsy returns to his tent, where all gypsies hit the bag with hammers and sledgehammers. “At length, when they saw that it was enough and that the devil will never dare to buy the people with money and take them alive to hell, pretended that they release him from the grapples they rotated him and let him go how many days a year does have”. The kings of hell decide not to receive the gypsy in their space when he dies. After a few years, the gypsy passes away, God doesn’t let him in heaven and the gypsy, with the bag, in which he had grapples and a hammer, starts to walk towards hell, but the gates are closed, thus he is forced to go to God, who, having no idea “what to do and how to get rid of him, he put him, meanwhile, to stay at the gate of heaven”. Standing he there, the Reaper comes to receive the command from God. The gypsy, “as he sees him so withered, ugly and sharp-tongued, so ghastly and horrifying, stops him” and tricks him by telling him that God had asked him to chew all the old trees. Of course, the Reaper breaks his teeth and remains “the toothless Baba-Cloanta”. The second time, he is compelled to chew on the young trees. The third time, because of the gypsy’s negligence, the Reaper reaches God, asking him to make a big pillar, so he can walk on one side and the one who tricked him on the other, afraid that he could “beat him to death”. The Divinity grants his wish. “Since then, when Death separated from the gypsy, and until this day, no man goes in hell like before, but all the people gather together and wait for the *Judgment Day*, because all

the devils, but especially the devil who got beaten, are afraid that the gypsy will enter with other people!”.

We see that, in this fairytale, the space in which the action unfolds is not a mythical one, inhabited by fantastic creatures, but one that is specific to the popular Christianity, inhabited by demons (hell), angels and archangels (heaven). The popular imaginary envisions in its narratives the gypsy as brave, clever, kind (saves the angel), capable of noble deeds (hates Death and sends it to chew on trees, thus saving some of his fellows), a genuine trickster, that is able to dominate and even cancel the instruments of the monstrous (the devil) and of the sacred with their monstrous dimension (Death). Moreover, the gypsy’s relation with the sacred is situated on the axiological line of the human, God himself behaving here oddly, taking into consideration his supreme status; he does not impose, but kindly accepts the desires of the human being. The gypsy, although overcoming the obstacles, cancels the devil’s main attribute and opposes him. The gypsy is not presented, like Făt-Frumos, in an heroic dimension, but in an ironic one, because this corresponds with the collective vision. Therefore, the negative, demonic characters with whom he gets in touch (the devil, the Reaper) are rudimentary, the Reaper excelling through caricatural physical attributes. Moreover, the devil and the Reaper do not represent, in this fairytale, anything but a moral allegory presented as an anecdote. The popular mentality attributes to the gypsy, through this deeds, the voyage of the post-mortem soul, but on a more lightened path, a transition place first of all. It is possible that the Romanian thought that only a human being whose qualities are cunning and courage taken to the extremes, without necessarily being a good Christian, could treat God, the devil, and the Reaper “against the grain”.

In a similar thematic register, the fantastic fairytale *God’s godfather*, from Simion Fl. Marian’s same anthology, *Basme populare românești*, has the main focus on the gypsy’s relation to God. This time, the attributes the Romanian people give to the gypsy are more clearly emphasized. Like in the majority of folkloric texts, God is envisioned as traveling on Earth, among people, joined by Saint Peter. They arrive, on a rainy weather, to a tent of gypsies, and during the night, the gypsy woman gives birth to a baby. The gypsy asks God to be his godfather, what God eventually does. Not after too long, the gypsy falls ill and dies. Saint Peter, who was at the gate of heaven, recognizes him and “well-aware that heaven is not for his kind, he eventually opens the gates and lets him in the empire of the sky”. The gypsy, “proud like all the gypsies” goes to God, visits the heaven and then he asks his godfather to let him be “God just for a day”, to see how it’s like to be like him. God accepts that the gypsy take his place for an hour, opens up the sky and tells him to watch carefully what’s happening in the world. The gypsy, gazing attentively, sees a man with a wagon passing through the field where the gypsy had planted barley together with his wife and three children. The stranger, having nothing to feed the horses with, took some of the gypsy’s barley. Seeing this, the gypsy gets mad, takes a sledgehammer and throws it above the man on Earth and killed him. He then tells God what has happened. God rebukes him the foolish deed, his lack of comprehension and sends him to stay in a corner of heaven, “if he needs stay in heaven”. The end is specific, like in the previous fairytale, to the epic of an anecdote: “The gypsy would have probably said more, but God didn’t permit him”. In the narrative space, on a quasi-mythical foundation, the text underlines what is considered to be the gypsy’s fundamental characteristics, like boldness, witless pride, cruelty, impulsiveness, selfishness, all sanctioned

by the anonymous narrator, be it through fine irony (for example, the answer that God gives when he finds out the gypsy's deed: "Well, godson, godson! I saw and I still see thousands and millions of misdeeds daily, worse than what you ever saw, and still I do not kill anyone, and you, after just a couple of minutes, you were in my place and killed a man. If I were so impatient and vengeful for every tiny thing, it would have been a long time since the trace of any man on Earth"). In comparison with *The gypsy and the Devil* fairytale, in this one, the image of God is more similar to that of hierophantic deity, to the mundane-coming transcendence. The inter-human relation between the gypsy and the Romanian is treated here in a mythological frame, God being attributed characteristics of the Romanians', namely kindness, tolerance, capacity of forgiving, proving that every day realities were transformed through metaphor in most of the folk tales.

Described in an analytical manner, incapable of overcoming his condition, even when he benefits of godly help, the gypsy appears as cruel, with a vocation of a tormentor in *Ganul the gypsy*, from the *Basmele românilor* volume, by Ion Pop-Reteganul. The text has as a central character, a gypsy with a wife and six children, who stands out from among the other gypsies, because, without removing the sarcastic tone, the narrator says that this was "with wit". "There can be witty gypsies from time to time, but it goes that all gypsies are slow-minded. And Ganul the gypsy was with mind, I say, how was he not, when he, without a job, without a home, without a guitar, without a table, only with a hut, which wasn't even his, but his godfather's, lived from day to day, but badly did he live". That is why he goes in search of God, to demand an explanation, because he considered Him guilty of his poor existence. On the road, he meets an old man, who, in fact, was God and receives from Him a charmed table (at the pronouncing of certain words, the table would have offered him food and drink). Denoting foolishness and naivety, he loses this magical object that is taken by his godfathers while he was sleeping. The second time, God gives him a horse that, at the pronouncing of other certain words, he would spill money, but the horse is also stolen by the godfathers. The third time, the gypsy receives from God a magic club and with its help, he takes back the table and the horse that were taken from him. With their help, without any effort, he lives in optimal conditions with his family. But one day, Saint Peter and God arrive at Ganu's house. Instead of receiving them nicely, the gypsy bids the club to beat them. They escape with God's intervention, and Peter suggests God should take back all the gifts from the gypsies, because "they are not worthy". God then says: "I thought that giving gifts to the gypsy, I would make a man of him, but I see that I was wrong. A gypsy will never be a good man. From now on, the gypsy will not receive my gifts and he will only remain with the horse, with which he will work as long as he will live. And from that moment on, the gypsy had no longer food, because the table would lose the magical powers, but beating was going as the rain. And from then henceforth, the gypsies are as you see them".

The kind divinity from the beginning of the fairytale, intimidated, according to the popular Christian vision, by the harsh, poor existence of the gypsy, becomes judicial in the end, His manifestation being determined by the violent behavior of the performer. This God belongs to the Romanian cultural space and must not be mistaken, as Victor Kernbach thinks, with Devla "the stupid God, subjected to Benga's cunning – the devil, from the gypsies' rudimentary religion, demonizing by excellence and with blaspheming impulses at the address of the divine creation" (p. 324). In this context, we consider fitting one of Lucian Blaga's

aphorisms (1977: 63), according to which “any institutional religion thinks of God as one of its accomplices”.

The folkloric imaginary has inserted in the space of a tremendous amount of fantastic fairytales, the gypsy and the gypsy-woman, as secondary or episodic character; with a purely evil valence, they prove themselves as wrongdoers, but without reaching the proper “demonism”. For instance, in the fairytales *The flowers’ stout, Ion the Poor* (I.G.Sbiera’s anthology: 2010), the gypsy is the catalyst of the action, his desire of losing the hero, generating missions for the hero who has to bring particular or unique things (monster, the monster’s horse; the saddle of the dragon’s horse or even God has to be brought at a noble’s table), tasks that apparently are impossible of fulfilling, but which become achievable through other people, who mark his coming-of-age.

The gypsy is more rarely introduced as a positive character, as a servant at the court of a king, proving to be a kind man, with a big soul, often the savior of the king’s daughter, wrongfully accused of having become pregnant in the absence of the father, who is gone to war. An example is the fairytale *Nipper Walnut Branch*, from Dumitru Stăncescu’s fairytale collection, in which the gypsy is given the mission to kill the king’s smaller daughter, being impelled to bring back, as evidence of his task’s fulfillment, her eyes and the tip of her tongue. The gypsy, “a reasonable man”, not only does not kill her, the innocent girl whom he loved and “held in his arms since she was little” (sacrificing a lady dog in her place), but accepts, at her entreaty, to fulfill the role of the mediator, in hope that she will be forgiven. The fact that he can go before the king like any other servant, that he is accredited with absolute trust, reveals his socio-economical status, blurring the confines of differentiation. In this popular creation, the gypsy is the representation of the stranger, the Other, accepted and integrated in a traditional community, in which he identifies with its social and cultural dimensions.

The gypsy is the perfect embodiment of sloth, stupidity, vanity, cunningness, naivety, lie, broken promise, and of other vices in anecdotes and in stories: *The gypsy and the pumpkin, The gypsy and Mercureasa, The priestess’ coachman, The gypsy cohort, The gypsy and the cholera, The holy gypsy, The slothful gypsy, The insatiable gypsy, The little gypsies and the pies, The gypsy hunter, The gypsies and the bacons, The gypsies and the shepherds, The gypsy under the tent, The gypsy’s oath, The gypsy and the hive, The gypsy and the sheep, The playful gypsy* – from Simion Florea Marian’s anthology, *The wolf-hunting gypsy, The gypsy, cow stealer, How did the gypsy catch a boar’s sow, What did the first cat happen at the gypsies* – from the volume *Wallachian fairytales* by Arthur and Albert Schott. Still, the Romanian never omitted the emphasis of the cohabitant ethnicity’s qualities, as well. Thus, in the anecdotes *The gypsy’s chisel, The allotment of the gypsies, The tricky gypsy* – from Simion Florea Marian’s anthology, in the center of the epical core, with some comical accents, are intelligence, courage, the lively spirit of the hero – the gypsy.

Therefore, the vision of the Romanian mental collective towards the gypsy ethnicity, which it accepted and integrated in its geo-cultural space, is integrating, rational, without resentments, tolerant, and promotes a spiritual order that defines and evinces the interpersonal community.

e. Conclusions

The image of the gypsy, as it is reflected by the Romanian mental collective in the literary folklore, proves to be very complex, and reveals various identity, moral, and spiritual elements that are specific to an ethnicity that carries with it the stigma of origin for a millennium and a half. Be the gypsy as the fairytale hero's antagonist (although more rarely), ultimately punished in according to the "What goes around, comes around" principle, or as the bad or evil protagonist, he is characterized as being lazy, selfish, coward, with inclinations towards theft, cunning, naive, uninstructed, liar; described in such a manner, he is the subjective reflection, in the mirror of the spirituality, of a race with a mythical lode, of a cultural code specific to the minority group that it represents.

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