

Andrei OIȘTEANU, *Ordine și Haos. Mit și magie în cultura tradițională românească* (Order and Chaos. Myth and Magic in Romanian Traditional Culture), 2nd revised edition (Iași: Editura Polirom, 2013), 624 p.

Anca CHIOREAN
Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

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E-mail: anca_chiorean91@yahoo.com

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“The Romanian people were born Christian” is a phrase that was always repeated obsessively, with pride, at the beginning of every Romanian history lesson. Nonetheless, this apparent lack of a Romanian pantheon cannot quench the thirst for “tales of gods” and cannot generate a sense of resignation and a need for refuge in other peoples’ mythological tales, but it gathers all hermeneutical forces, channelling them towards folklore. Andrei Oișteanu offers precisely this sort of reading code of the Romanian folklore, with the purpose of unearthing the inner springs that had initially actuated this mechanism of communication with the superior plane, through ritual.

The superior dimension of common imagination, explored in art and literature, is populated by archetypes, laden with a type of symbolism that transcends the form of words and languages. It represents a superior dimension of primal energy and an eternal source of inspiration. That very same dimension of common imagination, endowed with living faith, becomes mythology, in which case inspiration becomes revelation. Religious syncretism, in the first centuries A.D., was usually a political solution for protruding a single, unifying system of beliefs to the pagan people. The idea was not to completely eliminate archaic beliefs, due to the fact that such a manoeuvre would have met a particularly violent resistance, but to gradually eclipse the archaic beliefs, to slowly superpose them through cohabitation and synthesis between the two systems. This dimension of common imagination that thus became mythology still exists in a secondary layer, deeply buried in the human ritual consciousness. The traditional Romanian culture is an example in which this mythical consciousness still manifests, covered by syncretism in a Christian aura. This particular mythical consciousness later becomes folklore and, in the end, it becomes folk literature. Thus, an entire system of desacralisation will occur, a system which Andrei Oișteanu will traverse backwards, in order to reach the original sacred plane?, the echoes that are still produced by the pre-Christian beliefs.

The matter of study in *Ordine și Haos. Mit și magie în cultura tradițională românească* (Order and Chaos. Myth and Magic in Romanian Traditional Culture) is represented by Romanian carols, fairytales and legends, but they are brought into discussion in order to contextualize certain ritual events that take place within an intelligible time-space, populated by motifs and symbols that, together, weave a mythical time, in the form of a timeless loop: cosmogony and eschatology are no longer isolated events, within a past that cannot be appointed in history with certainty;

they are cyclical events that take place in every moment “of passing”; Order and Chaos are no longer states of the universe that had been irredeemably established. They are mobile states of constant boiling. The purpose of a ritual is to interact with these exterior elements, offering people the chance to contribute to keeping the cosmic balance.

The ritual, as a *human action*, has the final purpose of keeping the timeless loop in its primordial balance. What is distinctively interesting to see is not the ritual itself, the pre-established steps within a human action. What needs to be explored is the intelligible made sensible through ritual, i. e. what takes place *inside* the loop. This is the primary difference between Oișteanu’s book and other contemporary studies regarding the Romanian mythical consciousness. He does not give detailed descriptions of the steps required by certain rituals, with transient explanations for the meanings of every object or gesture. Oișteanu explores the space that certain ritual addresses.

Lucian Boia affirms that a myth offers a key, allowing access to a system of interpretation, but also to an ethic code (a form of behaviour). It is strongly integrating and simplifying, reducing the diversity and complexity of a phenomenon to an axis that is privileged of? interpretation. It introduces a principle of order in the universe and in human lives, a principle that is assigned to the needs and ideals of a certain society.¹ Even in the absence of a pantheon, it would have been impossible for the Romanian mythical and archetypal consciousness to not manifest itself. Even more so, in the absence of a pantheon, in the absence of “tales of gods,” meant to incarnate cosmogonical and eschatological philosophies, Romanians embody pure philosophy in archaic rituals. The elaborate explanations for the rituals are either hiding behind a passive voice (“it is said that...,” “this is how it is done” etc.), or the Christian hybridization suffocated what was left of the magical consciousness that would have been able to translate everything into words.

The analysis of carols such as *Furarea astrelor* (The stealing of the stars) suggests that, in spite of the fact that the Christian overlapping had indeed taken place after the aforementioned syncretism, it is visible only at the level of words. Their *subject* is the one that invokes the pre-Christian layer. The ritual that takes place in moments of passing, of palingenesis, is not the one that had been adapted to Christianity, but the other way around: transposing a mandatory ritual incontinence at a divine level, incontinence practiced by people during the celebrations regarding the renewal of the year. This refers to an archaic and orgy-like behaviour, but no less ritual than, for example, the abstinent-ascetical behaviour during the fast that precedes the celebrations² and the carol includes the Christian divinity and the saints in this ritual, imposing upon them a sort of behaviour that is quite un-canonical – the abuses are even more obvious. Saint John is “relishing” in a “fair beauteous bed” (...) and/or is

¹ Lucian Boia, *Pentru o istorie a imaginarului* (For a History of Imagination) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2000), 40.

² See Andrei Oișteanu, *Ordine și Haos. Mit și magie în cultura tradițională românească*, 23 (“transpunerea la nivel divin a unui obligatoriu desfrâu ritual, pe care-l practică oamenii în timpul sărbătorilor legate de înnoirea anului. Este vorba de un comportament anarhic și orgiastic, dar nu mai puțin ritual, ca, de pildă, comportamentul cumpătat-ascetic din timpul postului care precedă sărbătorile”).

drinking wine until he gets drunk.³ Therefore, the idea that the Cosmos' regression into Chaos is followed by the birth of a new Cosmos represents the archaic belief *to which* Christianity later adapted – The arbitrary and late overlap of celebrating the birth of Jesus over this complex archaic mythical ritual of cosmogonist structure generated a multitude of traditions and customs.⁴

The terrestrial effects of the syncretism, in the space outside the “loop,” form a long list of mutations suffered by the archetypes: The god or the dragon slaying hero became Saint George. The god of storm was replaced by Saint Elijah (...). The goddess of fertility was assimilated with Saint Mary. The evil spirits became different states of Judas or Scaraoțchi [the devil].⁵ But even in the case of legends that appear to have strictly biblical roots, their nucleus consists of pagan beliefs regarding a continuous cosmogony. For instance, the myth of the flood, although it is a singular biblical event, is constantly relived through rituals based on reasons that no longer regard the religious Christian canon – The meteorological elements are thusly banished: an axe is thrust “with its blade facing upwards in the door sill” (...). The folk belief that justifies this sort of practices is as following: “When they [the dragons that bring storms, hails etc.] see the axe, or the knife, or the shovel, or the scythe, or any other sharp metal object, they leave in the fear of being pierced”⁶ – elements that outline the fantastic tale of the myth, and that also form the connection between the sacred space inside the “loop” and the terrestrial space. On the other hand, Oișteanu also offers the philosophical side of the myth that transcends the purely functional need for protection against a flood. If the ark, in the structure of the legend of the flood, is a symbol for a house, *The Ark* is a micro cosmos that has the purpose of regenerating the macro cosmos: *the ark* floats on the *primordial Ocean* (the aquatic Chaos), (...) like a *cosmogonical egg* (or, more precisely, a biogonical egg).⁷

The archetypal elements of dendrolatry are also found in the Romanian archaic belief. The axis as an *Axis et Imago Mundi* appears in different states, depending on the situation, but it is heavy with magical attributes – sacred axis, layer of the god / layer of the daemon, cosmic axis (...), votive axis, judgment axis, oath axis and swearing axis etc.⁸ Different species of axes appear in different cultures with sacred attributes. In

³ Ibid., 23 (“excesele sunt și mai evidente. Sf. Ion se ‘libovește’ într-un ‘pat mândru frumos’ (...) sau/și bea vin până se îmbată”).

⁴ Ibid., 19 (“Suprapunerea arbitrară și târzie a celebrării nașterii lui Isus cu acest arhaic complex mito-ritual de structură cosmogonică a generat un amalgam de tradiții și obiceiuri”).

⁵ Ibid., 73 (“Zeul sau eroul ucigător de balaur a devenit Sf. Gheorghe. Zeul furtunii a fost înlocuit de Sf. Ilie (...). Zeița fertilității a fost asimilată cu Sf. Maria. Duhurile rele au devenit ipostaze ale lui Iuda sau Scaraoțchi”).

⁶ Ibid., 77 (“Stihiile meteorologice sunt alungate astfel: se înfige toporul ‘cu muchia în sus în pragul ușii’ (...). Credința populară care justifică astfel de practici este următoarea: ‘Aceștia [balaurii aducători de furtună, grindină etc.], când văd săcurea, ori cuțitul, ori sapa, ori coasa și orice obiect de fier ascuțit, se bat în alte părți de teamă să nu fie străpuși”).

⁷ Ibid., 83 (“*Arca* este un microcosmos care are menirea de a regenera macrocosmosul: pe *Oceanul primordial* (Haosul acvatic) plutește *arca*, (...) ca un *ou cosmogonic* (sau, mai exact, *ou biogonic*)”).

⁸ Ibid., 155 (“arbore sacru, lăcaș al zeului / daimonului, arbore cosmic (...), arbore consacrat, arbore de judecată, de jurământ și de investire etc.”).

the case of Romanian culture, the maple seems to be the most often encountered axle at this metaphorical border between heaven and earth, not only as a natural, lively entity, but also as an organic tool that is introduced in the ritual: sounding the maple semantron (“toaca”), the “Romanian” Noah casts the devil that ruins his ark.⁹

Somewhere outside the timeless loop, Oișteanu identifies the “solomonari,” the conjurers, anchorites, Getae-Moesian priests, probably followers of the Zamolxian? doctrine.¹⁰ The author then observes their diachronic evolution within the folk beliefs and legends, thus producing an elaborate portrait of the anchorites who simultaneously live in both times (terrestrial and mythical). What is particularly interesting to observe is the fact that the conjurers’ magical attributes take shape, first and foremost, in their ability to tame the meteorological phenomenon – the Chaos principle once again appears as a flood, or as a dragon that brings the storm.

Order and Chaos are concepts that have proven themselves unstable, mobile within the lines of their characteristics. In the chapter entitled *In the Labyrinth* (*În labirint*), John D. Barrow puts forth a quantic description of the universe in the form of a ball of yarn: “the universe, with the enormous densities in which the quantic attributes become overwhelming, behaves like a four-dimensional ball. But then, some cosmologists started to question what would happen if the surface of the ball was not uniformly smooth: let’s suppose that some tubes existed that would connect one side of the surface with another (...). These tubular connections have been named “wormholes”. They are connections between the time-space regions that would otherwise be inaccessible to one another (...). The presence of wormholes with a diameter equal to the distance covered by light at that certain moment (approximately 10^{-33} centimeters) is probably a consequence of the chaotic interconnection state of space.”¹¹ This is not the first time when the mythical consciousness intuitively created congruent metaphorical scenarios – describing the image of the labyrinth in the timeless space, Oișteanu avers that Chaos can be seen as “a type of Order”. A *paradoxical Order* – insofar as it is governed by a single law, that of lawlessness¹² and he describes the universe labyrinth using the image of a ball of yarn, not only as a solution given by Ariadne, but also as an initial general state of the primordial universe. Thus, this mythical thinking precedes the scientific thinking – truly, as a polyvalent mythical and symbolic motif, the labyrinth had also been interpreted as a

⁹ Ibid., 154 (“Bătând în toaca de paltin, ‘românul’ Noe alungă diavolul care-i năruia arca”).

¹⁰ Ibid., 202 (“preoți-anahoreți geto-misieni, adepți probabil ai doctrinei zamolxiene”).

¹¹ John D. Barrow, *Originea universului* (The Origin of the Universe) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007), 124, 125 (“universul, la densitățile uriașe la care atributele cuantice devin covârșitoare, se comportă ca o minge cvadridimensională. Apoi însă, unii cosmologi au început să se întrebe ce s-ar întâmpla dacă suprafața mingii nu ar fi uniform netedă: să presupunem că ar exista niște tuburi care ar lega o parte a suprafeței de alta (...). Aceste conexiuni tubulare au fost numite ‘găuri de vierme’ [*wormholes*]. Ele sunt legături între regiuni spațiotemporale care altminteri ar fi inaccesibile una alteia. (...) Prezența găurilor de vierme cu un diametru egal cu distanța străbătută de lumină la acel moment (aproximativ 10^{-33} centimetri) este o consecință probabil a stării de interconexiune haotică a spațiului”).

¹² See Andrei Oișteanu, *Ordine și Haos. Mit și magie în cultura tradițională românească*, 305 (“Haosul poate fi privit ca ‘un fel de Ordine’. O *Ordine paradoxală* – în măsura în care este guvernată de o singură lege, cea a lipsei de legi”).

“representation of the starry universe (...). In the Romanian space, this mythical-symbolic interpretation looms in both the astral way in which some labyrinths are represented, (...) but also in the way the Milky Way is named in folk tradition and the decorative motif that embodies it (...): “The Mazy Way,” “The Tangled Road”.¹³ Before diving into analyzing the ways in which this motif appears in Romanian carols, it is even more interesting to study the ways in which this motif appears in other forms, but forms which suggest a type of archaic quantum mechanics.

If archaic thinking predicts in colourful ways certain aspects of analytical, “educated” thinking, one step further would introduce infantile archaic thinking, capable of producing reasoning and value judgment that are endowed with an even stronger faith than adult mythical thinking – the ability to wonder is the only thing that we would need in order to become good philosophers. All young children have this ability, this is clear. In a few months, in the beginning, they are pushed into a completely new reality,¹⁴ an idea that has also been explored by Oişteanu, analyzing children’s folklore: the defining aspects of child psychology are not only the characteristics that deviate and modify the magical and ritual manifestations and the mythical concepts of the adults, but also (or especially) the ones that turn a child into a good receptor: the excessive curiosity, great power of assimilation and retention, the tendency to imitate adult behaviour, the predilection to the fantastic and miraculous, the spontaneous solidarity with nature, etc.¹⁵ This implies that the product of infantile mythical-symbolic imagination is in its purest state, before the erosion of maturity. Without looking for explanations in psychoanalysis, this place of infantile imaginary, being the closest one to the intelligible plane, is populated by scenes that would have a very powerful impact on a “more experienced” receptor – ritual beheadings, human and alimentary sacrifices, human authorities invested with supernatural powers (all with the purpose of taming the meteorological phenomenon), and certain aspects of an almost playful demonology.

Throughout the entire book, the parallels between the Romanian practices and magical-ritual beliefs and the universal ones are not constructed synthetically, or comparatively. They appear within a Rosetta Stone-like system, enabling a system of translation of beliefs from one culture to another. In this case, just like any other

¹³ Ibid., 309 (“Într-adevăr, motiv mito-simbolic polivalent, labirintul a fost interpretat și ca ‘o reprezentare a universului înstelat’ (...). În spațiul românesc, această interpretare mito-simbolică transpare atât în felul astral în care sunt reprezentate unele labirinturi, (...) cât și din felul cum este denumită în popor *Calea Lactee* și motivul decorativ care o întruchiează (...): ‘Calea întortocheată’, ‘Drumul încâlcit’”).

¹⁴ Jostein Gaarder, *Lumea Sofiei* (Sophie’s World) (Bucharest: Univers, 1998), 17 (“CAPACITATEA DE A NE MIRA ESTE SINGURUL LUCRU DE CARE AM AVEA NEVOIE PENTRU A DEVENI BUNI FILOSOFI. / Toți copiii mici au această aptitudine, asta e limpede. În câteva luni, la început, ei sunt împinși într-o realitate complet nouă”).

¹⁵ See Andrei Oişteanu, *Ordine și Haos. Mit și magie în cultura tradițională românească*, 377 (“definitorii pentru psihologia infantilă nu sunt numai caracteristicile care deviază și modifică manifestările magico-rituale și concepțiile mitice ale adulților, ci și (sau mai ales) cele care fac din copil un bun receptor al acestora: curiozitate excesivă, mare putere de asimilare și memorare, tendință de a imita comportamentul adulților, înclinație către miraculos și fantastic, solidaritate spontană cu natura etc.”).

translation, the original will contain nuances and subtleties that are absolutely specific to the culture they are part of. A translation of belief in different cultures inevitably implies a diachronic approach of its language, in direct relationship with the symbol at a semiotic level – the association between the birth of the universe and the act of weaving can be explained through the demiurge-like quality of weaving. The ball of yarn (*massa confusa*) is a *prima materia* in the hands of the Demiurge, who then transforms it – through a rhythmic and repetitive action (row by row) – into a matter perfectly *shaped, ordered* in a Cartesian manner (Lat. *ordo* = row, line) (...). The two actions of the Demiurge – ordering and “weaving” the World – are related not only from a symbolic perspective, but also from an etymologic perspective: lat. *ordior* = “to weave a fabric,” lat. *ordino* = “to order, to organize”.¹⁶ The syllogism through which the connections between the planes, beliefs and the evolution of metamorphosis of symbols are formed will construct this space within the loop: many of the terms that appoint the *locality* have roots or are related to terms that appoint the *borders*: see the relationship between Alb. *fšat*, Rom. *sat* (old Rom. *fsat* in *Psaltirea Scheiană*) and Lat. *fossatum* = “chamfer, surrounding furrow” (...) and *orbis* = “circle,”¹⁷ syllogism that regards the evolution of the sound of the image that echoes in its transcription in the sensible plane, through the circular form of the “borders,” of the village.

This second edition of the book contains an author’s note that brings into discussion both the first edition, from 2008,¹⁸ and an edition prior to that one, from 1989.¹⁹ The main differences between the first edition, from 2004, and the present book consist of elaborating chapters VII and VIII (*Narcotics and Hallucinogens*²⁰ and *The Speech of Angels*²¹), chapters which have meanwhile gained their textual autonomy and have become writings independent of this book: either in books of their own, or within independent studies, published in a separate book. The ideas that are presented in the chapter entitled *Narcotics and Hallucinogens in the Carpathian-Danube Space. The Usage of Psychotropic Plants for Religious and Magical-Ritual Purposes*²² have been elaborated by the author in a previous book, *Narcotics in*

¹⁶ Ibid., 313 (“Asocierea cosmogenezei cu actul țesutului își are explicația în calitatea demiurgică a țeserii. Ghemul de ață (*massa confusa*) este o *prima materia* în mâna Demiurgului, care o transformă – printr-o acțiune ritmată și repetitivă (rând după rând) – într-o materie perfect *orânduită*, cartezian *ordonată* (lat. *ordo* = rând, șir) (...). Cele două acțiuni demiurgice – ordonarea și ‘urzirea’ Lumii – nu se înrudesc doar din perspectivă simbolică, ci și din perspectivă etimologică: lat. *ordior* = ‘a urzi o țesătură’, lat. *ordino* = ‘a ordona, a orândui, a organiza’”).

¹⁷ Ibid., 582, 583 (“Mulți dintre termenii care desemnează *localitatea* au ca rădăcină sau sunt înrudiți cu termeni care desemnează *hotarul*: vezi relația dintre alb. *fšat*, rom. *sat* (vechi rom. *fsat* în *Psaltirea Scheiană*) și lat. *fossatum* = ‘șanț, brazdă înconjurătoare’ (...) și *orbis* = ‘cerc’”).

¹⁸ Andrei Oișteanu, *Ordine și Haos. Mit și magie în cultura tradițională românească* (Order and Chaos. Myth and Magic in Romanian Traditional Culture) (Iași: Polirom, 2004).

¹⁹ Andrei Oișteanu, *Motive și semnificații mito-simbolice în cultura tradițională românească* (Mytho-Symbolical Motifs and Meanings in Romanian Traditional Culture) (Bucharest: Minerva, 1989).

²⁰ *Narcotice și halucinogene*.

²¹ *Graiul Îngerilor*.

²² *Narcotice și halucinogene în spațiul carpato-dunărean. Utilizarea cu caracter religios și magico-ritual a plantelor psihotrope*.

Romanian Culture: History, Religion and Literature,²³ as well as in an article published in the *Journal of Literary History and Theory*.²⁴ Part I of this book is found unabridged in *Order and Chaos*, its subject regarding this general idea of ascending into the intelligible plane of the timeless loop. What stands out, in conjunction with the previously expressed ideas, is the fact that the lucid and “corroded” state of consciousness seems to be insufficient for achieving a certain form of asceticism. The contact through ritual with the timeless loop is mediated by a certain altered state of consciousness.

Unlike the first, 2004 edition of the book, this second edition contains an additional subchapter of chapter VII, namely *Involuntary Intoxications*.²⁵ This element itself underlines the duality that characterizes the inner space of the loop, described not only in the terms of Order and Chaos, but also through the opposition between good and evil: in the terrestrial space, the involuntary intoxication, in the absence of a ritual, has adverse effects, and in the plane of translating them into words, the dynamics between the symbol and *semiosis* is capsized. What may have seemed symbolic in the text, or what may have seemed to be a vegetal metaphor for a certain condition is, in fact, a rudimentary reference to a poisonous plant that was mixed in with the wheat bread – Vasile Alecsandri knew a thing or two about the neurotic effects caused by the consumption of cockle. Only once the “bad seed” was destroyed, could the “kindness” replace “enmity” (*The Hora of Unity*, 1856). The folk saying also cited by Creangă: “May the enmity among us disappear, and the cockle from the fields”.²⁶ Thus, the altered state of consciousness, in the absence of a ritual, is the one that ascends into Chaos. By introducing this subchapter in his study, Oişteanu completes the description of the forked road to the superior dual plane.

I have previously mentioned the strong connection that children have with this superior plan. Chapter VIII of this second edition elaborates the way in which, through children, people have tried to discover the language used in a time before the mythical Babel, the primordial language that is clean of the parasitical nuances, specific to every culture. These experiments consist of isolating the children from society, in order to observe the language that they produce in the absence of any influences: not perverted by society, physically and mentally robust, born and raised in the woods, among animals (a representation of Paradise), “the wild child” could have spoken the language of Adam.²⁷ But their production proved to be limited to noise, without any actual articulation of syllables. But this could lead to the conclusion that the Word itself does not hold spirituality or magic, but the *sound* does, in a form of sacred phonetics. Speculatively, this generates the explanation for the fact that rituals contain song and

²³ Andrei Oişteanu, *Narcotice în cultura română: Istorie, religie şi literatură* (Narcotics in Romanian Culture: History, Religion and Literature), (Iaşi: Polirom, 2010).

²⁴ *Revista de istorie şi teorie literară*.

²⁵ *Intoxicări involuntare*.

²⁶ See Andrei Oişteanu, *Ordine şi Haos. Mit şi magie în cultura tradiţională românească*, 432 (“Vasile Alecsandri ştia câte ceva despre efectele nevrotice provocate de consumul de neghină. Doar odată distrusă ‘iarba rea’, ‘omenia’ poate să ia locul ‘duşmăniei’ (*Hora unirii*, 1856). Vorba populară, citată şi de Creangă: ‘Vrajba dintre noi să piară, şi neghina din ogoare’”).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 551 (“Nepervertit de societate, robust fizic şi psihic, născut-crescut în pădure, printre animale (o reprezentare a Paradisului), ‘copilul sălbatic’ ar fi putut să vorbească în limba lui Adam”).

music. In this situation, the Pythagorean “music of the spheres,” *Musica Universalis*, would be the closest version of the language of the angels.

It is natural that the studies that later gained their scriptural independence were also included in this book, for a broader synthesis of the ideas regarding the Romanian archaic beliefs and rituals. But what is even more interesting to notice is the evolution of the book’s structure, comparing it to the version from 1989. During such a historical period of national chaos, the communist censorship still held its power of desacralization (remaining in this analytical register): the communist activists feared not only ideas, but also words. After December 1989 I had the opportunity to see a list of terms that had been banned by censorship. One of them, ranked first on the list, was “freedom”. Others were “chaos” and “magic”.²⁸ The “ideas,” in the most Platonic sense possible, translate into the sensible plane through words, they themselves having the intelligible consignment and addressing the sacred dimension. Even more so, the edition from 1989 was robbed of forms of *mimesis* – the later edition was illustrated and thus constructs not only a translation of images into words, escaped from the suppression of the censorship, but also a translation of ideas into images, resulting in a multidimensional study, in both the depth of the discourse and its structural surface: *Mytho-Symbolical Motifs and Meanings in Romanian Traditional Culture* has five primary chapters and seven subchapters; later, in 2004, the magic numbers are completed – nine primary chapters, with seven subchapters each. The confession-like note at the beginning of the second edition, from 2013, denotes a type of relief after this “straightening,” fifteen years later: “Only later, in 2004, I published this book at the Polirom Publishing House in its true form, without censorship exclusions, bearing its original title, having nine (not five) studies in its table of contents, illustrations etc. I intentionally considered this form to be the first edition of the book,”²⁹ and in 2013 this book came out with a global and complete view upon the sacred space, along with this incipient note on the fact that the struggle between Order and Chaos, between the sacred and the profane, takes place not only in the intelligible plane. “On earth as it is in Heaven,” as we well know.

Andrei Oișteanu offers, through *Order and Chaos. Myth and Magic in Romanian Traditional Culture* a Rosetta Stone-like construction of universal mythology, focusing on the Romanian culture within a radiogram of the mythical consciousness that was buried under many layers of religious and etymological drifts. His book is a revealing, detailed study of the pure archaic layer that lies under conceptions like the one according to which “The Romanian people were born Christian”.

²⁸ Ibid., 5 (“Activiștii comuniști nu se temeau doar de idei, ci și de cuvinte. După decembrie 1989 am avut ocazia să văd o listă de termeni interziși de cenzură. Unul din ei, aflat pe primul loc, era ‘libertate’. Alții erau ‘haos’ și ‘magie’”).

²⁹ Ibid., 6 (“Abia mai târziu, în 2004, am publicat la Editura Polirom acest volum în adevărata sa formă, fără excluderi cenzoriale, purtând titlul inițial, având nouă (nu cinci) studii în cuprins, ilustrații etc. Am considerat anume această formă ca fiind prima ediție a cărții”).