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**The “post”- or the “past” Mircea Eliade?**

One hundred years after Mircea Eliade - writer, essayist and historian of religions- was born, his work, structured on multiple levels of the imaginary (literary, religious, social, political, utopian) shows a complex plural spiritual identity. What determined this configuration of his work might have been his belonging to the South-Eastern European space, a bridge between the purely European Western culture and the Oriental one (*Încercarea labirintului*, 50), as well as to a marginal space that states its specific values by adapting to the spiritual values of other “major” cultures.

Eliade’s literature, open to all styles, recover, reshape and use a huge cultural deposit, in a ludic way. For Eliade, the dominant features of Romanian folk culture are the polymorphism and the synthetic spirit (*Insula lui Euthanasius*, 132), which nourished the universal encyclopaedia-like spirit specific to his work and to the other great Romanian writers (*Destinuri românești*).

Mircea Eliade’s literary work starts from the idea that the rebirth of literature may take place through the modern writer’s rediscovery of myths. The author sets up his new view on the old Romanian traditions; and attempts to penetrate beyond the historic horizon (that of folkloric creation) into the archaic one, in which he sees four axes: “Dionysian Thracia, Orphic Greece, Imperial and Christian Rome.” (*Destinul culturii românești*). “An offspring of mythology”, Eliade’s literature would realize the synthesis of this polymorphous structure which is the ground of both the novelistic thematic and the characters typology and of the levels of codification of significance. For the author, archaic spiritual universe has a Platonician structure and between modern and archaic imaginary there is a connection generated by the capacity to create autonomous, real worlds, parallel to the daily universe; in other words, he invests literature with an ontological value, ready to propose behavioral patterns and new mental syntheses and, through this, it resembles myth (*Jurnal*, I, 156; 28; 586). Its abstract, specific character is to be “rediscovered” in the assimilation of ideas in the Eliadean narrative.

Eliade’s paratext and the scientific and essayistic texts correlate the mythic with the literary imaginary and interprets the relation author-

work-receiver. The author is a namer, a “revolutionary” of the anthropocosmologic universe and, in his opinion, the creation is one of religious nature, a new expression of the human-divine interrelation (*Încercarea labirintului*, 73; 109) The work, authentic and exemplary, with ontological value, harmonizes the noologic dimension with the cosmologic one. “The whole work” is a magical game based upon the dialogal relation between science and art, implying altogether a common metaphysical dimension. The hermeneutic reading, the internal perspective and the tabular technique are the premises of the “whole” reception that the author aims at (*Memorii*, I, 351). The production and the reading of the text are integrated within the universal rhythm of eternal return (*Fragmentarium*, 92). The reading enriches the textual dimension with new meanings and the relation of cooperation between author and reader allows the seizing of the archetypal substratum and of the ritual function of reading, which, like writing, takes over the function of religion and myth (*Oceanografie*, 9). From this perspective, they are provided with a soteriologic function, a palinogenetic character and are set up as a festive calendar of a textual type. Along the same line, the “figure” of the reading associates the myth of the androgynous with that of creative death, which multiplies the author and his work into readers (*ibidem*, 195, *Comentarii la legenda Meșterului Manole*, 455). The (re)creative act is presented as *mimesis* of ritual sacrifice, in a Dionysian perspective (cf. Frye, 150). Writing and reading are, for Eliade, mythic modalities of man’s coming into being, as man dwells a “semiotic”, symbolic and referential universe (*Memorii*, I, 355).

The symbolic unity of the whole work is constituted according to recondite logic; it does not polarize with the mimetic dimension, but it is correlated with other systems of symbolization, such as myth and rite (*Insula lui Euthanasius*, 17). The symbolic connotations of everyday places are revealed in Eliade’s literature according to the logic of hierophany, whereas those of temporal rhythms and those of passage –*in spiritu*– by means of reading, dream or show. The central spatial-temporal symbol of the theme of creation and of their meanings is represented by the child (*Jurnal*, II, 111). The author relates his “creating” heroes in his novels to this ecumenical archaic symbol of the beginnings, of creation and rebirth. A central element in the Eliadean structuring of the novel, which distinguishes thus from that of the new novel, the character does not pastiche forms of an old humanism, but, in relation to the above mentioned symbol, he projects the possibility

to create a new humanism placed under the sign of the mystery-related and “ecumenical” divinity: Dionysos.

The Eliadean hero, for whom to know the camouflaged essences of the world has the ontological value of authentic feeling, struggling between failure and creation, is the meeting place of the *coincidentia oppositorum*. His ideal, of spiritual regeneration, is heroic: to reach a planetary „potential conscience” and be creative, in order to set free by the „terror of history”. The various ways that the hero takes in order to reach his ideal are, successively, the abrutization, the magic and the mystic. They are reminiscent of the Platonician tripartite soul structure: (appetitive, sensitive, rational) taken over by Kierkegaard’s philosophy for the division of men in three classes. The hero, whose archetype is the god of metamorphoses, would represent in the Eliadean novels various hypostases of the twice-born ego, as mortal and immortal.

Mircea Eliade belongs to 1930 generation, adjacent to the modernist direction, but distinct of it. The writer is not interested to point out the affective memory and characters’ soul complexity. In the new novel of authenticity the accent falls on intense and dangerous living and spiritual experiences; the contesting madness, the creative flight that make the mobile unity of a plural personality that transforms ontologically speaking, virility, youth, conquering ardor and the nostalgia of world unity are his domineering traits in the novels *Romanul adolescentului miop*, *Gaudeamus* and *Isabel și apele diavolului*. The failures and ceremonialization of experiences –ritualic passages- the feeling of love and the assuming of existence in its wholeness, as life and death, the assuming of the responsibility for one’s own ontological mutations in confronting one’s own destiny form the “scenario” of the novelistic confrontations in *Maitreyi*, *Șantier* and *Întoarcerea din rai*. The mitemes of violent death and of the orphan are related to the orphic theme of rebirth. The *hooligans* in the novel with the same name accomplish a Dionysian mission: they pull down the “idols” with a view to instituting the “heresy as norm”, of the vital force of creation that lays the foundation of a new type of humanity. Apollonized, the image if the radical change of humanity is placed under the ecumenical symbol of light, in the novel *Lumina ce se stinge*. The spiritual sense of “royal” rebirth, by de-cosmisation, the importance of sacrifice in world’s re-significance also results from the scenario of successive death, in *Domnișora Christina*, and in *Nuntă în*

cer where the problematic fruit yielding is obviously enriched with that of Christian religion.

The second way, that of the ascetic attraction that some of the Eliadian heroes follow, reflects the category of *virī spirituales* with a messianic and apocalyptic vision, attempting to valorize existence in a new way, by which to oppose “the terror of history”, related to the Greek-Latin myth of decadence. The third way, that of the “abrutized”, that the majority of the characters follow is dominated by existentialist matters; it is the world of failures, of decomposed intellectuals subordinated to the philosophies –in –fashion: materialist, nihilist, progressist –and to history’s circumstantial plan. These characters have a Gidian structure and live in a universe of puppets and clichés, a universe in which God has died, and the titanic myth was converted into the “myth of digestion” (cf. Bachelard, 65)

The narrative hero fights with the mentality of his time, which is put into a fresco. But in the Eliadean novel, the mobile of the representation is not realist-social; the dimension of the narration and the auctorial view contests that of representation and characters’ view. Along with writing, the represented “world” has carnivalesque distinctiveness; this is the reason why, at the narrative level, Eliade uses on a large scale, unprecedented in Romanian literature, the intertext, the anachronism and the *mise-en-abîme*. Writing has an ontological use, it fundamentals the narrative authenticity, which resorts to the writing “without punctuation”, to the use of novel and diary techniques: it not only aims to constitute forms (=techniques), but also to highlight the significance of the ego’s mobility. The confessional distinctiveness of his novels indicates the same ontological use of narration, meant to reveal “Platonician” aesthetics of existence, placed in the service of truth (Foucault, 182). By his innovations in the thematic and compositional aspects of Romanian prose, Eliade proves to possess great artistic “indiscipline”, an indicator of the revolutionary renovation of expression and representation (cf. Ricardou, 55). The biographism and use of the letter, memoirs and diary on a large scale, conferring a fragmentary or “osirized” aspect on the text is a modality of “indirect” representation of the novel constituted on the techniques of the diary. The transcription and the commentary, the multiplication of stylistic registers and of narrative perspective, the plurality of voices suggest a critical situation in relation to the function of representation of the fictional dimension, which requires deviant, indirect, free

reading; it expresses itself at a narrative level by the multiplication of beginnings, creating a mobile, parodical and playful narration. The alternative *mise-en-scène* of narrative modalities of the novel and diary do not represent reality mimetically, but mythologically (*Memorii*, I, 202). It has the function of problemizing representation, as Eliade does not make pastiches, nor does he “reinterpret” mythological tradition; he does not imitate a form, but a creative narrative technique. Eluding the form of writing from the aesthetic forms of traditional novel means a surpassing of historical forms of culture, in order to have access to its an-historical dimension, in a new manner of representation and expression (*Jurnal*, I, 502), whose significance is structured in three stages: at textual, mythical and metatextual level. Unlike in rationalist aesthetics, of perfect forms, the Eliadean aesthetics of authenticity provides a hermeneutics of man and of unshapely reality. It relates to postmodern aesthetics, which levels action and fiction, reality and myth (Călinescu, 252) and which has a Platonician vision, based upon the ideas on cosmic homologies and on a synthetic perspective upon the world. The heroes in *Lumina ce se stinge*, *Întoarcerea din rai*, *Domnișoara Christina*, *Nuntă în cer* are certain that they live in a world similar to a ciphered text. Thus, the text has multiple codifications, which produces in its turn, a fantastic meaning.

Unlike the writers of the inter-war years, Eliade is not only a practitioner and a literary theorist, but he also designs the reading, involving the reader in producing its meaning. Eliade’s most important contribution to the development of Romanian novel is the over-dimensioning of the plot; this also represents a procedure of text mythologization, which tends to represent reality in an encyclopedic way (Frye, 66-75); thematic redoubling at a narrative level confers an abstract distinctiveness to the writing, which is also specific to myth. It structures the meaning of fictional plot, projected as a division of the former, by which the mimesis of sacrifice is represented, according to the “recondite logic” of the symbol.

Writing is constituted according to the principle of association, peculiar both to myth and the fantastic novel (cf. *Mitul eternei reînțoarceri*, 14, *Oceanografie*, 84, *Insula...308*); it has to be interpreted as an intertext of plural nature, but whose meaning is the effect of the play of fragment unification, as in *Șantier*, *Huliganii*, *Lumina ce se stinge*, *Domnișoara Christina* or *Nuntă în cer*. In the complex structure of *Romanul adolescentului miop* and *Gaudeamus*, also pointed at by

Eugen Simion (20-21), the author's diary, the document, the narrator's novel, the author-character dialogue and the optical elements do not exclude, but supplement each other. However, the structure of the textual discorpe is not a simple narrative experiment; the meaning of the discourse cannot be seized sintagmatically, by the mere relativization of scraps. Although the Huxleyian technique of the counterpoint, the "parallel mirrors" that represent unconnected destinies precariously articulates in the narrative, the "analytical splinters" and the differences of expressivity (which the critics observed) are constituted in a hermeneutic perspective, as with Eco, by means of their globalization and hierarchization.

The textual configuration is the effect of multiple codification (mythological, cultural, philosophical, philological, semiotic etc.) by means of which one may have access to the deciphering of fantastic meaning, of the "riddling".

The heteroclitite discourse, which combines direct and fantastic narration and monologue does not show the author's inability to dominate fiction, because this structuring, characteristic for all novels, has the function of undermining the function of mimetic representation (of Aristotelic type) for which meaning is either a cause or a goal of the finite text (cf. Ricardou, 374-375) in favor of that of diegetical representation (of Platonician type), in which meaning is produced freely and variably. This is the meaning of setting the library on fire, a symbol of labyrinth and of the centre altogether, of nature and culture (see *Lumina ce se stinge*, *Maitreji*, *Întoarcerea din rai*, *Huliganii*). Because fantastic discourse represents the irrepresentable (cf. Stoichiță); its function of irrealization does not lead to the depreciating of the imaginary and of its images, but to their investing with an absent spiritual dimension.

With Eliade, the cipher's code is represented by the words with spiritual "memory", reminiscent of the individualizing force of the Logos and reuniting, within the discourse, *ratio* and *oratio*. The semiotic intersection of textual discorpe with the mythological one, of discourse with the non-isotropic image of variable invariability represented by the archetype is achieved by allusion, quotation, titles and characters' names. The bibliotext, substituting for the library, does not only represent the means by which the writing programs the virtual metaphorical ordering of significances, but also the way for a metatextual "paradigmatic reading" (cf. Ricardou, 122) that might overtake the mechanism of text production and its structuring levels

(rational, mythic, magic and mystic); this is why it has to be plural, whereas the decoding process should cover several steps: literal, allegoric, mystic and anagogic (cf. Frye, 145-146) in order to identify the apparent signs, to search for their archetypes, to correlate them through symbols and to apprehend them by means of the subordination to polyvalent logical pattern. The unification of their meanings is therefore realized by means of a tabular reading, by form transgression and negation by each reader who, through the inexhaustible spontaneity of imagination and pragmatic skill, corrects the writing's lack of form, whose significances he endlessly enriches and who achieves the paradox of the Eliadean discourse: he becomes co-author of the text, whose aesthetic dimension he perceives by the discovery of the new novel organization, which goes beyond already existing patterns. The "anti-semantic" appearance, created by the massive presence of ideas in the novel has led to ignoring the motivated character of using the new techniques in direct relation to the radical innovation brought by Eliade to the textual structure and view, as well as to production of meaning.

Yet, the author defines his view on narration that we have tried to explain in correlation to the textual meaning and which has to be "free", not controlled by novelistic norms; for him, the book is only a project with cosmic pattern: it rhythmically renews itself by means of the repeated act of reading; its "hybrid" character is the effect of extending the factual dimension into the fictional one that aims at revealing a truth; child of cosmogonic myths, the book has a paradigmatic character, whereas the multiple disseminated meanings are integrated within an organic hierarchical perspective, whose anti-naturalistic character is suggested by its shattered aspect that invites the reader, situated in an intertextual labyrinth to an indirect recreational reading that overlooks the text in order to restate the principles of production of the new novel. Mircea Eliade declares himself to be a writer without a model in Romanian literature; he is the first post-modern in this cultural space.

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