THE MORPHOLOGY OF THE IMAGINARY IN ROMANIAN TALES (SEVERAL ASPECTS)[1]

Abstract: *If we are to consider the relationship between the real and the imaginary, we ought to stipulate that the real is subscribed under the ontic and ontological, whereas the imaginary (even if it has an ontological statute) is a substitute to the gnosiologic perimeter. Deeply "rooted" into the previous human experience, the imaginary represents, as an instrument of the imperfect comparison, an area of stimulation for the strategic wanders into the field of the possible. The imagination holds one of the most important roles regarding the good conduct and function of thinking. Placed in imponderability from the concrete and the real, imagination becomes a „shape", a concrete base for individual thinking, being destined to „grant itself a conscience of the inner reason, yet not under the form of general judgement and representations, but under the actual form of an individual reality" (Hegel). The two of them – the real and the imaginary – are completing each other continuously in daily practice of knowledge, often junctioning. This „encounter" is realised due to the structuring virtues which, in a superior plan, are conceptualised into symbols, the oldest of them being the archetypes. Through the symbol, which has a highly ordering function, the narrative fantasy regains its own morphological background under the form of a paradigm (base structure of the shape). These concepts have a suitable ground of manifestation in the connotative structure of the tale and story, as narrative shapers, and make up a dynamic system of symbols, archetypes and layouts, crystallisations. For instance, one can draw the conclusion that the way of „organising" the imaginary places in the Romanian tales and stories follow a structural logic that would allow us to easily comprise them in a hypothetical table, like the one of Mendeleev. The present text disseminates results of the research made by a multinational team (Romanian – Moroccan – French) within the grant called Espaces et identités dans la littérature d'enfance. Du local à l'universel (carried during 2004-2007)*

Key words: *imaginary, tale/story, structure*

I. Our research turns to account only a small part of the results achieved during the research project on *Imaginary places in children's literature*, carried by a team of researchers from Romania, France and Morocco during. Its subject was targeting the imaginary places as an exclusive result of thinking (telling the story), thus situated outside the perceptible reality, yet from the ontological point of view, being projected from a threshold of the real. The conclusions over the entire research have been presented in two printed appearances, the first one in Romanian (Bârlea, P.G, coord. 2006), and the second one in French Foucault, J., Constantinescu, M., 2007) and followed by a *Dictionary of imaginary places* (Bârlea, P.G., coord. 2009).

Signalling the prejudice of considering that the folkloric culture writings – which make the object of this analysis – would be exclusively produced by the so-called „naive" imagination, we will show that the parallel between the real and the imaginary can be subject to this area of interest, being one of the most important. Against the fact that the original meaning and tenor of the related terms (*imaginary - imagination*) expresses, indeed, a form of absolute and uncontrolled freedom of thinking, we join the researchers who have pointed out the existence of an authentic inner, structural organising, of the locations of the imaginary. In this respect, we intend to treat several aspects.

In our study called „*The realms*" *of thinking* (Chişu, L., 2006: 36-56), we have approached the following issues: (A) a summarising definition of the concept of

[1] Lucian Chişu, "Spiru Haret" University, Bucharest, lucianchisu@gmail.com

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imaginary, and its connections with the real and the fantastic, as elements which define or contain it; (B) establishing a peculiarity of the imaginary, according to the type of linguistic discourse, which is different from a culture to another and tightly connected to the environment and social evolution; (C) designing a panoramic picture of structures that are representative for the imaginary (especially from Romanian tales and stories); (D) the analysis of these structures, their distribution in subordinate units (nuclei) and their contribution to establishing the componence of the imaginary; (E) conclusions.

Summarising these components from the published article, under the first point (A) there have been discussed the contributions of certain thinkers, philosophers and writers, who have offered stability to the treated concepts. Among the ones invoked, one can count Aristotle, Hegel, Jung, Bachelard, Caillois, Durand, Piaget, Vianu, Starobinsky, whose references are to be found in the bibliography of this study (Aristotle, 1967; Hegel, G.W.F., 1966; Jung, C.G., 1998; Bachelard, G., 1948 and 2003; Caillois, R., 1969 a and b; Caillois, R.,1971 and 2002; Durand, D., 1998; Piaget, J., 1973; Starobinski, J., 1974; Vianu, T., 1968). The summary of these points of view is:

The real abides to the ontic and ontological, whereas the imaginary (even though it has another ontological statute), substitutes the gnosiological perimeter. The result is that the imaginary is deeply rooted into the previous experience of the human, being itself a part of the „strategy" of wanders into the area of the possible. Between perception and imagination, there is always a stimulation area of the latter.

The specificity of the imaginary according to the linguistic code, different from culture to culture but in close relation with the natural environment and social evolution (B) has been pointed out through the concept *forma mentis*, as Sextil Puşcariu has described it (Puşcariu, S., 1940: 10).

In order to understand how imagination works, we should reduce it to patterns (archetypes) of this *forma mentis*, that is correspondent to the environment and type of experience shared by every nation. This is where the great vision differences originate, and they deepen through imagination. This represents a continuous way of thinking forward, as well as outside the real. Thinking is the only one productive, and reality, as well as accumulated (hereditary) experience, along with thinking, and stimulated by routine and chance, give the turn of a new product that we will call identitary, national imagination. The imaginative diversification manifests through it, the continuous tendency to transform in an own manner the least perceptive environment and unknown into a perceptible area, known due to our senses, ordered into the structures of language.

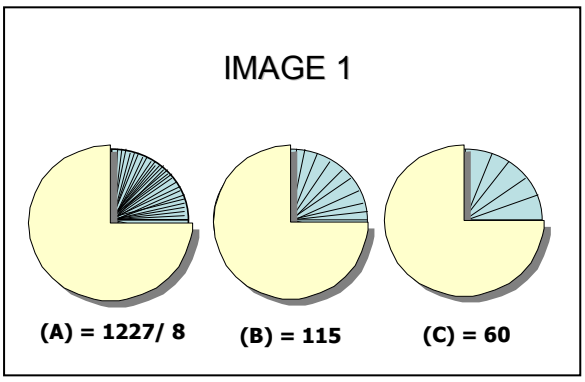
Regarding the panoramic picture of structures representative for the imaginary, mostly in Romanian tales and stories (C), rerunning the statement that, in a tale, nothing is unnecessary, much dissociation has resulted, and it has been applied within the gradual stages of structuring the 1277 entries/selections (Bârlea, P.G., Chişu, L., Bârlea, R., coord., 2006), representing the imaginary places in the initial research. Those, as well, have merged into 115 semantic units, gathered based on the principle of synonyms, also grouped into 60 components (Bârlea, P.G., coord., 2006: 265-266), internally restructured into another 9, ordered according to environment (1-3), „social" ambiance (4-7), spatial delimitations (8), and miraculous objects (9). The inclusion relationship works in a totalising sense, in a last analysis, all the 1277 repartitions „narrowing down" semantically and logically to the notion of *realm*. It also enables another operating method, in pyramid-type structures:

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Proceeding in the sense of our investigation, we will conclude that the imaginary space splits into two main symmetrical components: (a) this realm and (b) the other realm. In turn, they form the space (universe) of popular and cult Romanian tales and stories. The unbreakable unity between existence and spatial structures, even though the horizon of fantasy is in view, gains consistency due to the relation between space (spread, shape, volume) and its systemic creation. The contingency of *the realm* with the imaginary is a conventional and congruent one, hence the game between the real and the imaginary is marked by numerous symbols whose branching is manifested even including through atomising units.

II. The morphological analysis of structures that contribute to establishing the componence of the imaginary as well as their repartition into subordinate nuclei (D) makes the purpose of the present research, as the title states. For a fast (and easy) evaluation, we will present their structural organisation under the form of synoptic tables.

1. In IMAGE 1 we have, under a circular representation the internal narrowing from 1277 to 115 and, namely, 60 locations. They define the same concentric universe, which manifests itself with a term from linguistic, similar to a *diasystem*.

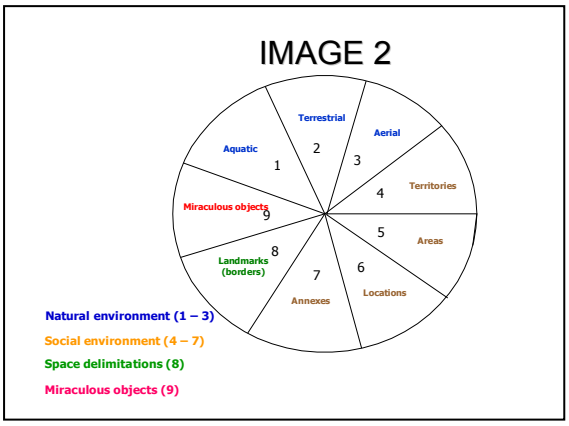


2. IMAGE 2, shows, by using location as structural criteria, the three environments (land, air and water), along with other special delimitations, whose functional acception is that of border / limit, reason for holding an essential place in the story. The various forms of representation have also been taken into consideration, some only being related to nature (landscape elements), and others being the result of social relations installed in tales and stories, which cannot be ignored. In tales / stories, one can also find territories (others than the two worlds / „realms"), symbolically conceptualised into countries of the blind, crippled, mice, etc.

Furthermore, we should note the presence of „miraculous objects" which hold metamorphic abilities, including territorial significance. Therefore, we add the exceptions denominated through the syntagm above to the universe formed from successive internal structures; the presence of miraculous objects gives fantastic turns to imagination, also marked by the stylistic cumulus (epithet, hyperbole, metaphor, personification). During the typologisation, the miraculous objects remain individualised and unpartable, they are not subject of an organisation within the system, but take part and hold an exceptional role every time needed in the evolution of the epics. However, these are abstracted to the real – imaginary analogy, breaking the

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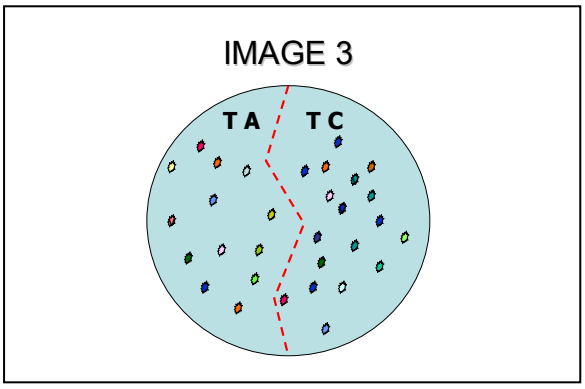
conventional patterns, as well as those based on the logic of thinking. They are extremely varied, not only by quantity and quality, but mostly by their spreading on the entire space of the two realms. By determining that, through the game of interpretation, their number is much larger, we notice that the particular segment does not follow the rationalist rigor, having a more non-entropic character.



3. IMAGE 3 narrows down the 1277 entries / locations to the two realms that are specific for the tale and story imaginary: "our" realm and "the other one". Under several aspects, the other realm is the exclusive result of folkloric imagination and shows characteristics in the way of projecting the unknown. It is noticed that, due to structural thinking, the unknown is not completely opposed to reality. Even though the main characteristic of the other realm is represented by its antagonistic profile, the differential accents are the grading ones and do not alter the structures of thinking. That is also why, in describing the other realm, it is presented as being analogically remade in resemblance to the real (our realm). Despite the complete opposition, the resemblance goes very far, regarding the structural point of view; in the imagistic side is mostly made up of overdoings of the reality. From the grammar (lexical) point of view, the antonyms and superlatives demarcate the two realms, just like symmetrical in function – yet opposite as function – poles of magnetic forces. In both of them, one can find structures that are easily to present (on all levels of organisation), configuring a network of relations through which the directions run similarly to communicating liquid containers. They allow us to notice that the real is comprised by the ontic and ontological, whereas the imaginary (even though it has an ontological statute) substitutes the gnosiological perimeter. Deeply "rooted" into the previous human experience, the imaginary represents, as an instrument of imperfect comparison, an area of stimulation of the strategic wanders into the area of the possible. If we are to consider the relation between the real and the imaginary, we ought to mention that the imagination holds one of the most important roles regarding the good administration and functioning of thinking. Placed in imponderability from the concrete and the real, the imagination becomes a "shape", meaning a concrete support of individual thinking, aiming to "grant itself a conscience of the inner reason, yet not under the form of general judgement and representations, but under the actual form of an individual reality" (Hegel, G.W.F., 1966). The two of them – the real and the imaginary – are completing each other continuously in daily practice of knowledge, often junctioning. This „encounter" is realised due to the structuring virtues which, in a superior plan, are

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conceptualised into symbols, the oldest of them being the archetypes. Through the symbol, which has a highly ordering function, the narrative fantasy regains its own morphological background under the form of a *paradigm* (base structure of the shape).



III. The connection between the realms (IMAGE 4) is realised after the travel of the heroes, as the characters are personally responsible for assuming the imaginary places. For that reason, the road (the journey) becomes an essential component of the imaginary space, because it turns the matter of space into a process, by several stylistic elements:

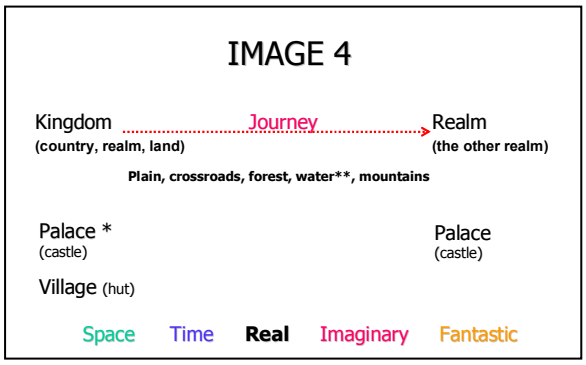
Without getting into all the details, it is concluded that the transformation of the imaginary into the fantasy is activated by a series of space-time formulas („they have walked and walked", „after a number of time", „he walked and walked", „first and first of all", „crossed seas, streams, waters as big as the land", „wandered through countries and deserts", „set himself over gulches, craters, ravines, mountains", „flew like an eidolon over mountains and valleys", „finally found". The stylistic effects originated in the affective language are also present, in „they immediately see", „it once begins", „as he throws it", „only and only", „managed to find", „started to oppose each other".

IV. The journey starts from one of the nuclei. Frequently, the initial nucleus is the palace or the scrimpy dwelling (house/hut). From this one towards the nucleus that will constitute the culminating point, in Romanian tales, the journey takes the shape of a road that can be reduced to an invariant. Commonly, the hero accesses the imaginary places starting off on a path (road, lane, trail, pathway, ski lane, labyrinth, road crossing, road split, valley), goes through a plain (glade, clearing, flat, field, pasture, desert), invariably reaches a source of water (spring, fleet, waterfall, river, Danube, fountain, slop, pond, sea), goes through a forest (timberland, woodland), reaches a mountain (rocks, cliffs), and, finally, to the other realm.

1. The reader has a horizon of expectations regarding the routine trail; each of the *lands* constitute a paradigm of the imaginary, and present at least one unpredicted / miraculous situation, with the purpose of dynamising or trammelling the action, to surprise or to deceit expectations. Due to this epic artifice, the nuclei have a covalent, radiating role. Regarding the other realm, even though the structure keeps its stability, the various forms of overdoing it determine the emergence of the unusual, which can advance to absurd. As the hero goes forward on his journey (whose initiation role we should not neglect), the notion of space melts into the one of time, the real is

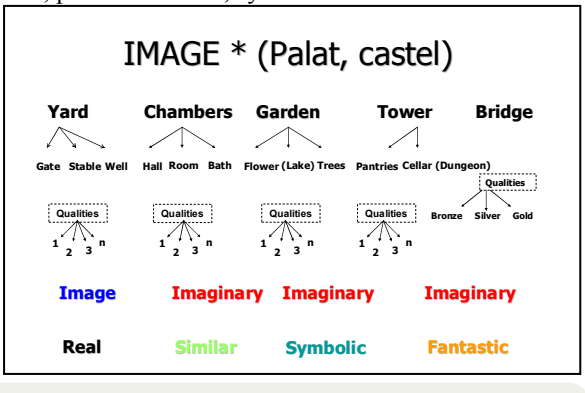
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transformed into the imaginary and, once arrived on the other realm, it becomes the fantasy. From an initiatic point of view, each of the invoked elements aims to tease the reasoning which, in fact, rules the text on the epic system and circular action feature levels.



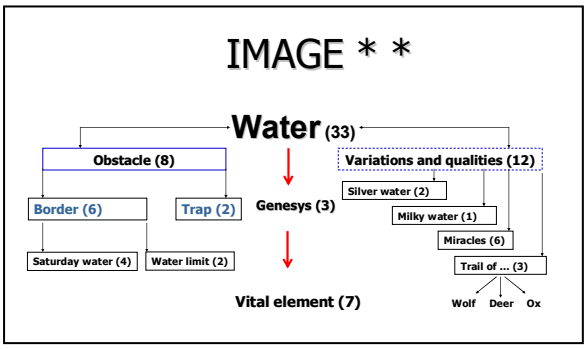
As it was already stated, radiating nuclei can be delimited, after searching the structures / places that the hero wanders through, being tooled along by his own impulses, but also by the ones that his (generally given) destiny gives. They can be hypothetically found in the structures / higher levels of the diasystem, transforming themselves from concrete aspects, as selected, into systemic, abstract elements. In order to describe the nuclei within it, we need identification as well as differentiation elements. Hence, they can be obtained from the subdivided unitary format, with semantic indexes that are stabile on a systemic level, as well as in diasystem. The most important aspects of the relation between the nuclei and their type of constitution refer to the need to keep them differentiated and to integrate the imaginary into a functional structure, under the influence of a better representation organising. These constitute polarising lines of the internal structure of a nucleus. They lead, among others, to considering the shape that a nucleus takes as a variant, while, as a means of functional design of the diasystem, the nucleus represents the invariant. Due to its character of invariant, the standard (semantic) nuclei dominate their own individual marking, functioning as a stable reference, adaption, correction and perfection point.

2. The more unitary we look at them, the more cumulative the structures of imaginary become, and their complexity can be detailed. See, for instance, (IMAGE*) the Palace/the Castle, under which the generative structure comprises elements such as the yard (with forming elements such as the gate, the stables, the well), the rooms (structured into chambers, baths), the garden (which has flowers, trees and lakes), the tower (from where one can reach the pantries, as well as the basement / cellar), the bridge. In turn, the subparts have different characteristics. Take the ones referring to the bridge: it can be made of lead / copper, silver, gold. In this context, the representation of little things starts from the real to its representation in order to challenge the imagination to, later on, produce similar, symbolic or fantastic effects.



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3. The facts in the 33 water locations (IMAGE **) are presented in the same manner, being semantically partitioned in nuclei indicating obstacles (with subdivisions like „Saturday water"/border between realms or landmark), but also characteristics of the water (silver), or under the seal left by various animals (wolf, deer, ox), with miraculous traits. From the symbolism of water, which has one of the best representations (Chevalier, J., Gheerbrant, A., 1994: 107-117), we can find the „creation" *water* and the „vital element" *water*.



IV. Conclusions

Far from being exclusively „naive", this type of imagination has several particular attributes. The specificity of the imagination process in tales and stories is granted, on one hand, by the maximum functionality of the cultural phenomena (no folkloric product, no gesture or attitude is meaningless), and, on the other hand, the general view over the traditional inhabitancy that perceives the real on a bidimensional scale: the objective real and the imaginary „real", the mythical realm. The ethical or affective vector fully crosses over the imagination of man in the folkloric space, in which stories and tales are comprised.

This split repartition must be connected to the raising interest for the folklore epos at romanticism dawn, when the way of thinking was functioning under this imperative.

As stated, the two realms are interconnected by the requests of the epic, better said, by the need that the hero crosses all the obstacles. On this entire course, the imaginary space is located in structures which contain hierarchically ranged elements, able of being conceptualised, through generalisation and abstractisation, into symbolic nuclei. The logical ordering (through symbol) of all the stances of the real, the permanent wander into the imaginary space, propels both the human existence and the internal structure of creativity into a permanent process of eliminating the effects of the entropy. When the fantastic, abrupting the order of the real or the mythical order, is temporarily installed in this space, it is temporarily settled into this space and shatters, for the moment, the meaning of the discourse, a sense in which the imaginary becomes a *discourse*, and, simultaneously, a *behaviour*, thus calling for *reasoning* and *affect*. Through myth and symbol, the imaginary space re-harmonises itself and gains symmetry. The path is „visualised", imaginarily speaking, into gradual narrative events, which, on the rational level, function as symbols and, on the narrative level function as images, according to the degree of text rationality. The two concrete forms of manifestation complete each other, especially as symbols, favouring the whole, with the result that symbolic nuclei can trigger, into every reader, the personalised vision effect.

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We believe it is important to note the fact that the path (journey) works as a constant obstacle, fact that one can notice by the grading difficulties, while the hero closes to the finale.

It can be concluded that the way of „organising" the imaginary places in the Romanian stories and tales follow a structural logic, which would rather easily allow us to comprise them in a table. According to this vision, establishing the possible combinations is given, among others, by the emergence into the narrative text of the „polyvalent free connections", whose intrusion into the epic is aimed to take it out of the patterns and logic of the real, transferring the meanings into the zodiac sign of fantastic, which these miraculous elements satisfy, and grant a temporarily new turn to the invariable nuclei. But, in their own regard, the miraculous elements keep their independent standing unity. They require a specific attention and a nuanced interpretation regarding the part they play in the narrative. The role of miraculous objects encountered during the journey is to make interventions that can be characterised, *in corpore*, through the ancient *deus ex machina* procedure.

From the gradual process of the research, one can note the totalising observation of Jean Starobinsky. The French medic and erudite brings a real clarification to the epistemological understanding of the imaginary: What we must remember is that „there is no pure imagination, an imagination that is not a behaviour, an imagination that would not be propelled by an ethical or affective vector, or positively or negatively oriented towards a social aspect" Starobinski, J., 1974: 175).

The imaginary spaces presented before, envision the real – imaginary relation in the Romanian tales and stories. Detailed as revelation (already a work tool), the facts entitle us to consider them susceptible of forming a body of texts that would be able to hypothetically and hierarchically represent a way of organisation. Our analysis has stressed that it was possible to include 1277 terms in the disposition of the paradigm.

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