

DEW AS A FEMALE BODILY AND SYMBOLIC CODE IN BULGARIAN TRADITIONAL CULTURE

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The paper examines *dew* as a female bodily code in Bulgarian traditional culture. The analysis focuses on beliefs and practices in which natural moisture is conceptualised as a mediator of purity, beauty, fertility, illness, and female supernatural power. Drawing on ethnographic, folkloric, lexicographic, and ethnolinguistic sources, the study traces the ways in which dew contributes to the cultural modelling of female corporeality in both positive and negative terms. Special attention is paid to the illness-related designation *rusà*, as well as to beliefs concerning samodiva- and rusalka-related illnesses, and to the role of samodivas, rusalki, and witches within the semantic complex associated with dew. The article argues that in Bulgarian tradition dew functions not merely as a natural phenomenon but as a culturally marked liminal substance through which notions of bodily openness, vulnerability, and the transmission of vital force are articulated.

Keywords: dew; bodily code; female code; samodivas; rusalki; witches; ethnolinguistics

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