Anarchetypes

Reevaluation of marginal literary forms and genres (ANTIP)

Research objectives

The ANTIP project aims to apply the concept of anarchetype to different successive historical corpuses of texts and literary genres. Each member of the research team will assume the objective of studying one of these corpuses:

Topic 1. **Alexandrine romance**. This class of narratives from late antiquity has been characterized as "Alexandrine" in a relatively pejorative acceptation, as opposed to "Attic" works. Romances of imaginary voyages, of fantastic adventures, of mythological inventions, or of *avant-la-lettre* picaresque fashion, the works of Petronius, Apuleius, Lucian, Chariton, Heliodorus, have been regarded as mere amusements and fantasies, as epiphenomena or excrescences of "great literature," whose canonical models were the epic poem and tragedy (cf. *Romans grecs et latins*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade). The main purpose of the research is to underline the creative force of such loose narrative mechanisms usually claimed to be detrimental to literature.

Topic 2. **Chivalric romances.** During the Renaissance, a rich genre of chivalric romances flourished (starting with *Amadis de Gaula* but paralyzed a century later because of the publication of *Don Quixote*). Giving free reign to utterly uncontrollable imaginative impulses, these works follow the most profuse narrative pathways, behaving anarchically towards any idea of organization or finitude. Come to think of it, even Cervantes's novel, which marked the depletion of this genre, is not in itself more unitarily structured; it might go on indefinitely, or even veer into another genre (the pastoral novel, for example, threatening to destroy yet another species). The main focus of the approach will therefore be on two main aspects of deconstructing narratives: reciprocally-generating structures in pairs of original and imitative works, such as Cervantes's *Don Qujote* and Avellaneda's *Don Qujote*, and self-generating structures in atypical Enlightenment fictions such as Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*.

Topic 3. **Extraordinary voyages, satire, allegory**. Among the rich corpuses of extraordinary voyages, satires and narrative allegories, there are numerous examples of works that defy generic expectations and are characterized by loose plots, episodic structures and an emphasis on allusion and auctorial irony. Drawing their inspiration from Greek and Latin sources (for instance, Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* or Lucian of Samosata's *True Story*), these texts were at the same time fragmented and refracted versions of other early modern literary works. Among them, one can find inverted utopias, from Joseph Hall's *Mundus alter et idem* (1605) to Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), loose

philosophical allegories – Charles Sorel's *La solitude et l'amour philosophique de Cleomede* (1640), D'Aubignac's *Macarise ou la Reine des Isles Fortunées* (1664), Gabriel Daniel's *Voyage du monde de Descartes* (1690), rewritings of heroic novels – Michel de Pure's *Épigone, histoire du siècle futur* (1659), or Menippean satires – Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde* (1657-1662).

Topic 4. **Enlightenment romances**. During the Enlightenment, adapting the Renaissance genre of picaresque literature, another successful genre developed, le "*roman d'aventures*". Featuring myriad plots that could be multiplied indefinitely, through Chinese box structures, strange loops or forking paths strategies, the novels of adventure of the 18th century could stochastically expand across the generic boundaries of different narrative subspecies, becoming hybridized with the Gothic romance (M.G. Lewis's *The Monk*), the philosophical novel (Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas, or the Prince of Abissinia*), and amatory or cautionary tales (Delarivier Manley's *The New Atalantis*), or producing the prototypal novel under erasure, whose performative making also entails its discursive, anarchetypal unmaking (Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*).

Topic 5. **Modernist novels**. During the 20th century up to the beginning of the 21st, the onslaught against the traditional genres of works developed into anti-canonical rebellion. This period has seen the proliferation of "anarchic" works, rebellious towards schemata and models. The most blatant example remains, of course, that of Nietzsche, who dispelled all the systemic pretenses of metaphysics and of Hegelian history. James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* or Proust's *A la recherché du temps perdu* also behaved anarchetypically in relation to the standards of the epoch; Proust's great novelistic series was so difficult to understand and accept particularly given its non-architectural logic, which is reminiscent of invertebrate organic biology. French literature has exerted a strong influence on Romanian interwar literature as well. Concepts such as "involuntary memory" and the "flux of consciousness", which mark a shift from archetype to anarchetype, have been put to work by authors like Max Blecher, Camil Petrescu, Anton Holban.

Topic 6. **Postmodernist novels**. Boris Vian's novels, Cortázar's *Rayuela*, Thomas Pynchon's *V.* or *Gravity's Rainbow* are also texts that are anarchetypically constructed and that have opened, amongst others, the way towards postmodernity. A special narrative category is the encyclopedic novel. Defined and popularized by Edward Mendelson in two 1976 essays ("Encyclopedic Narrative" and "Gravity's Encyclopedia"), the concept of encyclopedic narrative (and, to a more particular degree, the "encyclopedic novel") describes literary works which, as Melville's *Moby Dick* or Joyce's *Ulysses*, cannot be reduced to an archetypal analysis, for the structure of this type of narrative incorporates conventions of several genres. During the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the number of novels which can be comprehended through the means of the concept of "encyclopedic novel" grew as a result of the anarchetypal tendencies of (post)modernism, while, at the same time, the indeterminacy of form described by these works (non-

linearity, intertwined structure) led to a critical confusion regarding works like William Gaddis's *The Recognitions* or David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*.

Topic 7. **Fantastic, Fantasy and Science-Fiction Literature**

In fantastic, fantasy and science-fiction literature there are several novels that do not showcase a coherent, unitary structure or do not follow the classical model in which the main characters participate, while they inhabit the secondary world, in their own moral and ontological initiation. Such novels can display anarchetypal features on the level of both the imaginary and the narrative. Authors have conceived secondary worlds that can be infinitely multiplied, following the model of *One Thousand and One Nights* (like *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis, *Harry Potter* by J. K. Rowling and *A Song of Ice and Fire* by George R. R. Martin). Another anarchetypal feature can be found in novels depicting intermediate worlds or even portals fragmenting the narrative content. These intermediate worlds are frequently accessed through dream, delirium, madness and illness (see Lubomír Doležel). In this taxonomy, novels describing negative and nightmarish secondary worlds (see *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll) that exclude any form of salvation and initiation are to be found. All these basic traits can serve as a starting point in the attempt to define an alternative canon for fantastic, fantasy and science-fiction literature.

Methodology

The approach is multidisciplinary and will use convergent methodologies from the field of Imagination Studies (French "Recherches sur l'imaginaire"). "L'imaginaire" ("the imaginary") is an essential concept for the comprehension of individual and group behavior. For a long period of time, a heavy intellectually-oriented tradition of thought has conceived man as a rational being, whose actions depend on rational causes and follow logical patterns. But if we want to reach a better vantage point for understanding the actions of individuals and of masses, we have to deconstruct this myth of rationality, this anthropological utopia. In this context, European research, especially the French one, holds a unique position. The modern science of the imaginary was created in the second half of the 20th century by philosophers such as G. Bachelard, Ch. Baudouin, Ch. Mauron, G. Durand, etc. Over the past three decades, a new generation of philosophers, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, comparative researchers, etc. have created a new methodology for exploring the social and cultural imaginary. Their approach is widely different from comparable American studies. While the American scientists focus on images, as products and commodified goods (advertising, media images, etc.), the European scientists focus on the producers and the consumers of images, on their psychology and mentality, on their conscious and subliminal processes. For this European priority in the field, it is symptomatic that the French term "*recherches sur l'imaginaire*" does not even have a

convenient translation in English.

However, lately, the concept has experienced important and interesting developments, especially in the English-speaking world. Following innovative works written in the fields of literary studies (Said) and political science (Anderson), it has become customary to refer to social and political imaginaries for analyzing the institutionalization of modern societies. Charles Taylor defines "social imaginaries" as follows: "By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (*Modern Social Imaginaries*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2004, p. 23). Images of the self (*autoimages*) and of the other (*heteroimages*) (the "other" being conceived as an individual or as a collectivity), worldviews of nature, the universe or God, representations of geography, history, society and culture, literary and fine arts fantasy, theatre and cinema, music and dance, advertising and the media, etc. are all products and instruments of the imagining function. Even the most common and current attitudes of everyday life bear the imprint of collective representations.

From the rich panoply of methods offered by the imagination studies, the ANTIP project will heavily rely on Gilbert Durand's concept of "semantic pools" (*bassins sémantiques* in French). According to Durand's view, expressed in his book *Introduction à la mythologie. Mythes et sociétés* (1996), human representations have a diachronic dimension, of historical progression. Drawing on Fernand Braudel distinction between long history (referring to natural phenomena), medium history (of civilizations that last hundreds or thousands of years) and short history (the chronology of current events), he shows that the constellations of images and symbols also have an evolution in time, which he compares to a river with several phases: sources, confluences, main course, meanders, deltas, river mouths, etc. This aquatic metaphor suggests that clusters of collective images have a genesis (they appear in a certain culture), a constitution (by creating or capturing and adapting images from previous constellations), a moment of validation (when they are endorsed by cultural and artistic worldviews and institutions), a culmination point, and a period of decline, when they lose their power and disseminate into new emerging currents, etc. Durand offers several samples of "semantic pools", such as the Baroque, Franciscanism, etc.

The ANTIP project will also treat the corpuses of texts and literary genres (Alexandrine novels, chivalric romances, etc.) as historical "representation pools", which organize themselves into fictional chronotopes and artistic worldviews. The organizational principle of each of them will reveal itself to be, in contrast to the main canonical genres, the anarchetype.