# Image Ideology and Ideology Image in the Romanian Postmodern Narratives*

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**Résumé**: *Le paradigme actuel légitime le roman roumain postmoderne par l'idéologie que l'auteur et le texte assument explicitément, de sorte que la nouvelle réalité textuelle expose des stratégies métafictionnelles et dialogiques qui proposent un tout autre type d'image littéraire. Le monde-texte et le texte-monde fonctionnent simultanément et compensent la dérive identitaire de l'Auteur qui, dissipé dans le tissu du texte, utilise d'une manière ludique et expérimentale les modèles littéraires postmodernes*

**Mots clés** : *Idéologie du texte, image littéraire, roman postmoderne*

The postmodern issue stirred conflicting attitudes and opinions among Romanian writers and critics, making up its own aesthetic ideology rooted in the multiple perspectives on World and Text – one could say that Image mirrors the two complementary units into the ever expanding Ideology. An ideology that puts different "broken glasses" together to build up the "unity in diversity" aesthetic pattern. Once again, the Romanian narratives enhance the above mentioned concept by means of manipulating various creative strategies in self-mirrored texts which open the way to compensatory universes by rejecting, embracing or just re-reading reality. The term "postmodernism" itself has dominated theoretical discussions over the last decades. First introduced to define the new American literature emerging immediately after World War II, "postmodernism" establishes a direct relation with "modernism" by virtue of a conflicting pattern opposing the old and the new. Mircea A.Diaconu considers that: "Like other specific movements of Modernism resulting from World War I – one could mention here the Avant-garde (…) – Postmodernism seems to reject some of the modern utopias which failed: the myths of progress, transcendence and reason." [1] By denying the modernity values subjected to a violent ideological deconstruction, Postmodernism defines itself as a polemic reply to the modernist age, which enhances the inner dynamics of the literary system. The Romanian cultural space witnesses the same polemics in taking over postmodern paradigm. As Paul Cornea notices, "around postmodernism a heated debate has been held on a world scale, and the bibliography gathered until the present defies in dimensions the compass of any researcher. In Romania, the term emerged in the '80s, rapidly finding its place in the critical case of instruments, and gave rise, even before the fall of communism, to debates that are extremely relevant for gauging the crisis of the system as well as the extraordinary reverberation of Western culture among Romanian intelligentsia. What is remarkable is that a young generation, one of the most talented and daring, in creation, of the whole contemporary period, the so-called generation of the '80s, appropriated this term as an identity badge. As such, postmodernism became a key-concept, the drawbridge between Romanian literature and the new dominant cultural paradigm in the West, especially in the United Sates, permitting adherents to enhance their cognisance of their own manner of creation, to take a distance from their predecessors, first of all from modernists, to cultivate their difference and to clarify their philosophy and poetics." [2]

Generally speaking, Romanian postmodernism cultivates a coherent Image on the palimpsest World/Text which re-structures itself due to the Western principles: for Ihab Hassan, the analysis of the postmodern features asks for such a dual critical view: "Identity and difference, unity and rupture, filiation and revolt, all must be taken into consideration if we want to adapt ourselves to history so as to understand the change which can be perceived as a mental, spatial structure or a physical, temporal process as well as an abstract pattern or a concrete, unique event."[3] Thus, the necessary coexistence of the two ways of approaching the postmodern realities brings about the concept of "continuity in

rupture" which appears to be the only productive critical pattern suiting the purposes of our approach. Umberto Eco and John Barth, theoretists and postmodern authors, consider that the substance of Postmodernism is given by its universal tendency of revaluating the historically exhausted literary forms, of reviving the past (that explains "continuity"), but by means of a specifically metatextual or parodic game of the hyperlucid conscience (that is where the "rupture" occurs). The following example illustrates this general tendency. The modernist psychological realism turns into postmodern fabulation; the modernist schizophrenic shift to be perceived in the radical dichotomies between subject and object, imaginary fantasy and objective reality as a direct effect of the rational perspective on experience, is rejected in favour of experience being viewed as a continuous and ever flowing process. This "rupture" is rendered by the emergence of hyperlucidity in the art of fabulation which re-shapes reality by means of fiction-writing techniques. For Robert Scholes, "fabulation, then, means not a turning away from reality, but an attempt to find more subtle correspondences between the reality which is fiction and the fiction which is reality."[4]

Following the footsteps of the Western paradigm, the Romanian postmodern novels overtly practice the game relating Image of the World to textual ideology, playing "with regular conventions, the alternation of registers and narrative tones, documentarism, explosive fantasy, textual bricolage" [5], all of them re-reading *cosmos* and *ontos* in an ever re-written narrative. Such novels as those of M.Nedelciu, St.Agopian or Gh.Craciun do away with the "old-fashioned" causality and determination, replacing them with "local, fragmentary histories, histories of extraliterary contexts, biographies, etc. The crisis of consensus, caused by the unraveling of unitary criteria of judgment, together with the promotion of communally confined approaches and tastes, lead to an intensification of the canonical battle." [6] The newly-occurred "critifiction" type of text is opened to "the fractal, non-linear, probabilistic nature of the postmodern artistic phenomenon" which "allows literary criticism to situate itself time and again in utter paradox. The logic of *either-or* sometimes leaves the stage in favour of that of *and-and,* truth is replaced, as in the modal logic of possible worlds, by the possible, the probable, or the circumstantial, and the real - by the virtual and the illusory." [7]

The narrative "broken glass" represents the key-concept in M.Nedelciu's Tratament fabulatoriu, a metafictional discourse which gathers different experimental Images of Text in its attempt to re-write the realistic type of prose. Focused on as a literary experiment, the novel displays programmatic features by playing with the narrative strategies to build up an imaginary construct of utopian extraction. It functions as a compensatory universe by means of which Text eludes reality, transgressing it up to reaching the shelter-topoi protecting the human condition. Luca, the main character, escapes reality to Text, a protecting space for both writer and reader. The game of multiple perspectives points out the representation of World as Text, converting postmodern ideology into a various faceted Images of reality, without pushing up the textual limits. "Randomization" covertly directs the fictional flux as the reader himself functions as character in a text that imperiously asks for his active involvement: the reader acquires authorial values emerging out of the used participative textual strategies such as parody, intertextuality, game, meta-discourse and self-reference. It is just one example of how image ideology and ideology image relate to each other within the textual intricacies.

On the other hand, the Romanian narratives take over the fundamental postmodern values developed in the Western milieu such as: pluralism, heterotopia, relativity, ideological ecumenism, impure literary structures, denial of historical diachrony and emergence of simultaneity and synchrony. Mircea A.Diaconu notices that: "For the postmodernists, the skeptical solution of the modernists, who witnessed the failure of their

utopias, is replaced by the resurrection of the secondary, the fragment and the marginal, by disregarding hierarchies so that the new sensibility might be said to be 'post-dichotomist' and 'post-reductive' (Monica Spiridon)."[8] The postmodern overpassing of all kinds of contrasting forms is caused by the constant use of irony, parody, intertext, all joined together in textual spaces that are eclectic with regard to their genre. They become game strategies by means of which the text and the world, although once opposing, get together. This process is determined, as Mircea Cărtărescu considers, by the „constructive principle” of postmodern irony which has lost its function as an *offensive ideological weapon*. The critic motivates his interpretation by quoting Ihab Hassan: „In absence of a cardinal principle or paradigm, we turn to play, interplay, dialogue, polylogue, allegory, self-reflection, in short, to irony."[9] Here, a specific form of irony is taken into account, the one called „suspensive irony” by Alan Wilde, „with its yet more radical vision of multiplicity, randomness, contingency and even absurdity."[10]

Combining the detail, the insignificant and the marginal with the perspectival opening towards wholeness within the dialogic texture, the postmodern authorial ego structures itself out of complementary heteromorphic facets, being simultaneously biographic, moral, ontologic and reader-oriented (Cristian Popescu). Caught in the game-like textual reality, but being conscious of its immanence and artificiality, the postmodern Romanian writer hyperlucidly filters discontinuity in order to grasp a meaning of the universal inconstancy. Living indeterminately, affected by the simulation and seduction effects (Jean Bandrillard), the postmodern ego turns into a set of fragments or puzzles which will never converge. Instead of still being a literary strategy, the intertext itself changes into an ontologic principle which causes the metamorphosis of the *text as texts* into *texts as simultaneous realities*. Ana Bantoş underlines that "the intertext implies changing perspectives and registers so as to catch the very essence of things. The author relies firstly on the authenticity of his writing. The truth of writing prevails over the truth of reality. There is no aiming at mimetically representing reality. Self-reference is very important. There is no more realistic ego. It is replaced by the text which creates its own author by selecting him as a possibility out of a range of different possibilities.(…) From now on, the postmodern author is caught between the authenticity of life and that of writing.(…) The most important thing is that writing itself becomes a form of reality."[11]

At the structure level, the postmodern text is characterised by intertextuality and Cristian Moraru considers it to be the only principle which governs the poem viewed as a "hypertextual laboratory." The major difference between its postmodern features and its modernist usage lies in the de-mystification of this principle which makes the reader participate in the dialogic interplay of allusions and significations. From another point of view, intertextuality fulfills the postmodern ideal of the poem that is to enhance the marginal and the contingent and not to create a poetics of the abstract. Steven Conner says that "the postmodern poetry returns to the less egocentric narrative structure, opening to the intrusion of the vague, the contingent and the non-structured elements of language and experience. Consequently, this type of poetry adequately adopts non-official and non-poetic linguistic patterns such as letters, newspapers, conversation, jokes and news."[12]

Creating a multitude of inner worlds, the postmodern Romanian novel reveals itself as a polimorphic stage where the ontological borders are surpassed and interchangeable fictional worlds destroy the egocentric language, reason and subjectivity. In opposition to the modernist text conceived as a *noun*, Thomas Docherty considers the postmodern literary creation as a *verb*, for the latter can be perceived as „a space characterised not by spatial identity or difference, but by temporal difference towards itself; that leads to engendering a text conditioned by its own historicity or by the temporal dimension of the civil war it fights against itself."[13] It is the case of the postmodern narratives that act in

their own writing/reading game, thus re-constructing Image by means of the specific mechanism of „looking through the broken glass."

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