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**The Politics of Poet(h)ic Irony**  
**in the**  
**Romanian Poetry Written during the Communist**  
**Period**  
*(Summary)*

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## Summary

Preceded by a **foreword** and an **introduction** intended to outline its general focus, , **the first part** of the thesis opens with a **chapter** on the concept of irony which provides a theoretical framework for the exploration of the concept from its original negative meaning of hypocrisy, to the positive connotation it received once Plato had assigned the concept to Socrates, to its being accepted as a rhetorical technique, successfully acknowledged in the same period and continued as a dominant manifestation, up to the early nineteenth century, when irony was philosophically re-appropriated by the German Romantics, thus also acquiring also a literary value. Considering that the propagation of the mechanism of irony in literature marks the entry of the concept in the stage of its aesthetic modernity, this transformation highlights the elitist and idealist features of Romantic irony, understood as a reflexive relationship with the artistic creation and seeks, diachronically, to abandon this meaning once irony enters a new phase: that of the ethical modernity. It is a transition, placed at the beginning of the twentieth century, under the impact of the First World War, a historical event that determines a democratization of irony, which becomes accessible to all, based on shared experiences. Starting from the new functionality of irony, that of a lucid retrospect to life, this analysis aims to explore the manner in which, after its ethical conversion, accomplished once the Second World War had ended, irony acquires political affiliation within the context of the Communist regime that immediately established itself in the Eastern European states. The work captures, thereby, the way in which, after its democratization following the two World Wars, irony made its way as a *democratic* practice in the representative literature of those societies. Interested in the trans-ideological nature of irony, which is, at the same time, a brand of superiority and the appanage of the minority, the research seeks to reveal the factors that led to its proliferation in the *poetry* written during the communist period.

To this end, the major objective of **the second chapter** of the first part is to deconstruct certain prejudices which stipulate a fundamental incompatibility between poetry and both the notion of irony and that of commitment. Explaining how the tension between the metaphorical depth of poetry and the antiphrastic schematism of irony is solved in the mid-twentieth century (allowing the osmosis of these two concepts which, until then, were mutually exclusive in a line of thinking according to which poetry suggests uniqueness, while irony favors multiplicity) this part is followed by a sequence dedicated to the relationship between poetry and commitment. Thus, this thesis reviews three types of poetic commitment with the historical present – engaging *despite* of it (specific to reflexive poetry), engaging *in view* of it (exemplified by militant poetry) and engaging *in relation with* it (specific to transitive poetry) - and continues with exploring the commitment of transitive poetry, through irony, in relation to the realities of the Communist regime.

In the **second part** of the thesis, conceived as a single chapter, the subversive dialectic of irony, which involves an ethical revolt against totalitarian power and a simultaneous shirk from aesthetic considerations is observed with application to Romanian poetry written under communism (1948-1989). Assuming the implicit paradox of this commitment of ironic poetry against the regime – since commitment presupposes precisely what irony’s dialectics without synthesis obstinately rejects, namely the assumption of a direction, interpretation treats it, in the case of Romanian literature, as an expression of a double helplessness: to speak openly about the politic reality of the time and also to pass it by in silence. Therefore, the commitment to the historic context, through irony, is pursued, in the works of the “war generation” (**Geo Dumitrescu, Eugen Jebeleanu, Nina Cassian**) as well as in the poetry written by the postbelic generations, as follows: the ’60s (**Marin Sorescu, Ana Blandiana, Adrian Păunescu, Ioanid Romanescu, Nicolae Prelipceanu**), ’70s (**Mircea Dinescu, Dorin Tudoran**), and ’80s (**Matei Vișniec, Magda Cârneci, Mariana Marin**).

Insisting on some chronological landmarks, exegesis tries to capture the moment of appearance of when ethical irony appeared in the Romanian poetry and its becoming a poetical practice, permanently confronted with censorship. Therefore, the democratization of irony due to the impact of World War I on the collective mental and

the occurrence of this democratization of the process only at the end of the Second World War are problematised here while developing a poetic transitive line among the poets gathered at "Albatros" magazine. The ethical commitment, through irony, in relation with the reality of war, exemplary illustrated by Geo Dumitrescu, is presented as a complementary response to the one given by the poets of the Sibiu Literary Circle, through their aesthetic commitment, to the same context of right-wing dictatorship of the first half of the fifth decade. The analysis of Geo Dumitrescu's poetic irony takes into account both the changing of the political climate starting with the installation of the left-wing dictatorship in Romania, and the militant commitment of the poet, and that of his colleagues, in order to turn the socialist ideals into reality. The way in which the antiwar enthusiasm (and therefore anti-fascist) gradually converts, in the works of these poets, into an attack against the "pacifist" Communism serves to identify a common denominator of irony in the war generation.

The exploration of the phenomenon of ethical irony against the Communist regime continues with the poetry of the postwar generation, deceived not by the utopian promises to which the writers of the previous generation had fallen victim to, but by the promised cultural liberalization, which had started in 1965 and had been suddenly interrupted by the theses of July 1971 in which the Supreme Leader had imposed a re-ideologization of literature. Born during this ideological "thaw" and recovering, because of that, the sources of the interwar lyricism, - the generation belonging to the '60s - may seem an unjustified choice in the framework of this approach, as far as ethic irony is incompatible with lyricism. The explanation of the way in which irony propagates itself in Romanian poetry, despite the dominant aesthetic model of a generation of writers, as an existential response to the enormities of the totalitarian system is, nevertheless, among the objectives of this thesis. After the raid on the dissidents' poetry of the '70s, the detection of an ethical irony in the poetry of the '80s places, again, the research into difficulty, because of the confinement of these poets within the frame of postmodernism. The perpetuation of the modern referential irony into the poetry of a generation that ardently promotes the postmodern principle of self-referentiality has, ultimately, the role to extend the interrogation upon the urgency of an ethical commitment of writing in an epoch in which reality actually refuses to be put between brackets.

Bounded by two sets of **preliminary conclusions**, this last chapter of the thesis tests and ultimately recognizes the legitimacy of the assumption according to which it is possible *to circumscribe a paradigm of ethical irony in the Romanian poetry written during the Communist period as a particular way to engage a considerable number of writers in relation to the historical context to which they belong*. Starting from the observation that irony has both a logical side, of transmitting an opposite sense to the one expressed, and an axiological dimension, of evaluating the mocked object, which betrays, with no exception, an idealistic aspiration, this study does not address the notion as a simple discursive modality, but as a view upon the world. Hence, it signals the existence of a critical engagement of the Romanian poets with the Communist world, an engagement which is different from the two types of commitment (militant and esthetic) mentioned until now in other studies. Thereby, this research puts itself in front of a new series of ethical and moral difficulties which are anticipated, however, and pointed out in the **final conclusion**.

The discussion focuses, finally, on the possibility of assigning to the poetic commitment through irony the value of a heroic gesture given the fact that the term of heroism has already generated endless controversies in relation to the Communist period, , starting with the aesthetic heroism of engaging the poets despite the reality and ending with the anti-heroism of their militant commitment. At the end of this interrogation, the ironic commitment of the poets, praised and condemned for their courage, respectively for the futility of the gesture to break the silence, respected and blamed for their attempt to maintain a balance between the ethical invective and the aesthetic rebound, remains a moral action, as far as the morality of irony is a morality of intelligence. Moral, because intelligently, the funambulist poet cultivates the undecidability of the meaning, understanding very well the fact that freedom is only possible in the disorder of the protest itself. On one side lurks the guilt of the aesthetic refuge while, on the other side, the consequences of the ethical involvement. Between these two lines, the poet chooses irony, namely the border as a state of grace.