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**Teză de doctorat**

**Remitologizări literare la turnanta mileniului trei**

**- rezumat în limba engleză -**

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**Remitologizări literare la turnanta mileniului trei (Literary Remythifications at the Turn of the Third Millennium). Abstract:**

The status of "secularized mythologies" that can be ascribed to a large number of literary texts must not be understood in the terms of any traditional brand of "sacred-profane" dialectic, but rather as an intermediate stage connecting grand cosmological systems of the past to new, pseudo-cosmologies, through which an attempt to recapture a certain ontological stability (that seems to be only partially recognized as such) can be observed. The fact that certain literary works often feature a primarily mythical perspective – or, at the very least, allow the emergence or partial validation of one such angle – by way of appropriating or recycling a vast number of archaic patterns, symbols, narratives or weltanschauungs, invites us to consider that the analogical relationship between sacred history and secular literature (imperfectly coagulated as it may be) presents itself as one of near-isomorphism, all the more in our present age. As we will aim to demonstrate, this quasi-isomorphism naturally engenders attempts to reconfigure a particular "profane" or "secular" piece of narrative material according to mythically calibrated (and archaic) structures – thereby also presupposing the inclusion of a set of structural functions pertaining to the very same sphere. What remains fascinating in observing the methods through which these patterns of evolution take shape is their often unconscious or only-partially conscious nature. Granted, various authors do choose to include varied mythological elements in their works (or, equally, to compose their texts as a means of conveying dilemmas which superimpose themselves over the objectives and obsessions oftentimes pertaining to myths). In spite of this undercurrent, either by means of imitation, or by means of internal processes which somewhat transcend the sphere of active intent, unforeseen mythical patterns seem to appear

and develop autonomously, independent of any auctorial will and synergetically interpenetrating with other, similar, emergent articulations. This phenomenon, whose inexorable manifestation seems to betoken a sort of invariance of the human psyche's architecture and also a congruent tendency towards mythical reemergence, forms the central axis of our present study. Having the goal of granting it individuality and intellectual autonomy, we propose the name mythical fortitude or firmythicos (as a second variant which intends to boast a certain degree of linguistic impartiality).

Our central assumption regarding this concept proposes an additional exegetic praxis, disposed towards two complementary demonstrative paths. One could say that these would be geared towards two concentric spheres: firstly, in exploring the “infrastructure” or “inner” aspects of the concept, we will aim to sketch out a few of the main lines of argumentation which give it shape and normalize its insertion (as well as its metamorphoses) within a given corpus of texts. Correlated with this trajectory, we will seek to advance on a second, “outer” or “exoteric” one, which, as opposed to identifying the particularities of the concept from the inner view of its diverse permutations, will opt, on the contrary, to analyze the mutations and internal instances of coherence which its presence determines in the infrastructure of those textual artifacts in which it emerges. Far from suggesting that the validity of this presence, of any given substratum of mythical fortitude, is ubiquitous and extends to the entire field of modern or pre-modern texts, we venture, nonetheless, to affirm that at least a considerable tranche of literary artifacts are, indeed, in a significant proportion, semantically and stylistically modulated through the undercurrent of this node, which underscores them.

Of course, we are mainly talking about those works of fiction which are relatively contemporaneous, sufficiently distant from pre-modernity to justify identifying them – at least at the level of their composition – as secular constructs. The term is, perhaps, too general, and should rather serve as an orientative pylon, connected to the auctorial will which, in these cases, can be observed as acting in the direction of aesthetic self-determination (and only implicitly possessing any finality of a mythical, mystical or teleological nature). In order to coherently illustrate the patterns of emergence and operation observable in the manifestations of mythical fortitude, we have selected a small number of works, temporally, spatially and auctorially segmented in accordance to several principles which can grant extra weight to our own theorizations. The five authors that we propose as proverbial „fields of demonstration” in relation to the modulations of our concept of mythical fortitude are, all of them, long fiction writers and, with a singular exception, also short prose writers. Their entire literary output (supplemented in all cases by several non-fiction works), ordered according to a chronological sequence which tracks the release of their individual volumes, will be considered in our analysis, in order to exhaust and unitarily investigate each separate corpus, as well as in order to be able to capture the reoccurrences of those axioms, patterns and parameters which each writer has annexed to his own set of stylistic instruments. This first bibliographic stratum will be

adjoined by a secondary one, comprising a heterogenous set of other literary, mythical, religious or theoretical works – three ample categories of texts by which we will seek to identify the various analogies between the cosmological superstructures, speculative arguments and theoretical isomorphisms proposed by our primary corpus.

Taken in sequence, the primary sets on which we have worked have also unveiled a certain propensity toward a historicist progression, along a temporal axis that coincided – in relative terms – with the sequence of each author's literary debut. Of course, this pattern should not be seen as anything other than a utilitarian abstraction. We do not wish to postulate that the theoretical modulations which emerged in the wake of “postmodernism” (as loosely as it can be defined or encased in any reductive parameters) have seen a linear progression, extending from the ontological uncertainty addressed by Umberto Eco in his fiction, to the harmonious convergence of the disparate cosmologies that populate the works of Neil Gaiman. We are confronted with a phenomenon of a much too harrowing complexity to permit any postulation, on our part, that such delineations of patterns of maturation could constitute anything more than proverbial figures in the carpet. And yet, even if they be merely this, we dare consider that the sequence of works for which we have opted has served to underline, at least in a simplified, ascending manner, five crucial moments in the process of mythical reformation, as it manifested itself at the turn of the third millennium. Firstly, in the case of Eco's mythos, we observed the construction of a post-factum, adaptive cosmology, in which the overarching priority seemed to be that of imbuing man with an attitude and existential rapport that would activate in the absence of an ontological compass fully calibrated to match his new teleological horizons. The same set of instruments, which we saw inscribed in the infrastructure of Eco's cosmology, could imbue human beings with at least a simulacrum of a vehicle that could reinforce a sense of internal aggregation, especially when faced with the necessity of navigating the deluge of the abusive, irrational or incomprehensible syncretisms harbored by a culture witnessing the direct collapse of its old, comforting, mythical constructs.

Regarding the prose of Irvine Welsh, we identified an ingrained habitus of subcultural restriction operating within the inner workings of his underlying cosmology, one marked by a double ontological axis which permitted an equally ambivalent reading of his mock-heroic narratives of urbane decadence, targetted at encapsulating the travails of the broadly defined “chemical generation”. Made up of the ostracized, marginalized youth of modern Scotland, it is this audience towards which Welsh directs his theorizations, as well as his rebellious tone, as the strictures of thatcherite Britain are deconstructed and met with open belligerence. On the one hand, works such as *Trainspotting*, *Glue*, *Porno* or *Skagboys* incarnate the first possible mythical reading of Welsh's corpus, organizing themselves as an eschatological codex which openly welcomes and celebrates the collapse of all traditional myths and cultural narratives. On the other hand, a second reading could be

unveiled in the case of works such as *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, *Filth* or *Crime*, wherein one could identify Welsh's efforts to operate a radical rearrangement of archaic religiosity, appropriating fragments of pre-modern ceremonial practice and projecting them unto his own idiosyncratic (and markedly materialist) cosmology.

Along similar lines, the mythos of David Foster Wallace appeared to us as being geared towards another strictly-defined audience, amplifying its esoteric undertones through a stylistical affinity for hyper-intellectualism, counter-intuitively directed towards the dismantling of the "rigor mortis" and perceived inauthenticity of his forebears. Along with these, the "vices" of alienation, irony and solipsism found equal scrutiny as part of the American writer's attempts at constructing a cohesive ontology, focused on the recovery of a militant type of candid emotional and intellectual openness and encapsulated within the New Sincerity movement as its central axis.

The fiction of Chuck Palahniuk could be examined as a compendium of eschatological scenarios, amalgamating fractal spirals of violence and vulgarity, hyperbolized in transgressive vein. Raising certain parallels between the authors prose works and the various excrescences pertaining to the cosmologies of gnosticism (as well as those of other pseudo-cosmological constructs entrenched in anachronistic forms of primitivism), we have observed the means through which the destabilization of corporate consumerism, along with the heralding of its role in instilling the axiom of alienation within the modern human condition, served to individualize the main axiological threads of a cosmology that appeared determined to dismantle both the object of its critique, as well as its own enantiomorphic arsenal, articulated with satirical overtones. In works such as *Fight Club*, *Survivor* and *Diary*, the precepts of Palahniuk's transgressive ethoss were progressively amalgamated with an undercurrent which postulated an unabashed celebration of genuine emotional communion with one's alterity.

Finally, the chapter which focused on the examination of the psychotronic prose of Neil Gaiman crystalized as a more optimistic coda, regarding the capacity for emergence of a novel set of syncretic mythologies, predisposed to absorb and assimilate the heterogeneous compounds of more disparate archaic cosmologies and traditions.

Thus, at its suprastructural level, the trajectory of our present research has invariably ended up forming a semantically significant sequence of "vertebrae". This segmentation has allowed us to reconstruct a total, overarching panorama of mythical reemergence. Once more, it must be stressed that, as far as the empirical continuity of these tendencies is concerned, we necessarily restrict it exclusively to the internal logic in accordance with which we have ordered our thesis. The demiurgic aspirations that we have identified – inserted as they may have been, in a singular set of literary artefacts – have proven their ability to demonstrate the categorial utility that the introduction of our concept of mythical fortitude has catalized as part and parcel of our theorizations. In the prose of

Umberto Eco, a proverbial undercurrent of ontological uncertainty was, eventually, pushed back through the extensive use of hilaritas. By contrast, the axiological alloy which defined Irvine Welsh's poetics gravitated around a tribalistic and violent sort of infra-material rebellion. In the novels of David Foster Wallace we observed the coalescence of a hierarchical reorganization, supplimented by a tentative and balanced set of hermetic exercises and resacralization experiments, thrust upon the most mundane elements of every day corporate life and reality. Chuck Palahniuk's fiction was defined by a militant array of apocalyptic conflagrations, reiterated hiperbolically through the use of his own personal transgressive ethos (and ultimately arguing for temperance). Likewise, the fantasy works of Neil Gaiman were articulated around multiple sets of synergetic hierogamies between archaic mythical categories and modern, speculative ones. Thus, analyzed sequentially, the fictional worlds that we have explored have presented us, in turn, with a number of individualized cosmologies. Built in accordance with different demiurgic principles and axioms, all of these have proposed divergent trajectories through which the human telos could be reshaped, equipping us to better meet with a fluctuating existence that awaits at our newfound experiential horizon, along with the grand explanatory narratives that, in as of yet unpredictable forms, will continue to arise and grant us a sense of ontological legitimacy.

Concording with – what we view as – the formless foundational basis of all mythical systems, exteriorized through a proteism which harbors an inexhaustible complexity and which does not possess any center of infrastructural stability that could condition their generative mutations (in an essentialist fashion), we venture to anticipate that any ulterior forays which will make use of our concept of mythical fortitude will organize themselves in the most diverse and surprising modulations. We predict that, in turn, we will be able to launch other, similar explorations in the near future, accentuating a given undercurrent of mythical fortitude's ability to apodictically proliferate itself within the most unexpected literary (and non-literary) textual mediums. Such a hermeneutic turn could permit the entire set of instruments that we have made use of to fully demonstrate its argumentative force and creative potency, as a means through which archaic mythical patterns may continue to be discerned and filtered.

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