МОТИВ РУСАЛКИ В РУМЫНСКОЙ И РУССКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ

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Аннотация: В данной статье рассматривается мотив русалки («водяной девы») в румынской и русской литературе. В результате исследования выявлено, что данный мотив имеет определённую традицию в литературе, отмечается многоликость данного образа в произведениях писателей.

Ключевые слова: мотив, традиция, фантастика, соблазнительность, эротичность, водный, русалка, персонаж, мифология.

THE MERMAID MOTIVE IN THE ROMANIAN AND RUSSIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract: The reason of the woman-fish has a long tradition in the Romanian and Russian art and literature. This motif proves surprisingly loaded meanings and sirens are multifaceted beings interpreted in different ways.

Key words: motif, tradition, fabulous, seductive, erotic, aquatic, mermaid, character, mythology.

The mermaid is one of the most popular characters in the popular mythology mentioned since antiquity in several cultures. According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, the mermaid is "a fabulous creature with the appearance of a woman, with bird legs and wings, later with a fish tail, which, through its songs, lures ships to dangerous places, where they found their death" [2, pp. 993]. The mermaids are first mentioned in ancient Greece by Homer in the poem *Odyssey*, but are not physically described. The episode in which Odysseus resists their song about the mast of the ship is not very widely interpreted: first you will arrive at mermaids, / The sweet song hears them, it does not return home forever..." [3, pp. 125-126]. Thus, Homer's followers circulated various opinions: some authors (Pythagoras, Plato) refer to the magic of mermaid music, which reflects, or even is, the music of spheres. Cicero and the Stoics emphasized the

attractiveness of the knowledge and wisdom promised by the song of the mermaids, and in satirical literature and ancient comedy, mermaids appear as creatures that seduce with worldly pleasures such as erotic ones. We can also mention the legends that describe the unhappiness of the mermaids who participated in musical "competitions" with Orpheus (*Argonautica*) or the Muses and committed suicide by the sadness of defeat. The Latin writer Ovid in *Metamorphoses* proposes a new legend, according to which the mermaids were the companions of Proserpine, transformed by Demeter into human-faced birds, condemned to fly in search of their mistress in Hell. In parallel with the literary tradition, however, various popular variants about mermaids circulated.

The mermaid in the first Christian centuries is seen as a symbol of the dangers of heresy and secular culture, and in the late Middle Ages it illustrates earthly temptations in general, especially those of the body, becoming a symbol of temptation, deadly seduction and represents the demonic part of woman. In the VII-X centuries in the popular tradition, but also in the literary one, the transition is made from mermaid-bird to mermaid-fish, but until the late Middle Ages the two types coexist. The mermaid has several functions: it can represent an image of vice, a zoological curiosity, but at the same time in many peoples it also appears as a being that can protect the house from the forces of evil. "In the traditional imagination, what has been perpetuated from the myth of mermaids is the symbolism of mortal seduction" [1, p. 837].

A study elaborated by Vasile Lovinescu investigates a series of Romanian folk works. Namely, he relates the fact that whenever a pond, a lake or other stagnant water is described, which represents "Raw Material, in its aspect of Potentiality, especially when something is fished or appears on the surface: fish, dragon, fairy, mermaid" [4, 68]. The fairy tales analyzed by the researcher also talk about *lostrita*. He writes about the fact that the fairy tale *Lostrita (mermaid)* was collected in the village of Baia by Nicolae Labiş, who, at the urging of his Romanian language teacher from high school, Vasile Popa, collected folk material. "The fairy tale has the title *Lostrita*. It is the name of a fish from the salmon family, meaning "solomonian" (salmonid - family of predatory fish that includes trout, grayling; solomonian - witchcraft, charm) through the generally adopted symbolism of verbal coincidences. It is found only in the Bistrița river" [4, p. 48].

The character of the fairy tale *Ion Cel Adus de peste Lumi* (the Brought from All Over the World) is a handsome young man, handsome for thirty years. He does not know his parents, because as a child he was brought by the waters of the river to a

tree at the gates of a monastery, where he was raised. In a dream a sawdust appears to him: "When I pulled on the stocking," said Ion, "I froze: a large sawdust, with shiny scales, here and there with precious stones on it, was looking at me with human eyes." he asks the hero to let him go to the pond near the mountain with the crystal waters, because he got lost and Ion, merciful by nature, fulfills his wish, and the little girl tells him how to find his parents. But Ion the Brought from All Over the World does not recognize his parents and unknowingly kills his father, and later marries his mother. In an esoteric interpretation, the tragic story of a woman is quoted, who finds out about sin on Saint Elijah's day and throws herself into the well, turns into a lost woman, and Ion the Brought from All Over the World took his bag, followed the path of exile and disappeared without a trace.

Vasile Voiculescu from professor Vasile Popa also obtained the text of a folk poem, entitled *Lostrîța*, an enchantment of easy making. This song was intended to untie the woman who gave birth to a baby as quickly and better as possible. Birth in ancient times was a rite, and enchantment was enchanted by the midwife during birth. "Once upon a time / A gold dust / Chicata / In salt water / In muddy water / Muddy mud, / Dark water / Surrounded by rocks." The wet and dark lake is the woman's womb, and *lostrîța* (mermaid) means in this song the baby. „But how did he escape / From the salt lake, / With lying waters / The silver polisher, / And our Mary / To escape, to give birth / To show the baby / On clean shores / Alive and healthy / As from Christ". This symbol of the baby litter is original in Romanian folklore, but in such a way it is not approached in a literary work.

In Romanian mythology, *Știma Apei* also appears - a primitive divinity of fresh waters, on whose benevolence the aquatic stability depends - it can cause both large floods and drought. Named in Bucovina "*Femeia Gârlei*", and in the Apuseni Mountains "*Vâlva Apei*", she can look like a woman with long hair and seductive eyes, who attracts young men to drown them. In the cult literature, representations of the water storm are found in the creations of Mihail Sadoveanu (Lake Fairy), Cezar Petrescu (Aranca, the lake storm). The same aquatic fascination is found in *Lostrîța* by Vasile Voiculescu, a fantastic story in which ancestral folk beliefs about the unnatural forces scattered in the world are narrative transfigured, thus formulating a warning about the serious consequences to which the one who is exposed, it is tempted to aspire to the absolute, the absolute symbol being, here, the lost.

Lostrîța - predatory fish, similar to trout, with a long, almost cylindrical body, with a large mouth and strong teeth, which lives in mountain rivers. Voiculescu's character has a "sleepy head", "a squirrel's body", "golden mottled skin, with red-rust

berries, like trout" - the chromatic journey with iridescence gives the description charm. The oyster appeared three times as big, sometimes on the sand on the beach it looked like "a young lady lying in the sun on the golden sandy beach", to deceive and seduce. She can be inserted among demonic women: the attraction and eroticism emanating from this woman-fish takes the minds of the young man from the story of the Romanian writer. "The enchanted lottery has seduced many people. Skilled fishermen laid nets for her, but they fell into the nets of the enchantress, to go to the bottom forever.

Lostrita is presented by the author from the beginning as a fantastic character, being the fish woman, "a cunning scammer, a trap set for ignorant lads, to drown them", "damn fish", a symbol of deadly seduction. According to the literary critic Ion Rotaru, Vasile Voiculescu's originality, in *Lostrita*, lies first in the fact that the "beautiful" is a charming little fish that the hero, the young man Aliman (the name has a fairytale and ballad resonance), fell in love with death and this unnatural love seems to have been fatal to him" [5, pp. 379-380]. In turn, Aliman is also a solomonar, he knows magical practices through which fish are caught, but he fails to catch the lizard - the queen of fish. He is a handsome, energetic young man, with an unlimited will, daring, aspiring to know the secrets of elementary nature with strange appearances. The young man aims to catch the beautiful lizard, but he falls ill with love at the sight and touch of the chimera.

Aliman asks an old wizard to help him catch the lizard in exchange for renouncing God's world. After making a pact with the devil (the old wizard), Aliman saves a beautiful girl from the waters of Bistrita, but the ambiguity is more and more obvious: it would never have been wet. They also noticed that his hair was disheveled on his shoulders like strands of bald hair spread on a white sheepfold. The eyes, of golden green amber with blue hedgehogs, were large, round, but cold as glass. And the teeth, (...) white, but sharp as beasts". The appearance of the real loser on the occasion of a flood, the faces being saved by the lad who takes her to his house, where they live for a time as two happy fiancés, we do not know "whether it happens or in a dream, in the dream of the hero. Although the descriptions and, more generally, the narrative structure of the short story are kept within the limits of the real"

[p. 380]. Aliman lives happily with the girl until he thinks of marriage and mentions the church. Ilena-lostrita's mother, Bistriceanca, takes her daughter and leaves for another realm. The young man then looks for her coldly but does not find her. Later, Aliman, apparently healed by his love for the lost, marries a girl from his world, but

on the night of the wedding the lost appears (a boy had seen her on the bank of the Bistrita "out on the harbor below the coast of Hell") and the groom, forgetting all, leaving in the payment of the Lord the earthly bride and the bridegroom, he throws himself into the waves and disappears swallowed by the abyss together with the ghost of his unnatural love.

The myth of the mermaid has been updated in the Romanian literature and in *Aranca*, the esteem of the lakes by Cezar Petrescu, but his work lacks the disturbing meanings, which emerge from Vasile Voiculescu's story.

The mermaid is also one of the most popular mythological characters in Russian literature, being represented in the creation of Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Nicolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Anton Chekhov, Ana Ahmatova, Alexander Blok, etc. In Russian folklore the mermaid (*rusalka*) is the spirit or power of the unclean. She lures passers-by or fishermen with her charming laughter or scares them with her loud laughter. The Russian people, endowed with one of the specific features of the Slavs, namely the predominance of feeling over reason, combined with their own inclination towards mysticism, shaped the image of the Russian from their confrontation with the aquatic element.

Thus, the environment in which the *rusalka* (mermaid) is represented is an aquatic one, being often depicted in water swimming (Mikhail Lermontov), bathing, washing his clothes, or on the water's edge, combing his golden or green hair on a stone. The activities in which the Russian is caught superimpose the unreal plane over the real one, the human one over the spiritual one, erasing the boundaries between the two perceptions. Thus, these spirits can be easily confused with real characters, and therefore any attestations become uncertain, which only deepens the atmosphere of mystery, generated precisely by this visual uncertainty. *Rusalka* occupies a border position, at the boundary between the spirits of water, forest and air; she can be seen rocking in the trees (Alexander Pushkin), stealing mothers' children, attacking pregnant women or causing nightmares (Ivan Turgenev).

In the middle of the 19th century, Ivan Turgenev wrote the cycle *Stories of a Hunter* in which he addresses the fate of the Russian peasant. Turgenev's narrator's attention is always directed to the people, to those who accompany him or whom he meets on his long walks. Whether he spends the night in the attic of a haunted mill, is caught in the rain in an unknown forest, guards horses with the children of peasants, he uses every opportunity to reveal stories of incredible characters.

In *Lunca Biejei* („Бежин луг”), part of the collection, from the beginning of the story we notice a dichotomous oscillation between known and unknown, real and

imaginary that establishes the inherent presence of the fantastic. The description of nature prepares the stories of an unprecedented fantasy of the five boys: Fedia, Pavluşa, Iliuşa, Kostea and Vania. It is evening and in the light of the fire, frightening stories unfold in which the spirit of the house (domovoi), the mermaid, the unclean, the dead appear.

Kostea's story, the one with the sad and thinking look, does not leave the fantastic, but it is on the way to enter a neighboring genre, either strange or miraculous. It invokes the appearance of a mermaid, again at night, the nocturnal being tributary to the fantastic because it gives rise to dreams, fears and conspiracies. However, the experience is lived indirectly, being retold, Kostea not being the hero of the story he relates, this somewhat betraying the reader's trust but increasing that of the characters, who again do not question the veracity of the events narrated. The boy tells about Gavrilă-the carpenter who is always grumpy and doesn't talk to anyone because of a mermaid. Gavrilă went to the forest to pick hazelnuts, but she got lost. He walked a long way until nightfall and stopped under a tree, where he fell asleep: "And as he slept, only he heard someone shouting at him. Open your eyes - no one. She falls asleep again - shouts at him again. He looked there, he looked here - when there, right in front of him, on a branch, a rusalka: he swayed there and called him to her and he burst out laughing, laughing that he could no longer... And that was it a month, boys, if they all looked as if in the middle of the day... And Gavrilă-the carpenter had frozen in fear, and she kept laughing and calling him to her like that, with her hand... And Gavrilă, my brothers, was ready to go and God listened to him and made his cross" [6, p. 103]. That's how the hero was saved, but something has been grinding him ever since and he's still angry. He does not find peace, as Aliman from Vasile Voiculescu's story *Lostrîţa* is also restless.

The character of the mermaid is created based on Russian folklore, the author recounting an unusual, sensational motif - the unclean spirit. The unstable composition of this evil spirit has many correspondences in people's minds: Turgenev's rusalka is the type of demonic woman like the *lostrîţa* in Vasile Voiculescu's work.

The motif of the woman-fish has a long tradition in Romanian and Russian art and literature. This motif proves to be surprisingly loaded with meanings, and mermaids are plurivalent beings, interpreted in different ways.

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