

Les Trois Grâces and Mircea Eliade's Metaphysical Attempt to Control Illness

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In *Youth without Youth*, published in 1976 in Paris, Mircea Eliade illustrated his fascination with eternal life, telling a fantastic story of a Faustian man. The same year, while living in France, the historian of religions wrote another story about immortality inspired by Greek mythology, *Les Trois Grâces*, where three women achieve eternal youth through medical experiences. The ingredients for success present in Eliade's former fiction, such as the fantastic and the revelation of the sacred in the profane, are also visible in this new metaphysical novella with a detective flavour.

Eliade builds *Les Trois Grâces* around the three Greek mythological figures from the Eleusinian mysteries. I will read this text using Eliade's perspective on the myths in his treaty of religious ideas and conclude with a personal point of view, more psychological than philosophical. I am aware that Eliade defended himself of this type of critical approach but I think that it is important to see the connection between some of the theories he advances through his fictional characters and what he believed as an anthropologist.

Eliade, who did not live in Romania at the time when he was writing his fantastic fiction in Romanian, provided readers from his native country with an evasion from the ideological burden of the Communist regime. He trusted that his Romanian audience would best understand his mythological and folklore allusions. In *Youth without Youth* Eliade evokes a famous Romanian philosophical tale about transgression of death. In *Les Trois Grâces*, one can think of the *Sânziene*, fairies present

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Dedication: In memory of my Father, historian Vasile Novac.