CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ROLE, IMPACT AND MAGNITUDE OF THE DISENCHANTMENT IN THE TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN VILLAGE. STUDY CASE: SLOBOZIA COMMUNE, ARGEŞ COUNTY

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Abstract

The article brings forth the practice of disenchantments, used since ancient times, as a magical therapeutic practice for the treatment of various diseases. The article is based on a field research conducted in the rural area in the commune of Slobozia, Arges County. The first part of the article creates an incursion through literature, referring to the major themes around which the whole text was revolving: ethnomedicine; charm; the role and impact of the discovery in the contemporary Romanian village; reasons and causes that call upon magic therapies. In the second part of the paper I presented the ethnographic data obtained from the field research, through which I highlighted the amplitude of the disenchantment in the analysed environment, the frequency with which people resort to this practice and the main types of disenchantments. All of this emphasizes how important magic therapies are on the social scale, as well as the changes they have made in the last period of time. The need of those who call upon a disenchantment intertwines with the need of those who practice it, giving rise to a real marketplace of magical therapies that meet the needs of society.
Key words: magical therapeutic practices, ethnomedicine, disenchantment, the disenchantments market

Introduction

Specialty literature and history, as well, accent that magic has existed and has always been a part of people's lives. From its presence in the fulfilment of superstitions, which underlie important life events, to its involvement in the treatment of conditions and the solving of problems related to the spiritual side. Against odds, magic has managed to survive retaliations that took place throughout 15-18 centuries. Magical therapeutic practices didn't disappear completely in a world that defines herself as being technical and rational, but reinvented themselves (quote) and come back strong in multiple forms: astrology, healing practices, charms rituals and disenchantments, activities in various sects, dark liturgies, Satanism practiced quietly in the big cities etc.

On the Romanian territory, magic made its presence known through different forms, environments and eras. In Romanian specialty literature there have been a lot written about disenchantment used by the Romanian peasant, but there was not much highlighted about the meaning, signification and about its efficiency. Most of the writings are booklets that contain the description of the disenchantment, the folklorists (Tudor Pamfile (1999), S.F. Marian (1999) etc.) reducing the importance of studying them to a simple presentation and description, without any critical or detailed analysis from some essential or paradigm

elements' perspective. The importance of the article consists not only in justifying an idea, but pointing out functionally and relationally a field of significations constituted by analyses and the outlining of the empirical truth behind it. Secondly, by presenting the role and frequency with which the disenchantment is used, the article brings forward a very important proof of the ways rural people manage life and survival in various conditions, highlighting an important and surprising truth which lies behind the Romanian village after decades of modernization. Last but not least, it is of particular importance, as it brings back to mind the subject of magic, which seems to have grown lately in contemporary society, through the many practices that make its presence felt in society in various forms.

Analysing the disenchantment on a village level, the article highlights the impact that the phenomenon brings, the kinds of protagonists and recipients who call upon and practice disenchantment, the frequency with which people call upon this practice, the main types of disenchantments, the high rise that the phenomenon has had socially speaking, the last part of it draws attention the transformations and changes that this practice has been through throughout time, directly correlated with the role that the society has had in its transformation. The article follows the impact on people's existence, the phenomenon that is magic, phenomenon that ascended in the last time period in the Romanian society, in the urban and the rural environment, creating this way a true disenchantment and magical phenomenon market. The purpose of the article is purely anthropological, attempting an acceptable explanation for how this practice works, the main questions that guided the research being following: *What is the magnitude that the phenomenon of the disenchantment has got in the Romanian society now? What is the frequency with which people call out for this practice? What are the reasons people call out for this practice? What role has the disenchantment got in the Romanian society? How many types of disenchantments are presently at the traditional village level?*

Methodology

The research took place in Slobozia commune, Arges County and was based on an ethnographic approach. As alternative methods of research I have use the semi-structured interview, participative observation and the questionnaire. I have interviewed people who practice magical practices (protagonists) and people who appeal to these practices (recipients). There were 5 interviews with 5 village disenchantment makers and 8 interviews with magicians, six females and two males. The age of the disenchantment makers was ranged between 40-76 years old, and the ages of the recipients was ranged between 40-76 years old. The obtained information from applying quality methods has been completed by the information obtained within a quantitative method, the questionnaire. A phenomena demographic was created through the use of the questionnaire, surprising the magnitude of the practice at the level of the locality, the radiography of the most frequent disenchantments in the area, but also a portrait of the recipient of these practices, obtained by analysing the socio-demographic data. 100 questionnaires have been filled in by individuals aged between 18-80 years of age, 61 females and 39 males. We used a sampling quota with the purpose of gaining both quantitative and qualitative data, taking into account the available data on the age range provided by the local council. I haven't taken into account a statistical step when selecting people and from each household, one participant has been selected who according

to the sampling, fit in the age range. To keep people anonymous, in the following qoutings we will only use their initials.

Ethnomedicine. Theoretical distinctions

Magical therapeutic practices used in traditional environments lead to highlighting what we call "ethnomedicine" today. Ethnomedicine is an anthropological branch that studies concepts like health and diseases, but also healing practices and social assistance from various areas of cultural traditions (Kripper S.apud. Williams, 2006: 216). The word has been defined by most researchers to designate health-related beliefs and practices in traditional societies, especially indigenous, being synonymous with traditional medicine or primitive medicine (Sobo, 2010:114). From Maria Sitaru's paper, „Linguistic Ethnomedicine" (1999- „Etnomedicina lingvistica") that studies ethnomedicine from a linguistic point of view, you can find out that the expression used to describe therapeutic practices on the Romanian territory are extremely diverse. To designate these kinds of therapeutic practices the following words have been used: "people's medicine", "the old women's medicine", "household medicine", "popularized cultured medicine" (the first generation of doctors), "traditional medicine" (Sitaru, 1999:27). The word ethnomedicine is used less in the works of Romanian authors, on the Romanian territory the word ethno history being used for the designation of the traditional medical practices (Sitaru, 1999:30). Berdan, in Aurel Candrea's book "Folclorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică" ("Compared Romanian medical folklore. General outlook. Magical medicine") (1999) introduction, states that in modern times a new discipline called "ethno history" started showing up and it aims to study the field of home remedies (Berdan in Candrea, p.8, 1999, introductive study). In other words the idea of home remedies has been replaced with the one of ethno history. The word comes from two Greek words "ethnos"=people and "iatros"=quack (impostor). Romulus Vulcănescu defines ethno history as an ethnological discipline that aims towards "knowing and explaining forms of culture and civilization through traditions, manners, practices and uses of home remedies" (Vulcănescu, 1979: 112).

Specialty studies show that ethnomedicine has two main goals. The first one is analysing theories and knowledge regarding health in a certain cultural area that people inherit and learn their whole life, and the second one is trying to highlight and understand globally, medical knowledge from many cultural areas (Quinlan in Merril, Erickson, 2011:382). Trying to accent the characteristics of practices studied by ethnomedicine, O'Connor and Hufford (in Brady, 2001), emphasize two of their main characteristics. On one hand, the unofficial nature (Yoder apud. O'Connor, Hufford cit.source), representing "a subset of healing practices and beliefs that are different from the main current and aren't affected by modern knowledge", on the other hand, the oral nature, based on orally transmitting from one generation to another in contrast to scientific medicine's printed sources (p.14).

From various authors' works (Quinlan (2011), Williams (2006)) we can deduct that ethnomedicine is a "multi-disciplinary complex, a system based on plants, spirituality and natural environment" (Lowe H, Payne-Jackson A, Beckstrom-Sternberg, Duke apud. Williams, 2006: 215). Several components are distinguished in the practices they study,

theorists often differentiating "rational" from "irrational" elements. On one hand we can distinguish purely empirical, herbal, magico-mythical and religious products that also contain magical acts, incantations, such as disenchantments or some magic word formulas (Sitaru, cit.source:36). The two domain components can be separated, but most of the times, they merge inside the same practice. Pavelescu in one of the studies (1998) where he was researching magical practices on the Romanian territory states that traditional therapeutic practices are a combination between empirical medicine and magic, in which where you can barely distinguish one's element from the others (p.37). On the Romanian territory the two practices would be often distinguished. In this way, we exemplify Aurel Candrea's work "Folclorul medical român comparat. Privire generală. Medicina magică" ("Compared Romanian medical folklore. General outlook. Magical medicine") (1999) where the author shows the difference between the two components and splits his study into empirical medicine that includes empirical practices and black magic that includes magical therapeutic practices.

Throughout millenniums therapeutic practices within ethnomedicine have been used and encountered as healing practices, mainly with indigenous people, as the definition shows, in archaic tribes and non-industrialized societies. These treatment forms are sometimes the only way of medical assistance available for the rural population. Anthropological studies show us that traditional healers (shamans, quacks) are the main medical assistance providers in forest areas and tribes. Branislow Malinowski's studies (1993) on Melanesians tribes are proof of this kind of medical assistance. His works provide us exact examples of therapeutic practices done by shamans and quacks. Also, Claude Levi-Strauss's writings on the studied tribes confirm the beforehand statement. As I mention in the introduction, the famous paper "Antropologie structurală" (1978) (Structural anthropology) presents numerous situations where the tribe's shaman is a real help for the tribal population. According to the World's Health Organization, 70-80% of the today's Africans depend totally or partially on traditional medical practices, and in some other Asian countries 80% of the population depend on traditional medication from primary medical assistance (Torri, Hermann, 2011).

Ethnomedical systems enclosed by traditional societies have been placed in the archaic times, their presence being considered evidence of a regressive turn to "dark" periods of humanity, evolutionary interpretations defining these healing practices as "irrational" and "unrealistic". Therapeutic practices specific to traditional societies have long been the subject of research for folklorists and ethnologists (concerned to gather as many as possible of such practices), doctors who have vehemently opposed the existence of medical practices within each culture, on the grounds that they are harmful, giving greater importance to scientific medicine (Sitaru, 1999). The importance of these practices, especially the spiritual and magical ones, that have had the lowest scientific validation has been debated for the longest time, especially by doctors and ethno graph doctors, their utility and importance being based on autosuggestion, placebo effect, energy transfer (Torri, Herman, 2011). Since the emergence of a discipline to study these practices, scientific research has made important contributions to understanding traditional medical practices and knowledge, research to study these practices growing heavily in the last decade (Williams, 2006).

Studies (Torri (2010), Iwu (2002), Grigorescu and Silva, (1997), Williams (2006)) show that for the past three decades an interest reborn towards these medical practices, a part of it being recognized as valid forms of medical assistance, in the industrialized countries and the ones emerging. The practices used in ethnomedicine, especially the ones that refer to the spiritual component start to expand in some institutions in the USA. Williams states that at the moment the ethno medical practices are "part of a faith system which transcends class, ethnicity and religious belief", in North America, Europe and the Caribbean, the traditional aspect of the social assistance expanding to all social classes without only being limited to the poor (Lowe H, Payne-Jackson A, Beckstrom-Sternberg SM, Duke J., apud. Williams, 2006:216). From a study made by Sobo E. and Loustaunau M. (2010) we find out that the causes for why people call upon these practices is the lack of financial resources for a medical consult. (high transportation costs for those living in remote areas often cover the cost of a medical check-up), people's denial to call upon these practices, and also the disbelief in official health systems (there are numerous cases where doctors don't agree on a certain drug or prescribed treatment) (p.116-117).

Disenchantment. Theoretical approaches

Malinowski (1993) affirms that the magical therapeutic practices' mutual element is disenchantment, for native people the ritual always being focused on enunciating the disenchantment (p.116). The fascination which the disenchantment has brought to the researchers in modern times has materialized on the Romanian territory in some reference papers, important from the perspective of the analysis itself, of defining and highlighting the way of functioning, as well as by revealing their origin. This way, Aurel Candrea concluded that disenchantment is part of a very old tradition of mankind, and this is certified by the first cultural documents of the ancient Antiquity, beginning with the Chaldean, Asiro-Babylonian and Egyptian civilizations. We find out about the old character of disenchantments in Platon's writings, where he tells Charmides that out of all practices done by Zamolxe's priests the most powerful is the disenchantment's (Planton apud. Oişteanu, 2004:279). Radu Rautu (1998) states that in its origins the disenchantment is a song turned into a word. As some foreign practices intensified, disenchantment has become an oral formula, most of the times versified, that sits in the notion of spell sphere (Slavic) or charm (Greek) and literary speaking it's being recited and not sung. (p.14).

From Rautu's paper introduction "Antologia descântecelor populare româneşti" ("The traditional Romanian disenchantment anthology"), we find out that the first disenchantments appear in priest's Grigore from Măhaciu manuscript, where two disenchantments are translated in Romanian right next to a Slavonic one (Răutu, 1998:5). The author also tells us that inscriptions about the disenchantments' existence have appeared even after these discoveries, but the first massive collection of Romanian disenchantments is made by S.F.Marian în 1886, "Descântece poporane române" ("Romanians' disenchantments") followed by the one in 1893, "Vrăji, farmece şi desfaceri" ("Spells, charms and 'un-tying'"), both papers representing a massive collection of books of disenchantments, spells, charms. The number of books and studies about disenchantments start going high after the 1900s, when comparative studies start to show up regarding disenchantments in different parts of the country.

From various authors' writings, we acknowledge that on the Romanian territory to determine the name of the disenchantment we use various labels, but mostly this labels the notion of the action without the song (Răutu, 1998:15). Pavelescu gives an affirmation that in Apuseni Mountains for the disenchantments' name they give out the names "a cota" and "a cotatui". On the same note, Gorovoi claims that there is no such thing as the word disenchantment on the Romanian territory, people that disenchant having all sorts of names, like: old lady, woman who practices favomancy, healer-woman, midwife or witch, men that practiced disenchantment being called "solomonar", wizards or charmers" (Gorovoi,1990:29).

Malinowski defines disenchantment as "that part of magic that is occult, transmitted through magical affiliation, known only by the practitioner". Later on than Malinowski, Eliade considers that the disenchantment is an enchantment which the man can execute and that has been executed by the members of the individual village community (Eliade apud, Rutu, cit.source, 9). Compared to Malinowski, Eliade's definition presents a more human reality that underlies the disenchantment made on the Romanian territory, a practice that be done by the members of a village without them being able to fulfil many restrictions. S.F. Marian (1999), in his classification of magical acts, stated that "the disenchantments are about to return, the main purpose being relieving and healing the various bodily diseases from which not only people suffer, but domestic animals also" (p.7). From these definitions, we find out that, unlike other magical acts (spells and charms), it is a magical practice made by the members of a community, the disenchantment being primarily a medical act with a therapeutic effect that be used for men and animals.

Various controversies have existed over periods of time with regard to the definition of the disenchantment and disenchanting. Artur Gorovoi considers that by disenchantment you mean "the sum of the words the wizard or the charmer, who makes the cure, the spell or the charm, from where they await a result, previously determined" (Gorovoi, cit.source:129). Pavelescu (1998) states that "by disenchantment we mean not only the number of verses that are spoken by a person and repeated at a certain moment, but also the gestures, mimics, the objects used in the same action, the substances / drinks which have the purpose of curing a disease, that's how a true magical ritual is formed "(p.80). The specialty literature shows that disenchanting encompasses both the disenchantment (verbal formula), and the manual ritual as a complementary act, which contains certain rules for accomplishing the ritual: the time in which it is being disenchanted, the objects with which it disenchants, special purity conditions, which must be fulfilled by the disenchanter, conditions of repetition of the act of the disenchantment etc. (Răutu, cit.source, 13). We can conclude that the phenomenon of disenchanting means both the text (legomen) and the magical act (dromenon) which taken together form a complex ritual for the good functioning of which several element are used (Olteanu, cit.source:279). As in the rites it is difficult to achieve a classification of their importance and within the disenchantment it is difficult to say which element is of greater importance, forasmuch as according to theoreticians, the merging of all elements accredits its effectiveness. However, the generative conception affirms that "the oral formula recommends itself by its very quality to determine directly one result or another" (Răutu, cit.source, 13).

Pavelescu and other ethnographers (Candrea (1998),Gorovoi (1990), Răutu (1998), Laugier ([192-]) tell us there is no single option of the same disenchantment, them being different from person to person, region to region, and moreover there are different ways of interpreting the same disenchantment by a single person, Pavelescu classifying them as inter-individual disenchantments (different from person to person) and intra-individual disenchantments (the same disenchantment told differently by the same person) (Pavelescu, 1998:43).

The extent of the disenchantment on village level, the performers and the recipients
   1.1. The magnitude of the phenomenon and its recipients
   The rural environment in which we have researched is a space on the border between traditional and modern. On one hand, it has undergone a modernization process by improving the lifestyle of the inhabitants, on the other hand it is stuck with the same old traditions and customs. Lately, on different points of view, the lifestyle of the inhabitants has improved, both because of the investments made by local authorities and by the improvements that have been made on a household level by those integrated in the emigration process.

   But yet it is still a space that lacks modern infrastructure and medical services locally. There is only one medical office, but found in a deplorable state. Although there is a medical office there is no daily medical facility in the locality, but only three days a week: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. The nearest office is 20 km away in a nearby village and the most populated town with a hospital, 50 km away. "What should I do in these circumstances?" the same informant as mentioned above rhetorically asks *"it's not like I am waiting to die until she comes, I'll just treat myself how I know, with what I know (...), tea, pills and wait for it to pass"* (I.B., 45 years old). In the absence of a physician to provide their help, residents resort to alternative practices, such as those in the professional sector. However, there is another factor that, in our opinion, prevents the villager's call upon the doctor. This is about the lack of financial resources to pay for quality medical services. *"And after all, what would I bring? If I have nothing, I have no money! Back in my day, you could bring cheese, milk, eggs, what we had lying around. Now it doesn't work anymore, now money, money has the power. That's how it is with the ones in the city, from Pitesti, if you don't give them money, they don't even look at you. Doctors, the hospital, they're not for us, they're for the ones with money"* (I.A, 35 years old). We can infer that the doctor and the medical services are seen as a "good" only to those who have a better financial situation, "those with money". The services offered by a doctor require time, money, but also his permanent presence in the local area. The lack of money, as well as the lack of a permanent doctor in the locality, are the main factors that lead people to resort to magical therapies. But there is also the mentality of some people and the way they have become accustomed to treating themselves within the family *"And eventually, even if I don't go, I let it pass, I drink some tea, and I put my feet in hot water when I'm cold, somebody's disenchants when my head hurts. You hear one or another that this or that hurts, and that's it, they go to the hospital. Well, that's why you're sick! I tell him. It's because you got so many chemicals in you!"* (E.A., 45 years old.).

   The reality is also demonstrated by the results from the beforehand mentioned questionnaire, in which only 7% of the respondents go to see a doctor the moment they have

health issues. I specify that the health problems have been headaches, stomach aches, especially health problems that are not very serious. In the first stage, the healing process takes place within the family's household, 38% of the people treating themselves with drugs and 29% being treated with grandparents' home remedies. In the second case, there are included elements of natural medicine, in which the empirical side has a large share, such as teas and syrup recipes, learned from their grandparents, including plants and insects as well as therapeutic practices that contain magical elements within them, such as disenchantments and ritual practices loaded with magic. There are two levels of intensity where magical practices are found in the village. On one hand, magical therapeutic practices made by the family, by the elderly, on the other hand the magical therapeutic practices made by people specialized in the secrets of disenchantments (the field that is found in the research).

As a therapeutic practice, the disenchantment is spread locally. The results obtained from the questionnaire aiming at the practices' radiography in the investigated environment, as well as the frequency, revealed that people resort in equal proportions both to the practices used in allopathic medicine and to the magical therapeutic practices, 45% of those questioned go to a specialist or use drugs when they have various illnesses, 29% resort to drinks and recipes known from the elderly and 23% resorting to magical practices (disenchantment). 23% of the respondents said that when they have health problems, they first go to a person who can give advice and disenchant. The everyday world of the village is much more rooted in these kinds of practices than you would believe. The call upon this practice is made regardless of the age of the respondents, the elderly, but also the young people, who are the recipients of this practice, 75% of the respondents stated they went to a disenchanter for medical reasons, and 36% saw witches to be medically disenchanted. The phenomenon is more prevalent among the elderly, more than 50 years of age, 59% of them went to meet disenchanters and 70% witches, as opposed to 41% and 30% for those under 50 years of age. Of those under the age of 50, respondents' ages between 18 and 25 went in a smaller rate to see disenchanters. From the point of view of the gender of those who use these practices, the frequency is higher among women. 69.9% for women went to see a disenchanter, 80.5% to witches, as opposed to 30.9% of men going to disenchanters and 19.4 to witches. Women go both for their own purposes and for their own husbands "the times I went for my own (n. n. the husband of the respondent) and he didn't even know" an informant tells us (I.T, 60 years old).

The percentages from the questionnaire also revealed the efficiency of the disenchantment, 61% of those who turned to medical disenchantment, claim that their symptoms have disappeared after being disenchanted by a disenchanter, and 29% of respondents said theirs disappeared after a disenchantment done by a witch. The efficiency of the disenchantment as well as the fact that it is a frequently used practice, is also highlighted by the high degree of confidence of the villagers. A percentage of 76% of respondents trust this practice, where 26% very much and 38% a lot. The degree of trust is higher among the elderly, 63.1% of those aged over 50 believe in this practice, compared to those under 50 where only 36.8% said they trust this practice. In other news women have more confidence 72.35%, compared with 27.63% for men. As far as I can observe from the interviews, but also from the interaction with the subjects, the disenchantment and the call upon this practice is more widespread within the families where there is an older person who

knows how to disenchant or even if does not know it in the name of the ill calls upon this practice. From the observations, we can say that it is more likely that children are being disenchanted. Through the questionnaire, we have tried to measure the respondents' awareness of this practice. From a list of 15 disenchantments presented to the respondents (the most practiced locally, as identified), over 50% of the respondents have heard of each existent disenchantment.

Locally, disenchantment is seen as a therapeutic practice that the inhabitants need. In the absence of a permanent doctor in the village or a nearby hospital, but there are cases where some diseases in the traditionally speaking, that can only be treated through disenchantments, the help of a doctor being ineffective- such as spell-borne diseases, like "evil eye"- the disenchantment and also the performer are seen as the only treatment *"you need this too, like I said before there are diseases that cannot be treated with drugs, like those ones where somebody treats you bad. If you receive the evil or have another spell-borne disease even the doctor sends you to the elderly"* (F.P., 76 years old). In both cases, in urgent cases, people ultimately resort to them with the greatest confidence *"Oh, Marin, I'll give you anything, just heal my child!* (M.N, 57 years old), the epilepsy disenchanter's daughter would relate about people's attitude when they would come to her father. Another informant, telling us about his mother, said "There was once a man who had sick children and said *"Oh, Florica, if you heal my two children, I will even give you my house"* (F.C. 50 years old). Most of the time, the healing act is a whole adventure for the ill, but also an act of initiations in the secrets of disenchantments *"I would go every night to this one in front of my house* (n.n the neighbour that lived opposite of her), she passed away now, with my baby to have him disenchanted. She had a really bad dog, I would go with my husband, and he would hold the dog and I would go in with the child. She wouldn't let me inside, she would keep me outside in the cold with the child. Often, she wouldn't want to disenchant because she had an argument with my mother-in-law, she wouldn't hold grudges against me, but, eh, that hatred and I would say: - hey, come on now, Florica, disenchant my baby because she is dying, she has an aching stomach! She didn't want to disenchant because it was also late in the night. On many nights she wouldn't even come out. And then I said: I will teach myself how to do it, it isn't a big deal. And I paid attention once at what she was saying to her, and that was it, taught myself how to disenchant. I said it once to the baby, she was alright and after that I just disenchanted her myself. Since then I have disenchanted for aches, deochi and I know it a bit for spasm. She knew more disenchantments. She was a disenchanter (F.M., 60 years old). Under these circumstances, the disenchantment was perceived as a necessity, being a real helper in the case of an illness, but also as an element of safety for people, only by the fact that certain people know different disenchantments like the ones for ache and deochi within the family. The reason why, in addition to the professional disenchanters, some women know how to disenchant within the family, and rarely men.

1.2. Performers. The disenchanter and the witch

The practice is also performed by the unspecialised people, people within the family that "stole" some verses from the professional disenchanters or from the ill itself (self-healing). They practice disenchanting as a charity action "I disenchant…because it's good to disenchant. You give to the people! You disenchant your nephews, another woman comes in

with her child" (F.M., 60 years old). But the most effective disenchantments aren't available for anyone out there. They are made by specialists, grouped in the village as follows: the disenchanter and the witch.

The image of the disenchanters in the village

The network of disenchanters in the area is relatively rich in terms of number of inhabitants and the size of the locality. The locally-recognized scavenger-initiated disenchanters are six, each of which has different characteristics and performs different disenchantments and therapeutic practices. Two of the disenchanters are not only locally renowned, performing for clients in other several localities.

The image of the disenchanters is a fast-paced community acting to untie spells, curses, charms that are directed toward the ill. In most cases, their action is beneficial, over half of respondents to the questionnaire stating that the disenchanter was a real help to them, the percentages showing that 20% of them helped them very much and 35% a lot.

Not all disenchanters have the same position among the community on the scale of authenticity. The practiced magical act gives birth to a social practice that generates hierarchies among disenchanters. A difference can be made between disenchanters that are good and the ones that are less good, between those that have "the remedy" and those who don't, who speculate on this account and between younger and older ones. They are told and acknowledged by collective memory, facts that the social character, as a recipient of the offered practices, saw and can talk about through his own testimony, facts he heard from trustworthy people and deeds that are meant to maintain the atmosphere of the story needed by any community.

The social recognition of a disenchanter, and also her choice are given by important issues. First of all, how competent it is, most often referred to by the number of customers it has "*now a lot of people who go to it, it is very famous and there are a lot of people coming, only how many cars I have directed to it from other places (…) they come from many villages to have it disenchant them*" (R.Ş.,67 years old), the age "*Melina's disenchants since I've known her. It's something normal that she knows how to disenchant*" (S.R., 67 years old.); but also the stories underlying the effectiveness of the practices it carries out. „ *People tell that she does a lot and she does it well. She healed Mielu's Aurica that was cursed with mercury. He met with all of the doctors and they couldn't do anything. I've heard of Tuca's daughter, Tuca's Ioana, I've heard stories that she disenchanted her for the knife. Somebody had put her the knife and she was about to die.* (S.R., 67 years old). In the village, the stories about these practices are the backbone in the social recognition of the performer. But we are talking about two kinds of speeches that underlie stories. On one hand, the one that is strictly linked to the power of that disenchanter, based on real-time facts. On the other hand, the speech that refers to legends that legitimizes a certain disenchantment or healing practice of a similar disease like the one made by the disenchanter underlies the principle of "once upon a time". Secondly, social recognition is also given by the way in which it performs the disenchantment, materialized more often in the type of show it does and the way it captures the customer's attention. The show that the disenchanter puts on at the moment of the disenchantment deeply marks the client. *"I was at hers and what she told me and how many times she disenchanted me I don't even want to remember (…) she told me the thread is tied into ten knots and that it was done by one of my neighbours. Now…God knows. She made me*

come with nine padlocks, cloth and she disenchanted them. She threw one of her threads into the water, stirred it with basil and eventually unlocked the padlocks in it. Let me say she said she would shoot without a shotgun. Something like that. I don't quite remember" (I.T, 64 years old). Thirdly, social choice and recognition are also made on the basis of the recommendations made by former clients and also by the circle of friends in which those patients practice *"I was at hers because Rachieru's Marin recommended her to me because she is really good, because she is healed.* (C.L., 57 years old). What underlies on the above said is the way each disenchanter know how to present themselves and recommend themselves to the new client. And we can say that from our own experience. While doing this, every time we would step inside another's disenchanter's house she would assure us of the efficiency of the practices, the number of people that come to be disenchanted, but also about the charity work they do. The "alive silver" disenchanter, introduced herself as follows: *"I've healed a lot of people, I have so many coming to me, a lot of cars driving by. From all neighbouring villages"* (G.C., 55 years old). The recipients choose according to the offer they receive that is available in that village, but not only that. We can say that according to the elements mentioned beforehand. Our informants tell us more about the performers from the neighbouring villages that they call upon in emergency situations for their healing powers, alongside the disenchanters *"I have been to this one in Grui, known for "undoings" and that he has a remedy in that disenchantments"* (I.T, 64 years old) *„For faith „undoings" there is one at Malu' Spart, famous for healing"* (I.T, 64 years old). *"The "alive silver" disenchanter is in Patroaia as well. I was with Victor to disenchant him and you could tell"* (C.L., 57 years old).

The authenticity of an act's powers decreases when healings fail to happen. Unlike gaining social recognition, its loss is quite easy. One story or one inefficiency case of the performer is enough to make people not trust his powers anymore "There is still some mercury ("alive silver") running through my Victor, it comes and goes and moves all around the body, boy what happens to him. Crivat's woman gave him to drink it, and if you don't know how to disenchant it, it remains in the body" (O.C., 54 years old).

The famous disenchanters have daily more clients that come from neighbouring villages. In their cases we are mainly talking about a real deal for disenchantments, which meets the demand that exists both locally and the one coming from other localities. The disenchanters manage their offer and practices based on the number of customers and their needs. We are talking about scheduling and customer demand management, largely depending on the program and the time available for the disenchanter, but also on the need of the customer.

The approach or distant degree between disenchanters cannot be specified. The fact is there are appreciations, but also antipathies amongst them. They send clients to each other or influence customers not to go down to a certain disenchanter on the grounds that her rival is "weaker" than her. Client "exchange" takes place if someone's illness does not fall within the remit of a disenchanter and sends the client off to another one who can help him, on the ground the "I did what I know, but try somebody else. To another disenchanter you go, and grab the remedy from her too, it's better to go see a lot of them. With my remedy and her remedy you should be fine" (I.T, 64 years) tells us about the advice that the "alive silver" disenchanter gave a woman. A disenchanter never undermines her abilities in front of a

client, admitting other's superiority. The only situation where she accepts her defeat in front of the client is when according to the steps made in order to diagnose, she realizes that the disease is worse and sends the ill to the doctor. *"My Vasile had chicken pox, stayed like that for over a month. I thought he was dying. I went to his mum's and read my cards. She told me, I don't have the remedy and you won't find it in a witch, you can go round to all the witches, but the remedy is in the hands of a man with white coat. And so it was, I brought Ica the next day there, gave him some shots and the child was fine again"* (C.I., 40 years old).

Although women disenchanters are aware that they work with the „good thing"[2] and that they are doing good, the thought that disenchanting is a practice that affects their relationship with God usually bothers their minds. We all know what the Orthodox Church thinks of these practices, considering them something against God and blames them for practicing occult acts, no matter their goal *"I have thought of not doing it to anyone anymore. To give up disenchanting."* (F.P., 76 years old) one of the disenchanters tells us. Answering to our question: why? *„I am old, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow I might die and you don't know what's on the other side, what if I burn in hell for what I've done"* (F.P., 76 years old). We've found the same attitude in the women that perform these disenchantments within the family. That's why performers need to feel safe in this way, more exactly to be insured about the state of this practice in front of God. In other words is it "alright" or not if they perform these acts. Most of the times this answer comes from the villager's priest "The priest told me that there is no sin in doing this. It's good that I am disenchanting. It's bad if I do other things, like speak of the devil, make spells, charms" (F.P., 76 years old)*;"I ask the priest once in a while when I confess if it is a sin and he says to me:" You do good to a man, you do not let him die. It is not good to do anything else, to do bad things. That is the sin of death! "*(M.M., 80 years old). In the vision of older women, the disenchantment is a "sin", it's an act that violates the commandment of God, and more than that, they invoke His help in carrying out the charity action *"How? I pray to the Mother of God when I am disenchanting, I am asking Her for Her help, to do good to the ill and she comes in help"* (F.P., 76 years old). The discussion regarding God's faith in women, as well as the position of the church based on these acts, is extremely vast.

It is certain that they reach a pact with God, on one hand they know it is sinful, aware of the church's thoughts on these practices, on the other hand, the thought that it is a charity action gives an incentive to these women to continue work "And finally do not let the bay die crying" the tongue teller disenchanter tells us. This discussion, however, highlights yet another important aspect that goes a bit scrutinized, especially the priest's opinion on the state of these practices and the whole speech the church gives out against occult practices. The advice that this priest gives out to these women, cumulated with the advice given to the mother "it is good to pass by the elderly", also specified in the methodological part he tells us a lot about the church-adopted speech. It seems that the rhetoric is strong only in the official speech adopted by the church and less in reality.

The magic recipe. The main disenchantments from the disenchanters' repertoire

The disenchanters' repertoire is quite rich. Most of the time, they are specialized in making certain disenchantments, which they perform which made them famous. In the repertoire of the disenchanters, we encounter disenchantments like: one for "quicksilver", one for the tin, one with wax, one for "undoing" the man, ugly one, tongue teller, for scares,

for flour beetle, for dry sun, in the wind, for crusty tetter, for crying, for squeezing, for writing, for the "evil eye", for red murrain, for wens, for drowsing, for smut, for swelling, for white spots, for twinge. Through this questionnaire I created an X-raying of the disenchantments people call upon, and to what extent they spread. In first phase we asked the respondents to list the disenchantments they heard of from a list of 15 identified in the repertoire, then asking them to list the disenchantments that they have called upon in the past 10 years when they were sick. Analysing the subjects' choices about the type of disenchantment they have been using over the last few years, we have identified the type of disenchantment that people most often go to. The percentages look like this: 78% for "evil eye", 69% for stomach ache, 60% one for the tin, 58% for wens, 51% for dry sun, 42% for ugly one, 41% for twinge, 38% for wax (35% for red murrain, 31% for quicksilver, 29% for scares, 28% for crusty tetter, 18% for flour beetle, 17% for tongue teller, 15% for "undoing" the man. We notice that beside the "evil eye" that is the disenchantment that many people go for, other disenchantments that people call upon are the ones for stomach aches and hurtful limbs. In this analysis, we must take into account the fact that some of these disenchantments, such as "evil eye", wens, stomach ache are done within the family being easy for them to call upon.

The institutionalization of the disenchantments and the market of disenchantments

In the analyzed environment, as well as in the Romanian society it is discovered a significant growth of the magical therapeutic practices, but also a reborn of it. The modernity hasn't left the folkloric character of disenchantments unchanged. The status which the disenchanter must have, the way in which the disenchantment is performed the norms of time and space that refer to the sacredness of the disenchantment about which ethnologists told us about had known fundamental changes lately. The gift of the disenchanter and the old age are no longer essential norms that the stager must fulfil, but their desire to learn. The objects used for the accomplishment of the disenchantments are not mandatory anymore and neither is the conformity of the conditions of time and space. We can talk thus about an accomplishment of the disenchantment through profession, not of the charm that is generated, but also the constant bargain betwixt the stagers and the purchasers, so that the act of the disenchantment can be in favor to both parts, the costumer to be pleased and to return, and the disenchanter to gain some advantages as a result of the act. The range of the disenchantments is so vast, but so is the number of the customers, that the disenchantment could be done through telephone, people could reach the disenchanter only through registration. Therefore, at the end of the analysis we ask ourselves if the performed act could be talked about a disenchantment from the point of view of sacredness or is it from the point of view of profession. About the disenchantment, like in the magical therapeutic practice it surely is, seeing that in the pastoral life it is still a practice highly searched by people, but it is about an adaptation of the disenchantment to the modernity, closely related to the development and the apparition of new objects, like the telephone, the computer etc.

The recent writings about the magical practices tried to spring into discussion the transformation of the magical practices, as well as the ampleness that they received lately. In his work "The magic and witchcraft in Romanian culture", Ion Pop Curseu tried to create the robotic portrait of Romanian culture in its reports to the magical and supernatural writing

about the transformations he magical practices have been through "In the nowadays urban world, when the television, the soap operas and the internet contributed to a leveling of the psyche, the magic and the witchcraft are coincide well with mass-media. The written press has numerous pages of small advertisement, where the witchcraft of various types (from peasant women to master nuns), but that all tell that they work in the name of the God and have the intention to make only good, praise themselves by extracting the quicksilver, breaking marriages, future telling (in tarot cards, in coffee), treating incurable diseases, like epilepsy, alcoholism, impotence, depression, fear, state that they have plants from Indian shores, required for treating all kinds of diseases"(Ion Pop Curseu, 2003, Polirom). In her book "Socioanthropology of the divination phenomenon", Cristina Gavriluta remarks a transformation of the phenomenon through the loss of the 'authenticity' because of their manner of presentation in media and of the excessive presence of the phenomenon, arriving to the conclusion that a phenomenon of 'kitsch' of this practices has been made. In this sense, anthropologists draw attention to the transformations and the complex functions in popularized forms and highly mediatized by amulets or other objects that protect and secure the health (metallic bracelets, ionized necklace), but also complex projects such as mystical sects (Coman, 2008, p.117-118). Of course there is the question associated with the mechanism that lead to the maintenance of magical practices, but to their existence as well from the begging of times. Jean Palou affirms that the situations of economic crises, as well as different social crises in which the people find themselves in lead to a development of the application of witchcraft, economic crises, but the social ones support the phenomenon as well (Palou, 1992, p.6).

Disenchantments are a part of the magical therapeutic practices, just like other state institutions (the church, the hospital, etc.) treat different diseases. By intensifying the phenomenon, and also by increasing the number of people who call upon these practices, one can talk about a crisis of institutions in solving the problems of individuals. Other studies (Cristina Gavriluta) claim that the revitalization of magical practices has taken place, because it was needed to bring the sacred and willingness to join the mystery area in today's society, or that this is a cultural background of these practices that has been preserved since the earliest times (Curseu). To this, of course, the financial and material situation of the rural people who use these practices are added. Regardless of the reasons that have revived magical therapies and the general revitalization of magic, it has created a kind of institutionalization and a true market of magical therapeutic practices, in which demand and supply oscillate according to the client, but also of illness.

Conclusions

In the article we analysed the magnitude of the magical therapeutic practices in the Romanian society, investigating anthropologically the practice of disenchanting in the rural area. Magical therapeutic practices are spread amongst villages, a significant percentage of people who call upon them. The disenchantment, as an alternative treatment practice, whether it is disenchanting in the family, or disenchantments done by specialized people, that is frequently met locally. From the point of view of the frequency of the persons who use this practice, but also of the persons who practice the disenchantment is a strictly feminized practice. Women are more likely to call upon more than men, and they also often

go on behalf of men. It is also more common in the elderly than the young people and are guided by other values. Locally, disenchantment as a magical therapeutic practice, is perceived as a real help, practiced by women within family, who learn from professional disenchanters. The reasons for people to use these practices are for simple and well-founded reasons, such as those that relate to the financial situation of individuals. Other simply refer to the functional character of practice and to what we call the "placebo effect". The palette of disenchantments is locally varied. Usually all cases can be disenchanted only if you are familiar with the case, to restore the state of health, disturbed by unwanted actions, disenchanters performing disenchantments against both physical and mental disorders. The disenchantment and the actual practice is now located at the intersection between resistance to modernity (the old disenchanter and the old disenchantment) and modernity itself (young disenchanters, new ways of disenchanting). Practices that have changed over time, and their adaptation to societal changes accent existing problems within the society, as well as the need of change.

Endnotes

[1]*(In order for the disenchantment to work it needs to be stolen and not learned. Women within the families have learned to disenchant from the ones that initiated the secrets of disenchantment, the moment they went to disenchant, and for the ones left behind they learned how to do it from relatives (elders, parents), disenchantment being transmitted from generation to generation)*

[2]*(In this case the notion of good is relative as well. Within the action, they do a good deed for the ill, but on the other hand by the action of the liberation, they send the evil to the person who ordered the witchcraft action, "turn for the person" as a disenchanter would say)*

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