The Palimpsest Effect in Contemporary Narrative

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Abstract: *The article discusses the modernist and postmodernist features of the narrative palimpsest, focusing on the functions acquired by the proper names of characters when they are imported into a literary text from previous fictional contexts. The author explores some of the major issues raised by the narrative recycling of fictional proper names, such as the problem of meaning, reference, character identity, and the necessary complicity and competence of the reader.*

Keywords: *narratology, hypertext, palimpsest, intertextuality, proper name, literary character*

Résumé : *L'article débat les traits modernistes et postmodernistes du palimpseste narratif, en se concentrant sur les fonctions acquises par les noms propres des personnages, quand ils sont importés dans un texte littéraire, provenant de contextes fictifs antérieurs. L'auteur explore quelques-uns des problèmes majeurs soulevés par le recyclage narratif des noms propres fictifs, comme par exemple le problème du sens, de la référence, de l'identité du personnage et la complicité et compétence nécessaires de la part du lecteur.*

Mots-clés : *narratologie, hypertexte, palimpseste, intertextualité, nom propre, personnage littéraire*

The following is a highly categorical claim, which I would like to take as my starting point in this article:

> Reading texts is a matter of reading them in the light of other texts, people, obsessions, bits of information, or what have you, and then seeing what happens. (Rorty 105)

In other words, reading—any act of reading, Richard Rorty seems to say—triggers more or less surprising connections, analogies, comparisons and interpretations, which place the text being read in relation not only to other texts, but also to the real world, as a fixed point of reference, and to the immediate context in which the real reader lives, with all her preoccupations and obsessions. Nonetheless, there exists a separate category of literary texts, for which the relationship with another text/other texts is not only possible but absolutely necessary. Texts in this category, which Genette calls *hypertexts*,[1]

derive from previous texts, which they rewrite, continue, supplement or interpret, their authors taking full freedom in their approach to the subject matter, the characters and their story, and so on.

Rewriting is far from being a new textual practice, since literary works that retell myths and old stories can be found in the Renaissance and in Classicism,[2] and even more often in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A mere glance at the history of literature brings to light the existence of a longstanding narrative practice, encountered as early as Antiquity[3]: in other words, there have always been narratives in which we find characters from previous stories, characters whose stories intersect for a time, the reader's task being that of identifying the provenance of each, in order then to construct the meaning of the new work.

The question I should like to ask is this: what new features did this ancient practice acquire during the modernist period and, even more so, in the last century? Ultimately, the works of the Greek tragedians would have been inconceivable without reference to Hellenic mythology and the Homeric epic. Likewise, it would be difficult if not impossible to imagine how we might understand a tragedy by Racine or Corneille without a deeper knowledge of Greco-Roman mythology and the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. At a distance of many centuries, texts such as Eugene O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra*, Jean Anouilh's *Antigone* and *Medea* or Jean Cocteau's *Testament of Orpheus* are constructed at the intersection where myths are reinterpreted, as well as in relation to the texts of the ancient authors mentioned above, to which they emphatically refer. At first glance, in modernist and contemporary literature, the forms of intertextual dialogue have diversified greatly, often going so far as to blend together or, if you prefer, to *con-fuse*—in other words, to fuse together and to confuse—both texts and meanings, thereby making the problems of *representation* and identity all the more acute. In texts of this type, the "rumour of meanings" is amplified by the multiplicity of semantic layers that contribute to the construction of characters and plot. Whether plays or narratives, these texts present themselves as *palimpsests*, which wager on the dynamism of cultural interchanges, on the dizzying whirlwind of literary references, on the symphonic simultaneity of the fictional worlds conjured up by the author.

My approach will center on *characters* in contemporary palimpsests, characters that I regard as doubly coded signs. In such texts, there is no need for the author to repeat a story *da capo al fine*; it is enough for her simply to mention the name that carries the load of a well-known story. My thesis is that in the case of major literary characters from existing fictional worlds, the proper name functions as an abbreviation of a particular story. The choice of a name is never innocent, and the author's choice of a name already established by a prior story is therefore all the more significant. Thus, a character named Ulysses, regardless of the new context in which he might unfold, will always be bound to the Homeric character, since the echoes of the old fictional context will reverberate through the name in the new narrative structure.

The Palimpsest Effect

If we agree that literature is made out of literature and that there is such a thing as an "intertextual unconscious,"[4] which precedes and includes every literary work, then the logical conclusion, against which it is almost impossible to bring pertinent arguments to bear, is that the whole of literature is, in one way or another, intertextual in essence. But this does not apply to the characteristics specific to the palimpsest. The reason is that the palimpsest effect presupposes the existence of an obvious intention on the author's part to superpose, within the same structure, multiple cultural layers, multiple "stories," wagering everything upon this play of mirrors, which generates meaning.

In what follows I shall try to construct the concept of narrative palimpsest and identify its particular features in relation to the hypertext.

Drawing on the term introduced by Gérard Genette in his fundamental work *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* [*Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*] (Seuil, 1982), I have in view only that category of literature that exists solely in relation with another narrative (be it an independent work by a different author, a universally known "true history," or a multi-layered structure, which I shall call *suprawriting*, conceived as a "text within a text within a text" by the author herself, in order to lend greater depth to her own text, via the technique of *mise en abyme*). Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is a paradigmatic novel in regard to both rewriting and *supra*writing: although it does not repeat any particular work, it is nonetheless a (parodic) revival of a genre, the picaresque novel. On the other hand, *Don Quixote* is also a very good example of suprawriting, since the second volume contains not a continuation or explanation of the first, but rather countless stories that function as inner mirrors of the main character, finally aware that he is nothing but a fictional entity. Other relevant examples of what I understand by "suprawriting" are *Oracle Night* by Paul Auster, a novel within which there are a "chain of authors" and a "chain of characters" created by those "authors," all of whom are involved in the writing of the novel (Sidney Orr, Nick Bowen, Lemuel Flagg—a blind English lieutenant, the main character of *Oracle Night*); Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*, a meta-narrative fascinating in its depiction of reading as the adventure of the search for meaning; and Matei Vișniec's recent novel *Negustorul de începuturi de roman* [*The Seller of Novel Openings*].

Postmodern literature programmatically "plays" with multiple interpretations, overtly addressing a reader with a vast reading experience, a reader who already knows how the intertextual unconscious works and is capable of understanding explicit or implicit allusions, as well as the transformations famous characters undergo in the new fictional context, characters "imported" from previous literary works. I might be tempted to say that the palimpsest narrative puts on the page a transparent discourse which, to paraphrase a passage from *Oracle Night*, I would describe as a "porous membrane through which all the world's invisible forces [read: "previous texts"] can pass—a nucleus of electrical pulses, transmitted by the thoughts and the experiences of others [i.e., the other characters, who appear in the primary text]" (190). Proper names insert into the text a multitude of allusions, fictional impulses and previous stories, and are one of the main sources of

narrative ambiguity. What better example could I give than James Joyce and Vladimir Nabokov, in whose works proper names frequently function as thematic nuclei, whose occurrence opens the text to unexplored territories? Alastair Fowler puts forward a thorough and inspiring analysis in his recent study of literary names. Commenting on the two abovementioned authors' pleasure in resorting to a wide array of proper names, drawn from very different spheres (literature, history, anatomy, mythology, biology, topography, etc.), Fowler reaches the conclusion that *Finnegans Wake* "is an immensely onomastic epic," within which "[t]he names and their hoarded associations reopen entire worlds of Irish and global history and prehistory, to say nothing of contemporary politics" (224), and *Lolita* "is a supreme example of the sort of naming found in fiction of the last century, whereby names are so intimately thematic as to be indispensable to the interpreter of the literary work in which they occur," while Nabokov's art consists in "finding meaningful names in the manner of 'found' poetry" (230). The ambiguity of proper names, which originates either in etymology or in the programmatic superposition of widely varying meanings—in which respect, see the successive transformations of the acronym HCE at the beginning of Joyce's novel—or very often in the literary suggestions inherent in the names themselves (such as those included in the Ramsdale directory in *Lolita*), generates multiple narrative layers, which interpenetrate, potentiate and highlight each other. We are therefore talking about a "cultural commerce" between paper creatures, where the emphasis invariably falls on the relations between the present character and the other paper creatures that surround him, determining his narrative identity.

It is well known that every literary work refers to an imaginary reality, instituted through words, which only exists as such in and through language. In the case of palimpsest texts, however, we are talking about a dual use of language, one that is at once performative and constative. Rewriting Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, in *Friday or the Other Island*, Michel Tournier employs language not only performatively, but also constatively: the narrator refers to a certain state of affairs with which the reader is already familiar, because she has read (or at least heard of) *Robinson Crusoe*. Such texts do not give life to wholly invented characters, "doing things with words," but rather point to a given story or context in which the character has previously developed. In the construction of fictional geographies and topographies, the use of language is always performative, even when the "city" or the "street" in which the fictional events take place corresponds to one in the real world. The "Bucharest" in which the characters of *The Bed of Procrustes* move is not the real turn-of-the-century city, the capital of a country on the threshold of war, but merely the subjective and inevitably incomplete projection of the author of the novel. Neither "Napoleon" nor "Kutuzov" in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* are identical to the historical figures who clashed in the terrible winter of 1812, being mere fictional hypostases created by the great Russian novelist. Nonetheless, the same as in the case of rewritten texts, in such situations too there is a constative linguistic component, which sustains and amplifies the performative dimension. The fact that there is an external and pre-existent reference point to the fictional world, in relation with which the new "reality" comes to birth, causes narratives in which "hooks" of this kind appear to be closer to the status of a rewritten text or palimpsest narrative. A solid argument

in support of this interpretation is provided by Emmanuel Levinas in the foreword to *Noms propres* [*Proper Names*]:

> Perhaps the names of persons whose *saying* signifies a face—proper names, in the middle of all these common names and commonplaces—can resist the dissolution of meaning and help us to speak. Perhaps they will enable us to divine, behind the downfall of discourse, the end of a certain *intelligibility* but the dawning of a new one. What is coming to a close may be a rationality tied *exclusively* to the being that is sustained by words, the *Said* of the saying, the Said conveying fields of knowledge and truths in the form of unchanging identities, merging with the self-sufficient Identity of a being or system—complete, perfect, denying or absorbing the differences that appear to betray or limit it. This intelligibility reaches its apotheosis in the ultimate identity of "the identical and the non-identical" asserted by Hegel, which probably completes and concludes the philosophy of the Same and of immanence, or ontology. (Levinas 4-5, author's emphasis)

How is it possible for a character to have the *same* name, without being *identical* to a different character from a different fictional world? This is an aspect I shall look at below, but not before trying to answer a different question, namely: what are the proper names of fictional beings? Are they abbreviations of a set of properties or "rigid designators" (see Kripke) attached to individuals as linguistic "labels," pasted onto each individual regardless of the properties of that individual?

Let us go back in time to eighteenth-century England. In 1736, Joseph Butler distinguished between *similitude* (two triangles can be similar), *equality* (two plus two always equals four), and (personal) *identity*, defined in terms of the continuity of an awareness of self at different moments (I am one and the same person as I was yesterday and the day before and as I will be tomorrow, as it is awareness of myself and not merely memory that unifies my various hypostases). How then might we describe Pierre Menard's attempt, in Borges's "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*," to produce a *Don Quixote* that is *identical* to that created by Cervantes, one that would be neither a recreation nor a mechanical transcription of the famous novel of the knight errant? The narrator suggests that we "see the 'final' *Quixote* as a kind of palimpsest, in which the traces—faint, but not undecipherable—of our friend's 'previous' text must shine through" (Borges 90). For Pierre Menard is himself a laborious author, and the "new" *Quixote*, although *similar* (in Joseph Butler's sense of the term) to Cervantes's, is nevertheless different: the two texts are "identical from the point of view of the language, but the second is infinitely richer," since over the course of the four centuries that separate the two versions, the words—the *same* words—have acquired new valences, they are now laden with ambiguities and new contextual meanings, unknown in the time of Cervantes. The conclusion of Pierre Menard's experiment is one alone: in literature, there is no mechanical reproduction, not even when we are talking about linguistic similarity, because meaning is never purely denotative, but also connotative, conditioned to a large extent by the existence of a real reader, situated in a specific context. Onomastic similarity does not necessarily imply

that the first *Don Quixote* is identical with the "last," just as Tournier's characters are not faithful reproductions of those created by Daniel Defoe, but rather different characters, albeit constructed by means of quoting the properties with which Robinson and Friday are endowed in Defoe's novel.

Narrative Identity: Between *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*

The problem of narrative identity is obviously connected to that of proper names, and it is my opinion, contrary to that put forward by Thomas Pavel, that "literary" (or fictional) proper names carry with them primary details of the story from which they originate, and are therefore "abbreviations" of the initial narrative context. In *Lumi ficționale* [*Fictional Worlds*] (1992), Thomas Pavel adopts the viewpoint of Kripke, who believes that fictional proper names are rigid designators:

> [F]ictional names are not used as abbreviations either for sets or for groups of definite descriptions. The practice of writers, critics and ordinary people when talking about characters and fictional objects suggests rather that within the framework of a fiction names acts like ordinary proper names, as rigid designators, attached to individual objects, independent of the properties of objects. In regard to the structural aspects, therefore, I do not find any palpable difference between non-fictional and fictional proper names. (Pavel 61; my translation, AIB)

But "literary" proper names have a connection with their bearers even outside the stories to which they belong (see for example Ulysses, Daphnis and Chloe, Hamlet, Miranda, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe, and so on). They are associated with entire descriptive series, which are activated in the reader's mind as soon as another character, with a similar name, makes an appearance in a different narrative. Proper names "imported" from other texts are not only *descriptive* (functioning as labels), but also *repositories of stories*, determining associations and generating a multitude of epic possibilities.

Consequently, we might ask to what extent proper names have a meaning, in Frege's sense of the term *Sinn* as opposed to *Bedeutung*, and I am inclined to argue that fictional proper names imported into a narrative from previous fictional contexts do indeed have a meaning when they bring with them a story, and the new story, without necessarily being a retelling or continuation of the familiar story, is constructed in direct relation to the old one. It seems to me that in such a situation the *meaning* determines the reference—it is enough merely to name a character Quixote, as Graham Greene does in *Monsignor Quixote*—for the reference to the new character to be conditioned by the meaning acquired in time by *this* proper name (which invariably denotes him as the "errant knight" created by Cervantes, who jousted with windmills in an attempt to win Dulcinea, and so on). In the narrative palimpsest, proper names have precise meanings, and this categorically determines the reference.

Of course, such a trenchant claim will have significant consequences on the way in which I shall tackle the problem of narrative and its main elements. In the first place, the identity of a character who carries a "cultural load" is always a *liminal identity*, conditioned by the recognition of the previous story/stories. We might speak of a fusion of characters or even a con-fusion of characters/identities. For example, within the image of Margarita, from Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, it is possible to glimpse a number of female figures, whose presence is invoked in the character's name: firstly Margareta from Goethe's *Faust*, but also Marguerite de Valois, whom Woland mentions in chapter 22, and Marguerite of Navarre, the author of the *Heptameron*, both of whom were patronesses of writers and artists. This fluid transition from one fictional entity to another, which, as part of this process, gathers up all the traces left over the course of time by the succeeding embodiments of the same proper name, is also found in Nabokov's *Bend Sinister* (which might equally be called Sinisterbad, if we are to adopt the author's own suggestion, from the Introduction), in the highly suggestive image of the bridge on which Krug walks back and forth:

> Doomed to walk back and forth on a bridge which has ceased to be one since neither bank is really attainable. Not a bridge but an hourglass which somebody keeps reversing, with me, the fluent fine sand, inside. Or the grass stalk you pick with an ant running up it, and you turn the stalk upside down the moment he gets to the tip, which becomes the pit, and the poor little fool repeats his performance. (Nabokov 24)

This permanent reversibility and the fluid state, always situated "between worlds," are defining features of characters with borrowed names. In order to perceive their meaning, the real reader is in her turn required to accompany the characters from one side of the fictional "bridge" to the other. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the schoolboy Joyce confesses, through his fictional alter ego, that his favourite character is Ulysses. In *Ulysses*, Leopold Bloom becomes the contemporary equivalent of the Homeric hero. For Michel Butor it is obvious that

> The world of the *Odyssey* is the scaffolding that allowed the construction of the novel *Ulysses*. Joyce constantly chases after a number of hares at the same time, he conducts multiple actions, he causes multiple voices to be heard. Stephen is Telemachus in search of Ulysses Bloom. Molly is Penelope. Each chapter corresponds to one of the eighteen main episodes in the *Odyssey*. […] In a single day in Dublin we have the opportunity to rediscover the whole of the *Odyssey*. In the midst of contemporary strangeness, the old myths are reincarnated; the relations they express remain universal and eternal. (239)

Finally, the distinction that Kripke makes between *semantic reference* and *the speaker's reference* might also apply here: while the semantic reference is the character

in the hypotext,[5] the speaker's, or rather the narrator's, reference is the character himself, instituted via the narrative discourse, which carries the "load" of the semantic reference.

Enter the Reader

What would become of a literary work if nobody bothered to read it? Without the keen eye and alert mind of the reader, literature would be in danger of extinction, since the reader is just as necessary as the author. All the more important seems to me to be the role of the reader in the case of the narrative palimpsest, which requires a wholly special kind of reader: one capable of uncovering the "traces" of the prior story/stories interwoven in the hypertext. Without such prior knowledge, it would be all but impossible for the real reader to understand the special effects generated by the overlapping of multiple layers of meaning. In this contexts, *who* reads, *how* she reads, and not least *in what context* she reads become an issue of the greatest relevance, since in order to be understood the palimpsest demands not only a competent reader but also one who loves literature.

Perhaps we ought to imagine that reading *involves a continual dialogue between different texts and different readers, a dialogue that also takes place beyond the bounds of a narrative, often stimulated by the presence of characters whose names carry what I have chosen to call a "cultural load."* Moreover, such a reader would have to be able to recognise not only the prior character, but also the "literary space" whence he originates. Although I am here adopting Blanchot's concept, the manner in which I am using it is closer to the notion of the "intertextual unconscious" conceived by Riffaterre: it seems obvious to me that literary allusions, borrowed characters and, often, merely proper names (for example the way in which Caragiale constructs the character Agamiță Dandanache against the grain of the ancient Agamemnon) make the narrative spatial, lending it depth and surface area.

The idea that the text is an intentional fabric of prior stories and identities, which subsequently have to be discovered and recognised, the mechanism specific to the generation of narrative identity, in which the proper name plays an essential part, and the assumption that what is required is a reader whose cultural competence is beyond doubt, are all essential elements of the narrative palimpsest.

The new character and the new narrative develop against the backdrop of a story that provides a well-individualised reference point. A knowledgeable reader will easily understand that Gheorghe Crăciun creates—and sometimes recreates—new-old characters via constant dialogue between at least two "embodiments" of the same proper name: Adela, in his novel *Frumoasa fără corp* [*The Bodiless Beauty*], cannot help but refer to the eponymous character from G. Ibrăileanu's novel, while at the same time assimilating the poetic "silhouettes" created by Eminescu in *Miron și frumoasa fără corp* [*Miron and the Bodiless Beauty*], in its turn a re-write of the fairy tale collected by Richard Kunisch, *The Bodiless Maiden*,[6] as well as his own character Chloe, a rewrite of Longos's character. And so we have five cultural references that lend depth and meaning to the character in *Frumoasa fără corp.* They all lend shape to the "literary space" of

Crăciun's "Adela," contributing in an essential way to the shaping of the fictional world as an intersection of already existing narratives.[7]

Similarly, the narrative identities of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom come into being through their deliberate superimposition upon ancient heroes, Daedalus and Ulysses respectively, whose stories are "quoted" in Joyce's novels in an onomastic way. In Christian Moraru's opinion, onomastics is a field of the greatest importance, not only in contemporary literature, but also in the increasingly globalised real world, where proper names "reveal us to the world by revealing our ties to others" (Moraru, *Cosmodernism* 123). Speaking about the intertextual onomastics, Moraru argues that any association of one literary character with another, via a proper name, makes him enter "into a world of political and textual associations; he *affiliates* himself" (Moraru, *Cosmodernism* 136). In a cosmodern world—essentially defined through relations with the Other—"naming is 'meaning-making'" (Moraru, *Cosmodernism* 155). One of the examples Moraru provides in support of his theory is Chang-rae Lee's novel *A Gesture Life*, whose main character, Franklin Hata, takes the name of Benjamin Franklin, one of America's founding fathers. By this, "the story, a monologue in more than one way, becomes dialogical, engages with itself critically, by revealing its cultural, political, and textual ramifications" (Moraru, *Cosmodernism* 137).

When and how does a character cease to inhabit her own history? When and how does the "story" constructed around her end? If we talk about the "end of the story," any imaginable end might in fact be the beginning of another story, given the characters' power to fascinate us long after we have finished reading. Their stories, when they are well written, dwell in us, move us, never cease to preoccupy us. So familiar do the characters in the books we read with pleasure become to us that we want to know everything about them, and when the author passes over certain aspects of their existence in silence, our imagination comes into play, attempting to fill the empty spaces of the story. The frequency of retellings, rewrites, and sequels provides us with sufficient convincing proof in this respect: John Barth's *Menelaiad*; Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*, *Eugenie Grandet* and *The King*; Lin Haire-Sargeant's *H.*, in which a professor of literary theory imagines the events that take place in the life of Heathcliff during the interval in which he is absent from *Wuthering Heights*; *Death Comes to Pemberley*, P.D. James's detective-genre sequel to *Pride and Prejudice*; Costache Olăreanu's *Cu cărțile pe iarbă* [*With Books on the Grass*], which inverts the roles of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in a completely different spatiotemporal context; and the list might go on, with numerous other titles worthy of inclusion.

As for the art of storytelling, it will never die as long as life itself exists, for the old stories will always be told and retold, by many different voices in many different ways. If there is a "sense of an ending" (to quote another classic, Frank Kermode) in fictional narrative, then it is connected only with indifference towards original themes/plots/subjects. The reader knows that beyond the text proper there will always be what might be called the "textual unconscious" (Riffaterre), the "horizon of expectation" (Hans Robert Jauss), the "space of literature" (Blanchot), the "cultural encyclopedia" (Eco), on which the reader can draw in order to "fill" the blanks in the text. What I have in view

is an immediate reading context and a real reading, capable of bringing to awareness the palimpsest effect and of understanding the intertextual connections within a narrative. As Riffaterre explains, "the text functions something like a neurosis: as the matrix is repressed, the displacement produces variants all through the text, just as suppressed symptoms break out somewhere else in the body" (*Semiotics of Poetry* 19). In other words, what seems to be the most controversial aspect of the text (its apparent loss of meaning, its shattered meaning) proves to be its strength: the intertextual dialogue that brings together disparate narratives, signals and repetitive allusions which indicate a textual "beyond" that inevitably precedes the present narrative. The absent part of the text, nonetheless present through its obvious traces—just as Godot, who is always absent from the stage, is omnipresent because his name is uttered by all the other characters—has on the reader the effect of a spider's web, making her literally see the hidden design in the carpet, the prior story, which is never directly recounted, but merely suggested in the current text, primarily by means of proper names. And although the reader cannot erase or add whatever she likes in the text proper, it is the reader who actualizes the suggestions provided by the text, establishing links between the current text and countless other previous narratives and stories, which form the intertextual aura of what we are reading. Ultimately, the reader herself is an avatar of Penelope, who unravels what she has woven during the day, thereby postponing any final decision, prolonging the wait in which anything is possible. Like her, the reader re-weaves the text's "fabric" of meanings whenever she reads and re-reads, often pausing, going back, discovering and producing meanings as she advances sinuously into the multi-layered space of fiction.

Translated by Alistair Ian Blyth

NOTES

1 Among the types of architext, Genette includes self-parody, the heroicomic genre; parody; the sequel and its variants: the cyclical sequel (e.g., *The Aeneid*, *The Adventures of Telemachus*), the unfaithful sequel (John Barth's *Menelaiad*); and the epilogue; the retelling of a story, see for example Ştefan Agopian's novels *Tobit* and *Sara*, which broadly retell *The Book of Tobit*; the revival of a genre (e.g., *The Tziganiad*), which repeats the motifs and procedures of a given genre (the epic, the pastoral novel, the ancient Greek novel, e.g., that of Heliodorus); the transposition of a theme or episode from a hypotext within a large-scale work; and rewriting in a different style.

2 In *Orlando Furioso*, Ariosto retells in a parodic style the adventures of one of the most popular heroes of mediaeval European literature, the Roland of the *Chanson de Roland*. The French classicist playwrights Corneille and Racine strove to retell ancient stories.

3 In his study of rewriting, Christian Moraru points to the long tradition of this practice, the *imitatio auctorum*, a "motor" in the history of western literature, "from the Homeric epic poems—themselves 're-tellings' (Brewer 12)—to the early modern reinvention of the genre in Cervantes's parody of chivalresque romance to Laurence Sterne's own exploitation of *Don Quixote* in *Tristram Shandy*, to Joyce, modernism, and postmodernism" (*Rewriting* 7).

4 See Michael Riffaterre, "The Intertextual Unconscious."

5 I use the term in the sense that Gérard Genette gives it in *Palimpsestes*, that of primary text, whence derives the hypertext or secondary text.

[6] I thank Viorica Nişcov and Editura Humanitas for allowing me to read Richard Kunisch's *Bucureşti şi Stambul: Schiţe din Ungaria, România şi Turcia* [*Bucharest and Stambul: Sketches from Hungary, Romania and Turkey*], which also contains the two "Wallachian fairy tales" on which Eminescu based his *Luceafărul* [*Morning Star*] and *Miron şi frumoasa fără corp*.

[7] See my extended commentary in *Strategiile subversiunii*: *Incursiuni în proza postmodernă* [*The Strategies of Subversion: Forays into Postmodern Prose*]. Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 2008. Print. 320-33.

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