



Field: Humanities – Philology

# PhD THESIS

- ABSTRACT -

## TEODOR MAZILU MONOGRAPHIC STUDY

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Keywords: research, creation, writer, post-war, satire, typology of characters, moralist, theater, play, comic, pamphlet, irony, humor, stage, biography, bohemian, encounter, hat, mirror, psychology, truth, hypocrisy, soulful, short prose, travel memoir, publicist, essay, vision, lucid, director, censorship, novel, slum, hypostasis, poet, screenplay, marionettes, love, loneliness, communication, silence, death, fortress, flower, bovarism, thematic universe, critical reception, technique, language, interview, file, reevaluation.

The present work proposes a reassessment of the creation of Teodor Mazilu, a man who dedicated his entire life to literature and who had the pleasure of expressing himself in several voices, of always looking for other formulas to convey, as best as possible, his vision and originality.

Listening, with equal attention, to each voice of the author, whom we have become accustomed to calling a playwright for the innovations he brought to the world of post-war theater, we discover a captivating prose writer, a cerebral, lucid essayist, a sensitive poet, a demanding screenwriter, an ironic and moralistic memoirist, a tireless publicist, a humorous and satirical writer, an inspired translator.

Our investigation hypothesizes that the entire literary, cinematic, and theatrical creation of Teodor Mazilu was influenced by the sunny or harmful encounters in his life and by the liminal experiences he was troubled by. The meeting of Hortensia Papadat Bengescu is regarded by the author as a miracle, a blessing, an authorization from which his creative self came into being. Her urge to give birth to people and put them in front of the mirror to recognize themselves, is listened to by the young Mazilu who, at the age of sixteen, begins, through the visits to factories and plants, occasioned by his work as a journalist, the probing of human relationships. The meeting with the directors Lucian Pintilie and Aureliu Manea, with the actor Octavian Cotescu, reveals to him the fact that, although it was a later discovery, the theater is one of the greatest inventions of man, moreover, it is the means through which his message can reach instantly large masses of people. The fact that Nicolae Ceaușescu attends the seventeenth performance of his first play, *Proștii sub clar de lună/ Fools under the moonlight*, that, at his disposal, an entire apparatus is put into operation to denigrate the author until his exclusion from the Writers' Union, confirms that he has to fight, even more tenaciously, for every phrase and it causes him to respond with even greater artistic prolificacy. If it were not for the meeting and support of Valentin Silvestru, many passages would not have passed the censorship customs, with other plays having the fate of the first. The encounters in Mazilu's life are key moments in his destiny.

Mazilu's literary debut takes place in a hostile political climate, in the obsessive decade, his decisions being initially affected by periods of freezing or relatively thawing of the author's contemporary culture, so that then, after the banning of the first play and withdrawal of his right to sign, between opposition to the communist system and declarations of adhesion, the author to be reborn like the Phoenix bird and threw glove after glove in the face of a corrupt system, of a world in which values have been overturned.

The meetings, on a professional level, with Hortensia Papadat Bengescu, Lucian Pintilie, Aureliu Manea, and Octavian Cotescu, are truly sunny experiences, thanks to the positive energy they brought into his life, the symbioses that were created between Mazilu and each of them, meetings of the importance of which he was aware and for which he was grateful. On a personal level, the most significant meeting was with his daughter, Ioana, whose future he became

responsible for only in the last months of his life, always being concerned with his *children* on stage.

The fear of death, which followed him since his youth, is the basis of all his writings, of the journeys undertaken, of the bohemia experienced in Mogoșoaia, of the uninterrupted search for love - the only one capable of counterbalancing the anguish. Love is the one who changes Ioana's destiny - the daughter was recognized a few months before Mazilu had the threshold experience he feared the most - when he tries to improve the disease through good deeds, promises, and bright plans for the future. The need to write is constantly fueled by the fear of limiting his life in time, on the other hand, to us, compared to how long he lived, his creation appears to us even more quantitatively important.

The work integrates a chapter on biographical aspects and four chapters focusing on the creation of Teodor Mazilu, both treated from a chronological perspective. Through the pluriperspectivist approach, respectively of the important events in the author's life, of his physical and moral features, of the political and ideological context of his time, of critical receptions, through the analytical study of the entire corpus of creation, the coagulation of the biography and the work was achieved, them being intimately connected, the biographical aspects recognizably infiltrating the fiction.

The biographical path and the sub-chapter that paints an unconventional portrait facilitate the lecturer's access to information intended to allow him to understand that the writer has been overwhelmed since his childhood by the feeling of guilt for everything he did, of responsibility towards the human condition.

From his televised reports, valuable historical documents that capture, in addition to the extended family, the atmosphere of the 70s and 80s, made later in order to identify the transformations of the Bucharest neighborhoods or the village where his father used to live, he conquers not only the desire to revive beautiful moments from his past, but above all, his love for people whose diligence and dignity always impressed him and which he translated into his epic and cinematic work. The same sub-chapter explains the reasons for the exploitation of his sensitivity, the refuges in the Creative House from Mogoșoaia or with friends, it reveals the truth about the loneliness he sought and ran from his whole life, about the women in his life whom, even if he absorbed in opera, he loved passionately, highlights the intelligence that everyone who came into contact with him noticed, the attention with which he looked at life out of the desire to understand it in depth and to reconstruct it.

Mazilu, spectacular in his work but also in his everyday life, created his own elegance, according to which the hat was his defining accessory, hat boxes being the only ones carried in all his peregrinations. As an object with symbolic value, it appears in short prose, in plays, and in famous photographs, until the end when it becomes the ultimate whim.

The sub-chapter *Mazilu between recognition and contestation* reveals other details, than those known, related to the fierce struggle of the author to save his texts in their original form, a struggle in which theater people and the public are on his side. They recognize his merits through awards and applause, which gives him strength, satisfaction, and sometimes victory. Evolving from "a writer noted for his hostile position towards socialist realism, the author of the play *Proștii sub clar de lună/ Fools under the Moonlight* - which was removed from the stage for its inappropriate content" to a writer who transmits, through the play *Mobilă și durere/ Furniture and pain*, tendentious ideas and a problematic analyzed politics "deformed from malicious political-ideological positions", as stated in the files in the archives of the C.N.S.A.S., despite physical

fragility and external pressures, Mazilu not only escapes the forks of censorship, but ends up being played all over the country and even today on the stages of the world.

The viability of Mazilu's work is demonstrated by capturing its recent echo in the country and abroad, by finding, at the end of a laborious research work, the translations, re-editions, festivals, tours, and radio stations that kept the interest alive, that knew how to recognize in his texts, a timeless, always captivating world.

Researching the archives of C.N.S.A.S. confirmed the lack of a file on Teodor Mazilu's name, so I tried to reconstruct the era by analyzing the files of his relatives. The cataloging of Mazilu as a writer with a hostile position towards socialist realism since the first play, *Proștii sub clar de lună/ Fools under the moonlight*, the repeated mention of the author as a link of some close ones pursued by the police, such as Lucian Pintilie, Elvin Bernstein or Ioan Ieremia, the existence of several files in the names of those in his immediate vicinity - Marin Preda, Mircea Dinescu, Radu Cosașu, Fănuș Neagu, Florin Pucă etc., some of them being among his friends, encouraged my efforts to find and confirm some truths. The review of 66 archival units confirmed the negative perception of the authorities on the play *Proștii sub clar de lună/ Fools under the moonlight* and on its author. It also brought to light more details related to the staging of the play *Mobilă și durere/ Furniture and pain*, the tensions created around it, the interpretation given by different agents of the police who participated in the dress rehearsal, the premiere or the performances that followed, the confession of suspicions related to the corroborated intentions of the author and the director Ioan Ieremia, which are, in their understanding, to transmit distorted truths and obscenities to the young generation. Relevant and contradictory are the statements about the reactions of some people in the theater and in the audience who showed themselves receptive to the message of the play and manifested themselves through laughter, endless ovations and applause.

So, as a conclusion of the close look at this prematurely vanished existence, partly due to personal turmoil and external pressures, we can observe strange serpentine of his artistic notoriety, the author being, by turns, admired, awarded, challenged, adored, censored, put in a position to start new crusades for the acceptance of his work, for the recognition of overcoming conventions, the affirmation of originality and the rejection of lineages imposed by literary criticism, remarkable being his inner strength that didn't let him be crushed under the communist roller.

Those who accompanied or followed him in his bohemian life, Puși Dinulescu, Candid Stoica, Mihai Ispirescu, Fănuș Neagu, Petre Stoica, Radu Cosașu, saw in him a sparkling, incomparable writer, but also an authentic man-character, whose disappearance, occurring immediately after that of Marin Preda, left the Mogoșoaia Creative House empty.

The second chapter analyzes the short prose of Teodor Mazilu. First of all, the author's skills for the short genre are noted, such as the folio ton, the sketch, the audience, the portrait, the story and the short story, texts collected in collections that illustrate contemporary subjects and characters full of flaws on which the satirical spirit pours out in full. If in the first two volumes, *Insectar de buzunar/ Pocket Insectar* (1956) and *Galeria palavragiilor* (1957), Mazilu privileges work, attachment to everyday life, speeches and "sedintoman" characters, starting with the volume *O călătorie cu barca/ A ride on a boat* (1964) and continuing with *Vara, pe veranda/ Summer, on the porch* (1966), *Proză satirică/ Satirical Prose* (1969), *Pălăria de pe noptieră/ The Bedside Hat* (1972), *Înmormântare pe teren accidentat/ Burial on Rough Ground* (1973), *Iubiri contemporane/ Contemporary Loves* (1975), *Pelerinaj la ruinele unei vechi pasiuni/ Pilgrimage to the Ruins of an Old Passion* (1980), *Soarele și ambianța/ Sun and Ambiance* (1983), *Singurătatea și diavolul milos/ Loneliness and the merciful devil* (2004), which focus on sentimental issues, eros, loneliness

and the unknown being ever-present themes in an extensive psychological study that captures the degradation of the affective zone in a schizoid society.

Focusing on short prose allows the identification and analysis of characters, the establishment of a typology of chatter and a feminine typology, respectively the search for correspondences of manifestation and language between the two categories presented, the penetration into a captivating thematic universe in which love is represented upside down, being based on an overturned soul mechanism, the characters, now empty inside, have an obsession with furniture and a programmed disorder, and the liminal experiences respect the law of the game, of an inverted logic and affectivity. Calling on the comic of language and of situation, by joining familiar phrases, stereotypes, and automatisms of an era in which imposture rules, Mazilu (re)creates the same characters, but in different situations, illustrated with nuance, to describe his contemporary society, broken down into small portraits, through characters who, each one of them, suffer from an ethical anomaly. The overall picture provides the complete image of social alienation, the number of symptomatic individuals being significant in the context of the socialist era.

Following the volumes from a chronological perspective highlights a gradual deepening of the human survey, a visceral need of the characters for soul regeneration, the nostalgia of love and the obsession of communication acquiring increasingly lyrical accents. Through his heroes, who are in a permanent pendulum between the need for silence and the need for confession, Mazilu manages, thanks to an unmistakable talent, to convey to us strong feelings of loneliness, caused either by an implacable destiny or by the real need or mimicked by the absolute. Without completely disassociating itself, without giving the feeling of a break from one volume to another, encompassed by the same obsessions - communication, love, loneliness and death -, Mazilu is constantly renewing himself, through ever finer irony, through the need to deeper humanization.

Because of a too rudimentary sociological vision, some of the early sketches have lost their aesthetic importance and seem to us today outdated, they addressed an audience that disappeared in 1989. But most Mazilian texts resist the battle of time through human nature on which he proposes in his satire, the original style of observation and the narrative model he formed in these two collections and which will accompany him in his other writings. Moreover, in these early books, we can recognize the characters of the later playwright, the lines, the "quiproquos" and the paradoxes that placed him in the gallery of the most prominent satirical writers of post-war literature.

Synthesizing the critics' opinions, despite some epic or, in some places, lack of artistic mastery, the conventionalism or didacticism of some texts, the deliberate exacerbation of ridicule, of caricature, there are, in the short prose written by Mazilu between 1964 and 1980, texts of real value through the ingenuity of the moralist, the originality and variety of ways of manifesting satirical verve, the introduction of the absurd, the unpredictable, the soul abyss, the depth of psychological analysis and through lyricism.

Analysis of the four novels, written in different tones, *Bariera/ Barrier* (1959) – the slum novel, *Aceste zile și aceste nopți/ These days and these nights* (1962) – the industrial novel, *O singură noapte eternă/ A single eternal night* (1975) – the love novel and *Într-o casă străină/ In a foreign house* (1975) – bildungsroman, aims analogously at the thematic universe, typologies of characters, techniques and narrative strategies, the impression being, even if a less experienced novelist is discovered, of diversity, of inexhaustible creativity, of creating memorable characters, such as nea Vițu, the image of the worker with a complex psychology from the novel *Bariera/*

*Barrier*, his father's alter-ego, at the opposite pole is the superficial man, represented by his son, Fănică.

The author's favorite topos, that of the periphery, is compared to the aspirational slum of Caragiale, the contemplative one of Preda, the stumbling slum of Barbu, the devitalized one of Zamfirescu in *Domnișoara Nastasia/ Miss Nastasia* or the lewd one in *Maidanul cu dragoste/ The maidan with love*, *Lupeasca* of Mazilu taking shape as a micro-universe with lights and shadows, where individuals learn to demand their right to light not only in borderline situations, but every day. The comparative approach of the slums reveals the same motley world, in search of love, dominated by instinct, poverty, unhappiness, and loneliness, but *Lupeasca*, although it seems to function as a closed society, nevertheless, through the catalysis of energies, the diversity of concerns, the force of experiences, the persistence of ideals, turns out to be an open, radiant, unpredictable space that can at any time determine a repositioning and become the center itself.

Filtered through the grid of socialist realism, *Bariera* proves to be, for contemporary critics with Mazilu, a valuable work that probes the inner universe of the worker, of the superior misfit, but lacks epic dynamism, the pathos of revolutionary moments, the brevity of expression and the accuracy of style. Nowadays, looking beyond the rigidity of proletarian schemes and the dogmas of the time, going over the fragmented authorial vision of the epic, the work must be appreciated for the force of satire in that hostile climate, highlighting the complex psychology of the worker and shedding light with documentary value on the Bucharest slum of another time. To achieve it, the author uses techniques and narrative strategies such as the technique of parallel planes, counterpoint, pluriperspectivism, flashback and flashforward, bas-relief, and significant detail.

*These days and these nights* is a novel dedicated to life in a factory, to some characters who strive to maintain and develop a production process, the essential theme being work, love trying in vain to infiltrate among courses, meetings, promotions, the desire to power, vices, plans and ideals of professional achievement. In an era in which the need to move from self to us is constantly emphasized, the author makes daily cutouts, and describes the banality of everyday life, behind the decisions that must be made in various and small situations, the party invariably being.

The theme of inventing a new religion, which in the novel *Bariera/ Barrier* is attributed to Fănică, and in Marin Preda it is the idea of Nicolae Moromete, is also exploited in this novel. If in *Moromeții* it is born as a vital necessity, Nicolae is no longer able to believe in the religion of his parents, in the case of the Mazilian hero, the need is fueled by the thirst for power and is justified by the inappropriate readings of childhood. Teodor Mazilu finds the theme very suggestive of the world of the slum, since he takes it up on other occasions as well. In the novel *Într-o casă străină/ In a foreign house*, Matei Alexandru, when he gets bored with the childhood games in which he has total authority, he allows himself to be tempted by spiritual supremacy. In the screenplay of the film *Bariera/ Barrier*, the one who is tasked with inventing the new religion is Fănică, the degenerate son of nea Vițu, the one who in the novel earns an income from writing litanies for the illiterate old women near the church.

By repeatedly returning to this incident, Mazilu sanctions the transformation of spirituality in the pursuit of monetary interests, false religious supremacy, charlatanism, lack of vocation, the search for false idols of modern man, the need for spiritual power and its manifestation on the naive, the egocentrism leading to extremes to the divinization of one's own person, but, beyond these satirizations, we cannot speak of a return of the sacred in Mazilian pages.

The typologies of characters such as the know-it-all, the sucker, the slacker, the chump are constructed like puppets and are illustrative for the representation of a world characterized by the discrepancy between what it is and what it says it is, and for which illustration the author uses the

juxtaposition of unrelated events, psychological analysis and descriptions, sometimes elaborate, of the environment, merged with those of the beings that populate them.

Regarding the reception of the novel *Aceste zile și aceste nopți/ These Days and These Nights*, the critics aligned themselves in one camp or another, depending on the political twists, some appreciating it for its satirical virtues, for the accomplished descriptions of the environment, others criticizing its monotony of content and form, the diminution of the epic, the simplistic, dogmatic vision, the enslavement to the regime of its era. However, the novel convinces us through the discrepancy between the seriousness of the individuals' concerns and their true character, dominated by hypocrisy.

In the novel *O singură noapte eternă/ A single Eternal Night*, love becomes uplifting, offering the protagonist the power of escape from a world without morals, without perspectives and ennobling, for a deeper understanding of existence. In depicting the two worlds, the lovers and the hedonists, the struggle of the former against degradation, to save the supreme feeling, the author relies on the effects of circularity, the end of the novel being analogous to the beginning marked by a separation, on the insertion of a legend that, far from being a gratuitous exercise, encompasses the moral of creation in its entirety: however strong the feelings, some separations are inevitable, but even if it changes in some aspects of it, love remains eternal. The critics are not generous in their reception of this novel that praises the love that generates joy, devotion, and creative power, considering it without substance, a parody of romance literature, but which still reserves for us a brightening of the authorial vision by giving a chance to humanity.

*In a foreign house* is a novel about the experiences of Matei Alexandru, a painter, but it also is about his generation, against the background of historical events after 1944, experiences carefully and curiously put under the satirical writer's ironic lens. In outlining the thematic universe, the title of the book is extremely well chosen, representative of many characters who feel the need for identity, to mark their territory and, not being adapted to current conditions, are looking for a protective space, a guarantee of safety and stability. In a period marked by social unrest, physical and spiritual violence, the space captures less positive, creative and destructive energies. By moving them into foreign homes that degenerate into spaces of chaos, moral, sentimental or religious disorder, the author punishes individuals obsessed with independence of spirit, bohemian, metaphysical, adulterous temptations and any other form of eccentricity.

On its most important dimension, the book can be considered the novel of the formation of an artist in the conditions of post-war life, but Mazilu's creative ability illustrates several authentic types, individuals with obvious anomalies undergoing a pseudo-adaptation to the conditions of normal life. The result will be a gallery of grotesque portraits, of swindlers, impostors, traitors, the binder being Matei, a not exactly positive hero, but with chances of salvation. Among the cultured human types, vulnerable women and fallen geniuses stand out, and among the narrative techniques and strategies used by the author, I particularly focused on the insertion of autobiographical elements and on the circularity of the novel, starting with an existential meditation in the native universe and, after tireless searches of intimate space, ending with the same familiar topos, seen as nostalgic.

Despite some remarkable pages and an inexhaustible capacity for invention, critics reproached him for annoying repetitions, falling into caricature, predictability, the lack of substance of the protagonist, of the spectacular, of the psychologies and an ideational deficit. However, in the view of some, it is a well-written novel, with successful female typologies, with abundant comic situations and ironic reflections, with a great force of satire, the satirical spirit interweaving with the analytical one to describe the first years of the obsessive decade.

A less investigated theme in Mazilu's work and which deserves attention is Bovarianism, present in all four novels, the characters always tending to be perceived as different than how they are. Suffering from social, moral, artistic, intellectual, sentimental or ideological bovarism, they truthfully reflect an era in which the pressures of double thinking are massively exerted. The role of a novelist obliges him to reveal in detail the circumstances and reasons that surround this phenomenon, which compose its exteriority and determinism, in order to establish the specific types of Bovarianism of the characters, as they pass through several simultaneous or successive avatars. Being under the influence of the environment, under the control of an enthusiasm, a need, an admiration or an interest, Mazilian Bovarian characters end up attributing to themselves foreign feelings, opinions, instincts, attitudes that consume a lot of energy because they don't suit them. Following these analyses, we find that Bovarism in Teodor Mazilu, although it could be a principle of elevation and progress, the heroes being in search of immediate or future happiness, is a principle of decay, misery, ruin, bankruptcy, suicide. As the biographical data also reveals, the author's soul background proves to be up to the task of understanding and illustrating the psychology of his Bovarian characters.

A distinct sub-chapter is dedicated to a favorite theme in Mazilu's epic work, namely loneliness, looking for the sources of this feeling, the need to take refuge in the «Maison de l'oubli», as the Creative House from Mogoșoaia was also called, the acceptance of its loneliness and privileges. We can identify the loneliness as physical emptiness, as proof of love, as sacrifice, as punishment, the alienating, sacred, sought-after loneliness and the fight against loneliness. Applying, in the case of Mazilian characters, the typology of loneliness made by Diana Câmpan, we notice that most often we encounter the alienating loneliness, specific to misfits, fallen from the logic of nature, and the sacred loneliness, of the chosen ones, but who do not reach the expected results, either from a misunderstood vocation, either because of a pathology. In Mazilu, loneliness, confronted with love, the ultimate criterion for discerning the souls of his contemporaries, gains or loses ground, depending on the aspiration of the characters to remain silent or confess.

The chapter *Teodor Mazilu - the playwright* begins with a search for the motivations of the author's recourse to this formula, discovered later, but which will bring him consecration on theater stages throughout the country and beyond. From the bouquet of lineages that have been offered to Mazilu over time, persistent attention is paid to Caragiale, then to D. R. Popescu, Marin Sorescu, Eugen Ionescu, Brecht, Chehov, Thornton Wilder and Samuel Beckett, decanting the similarities and differences among these prominent representatives of dramaturgy.

Although Mazilu rejects the Caragial vein, opposing the tenderness of his predecessor towards his characters, the cruelty and baseness of the Mazilian ones, and some critics add the psychological verisimilitude of the world created by one compared to the other abstract one, elevated for demonstrative purposes, the two playwrights share the topos predilect, the Bucharest slum, both motley worlds, dominated by excessive and repetitive gesticulation, chatter, spontaneous and overflowing sincerity, with the tendency to convert dialogue into monologue to favor oratory and exclude authentic communication.

By overcoming dramatic conventions, the unrestrained verbosity of the characters, through the omnipotence of the word, the development of oratorical skills, the Mazilian theater approaches both the social satire of D. R. Popescu, trailblazer in contemporary dramaturgy, and the existentialist and absurd theater represented by Marin Sorescu. The delimitations are identified at the thematic, stylistic, ideational level, of metaphysical infiltrations and by the nuance of (self)irony.

With Ionesco, Mazilu resembles at most through identical obsessions such as estrangement, alienation, the grotesque, artificiality, the reduction of the being to the archetype, the ridicule of education through the characters. The desire of Ionesco, of the dramatic authors of the absurd in general, is to make man face his human condition, the senseless reality, to free himself from illusions and fears, to come to terms with the world in which he lives. Up to a point it resembles Mazilu's, but he goes beyond acceptance and, at the risk of becoming didactic or moralistic, aims to mirror an alienating society, but also to change its morals, of coexistence between people, which is also Brecht's point of view. Although he is only interested in a minimal indication of the realistic register in which the action of his plays takes place, Mazilu thinks that his theater does not fall within the sphere of the theater of the absurd, what separates him is the philosophy according to which existence cannot be absurd, life cannot be emptied by a miracle. In addition, the demonstrative, intellectual language of the theater of the absurd does not define him, he is a follower of honest, direct confessions which, together with commonplaces and typical phrases, make up a vital, open theater that does not mutilate life, but reproduces it in all its complexity.

By calling on allegory as a way to express reality, Mazilu gets closer to Brecht, but also to Wilder, through the concern for cynical farce, the overturning of the value system, the presence of erotic triangles, the lack of a dominant event, the absence of purification processes, solitude, the impossibility of communication, of finding a common language as a couple, by Chekhov, and the self-alienation of the characters, the removal of successive masks to reach the depth of the being, the futile attempts to find one's self, the impossibility of leaving time, all these made the critics associate Mazilu with Samuel Beckett.

After placing it in the satirical theatre, of moral and social observation, with emphasis on the difficulty of realization compared to the forms of modern theatre, the action of the main plays is followed, with the finding, in the agreement of the critics, of the lack of gradation of the dramatic conflict, the success being due to the charm the lines, the tension of the interrogations, the effervescence of the dialogue.

The sub-chapter referring to the dramatic technique and language, to the sources of the comic in Mazilian plays, highlights the originality and innovations brought by Mazilu in post-war dramaturgy. If, in classical comedy, the sources of the comic came from the contrast between appearance and essence, laughter erupting at the unmasking of individuals, the originality of the Mazilian formula is ensured by the agreement between the two, the characters being, at the same time, ridiculous and frightening, predisposing to laughter through their absurdity, but also to the shudder, anxiety. Mazilu, however, knows how to mitigate the terrifying and the grotesque by illustrating a motley, expansive world, some picturesque social basements, with gestures, onomastics and language specific to a comedy of light morals. The comic based on characters is an important source of the comic in Mazilu, he outlines ridiculous characters through negative, strong moral traits, provoking laughter with a moralizing purpose. Quite remarkable is the comic of language, a way of characterizing the characters that individualizes the author in the entire post-war dramaturgy. The heroes use elevated language without being an intellectual quality, they waste brilliant aphorisms and sentences, they pose as wielders of beautiful words, but they belong to a minor soul universe. This embellishment of the language with pompous terms, euphemisms, abstractions has the effect of moving away from reality, stifling the truth, the ambiguity of the language being doubled by the existential one. The paradox, the antiphrase, the counter phrase, the illogical and absurd phrase, the diversion of the meaning of the words, the lack of logic of some statements, the nonsense, the contradictions of the statements or sometimes just the sharp, glacial, abstract word, is what characterizes the Mazilian dramatic language, with the mention that the

author does not consider himself a paradoxical writer, but a realistic one, because he does not propose only an upside-down image of reality, but, above all, its decipherment. In Mazilu, even the absurd becomes a tool to expose the political regime, because it does not appeal to fantasy, but reflects the harshest reality.

From the herd of "Epicurus' fat pigs", as Mazilu calls them, typologies of positive characters emerge, then male and female, individualized by name and manner of analysis. The mosaic world of Mazilian prose also returns to the theater to populate the same social basements: managers, hall managers, barmaids, receptionists, small businessmen, small wage earners, waitresses, utility girls, and bar singers. The roles are distributed in pairs, such as the frivolous woman and the woman devoted to her husband, the boss and the underling, the honest and the embezzler, the hypocrite and the sincere. Regardless of the socio-professional environment to which they belong, they pretend to suffer, to love, to live and are not afraid to admit it. Moreover, it assumes this baseless form as a virtue, wanting to impose it as the new human norm. Mazilu's rare positive characters are fragile structures. Their weapons are common sense, modesty, lucidity, these proving insufficient in the face of the onslaught of stupidity, superficiality, hypocrisy, boundless greed. That's why sometimes positive characters become negative and vice versa, the playwright intends to demonstrate that neither the moral people are exactly moral, nor the immoral ones are not entirely immoral. In order to underline this conclusion, recourse is made to the demonstration of the playwright's use of concave mirrors in observing the world, in enhancing the defects of a schizoid society, in choosing paired characters to mirror anomalies, to increase the effect of alienation, robotization, rhinocerization.

The other poses of the author: the essayist, the poet, the screenwriter, the memoirist, the publicist, the humorist, the translator are not to be overlooked, Mazilu's work also arouses interest through diversity, through the availability of expression in many fields of art and life, through the generosity with which satisfies all tastes.

The analysis of the philosophical essays, gathered in the volume *Ipocrizia disperării/ The Hypocrisy of Despair*, was carried out structurally, thematically, stylistically, affectively, resulting in the natural discovery of the same thematic universe from his epic, of some feelings and attitudes belonging to the essayist when skeptical of doctrines, theories, ideologies, who removes, from the perspective of common sense, everything that defiles life and prevents the discovery of truth, when optimistically expressing his trust, hope, love of people and respect for them. More often than not, in these pages, one hears the voice of the moralist, who, through a different narrative formula, targets the same human flaws. Sometimes, however, the voice of the Mazilu man, the one who is hopelessly in love with life, with love, with the beauty of the world, reaches us.

The repetitive recourse to the same names that he praises in relation to everything, names like Tolstoy, Michelangelo, Bach, Kant, Eminescu or Pythagoras, can be disturbing, but it can be explained by the need to establish some benchmarks, to relate to some values in a world dominated by falsehood. However, without making direct allusions to external pressure, in the climate of double thinking cultivated by the political regime, the author confesses and urges us to personal meditation, lucid analysis, escaping from the patterns of hypocrisy and finding true freedom. The comments of the critics of the time, doubled by the recent ones, generated appreciation for a true spiritual master, an exceptional analyst in the field of morality and psychology, for the historical document he gave us.

The sub-chapter dedicated to the poet occasions the revelation of a sensitive lyrical spirit, which emerges from under the mask of the satirist, whose irony becomes melancholic, of a philosopher with a rich life experience, capable of endowing words with consciousness, but also

of the familiar universe from other creations, in which love, loneliness, silence and death are favorite themes, and the flower and the fortress are frequent symbols to emphasize the fragility of existence and the need for security. The poetic self is caught oscillating between the Baudelaire spleen and *carpe diem*, sometimes appealing to the Symbolists and their aesthetics of the ugly, sometimes to Horace and the idea of total erosion, with the privileging of love. The confession of the anguish caused by loneliness, but also the possibility of salvation through love, brings him closer to Shakespeare, to the legend of Orpheus and Eurydice. Mazilian poetry reminds us of our great poets or philosophers, of Eminescu through the idealization of love, of Blaga through the theme of existence, absolute knowledge through love and the metaphor of light, of Bacovia through the terrible terrors of loneliness, of Prelipceanu through the tendency towards irony, of Ioan Alexandru through the positioning of the lyric between the sublime and the tragic, by Nichita Stănescu through the ferocious fight with the inner lioness, by Labiș through the mixture of restlessness and lucidity from the need for absolute purity, by Barbu through the mathematical explanations, hermetic arguments and the accuracy of the verse, by Arghezi through the motif of lucid consciousness and the feeling of guilt, but the expressiveness, the philosophical meditation, the ambiguity, the reflexivity, the suggestion and the poetic imaginary make it unique in the space of the post-war lyrics. Although critics have paid little attention to him, they have nevertheless recognized that the Mazilian lyrical spirit exists, draped under the veil of satirism, but revealing some of the most intimate aspects of his personality.

The surprise of this approach is the discovery, alongside the well-known volume *Cântece de alchimist/ Songs of the Alchemist* (1972), reissued in 2020, of the poems that were to make up a second collection, entitled *Cântece de moarte și de sărbătoare/ Songs of Death and Celebration*, twenty poems added by Philippe Loubière in the bilingual edition, Romanian-French, from 2001, of a volume that did not reach the general public. By bringing this volume to light, the pose of a poet has multiplied, surpassing the label of a singular episode, as Mazilian lyric has been considered until now.

A lesser known and investigated position of the author is that of the screenwriter. In 1964, Teodor Mazilu already has his first cinematic experience, by collaborating with Ioan Grigorescu on the screenplay of the film *Cartierul veseliei/ The neighborhood of joy*, a film that illustrates the story of a family of workers in the slums of the 1930s and will be directed by Manole Marcus. In 1975, Mazilu will be assigned a secondary role in the drama *Singurătatea florilor/ The Loneliness of Flowers*, directed by Mihai Constantinescu, based on a script signed by Octav Pancu-Iași. Later, his plays and satirical prose would be the subject of numerous adaptations for radio and the small screen. What ties him more steadfastly to the cinematographic art is, however, the meeting with the director Mircea Mureșan and the common attraction for the same topos, for bringing it back into the spotlight. Together they will leave a testimony over time about the charm of an era, about the colorful world of the slums of the capital. The novelty of the screening of the film *Bariera/ Barrier* (1972), a screening of a certain value for those times, of relative thaw, of a certain freedom of culture, consists in the rare presence on the films of this picturesque environment, despite its cinematic potential, and the success is due to the reduction to the minimum of the ideology, the original vision of the painted world, the rendering of the atmosphere illustrated in the novel, but also a constellation of exceptional actors and the soundtrack performed by the talented Mihaela Mihai. The analysis aims to sediment the motivations and value of the screenplay, the joys and dissatisfactions of a demanding but also nostalgic screenwriter vis-à-vis his novel to which he would return as to his childhood home.

A revelation also turns out to be the volume of notes *Este corida o luptă cu moartea?/ Is the bullfight a fight with death?*, which reveals Mazilu's talent as a memorialist, the purposes of his travels, to meet happiness, to approach the beauty of the world or its suffering, to feel homesick or to run away from loneliness, to understand the death that must come at the end of a loyal fight. Witnessing the spectacle of the world, witnessing the injustices, the incoherence and the ridiculousness of human manifestations, Mazilu could not disassociate himself, even in these texts, from his moralistic and ironic side, through fine or humorous observations, unusual comparisons, reflections that, sometimes, are not limited to the individual level, but extend to the customs of an entire land.

Publicity is added to the tireless concerns of the author who likes to have a say in several fields, of which he privileges two: cinematography and sports, especially football. The phenomenological analysis of football, undertaken in the collection of essays *Fotbalul n-a fost creat de diavol/ Football was not created by the devil*, is doubled by lucid, objective observations about matches, stars, sports behavior in general. The motivation of Mazilu's leaning on this game is, beyond the search for harmony, the intuition of an attitude close to that of the one who writes poetry, which tends towards deciphering the miracle of the world.

The hypostasis of a humorist is, for Mazilu, an opportunity to complete his gallery of characters in texts collected in collections, such as *Pâinea la loc fix/ Bread at a fixed place* (1972), *Elegie la pomana porcului/ Elegy to the alms of the pig* (1976) or *Doamna Voltaire/ Lady Voltaire* (1979), with the difference that here the hypocrite is called an "angel with a record", the sycophant is a "sentimental leech", the corrupt is a "commodity man". Mazilu, like all humorists, observes the deviations of society and aspires to correct it. The subchapter Pamphlet elements in Mazilian work applies the theoretical notions developed by prof. dr. Cornel Munteanu in the work *Pamfletul ca discurs literar/ Pamphlet as literary discourse*, identifying in Teodor Mazilu a "barometer of the public spirit", which aims at the moral and social sphere, more precisely, the ills of the society of his time. The difference from other pamphleteers is found in the actors' awareness of their own deviations which become reasons for pride, and for Mazilu ironic distancing, provoking an inner, sweet-sour laugh.

The last hypostasis of the writer, at which a stop proves opportune, is that of translator. Mazilu translated four books, written by different authors, from different languages, alone or with help. The explanations for undertaking such an approach lie in the discovery of common visions, the satirical one, in the construction of similar thematic and affective universes.

All these hypostasis of Teodor Mazilu, some such as the translator, the screenwriter or the cinephile being excluded from other analyses, enrich his palette of concerns, are essential for the recuperative stake and, at the same time, facilitate the understanding of the fields that consecrated him: theater, prose short and publicity.

The appendices of the work are important because of the exclusivity of the information about aspects of Teodor Mazilu's life, given to the author by the writer's daughter, through the disclosure of some behind-the-scenes details, collected from the actress Tora Vasilescu, who knew the author personally, and through the intimate revelations, full of admiration of Oana Pellea, who is currently enjoying great success, playing in a Mazilian play. A statement by Teodor Mazilu, discovered in the TVR archive and attached to the work, is a unique document for understanding his beliefs about art, the pressures from the political sphere, but also the removal of the tombstone from his theater in 1972, after nine years of Prohibitions.

Mazilu's guide, created after a careful reading of the entire dramaturgical work for the careful selection of aphorisms, lines that are specific to Mazilu, his unmistakable style, those

phrases that, taken out of context, are meant to convey as much as the whole play, make up an upside-down code of life, a Mazilian universe in miniature.

The chance of creating and saving such a valuable work is due to the refusal of exile at every invitation from the leading voice to the stubbornness of the author to remain in the country and culture in which he was born, with all the risks. Mazilu was convinced of his vocation, of his destiny as a writer, of the privilege of living in a context that provided so many fascinating subjects. Unlike some of his colleagues who went to other lands, he could not imagine writing in any language other than Romanian, about a society other than the Romanian one that he wanted to mirror. Stubbornness, pride, but also responsibility towards the human condition, an attitude of respect before the miracle of life and, last but not least, a great love of the fellow man.

Studying the current works of history, theory and literary criticism, the echo of his work in the country and abroad in recent years, the calendar of recent and ongoing relaunches of his books and plays on different stages of the world, proves, through the results obtained, the actuality of Teodor Mazilu, the overcoming of temporal and spatial barriers, reinforcing the need for objective assessment of the author. Thus, it becomes necessary to revalue Mazilian's work in the context of contemporary literary history, analyzing it from new perspectives, putting it in a new, revealing light.

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