# *THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN MIRCEA ELIADE'S NOVEL- A SIGN OF AUTHENTICITY*

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***Abstract:*** *Written at first person, Eliade' novels could apparently express the image of a compact novel body. It is easy to notice more possibilities of analyze, if one looks at them from the points of view of narrative labyrinth and authenticity. Introspection, epic fragmentation, counterpoint, the diversity of the narrative levels, are just a few ways to structure the epic material. Therefore, including Eliade's novel only into the category of the modern creations from the Romanian literature, seems not to be enough, when we compare them with their narrative variety that is offered to the reader. Moreover, one can obviously identify an explicit communication pattern through revealing the narrative instances, where the author is not only the creator, but also his first critic and reader, and his characters are dynamic in their acts, inside their souls, always full of vitality. They are absolutely not artificial fiction characters handled by the writer's free will. So, everything could be justified from the point of view of writer's style, as a unique and non-recurring experience, that he perceives as a catharsis. The narrative techniques help a lot to a good articulation of the text, at epical level, and to a better relationship between topic of the novel-characters-story teller–author. Actually, this articulation is a play of ideas coming from the backstage of creation, which makes the epic story permanently shine bright to a wide range of readers. Concluding, we are discussing about a writer, who was aware of this innovation and personal style of creation, who could be described in a few words as: authentic, subjective, deeply involved in the life of his characters, permanently listening to their voices.*

***Key words:*** *narration, novel, authenticity.*

## Premises

The narrative technique identification could be associated, from one point of view, with the "style" concept, which means that a particular creation is individualized by special elements, consequently targeted in each epic discourse. By the time when Eliade came up with the innovation of writing differently, the reviewers did not agree with this narrative organization and style construction as well. For this reason, the first critical observations in this field belong to the writer himself and they were specified by him either within interviews, memoirs and diary, or in articles published in the 30's in the Romanian cultural magazines.

The analysis of the narrative techniques in a novel relies on establishing the reference criteria, which represent the reason for reading and approaching a fictional work differently. The international researchers approached the issue according with text segmentations, plot, sequential dynamics of narrative, chronological ordering, continuity /discontinuity, narrative perspective and focalization. Our perspective will concentrate on the most important of Eliade's novel, that belongs to the youth time (*Maitreyi, Wedding in Heaven, Return from Paradise*) and to maturity time as well (*The Forbidden Forest*).



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## 1. Narative Techniques according to the Narrative Perspective

Eliade's novel developed, in time, a couple of original techniques (at least by that time in our literature): the introspection and the double angle of narration. First, we have to clarify what these debatable concepts (point of view and focalization) are approached in the new narrative theory, in order to analyze Eliade's novel according to the actual direction. Burkhard Niederhoff came up in 2004 with the idea of the complementary specifics and coexistence between the two terms we have just mentioned. He later appended to his theory the required interdependence between the terms: "There is room for both because each highlights different aspects of a complex and elusive problem" (NIEDERHOFF, 2001: 121). This point of view renders the authority to the character's experience, as a result of telling the story from her/his perspective. What the researcher explains is that the point of view makes more sense than the internal focalization, because the characters could have different angles upon the same problem and at the same time in a novel. This means plural perspective and it could not be reduced only to the focalization on one character, in this case. Therefore, as for as Niederhoff is concerned "Focalization is a more appropriated term when analyzing selections of narrative information that are not designed to render the subjective experience of a character, but to create other effects such as suspense, mystery, puzzlement etc" (NIEDERHOFF, 2009: 122). Under these circumstances, beside the old Genette's theory regarding "who sees?" and "who speaks?", we might add also a new question "how he/she sees?", which establishes a relationship between the focalization and the point of view. Focalization paid attention to the story-teller and the point of view to the different angles on the narration emphasized by the characters.

The dispute between perception and seeing, narration and being narrated could be figured out only adapting the theory to the appropriate text, as Niedorhoff explains, too. For this reason, this approach seems to be more adequate to our purpose during this research.

### 1.1. **The Introspection**

This is one of the narrative strategies which point out the internal focalization and the relationship between the narrative instances: author-characters-narrator-reader. This means that the point of view belongs usually to the main character, and the focalization consists exactly in underlining the special narrative effects. It becomes very interesting when the "narrative voice" becomes also the main character, but from time to time the angle of views are completely changed. Taking a look at one of the most important novel of Eliade, *Maitreyi,* we distinguish between the writer's point of view, at the beginning of the story and the protagonist's point of view (Allan) in the narrated plan. Introspection is, obviously, connected to the creative approach in the first situation and to the Allan' self analyze in the second one. Furthermore, in the diary, Allan has two points of view: one as the "lover" character and the other one as an outsider of his own relationship, expressing a duality, from the focalization point of view, using the same narrative strategy. The complementary status is here a result of the character's complexity, whose self perception varies according to his hypostasis.

Another example which deserves our entire attention can be advances in the novel *Wedding in Heaven*, where the points of views rely on one of the main characters, Mavrodin. His point of view upon the love experience comes up from the confession he



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made while spending some time with Hasnas, but the other one is the creative perception relied on the same brackground. Coming back to the introspection, it is visible that, in this way, the points of view are outlined by means of the effect of focalization emphasized at the end, which is the mistery of Ileana's/Lena's existence. The narrator is here the voice "who says", the characters are those "who sees" the facts in the direction of living their experience, and the different perceptions upon the love means "how they see" everything in time.

### 1.2. The Double Angle of Narration or the Pluri-Perspective

This narrative strategy descendes from the previous technique, because introspection is a result of an internal perspective. In his article "Perspective and participation" Richard J. Gerrig lays out the narrative perspective as a distinction between the first person and the third one. He chose to concern on this approach which is different according to the narration style, and, of course, the starting point does not ignore the precious Booth's and Genette's distinction: "Therefore, my concern in this case is not so much discovery , but the types of consequences that may follow when readers experience a text from a first-versus a third person perspective." (GERRIG, 2001: 311*).* The idea is quite simple: the narrator uses the third person when he is only a witness, but when he becomes an actor, the first one changes the involment in the story. In both cases, the causality consists in how the events are narrated and in what impact they have upon the reader. In the first situation, the effects regard the logical order of the events , which is based on continuity, but in the second one, the consequence is foccusing on the subjective atittude. What seems to be useful in our analysis is that, many times, one of the character is represented by the narrator from many perspectives, either using the first person or the third.

Coming back to the *Wedding in Heaven*- one of the richest novel from the narrative techniques point of view- the female character, Ileana, is portrayed through a triple perspective, which implies a real confusion for the readers, that stays unsolved till the end. Andrei Mavrodin and Barbu Hasnas tell their love story using the third person, but the subject is the same, except the time. The name of the lovely woman is different, but its roots are the same: Ileana or Lena are derivation of the same pattern, Elena. The double narration is a strategy which gives the narrators the chance of changing the perspective. The first person represents, in this case, the consequence of the unlucky love: the pain, the revelation of the feeling, the need of re-building the relationship. The third person is involved during the discussion between the two narrators, when they have just left the time of the past, and come back to the time of the present. The past is the reason they have to tell the story for, in order to reveal, to the reader, the mystery of the woman that vanished from their lives.

According to Nicolae Manolescu, who develops his analysis in the chapter "Maitreyi's plays" framed in the larger critic study *Arca lui Noe,* Eliade uses "the double perspective play*"* (MANOLESCU, 2003: 455-483). The critic rose the question of the author's involvement in journal and in novel, at the same time, especially within Maiteryi's novel. What draws reader's attention is the involvement of a dramatized narrator, the moment that the journal is differentiated with respect to the novel. Actually, it is a narrator-character (dramatized narrator), who is the protagonist of some initiaton into a unique love experience, lived in the Indian space. Simultaneously, the narrator is also the author of a journal of that time, which cannot be confused with the



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events, for the simple fact that they are not simple memories, but they are re-lived during the writing. In the narration come up different temporal levels: $t_1$ is the initial time of living the experience of the events summarized in the journal pages, and $t_2$ is the time of re-living and writing the roman. This is a dramatized narration, because the novel accomplishes the journal, it does not duplicate the second one, it does not undertake it faithfully.

### 3. Narative Techniques according to Continuity and Discontinuity of the Plot

According to the continuity or discontinuity of the action, the relevant technique is the fragmentation, which means that everything is focused on episodic events and details, not on the homogeneity of the plot. This writing style could be also metaphorically called mosaic narration. Even if for many times the narrator is the same, and the narration is autodiegetic, heterodiegetic, or homodiegetic, according to Genette, the relationship between the focal-point person and focalized ones is often characterized by distance and leaps in space or in time, i.e. (meaning) fragmentation.

The writer got lost in details, focused on episodic moments and not on the entire unity of the text. The reader should pay attention to the secondary aspects and to look for the right connection at least at the end, despite any divagation about what the acting writer did. Eliade was upset with himself for the crumbled narration and he was aware later just in the second creation phase, that this could be one of the source of the going down in the eyed of his readers':, "I am so afraid that, in the first one hundred pages, the story is so fragmented, like a railing support torn away in small and insignificant parts." (ELIADE, 2003a:159)

In the first stage of Eliade's creation, when he was still acquiring his style, fragmentation was the result of his temptation to say a lot, due to the spiritual release caused by his waterfall-like mind flow. For this reason, this narrative technique could be explained by a meaningful metaphor: puzzle of feelings, ideas and facts. Eliade became aware of the possible disadvantages, or, to say it better, about the fact that his mosaic style altered and this comes out from his confession, which proves that the right understanding is the sacrifice for the sake of authenticity: "Of course, all these lines pour down on paper too fast, and I have a very poor way of expressing those very things that I could later express in a more accurate form" (ELIADE, 2003c: 323). This was the phase of the authentic revelation coming out of the acid filter of the critic eye.

The writer himself often expressed that this disorder is only apparent because it keeps the writing moment intact, which overlaps the time of living inside the story. The unexpected surprise is the revelation of the style homogenity, not of the eterogenity, which belongs to the first critic eye, the writer himself: "I am doing all these just in order to pull myself together, to feel myself as one, to prevent losing anything from what crossed my mind." (*ibidem*)

This fragmented approach was criticized by many contemporary reviewers, but, in this article, we are interested in the advantages of using nonconventiomal narrative strategies, which Eugen Ionescu deeply appreciated in Eliade's work. Ionescu compared *Maitreyi's* structure with the architecture of a Greek tragedy: "It is a perfect and precise ascension of story's epic and thrills." (IONESCU, 2000: 78). As a result of this note, he decomposed the text narrative scenes in their main core facts:

a) Maitreyi-Allan- the initial, descriptive and static interaction;

b) The beginning of passion and of the initiatory (ezoteric) way.



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c) The crucial experience of the passion: the abandon of themself to their passion and the maximum insight dynamics
d) The final moment seen like a punishing lightining, considering the association with Oedip's myth. The recovering silence- the death of the soul

According to Ionescu, the book owes its success to the twinning of two elements - the magic of the ideas and the plenary (comprehensive) architecture: "Everything is preparing for some kind of mistery final, events escalate faster and faster. On a fatal path, seems like there is no place, nor time for any diversion, for no useless errant detail." (ibidem)

## 3. **Narative Techniques According to the Linearity/Nonlinearity of the Plot**

The next epical reference is focused on the straight line of the plot. Meaning, for easier understanding, how the narrative plans tells us the story. The nonlinearity reflects Eliade's tentacle style of developing the story and the epic temptation getting beyond the classic borders. For this reason, the parallel narration is associated with the techniques of double destiny, or with the characters' double image. At the same point of discussion, we may definitely add other examples of nonlinearity, highlighted by the types of sequential combination. Tzvetan Todorov classified these techniques in 1981 defining the approach or the distance between the narrative segments of the novel. As for as he is concerned, each narrative discourse is supposed to follow one of this broad types: *embedding* (one story enclosed inside other), *linking* (juxtaposition or different actions) and *alternation* (moving back and forth between stories) (TODOROV, 1981: 52-53). All of them could be identified in our research, but it is obvious that the innovation of Eliade's style, a brand new one at the beginning of the 20$^{th}$ century, consists in: embedding and alternation.

### 3.1. The Embedding Technique

Usually, it could be recognized as the "frame narration"- but in this case, the meaning is different by interlinking (interweaving) the stories with the inside characters' tension and their unpredictable vitality. To illustrate this idea, we might focus on the novel that was object of most of the talks - the mythical one. There are many stories whose integrations into the main narrative line is progressive: Partenie and Ileana's love story, Anicet, and Ileana as well. The notion of continuity does not mean at all unbroken succession of event in the classical meaning, but it could be translated as a twisting of the sinuous characters' mind. Partenie's story is completely framed into Stefan's adventure, fact that justifies the double destiny theory, which we will debate later. The closest perspective upon the embedding technique comes up from the story of the consecutive and parallel weddings*: Wedding in Heaven.* The epic composition is visible, despite the temporal reversion and changing of actors on the stage:

- Andrei' s confession integrated in the hunting atmosphere, as a regular story.
- Translation between the stories shows up which is the real frame: the hunting evening.
- Hasnas's confesion framed in the same context.
- The final, when the two embedded stories seems to be overlapped in a mysterious way, but only one of them is still available for the reader.



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This novel reveals to careful eyes another type of insertion: the fiction created by Andrei as a novelist inserted in the fiction. Even if it seems to be a wordplay, the short name for this structure could be *the framing of the fiction inside the fiction* or meta-narration, because its impression of the self reference. As a result of this summary analysis we can come up to the only legitimated conclusion that Eliade's novels offers: the en-framed narration means not only a simple insertion into a classic epic composition, but it is associated with double angle perspective and retrospection as well.

### 3.2. The Linking Narrative Technique

It refers to a syntactic organization of the text due to the events juxtaposition without any temporal breaks or changing the main story line, by following the causality rule of telling a fact. Even if this technique is not specific to any modern approach concentrated on the introspection, we can identify it, once in a while, when the time is expanded, and the events reflect a slow moving of the story. We can find some examples, which represent either the social-historic background of the story, or, and this is the authentic innovation of Eliade's writing, the ritual context. Allan's marriage takes place at Marile Lacuri (Big Lakes), after the reader was prepared in terms of a strict events order: the right moment for going out, the ring, the sacrament, come back home, love story accomplished. The same mainstream lines out the diary pages, too, where we can see some life slices, focused on going deeply inside the moment, in order to reconstruct the puzzle/mosaic feeling.

### 3.3. The Alternation Narrative Technique and the Technique of Double Destiny

As for our concern, the alternation techniques is the key to discover the originality of Eliade's fictional books, because this teller-mode is made possible only using the other narrative dimensions such as: time, space, narrative lines/plans, stories. The exciting question regards the right way to express an alternation in an epic composition and for what reason it became a usual novel technique.

This is the right moment to involve, in our debate, the technique of double destiny, which, undoubtedly, lays out the character's complexity, his alternation between the two ways of living. In the same total novel, *The Forbidden Forest,* the reader follows the main male character and his relationship with two women, both of them being equally important for him. Stefan Viziru really loves his wife, Ioana, with undoubted and unconditioned feelings, and he will keep on loving her till the end of her life. By the time when the summer solstice came (24$^{th}$ June) perceived in the folk culture as Midsummer Night, Viziru took a walk in Baneasa Forest, listening to the deep inside voice which calls him back to the childhood space. There he met Ileana, who was inexplicably attracted by him, not as a sexual temptation, but spiritually, a fact they discovered meantime. Both of them will create a special world, where they could be honest with their selves and, the most important, they could help discovering each other. Stefan cannot live the same intimacy with Ioana despite their deep love. Spending some time in the Sambo room, Stefan becomes a different human being, who comes off to be released by the time pressure and to be detached to him self as a social and family image. The character's "double personality/image" technique is highlighted here by the distance created between his professional status (accountant) and his artistic aspiration



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The multiple personality implies not only the male characters, but also the female ones, depicting femininity in a contradictory way. Among the controversial novel *Isabel and the devil's waters*, the homonym character is analyzed in two crucial times: in her position as evil temptation, rebel virgin/maid and later, as a woman that became a martyr during her giving birth. The obsession regarding the maternity induces the final changing to the Eliade's female heroes: the disappearing. Lena and Hasnas broke up, because of her fearing a classic relationship, accomplished by giving birth to a child. Many years later, Ileana enigmatically disappeared after she gave up a child, as a result of Mavrodin' s reaction, who felt himself limited by this unexpected surprise of maternity. She sacrifices the natural voice of femininity for the sake of the man she loved and for his creative freedom. The role switch and the similarity of names demand such a technique as the double image, that actually expresses the contradictory experience generated by changing everything in a moment, starting with destiny, feelings and inside structure.

Summing up this debate about the theory of double characters' evolution, it is time to emphasize that alternation requests simultaneity, as it is the case for Isabel and Stefan, but also succession in time, as for Ileana/Lena, too. What could substantially enrich this classification is the characters' awareness of their duplicity/double image.

**Conclusions**

Concluding this synthetic analysis, there are some feature of Eliade's style that could be more than obviously noticed. First, his novels were not uniformly constructed, in the way of using a consequent strategy for developing the story that the writer focused on. Second, each fictional text assumes the presence of more than one narrative technique at the same time, with the complexity of structure and the different criteria applied during the analysis. In addition, the novel plot has roots not only in fictional field, but also in mythology and history, which changes often the narrative approach. The best examples we can offer as an strong argument is *The Forbidden Forest,* where the action covered many years and the theory of the double character and the myth permanently changed the reader's perspective upon the book.

Summing up this presentation, we want to emphasize that Eliade's style meant not only an anticipation of the literary evolution of the 20th century, but also an unexpected opportunity to integrate the Romanian novel into international family of the modern novel creation. The apprehension of his contribution came up when the narratology field took into discussion many interesting approaches regarding the complexity of the text construction, which broke the borders of the classic story. The narrative techniques were, by that time, not only a sign of innovation, but especially, a sign of authenticity by telling the story according to the writer himself, as Eliade himself confessed in his work called *Oceanography* (*Oceanografie):* "Autenticity is living for yourself, know yourself, express yourself." (ELIADE, 2003b: 138)



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