

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION “1 DECEMBRIE 1918” UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA  
FACULTY OF HISTORY, LETTERS AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES DOCTORAL  
SCHOOL OF PHILOLOGY**

**DOCTORAL THESIS  
ABSTRACT**

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**Alba Iulia**

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***THE CHANCE OF THE ALTERNATIVE IN 20TH CENTURY  
CHILDREN'S FANTASY LITERATURE***

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## ABSTRACT

The work entitled *The Chance of the Alternative in 20th Century Children's Fantasy Literature* reflects the personal passion for probing some frames of the artistic imaginary which offers the chance of a permanent *alternative* of innocence – regardless of our age and status as a creator or receiver of the literary phenomenon – which can be identified in any artistic manifestation, considering that literature, and the arts, in general, oscillate between subversion and escapism. However, the present paper has also been the result of a personal experience, regarding the punctual observation of reading expectations and the effects of reading Fantasy narratives on children, who rediscover in this genre not only a self-projection in an alternative imaginary which shields them from repetitive identity limitations in a multiplication of selves, but also the challenge to the possible assumption of some affective, aesthetic and moral responsibilities of depicting a beneficial secondary universe "to tell" the Other or, at least, an alternative mood to the sometimes trivial and flattening quotidian for the age-specific exuberance, an *alter-ego* symbolically reconstructed through language constructs.

Even since its beginnings literature has flirted with the fantastic, so that *Early Fantasy* or *proto-fantasy*, through *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, *1001 nights* and *Beowulf*, will constitute the foundation of a literature that gives rise to cultural, scientific, artistic and religious controversies due to the fact that the reader has access to several worlds, but (at least) one is real. The following stage is *Modern Fantasy*, which includes writers such as George MacDonald with *Phantastes* (1858), William Morris, the author of *The Well at the World's End*, published in 1896, which will form the cornerstones of the future Fantasy creations in the 20th century. Travelers in time and beyond time, in real spaces – illustrated by real place names (London, Norway, Sweden or Africa) or imaginary ones (Narnia, Wonderland, Neverland, Chrestomanci, Fantázia), passing through portals (wardrobe, bridge, hatch, mirror and others alike), Fantasy children travel some routes in order to regain the self, either by the call they feel, lured by the fascination of the fantastic and the possibilities that open up to them, or they are adventurous, eager for knowledge and unstoppable. Likewise, the fascination that evil exerts on man is another direction speculated by Fantasy writers. The typology proposed by Farah Mendlesohn includes four categories of the fantastic: "there are essentially four categories within the fantastic: the portal-quest, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal. These categories are determined by the means by which the fantastic enters the narrated world. In the portal-quest we are invited through into the fantastic; in the intrusion fantasy, the fantastic enters the fictional world; in

the liminal fantasy, the magic hovers in the corner of our eye; while in the immersive fantasy we are allowed no escape.”<sup>1</sup>

Regarding the CORPUS, extremely offering, we mention that our interest was focused on a comparative view of the proses that fit into the Fantasy literature for children of the 20th century, specifying that we selected, with priority, from the very rich material offered by the genre, those works that responded to our need to demonstrate the hypothesis from which we started, as well as the writing code and, respectively, the reception code specific to literature intended for children (therefore not for older teenagers or adults). Implicitly, in the course of our work, we will try to place as firmly and coherently as possible the characteristics of such literature, which lends itself to being traversed and analysed based on a grid specific to the childhood imaginary, not crossing the borders of the violent, not sliding towards the arsenal of war and hypertechnological / robotization, preserved in a canon of innocence, play and fundamental morality and, at the same time, being particularly permissive in outlining the actual desired *principle of alternative*, sought and (re)found from the need for good order which the Fantasy literature characters have.

Lost and found worlds, beings with supernatural powers and human appearance, but also the worlds invented and populated with strange creatures, whether benign or fundamentally evil, were attractive subjects in the Fantasy area. The success of the genre took shape around the 1900s, when Frank Baum’s *The Wizard of Oz* offered a little girl the chance to travel into a space of self (re)discovery on her own, in the company of her friends: a fearful lion – a subtle oxymoron of the association of the king of the jungle with anxiety, a tin man incapable of feeling, a scarecrow without cognitive possibilities and her faithful dog, Toto, each of these being an *alter-ego* of the child, through what they symbolize. Subsequently, an extremely interesting prototype of *the child who does not want to grow up* and wants to remain in a universe of eternal childhood, who has no soul, and, above all, does not want any parental control, appears in this type of literature. Peter Pan, the hero of J.M. Barrie, is the creator of a space utopia, where he also attracts children from the real world with the help of the dream’s spell, and the necessity of the intrusion of real figures into an imaginary space, being considered dystopia, Neverland becomes the place where every child is the creator of his own world. The traveler imagined by the author Selma Lagerlöf, Nils Holgersson, represents the typology of the naughty child whose games, although a bit mischievous, brought him, as a reward, a flight over Sweden, together with a herd of anseriformes. The mapping of Sweden is transcribed from the map,

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<sup>1</sup> Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 2007, p. 14.

so *Nils Holgersson's Wonderful Journey through Sweden* can be a veritable geography enchanted-handbook. Romanian literature is no stranger to the Fantasy genre, Mihail Sadoveanu's *Dumbrava minunată* examines a dysfunctional family, unfortunately for a motherless girl, who is frequently subjected to physical and emotional abuse by her stepmother and her maid, having a very low frustration tolerance.

Corin Braga states that “the Fantastic would cover the distance between the mode of the miraculous (‘marvellous narrative’) and the mode of the mimetic (or realistic literature). The miraculous, which includes genres such as myths, fairy tales (‘conte de fées’, ‘fairy story’), ‘romance’, magical and supernatural literature, belongs to the paradigm of premodern literature, within which the supernatural has a definite metaphysical reality; the fantastic, on the other hand, which appears in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, belongs to the modern, positivist and atheistic paradigm, within which God is dead and transcendence is empty. Because of this, the miraculous literature describes ‘full’ worlds, which have an undeniable ontological consistency at the level of fiction, while the fantastic reflects the feeling of ‘disenchantment of the world’, notices the disappearance of fantastic creatures and moves towards an imaginary void. [...] the fantastic arises when two planes of reality become incongruous.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, Fantasy literature conceives an alternative universe, a world possible through the imaginary, but beyond it, where the acceptance of a new reality is the only predetermined agreement between the author and the reader, especially since the worldly alternatives in fantasy intersect (not coincidentally) with the primary world. Despite being situated between subversion and escapism, Fantasy literature approaches escapism not as an escape from an undesirable theme, but as a construction of a salutary alternative, a type of rediscovery of the real world in which characters re-find themselves in a multiplicity of identities that converge towards identity assumption. Fantasy thematics, in this sense, processes real life by transposing it into the dyad of real-fantasy worlds, in order to find, in this way, *the best of the possible worlds*.

The centre of Fantasy research has its core at Oxford, where students become researchers and later, established writers, but according to the position of the University in question, we learn that “When studying Fantasy Literature one may come across mention of the ‘Oxford School’. This is a broadly applied term that covers the writers that have been based in Oxford over the years, often but not always associated with the University; the extraordinary output of a series of writers in the early

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<sup>2</sup> Corin Braga (coordonator), *Morfologia lumilor posibile. Utopie, antiutopie, science-fiction, fantasy*, București, Editura Tracus Arte, 2015, p. 24-25.

to mid-twentieth century who wrote and indeed established the genre (e.g. the Inklings – Tolkien, Lewis, Williams, Barfield, etc); the writers of Fantasy literature in the latter part of the twentieth-century who studied at Oxford and were influenced by writers such as Tolkien (e.g. Garner, Cooper, Wynne Jones); or a combination of all of these. What is true to say though is that there is, and never was, a formal ‘School’ in the sense of a faculty or course within the University that sought to teach Fantasy literature and creative writing. Instead it alludes to the idea that somehow all these people shared some experiences or absorbed something from being in the city or the University that possibly helped shape their work.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, it seems that the city has something mysterious, fascinating and magical, so that writers find the muse of London creation and capitalize on it in their writings, and the child-heroes are the pioneers of alternative worlds, which we can call representative geographies in Fantasy. The paradoxes of these places are inscribed in the alternative, where the ritual objects acquire meaning, the adventurous amplifies the motives of the heroes’ quests, the illusion of perfection becomes a possible geography, and the spatio-temporal coordinate competes with the laws of physics through functionality.

Fantasy literature for children evolves and changes the landmarks of spatiality from a predominantly rural environment towards the city. Michael Ende's *Never-ending story* continues the stereotype of the sad biographical coincidence of Fantasy children with Bastian, a motherless pre-adolescent whose school caused him anxiety due to his taunting peers. The relationship with the father was precarious because the suffering caused by the death of his wife prevented him from being able to manage a warm relationship with his son. Children's books have rigorous marketing strategies because they have to consider two categories of addressability: the parent who will buy the book and, above all, the child who would like to read it. That's why authors need to cultivate *wonder*, one of the most important factors that give a book appeal. Philip Pullman is the author of the *Dark Matter* trilogy, a series that presents Lyra's adventures in a *multiverse* where the girl travels from one world to another, accompanied by her symbiote, Pan. The enchanted realms of children's Fantasy literature also need wizards, so J. K. Rowling creates Harry Potter, a child with wizarding abilities inherited from his parents, who were killed in a confrontation with the ultimate evil, Lord Voldemort. The novels in the series follow Harry's evolution from a childhood darkened by the abuse of his adoptive family, to the coming of age that occurs when the evil is eradicated. Diana Wynne Jones leads the reader into a

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<sup>3</sup> University of Oxford, *Fantasy at Oxford*, available at: [https://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/engfac/fantasy\\_lit/FantasyatOxford](https://media.podcasts.ox.ac.uk/engfac/fantasy_lit/FantasyatOxford).



realm that contains elements of the real and the imaginary, where a little girl named Carol sells what she dreams of, but the marketing products are abusively controlled by her mother. Likewise, the ideology of the theme of children's books is formulated by Matilda, the child character in the novel of the same name, in a firm manner in response to Miss Honey's question: "Do you think there should be a little humor in all children's books?" "Yes, answered Matilda. Children are not as serious as adults and love to be made to laugh."<sup>4</sup>

THE HYPOTHESIS of our THESIS starts from the observation that, in the specific imaginary of Fantasy literature for children of the 20th century, the effects of historical time, of the evolution of societies, of the mutations suffered, from one generation to the next, by the education system, melt together, and, implicitly, literature is called to fill the natural voids that the child-reader often feels, traumatically. "A dream is the fulfillment of a wish"<sup>5</sup>, said Sigmund Freud. Starting from this idea, the **hypothesis of the present research** can be formulated in the following terms: reading books belonging to Fantasy literature for children (and not only) - as an alternative way of assuming and integrating the experienced and unsymbolized trauma from the early childhood of the adult who finds himself in a universe of maturity empty of symbols or too loaded with symbols subject to subjective comprehension and hermeneutics - is difficult without the phantasmatic anchoring in the fulfillment of the wishes of the infantile universe. Therefore, the universe proposed by Fantasy has close ties to trauma. Starting from the socio-historical context, we observe in the collective memory of the artistic world, scenes from the difficult periods of war, famine, abuse, social, family, community and individual dysfunctions. These almost unbearable events related to the loss of human lives, permanent disabilities, (self) mutilations, incurable diseases have been transposed in children's literature in allegorical forms or even true to reality, in books, films or animations. We wanted to argue that the limiting reception - from the point of view of the addressability category - can be extended, using various reading grids. Also, in the mentioned hypothesis, we tried to detect a **paradigm of escape in the alternative**, which constitutes the creation and valorization of an adjunct, which can be the protective space, the imagination and **the possible alternative imaginary** in a relevant temporal coordinate, one's own thought materialized in reverie or dream or a super-character, derived from the self.

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<sup>4</sup> Roald Dahl, *Matilda*. Traducere din engleză și note de Christina Anghelina, București, Editura Arthur, 2022, p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Despre vis*, București, Editura Trei, 2019, p. 13.

### **Motivation for choosing the theme**

The period that should provide the most soothing memories, the most comforting images to anchor the future adult, is childhood. From the evolutionary perspective, we live through four stages: childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity and old age. But what if we don't want to grow up and we find an alternative to take refuge in order not to be punished *with* and *through* maturing? But what if we don't want to change the paradigm, and we would rather find ourselves in those years when any dream is possible, no desire is unattainable, parents stay young, cheerful and healthy, games never end and we can replicate ad infinitum, like Bastian Bux, our colourful and smiling worlds? Loneliness is not painful in childhood either, because any mundane object can create a universe, the book in your hand presents friends as good as those in real life, and the mischief you do does not have to have serious consequences. If we can build - without knowing what power the unconscious has - alternatives for every trap on the existential path, which we will necessarily encounter, because that's what our parents told us, it means that we have, with imposed limits, "demiurgic" powers, a force equal to that of an alchemist, from the uncreated to mold worlds, from dream to pass into reverie and then into reality.

Why children's literature? The choice is justified by personal and professional concern. Through the prism of the teaching career in pre-university, middle school and high school education, I have found that students have a passion for Fantasy literature, because the worlds that open before their eyes can become sources of inspiration for the personal creations of certain children or young people, the language invented by Fantasy authors constitute a musical instrument in an imaginary orchestra for others. In fact, young readers understand that there is philosophical, logical, mathematical, artistic substratum in each of the Fantasy books. Beyond the notoriety they have, including that thanks to the screen adaptations of the books, it is impossible, as a young person in training, not to lean towards politics, history and society and not to make analogies between everyday life and the past that you have heard, listened to or even learned. The personal part concerns an observation - contrary to the direction of the research - that I heard from a young child who refused to read certain "children's" books in which the mother dies. This aspect led to the finding, in our opinion, of the misattribution of the "children's" bibliography, especially since for now all the classifications of Fantasy literature in: *for children, for youth or mass culture* are speculated. Fantasy literature also has a difficult relationship with the idea of *parenthood*. Parental should constitute a sanotogenic factor, if we refer to the attribution of the meaning that the word has in the pharmaceutical

industry, a tonic for body and mind. Fantasy children's families are often dysfunctional and the relationships between the members have a dramatic effect on the children's development.

The 20th century is a century of trauma, marked by acts of violence. Abuse and exploitation of children, women, especially in the middle class, have put in the spotlight studies, novels, poems, research on catastrophic injuries and unprecedented consequences in people's lives and justify the ***questioning and option for the alternative*** in a literary work, if the real conditions a certain type of writing. Following a short challenge with reference to the construction of the semantic field of the term "Fantasy" and the structures within which we can contextualize its meaning, we understand that most of the possible answers contain similarities between it and the fantastic, unreal, imaginary, dream, utopia, dystopia, supernatural. But what if we admit that it doesn't have to be just that? As we observe, the authors of the subgenre also allow ordinary children to enter an alternate world through a portal or through the dream into a metaverse of their own, created in dreams or reveries as a barrier, protection, imaginative veil, for a short period of time, until he can find the solution to the problem that crushes his soul, especially if he has to go through the journey towards regaining his identity, alone. Equally, the boys and girls of Fantasy literature are the *alter-egos* of the prose writers, who test their epistemological maturity through the children who become everyone's heroes.

Our thesis is structured in four chapters. In the first chapter, entitled *The chance of the alternative: Characters, topos and recurring archetypal structures in the imaginary of the 20th century Fantasy literature for children*, we created a possible conceptual framework of Fantasy literature, calling on exegetes of the genre under analysis, such as Jack Zipes, Maria Nikolajeva Sergiu Pavel Dan, George Badărău and others. We also analyzed recurring archetypal topos and structures, using the term *heterotopia*, coined by Michel Foucault. The phenomenon of spatiality in Fantasy is as complex as that in reality, because man functions in direct relation to his place, which led Michel Foucault to create a new concept, called *heterotopia*, to which he attributes six valences: *heterotopia of crisis, the heterotopia of deviance, of the graveyard, compensatory, itinerant and juxtaposed*. The last part of the chapter shapes a possible portrait of the child-character in the Fantasy Literature of the 20th century. Thus, we learn that from a psychologist's point of view, a child's loneliness is more mysterious and almost impossible to express in words, being rather reflected in behaviour. If reverie is the goal of the child's alienation, it can be a wonderful thing, for utopias of immortality, fantastical projections, and worlds unparalleled in beauty and purity are born. These archetypes create indestructible bonds with the Universe, a sublime, almost poetic accord of the self with the macrocosm. Analyzing the children's escape paradigm (real or fictional), we found a stereotyping of

the search and the searcher: the desire to contextualize the alternative. Specifically, trauma (family or social) causes the desire to escape, so an orphaned child will seek parental support in a physically or spiritually present mentor, a child abused by family members or the environment will leave the place of trauma and move, even if only in a dream, towards a space of security over which he will have full control.

The second chapter, *Cartographies of the Real and the Imaginary*, develops an analysis of possible worlds, starting from scientific theories, to religious, philosophical and literary interpretations. At the same time, we consider it opportune in the economy of the work to introduce the concept of *tertiary imagination*, which refers to readers, in their role of participants in the act of reading. The child-character travels in order *to find a saving alternative*, so we identified a similarity between the purpose of the journey and the determination of the chronotope, and the spaces create some bridges of the imaginary from a real geography to an imaginary and imagined one. Many of the books in the corpus contain at least one stereotype: travel through the dream, which is only achievable within a chronotope of *beneficial isolation*, which led us to analyze the so-called *spaces of introspection*. The themes of Fantasy literature develop rhizomatically, in a non-biunivocal multiplicity of worlds, characters, experiences, recoveries, symbols, meanings and re-meanings, whose hermeneutics can have its starting point in a multitude of apparent centralities, in order to prove then as the point of return, rediscovery, identity reassurance, in a continuous metamorphosis of dimensions and directions that invariably lead to the subjective saving solution that the child finds every time. Although situated between subversion and escapism, Fantasy literature approaches escapism not as an escape from an undesirable theme, but as a construction of a salutary alternative, a type of rediscovery of the real world in which characters re-find themselves in a multiplicity of identities that converge towards identity assumption. Fantasy thematic, in this sense, processes real life by transposing it into the dyad of real-fantasy worlds, in order to find, in this way, *the best of the possible worlds*.

We considered that space and time constitute the most important coordinates of Fantasy literature, because the hero will have to find the trigger object of his need to escape, in a chronotope atypical for the common man and not validated by him. Our hero is a child, so his personality is being formed and configured by borrowing, from the collective unconscious, parental values and symbols. However, if one of the pillars is missing, the child's identity incompleteness can only be resolved by experiencing the *alternative*. Most of the time, children's literature does not foresee the violent in its construction, because it is necessary to keep the innocence intact. The spatial alternative created by

the narrators in Fantasy is interdependent with the temporal coordinate and can be as follows: (pseudo)complete - when the child-character creates a mental cycle of social completeness, i.e. he is with his parents, in a “safe place”, but he will probably feel in a short time that his initial desire does not (anymore) coincide with the result obtained; hyper happy - as a result of completing the initiatory journey and fulfilling the desire that was the starting point of the journey; plasticized – that is, the infinite replication of the same space in different shapes, colours and sizes, up to the size considered final and complete, perfect but subjective; harmful-corrupted, i.e. the placement of objects and antagonistic characters in the spaces that the main character transits, as a result of punishments considered necessary in order to mature or regain lost objects or even the unsettled self, where the hero will wage wars at the level of the subconscious until awakening and its reactivation; duplicitous-loser-evil, i.e. the place of abandonment, losses, trauma, pain, but it will be exactly the space where the child will understand the abuse, experience and somaticize the disease, where he will feel lost.

The literature intended for the youngest readers contains subversive elements, so we are justified in saying that its reception can be extended to other ages, because its limitation would constitute a possible communication barrier between parents and children, for example. Moreover, we have shown that certain branches of science use, in interventional therapies with children, stories with a fantastical subject or even patients are invited to write themselves narratives with a happy ending, so that the therapist can build his intervention plan, depending on the prevailing model that the author of the text will use. For example, the dramatic victim-aggressor-persecutor triad is the most well-known within transactional analysis, which helps to establish and understand personal autonomy and can be identified by the therapist based on the stories imagined by the patient.

In the third chapter, we set out to demonstrate that the child-character, although marked by trauma and anxiety, following the journey he undertakes, whether *quest* or *call* type, has an identity recovery, and *the best of all possible worlds* is the real one. We have identified a number of hero *complexes* that are (partially) resolved when the child is able to acknowledge trauma, overcome anxieties, and find a balance that is both salutary and necessary to move through the stages of maturation.

Identity reconstruction, in this context, is configured in two ways: either through the loop of the imaginary and returning to the real world, or through meeting the real without the imaginary veil. Thus, in the first case, the escape into the saving alternative, whether it is done by way of involuntary imagination of the type of dream or reverie, or by way of voluntary imagination of the type of self-creation, implies the fulfillment of the loop by returning to *the best of the possible worlds*. In the

second situation, the balance of the alternative is found not in the imaginary veil, but in the direct confrontation with the real, with oneself, with death, with the other, with good or with evil, with the essences of existence, for an authentic rediscovery of the path of one's own symbolizations. *The escape into the alternative* is the way that the Fantasy hero consciously chooses to resolve the various complexes that we encounter in examining the personal and family histories of the characters, whose unconscious, abyssal and therefore unknown springs to the hero, give him the same energy and the motivation to go through the whole path of identity symbolization and particular and singular solutions in solving the conflicts inherent on this path.

Fantasy literature for children is a way and, at the same time, a chance to escape into an alternative of the senses and emotions, where the lecturer can enter guided by the parent or the teacher. The child - receiver of the text - (re)finds himself in at least one of the characters he comes into contact with through the book, participates with the character in the construction of his identity, and through the act of reading he learns what courage is, what humanity means and how not to give up moral principles and values. The Fantasy genre contains elements in common with other species that capitalize on the supernatural, so that common elements within the various species are easily identifiable, such as, for example, the moralizing character of children's literature or the triumph of good over evil, regardless of the species in which it may frame the text from the point of view of literary theory.

Too little analyzed by critics, Fantasy literature falls into the grouping of reading addressed to "the little ones" and, including the use of the preposition "for" in the structure of *literature for children*, assigns it a naive label, but we consider it to be an excellent escape route in a generous alternative, loaded with therapeutic symbols. From Peter Pan, Barrie's hero, the children's fantasy genre has evolved into a new character typology, the child wizard, who possesses and knows how to wield a magic wand. The supernatural can also be encountered in the real world without the need to enter the portal, and the representation of evil is much more obvious. Lord Voldemort is Harry's enemy because he killed his parents, while Peter was unfazed by the fact that he has no mother. Dorothy is a simple, orphaned girl, but her experience in the glittering and opulent Emerald City is in stark contrast to her modest lifestyle in the arid land of Kansas. Lyra, on the other hand, is a tough girl, at least in appearance, and her path is difficult, especially because it takes place in the plane of reality, she does not travel through the medium of dreams, and facing evil puts her life in danger. The Fantasy genre does not re-articulate its fundamental constitutive parameters with the passage of time, but its guidelines – motifs, symbols, characters, worlds, times – deepen and decline each on new specific

coordinates, enriching in parallel the initially configured aspects. In the dawn of the 20th century Fantasy novel - Peter Pan, for example - death necessarily appears in an allegorical light, and the encounter with it receives the valence of the image, a trans-reality, the crossing of which is easy to return to the re-symbolized world. Instead, in the Late Fantasy novel – Harry Potter, the encounter with death is a real one, not hidden by the veil of the image, being a concrete (physical) encounter whose transcendence always involves a bodily effort.

In the last chapter of our research we demonstrated the flexibility of the boundaries between the arts and showed common elements between Fantasy literature and music, painting or theatre. Not only the visual arts, architecture, sculpture and painting were influenced by Fantasy literature, mythological creatures, occult images and symbols, but also certain musical genres, among which we referred, in the present context, to *black metal*. For example, Tolkien's mythology has inspired numerous *black metal bands* through its apocalyptic imagery of orcs, wizards, hobbits and elves. Music of this type has been considered the prerogative of "nerds", anti-socials, behavior typical of metalheads, hidden in thieves' dens, sheltered from the superficiality of others, but there is surely something deeper than Venn-diagrammed syllogisms and bigots eager to demonstrate the evil and heresies that inhabit this musical genre. Let's not forget that good triumphs over evil, that there are marketing strategies and, above all, that many aspects aim at symbol and allegory, thematic, imagery, sound, all of which give the musical style modernist accents. Also, mythological creatures become leitmotifs in songs, even names of bands, musicians adapt their stage names to them or even by paronymy adapt them, increasing the *dark*, controversial and shocking character. The underground culture did not let this book go unnoticed. For example, the band *Black Sabbath* releases the song *The Wizard*, whose lyrics are inspired by Gandalf's speech. *Burzum*, another *metal band*, even has its name inspired by the dark, fictional language spoken in Mordor.

At the same time, we tried to illustrate the ways in which the arts influence each other and which are the points of view to which the authors adhere, but also how the methods, techniques and artistic procedures have evolved over time. For example, Fantázia from Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* has a homonymous world, but characterized by the valences of evil, in Walt Disney's *Fantasia* (1940). The musical consists of eight parts, to which as many masterpieces of classical music have been attributed, of which the part orchestrated by the creation of Modest Mussorgsky, entitled *Night on Bald Mountain*, caught our attention. Although the production is dedicated to children, in this part, the devil Chernabog summons the tireless spirits of Darkness from their graves on Bald Mountain. In a terrifying ritual of darkness, the spirits envelop the cathedral, the

rush of sins that the demons embody is dizzying, and Chernabog's desire is to clothe the world in eternal darkness. Disney, it seems, does not need a superhero to save the universe, because when the light comes, evil disappears. There is, however, the idea that the battle between good and evil is not over, and the succession of night and day will constitute the recurrence of evil, hope being the classicized stereotype of the triumph of light over darkness. The boundaries between the arts are not fixed, and the analysis of the texts from various variations of rock music is due to the similarity with Fantasy literature, not only at the thematic level - travel, escape into the alternative through dream or reverie, maturation - or the use of certain common onomastics, but also because of its location on the fringes of musical art, just as the genre in question is considered *a minor literature*.

Children do not fear any manifestation of evil, no matter how hideous the form it takes, but what causes anxiety at a young age is the possibility of losing loved ones. The fantastic reveals a threat, a rupture, an unusual, almost unbearable rupture in the real world. In other words, the fantastic is a term whose uses are among the most diverse: from the association with the imaginary or the imagination, to a possible explanation of phenomena that transcend what we call normality. That is why its definitions are so diverse and enter into contextual games, which keep a common element, even if not expressed overtly, at least suggested: the temporary suspension of the consciousness of reality, and the equivalence between the dyad of worlds to be made by compensation (in the alternative we find the object of desire), respecting the deontic logic, i.e. the balance between duty, prohibition and permission. **The chance of the alternative** lies in the power of the imaginary, as a territory unfettered by the constraints of exact sciences, so that conventional construction with elements of mimesis from reality is possible, but also according to its own laws.

*The magic of the imaginary* which consists in the possibility of understanding the speech of animals disappears at a certain age, when, we believe, the child begins to understand that eternity does not belong to the inhabitants of the earth. From this point, an extremely interesting picture emerges of ***the child who does not want to grow up*** and who wants to remain in a universe of the miraculous, where suffering cannot touch him and, why not, far from strict parental control. In other words, childhood / eternal infancy defines the absolute alternative.

Our journey into the Fantasy universe is configured according to the principle of circularity spotted in Bastian's AURYN, the identification of a possible conceptual frame constituting the drawing of an imaginary map that follows the route of the *alternative* through the intersection of *chronotopic* diversity. The hiatus in the *adventurous regime* aims to reveal and resolve certain complexes of early childhood in order to recover, re-construct and assume the symbolic identity in *the*



*best of possible worlds*. Art is the process of sublimation, and contextualization takes place in the *itinerant heterotopia* formulated in Michel Foucault's fifth principle of heterotopia. The timeliness of models in Fantasy literature is maintained by refreshing the images of heroes, as in the case of Alice, the Carrollian character. The author Patricia Goodrich confesses, in the debut of the volume of poems entitled *Hunting for stones in Transylvania*, that there were books that marked her life, and the first poetic texts reiterate the image of the little girl who “likes to see all the books she has / arranged beautifully in a library so they can choose the next one.”<sup>6</sup> The poems have a confessional character, and the artist's admiration turns into self-identification with the character that had impressed her in childhood: “I was Alice, the little girl grown up.”<sup>7</sup> Introjection does not take place at the age of childhood, but later, which strengthens our very hypothesis, that reading books with and about children is a way of assuming and integrating unsymbolized trauma in childhood, taking place at the moment of its awareness, even at the adult age.

As possible openings for future research, we propose to outline some portraits of the characters, from the perspective of the evolution of technologies and paradigm changes, from Ileana Cosânzeana - the eternal female character in the fairy tale, the archetype of femininity and beauty, to Klara - the soulless girl and, yet so human, Kazuo Ishiguro's heroine.

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<sup>6</sup> Patricia Goodrich, *Vânătoare de pietre în Transilvania*. Traducere în limba română de Casandra Ioan, Constanța, Editura EX PONTO, 2017, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 9.

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