

SUMMARY

Key words: Theatrum Mundi, William Shakespeare, Calderon de la Barca, Mihai Eminescu

Our research entitled *The Motif World as a Theatre in the English, Spanish and Romanian Literature. William Shakespeare, Calderon de la Barca, Mihai Eminescu*, was made up to identify and to realize a critical analysis on the motif world as a theatre. This research did not happen in any condition, but based on some literary works of universal circulation that belong to some apparently distinct and distant literatures. The three literatures from which we selected the bibliography of this PhD thesis were represented by three authors who are considered to be geniuses both in the local as well as in the universal domain. Those three – William Shakespeare, Calderon de la Barca and Mihai Eminescu used in different periods of time and space the same literary motif – that is - the world as a theatre.

Joining the real world to the one that is specific for the theatre was an interesting point since ancient times. The similarities between the two worlds are obvious both for the Stoics, Pythagoreans and Neoplatonics as well as for the Classics, Humanists, and Romantics etc. Life was and is a show for most of the writers, this hypostasis can be found under different forms either obvious or masked. The world as a theatre was easier perceived by writers like William Shakespeare, Calderon de la Barca and Mihai Eminescu due to the fact that all three were in a way or another people of the theatre or, better said, the theatre was part of their life. A living proof of the fact that these authors were part of the theatre world can be found in some of their works. If we take into consideration the fact that these three authors were people of the theatre, we must mention a second source which facilitated the existence of the motif world as a theatre present in the works studied in this PhD thesis. This second source is the access to the writings from the ancient times, it is known the fact that both the motif world as a theatre as well as world as a dream are ancient and they appear in the works of the philosophers

and personalities of that time such as: Anthistene, Diogene Laertio, Platon, Epictet, Cicero, Plotin etc.

The complexity of the motif world as a theatre allowed us to establish connections between the works of these three authors using as a literary method – the comparatism. We found common elements both in Shakespeare's England and Renascentist Spain as well as between these two and Romania in the begening of the modern epoque.

It was amazing the discovery of the motif world as a theatre as well as of the one related to the perisability of human life, both of them spread in the entire Spanish literature. The works of the writer Calderon de la Barca such as: The Great theatre of the World and Life is a dream can be completed by Don Quijote de la Mancha written by Miguel de Cervantes, in case we wish to extend the motif world as a theatre.

During time, the motif of world as a theatre has registered an evolution regarding the characters that are being distributed in the world's play as well as the stage director who tells them what to do. In ancient times, the real world was submitted to the force of destiny which was directing the entire play. The human being became an integrated part of the universe being submitted to the Divine Providence. The only thing that the human being was allowed was resignation in front of the world's show, fact which led to melancholy. This type of attitude was specific for the stoics who thought that everything was in vane especially because everything that happens is written "before and no matter how much did the director yell: < oh God, God > , he must obey and suffer until the end the role which he received. ¹(our translation).

If the Stoics left everything in the hands of the Divine Providence, William Shakespeare will return to the motif world as a theatre and he will offer another vision repeating an older idea of Quintus Horațius Flaccus. The two writers thought that our human life was divided in seven ages each of it with its specific, togheter representing the human cicle. Ideas as the one of order and degree, of the corespondence between the microcosmos and macrocosmos , of destiny which at least partly the human being can

¹ Marco Aurelio, Meditaciones Libro VI 46, p.15: Porque se ve la necesidad de que esto acabe así, y que lo soportan quienes gritan: «¡Oh Citerón!». Y dicen los autores de dramas algunas máximas útiles. Por ejemplo, sobre todo, aquella de: «Si mis hijos y yo hemos sido abandonados por los dioses, también eso tiene su justificación.». Y esta otra: «No irritarse con los hechos». Y: «Cosechad la vida como una espiga granada», y otras tantas máximas semejantes, Ed. Alianza, Madrid 2000.

make it better, of the imperative to respect the basic ethical precepts which are meant for the well going of the society as well as for a peaceful life, are part of the shakespearean philosophical belief. William Shakespeare will also use the metaphor *theatrum mundi* from the perspective of the terrestrial space compared to a stage from a theatre.

In what concerns Calderon de la Barca, he was considered the genius of the Baroque and due to the fact that he dared to offer a scenic vision to the philosophical cosmos-vision of the world as a theatre in a philosophical-allegoric work which bears a suggestive title. *The Great theatre of the World* is therefore putting on stage this concept related to existence. For Calderon the world is a great fair where we either spend usefully or we waste our talents. Unlike Calderon de la Barca, Mihai Eminescu will introduce in the field related to the motif world as a theatre a new element of schopenhaurian origin. The supreme director of the world as a theatre is not the *Christian Providence* or the stoic principle of *Universal Rationality*, but the *Universal Will*, the blind force that manipulates the man as a puppet. Eminescu will emphasize with ironic accents and in some cases pamphleteer the unnatural of the universal order. From this perspective, the poem *Glossa* can be seen as a satire and as an exposure of the indifference, a deep contempt regarding the ridiculous show of the world.

All the things mentioned above have been developed in different chapters and in each of these we focused on a single writer and on a selection of his works depending on the identification of the motif world as a theatre.

The PhD thesis entitled *The Motif World as a Theatre in English, Spanish and Romanian Literature. William Shakespeare, Calderon de la Barca, Mihai Eminescu* is structured on five chapters : the first chapter is entitled *Theoretical Benchmarks*, the second is *The World as a Theatre (theatrum mundi) in the Universal Philosophy and Literature*, the third is *World as a Theatre in the Theatre of William Shakespeare*, the fourth is dedicated to *Don Calderon de la Barca and the Motifs World as a Theatre and Life as a Dream* and the last chapter belongs to Mihai Eminescu and it is entitled *The Motif World as a Theatre in the Poetry of Mihai Eminescu*.

The first chapter *Theoretical Benchmarks* was meant to be an analysis of the method of interpretation used in this PhD thesis, Comparative literature and especially comparatism concentrates its study on finding connections, similarities and common

points which influenced and helped to the creation of some literary works in different geographical areas. The comparative method can be completed by intertextuality and hermeneutics when it comes to the study of the motif *theatrum mundi*. If the hermeneutics in a wider meaning is the interpretation and understanding of the world and life then we can state that the literary works which have as motif the world as a theatre represent, with other methods and another perspective, also a way of interpretation and understanding of the world and life.

We considered that using multiple strategies is somehow mandatory when it comes to the interpretation of the motif world as a theatre and that is why in this first chapter we defined each method and we tried to justify our selection for the critical study that we made.

The second chapter The Motif World as a Theatre (*Theatrum Mundi*) in Universal Literature and Philosophy approaches from a chronological point of view the motif world as a theatre. More precisely we tried to find the origins of this motif that was widely spread in poems, medieval treaties, works, satires and preaches from almost every period in the universal literature. The beginnings of the metaphor world as a theatre has its origin in the attempt to answer questions related to the role and the place of the human being in the universe. From ancient times, probably, the work in which we find the clearest embodiment of the concept world as a theatre is Platon's *Republic*. Also, in the work entitled *Eneadas* of Plotin we find the same metaphor and the man is illustrated as an actor submitted to the divine will, caught in a pre-established universal order.

During the middle age and the Renaissance we noticed a decrease of the interest for Epictetus's metaphor. World as a theatre was taken by Erasmus de Rotterdam in his work *The Praise of Fool*, the author expresses his concept of the world and life according to a critical rationality and a corrosive and skeptic irony. From Erasmus point of view, life is a comedy and each man- actor has to wear his mask. In this vision, sorrow does not lead to unhappiness, but to the opposite, you would feel unhappy if you are not disappointed.

In Classicism we noticed *Jean de la Bruyere* in whose pages we get the explanation of the literary ideology and tendencies of the French classic age. *The Characters written by La Bruyere* can be considered an historic document of the French

society during the period of the absolutist monarchy of Ludovic the XIVth. According to *La Bruyere* the world will continue after its old pattern, in a frozen and eternal social order resembling a piece of theatre that repeats itself on and on.

In Romanticism we noticed an exploration of the deep areas of the human soul and the value of the dream experience, the dream being at the same time a way of knowledge but also a way to escape from the reality. The romantic senses that the human's life is short and that the material world is lacked of value, a simple appearance. The parable world as a theatre will serve to satirize the unjust world in which the romantic finds himself.

This second chapter ends with a perspective on the evolution of the motif *theatrum mundi* in nowadays and modern philosophy. This motif subsists in our mental as a archetype which, if we are not aware, it will try to dominate our way of being and of perceiving the world.

The third chapter was dedicated to the English writer William Shakespeare and to some of his works in which we can find the idea of the world as a theatre. One of these works is entitled *As You Like It* and here we find the famous monologue of Jacques, the monologue in which life is classified in seven ages and *the entire world's a stage*. Another Shakespearian play which is as emblematic for the motif *theatrum mundi* is the one entitled Hamlet. In this play Shakespeare uses the technique of theatre in theatre by introducing another play into the original one. The actors from both plays are different. The actors from Shakespeare's work are playing after a script that is independent from their will as actors; the actors from Hamlet's play are interpreting their role for a reason – that of revealing the true killer of Hamlet's father.

The metaphor *theatrum mundi* appears in a unique and disguised vision in the play *Romeo and Juliet*. Even if, apparently this is a sentimental drama, it brings in discussion the dichotomy between appearance and essence. From the semantic sphere of the theatre appears the masque and the phrase *masque for masque* implies the tacit recognition of the status of character of the human being in the social arena.

Other plays of William Shakespeare were we find under an implicit or explicit form the motif world as a theatre, are: *Eduard al III-lea*, *The Tempest*, *Love's Tournaments*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (were we find the same method theatre in

theatre with the scope of undermining the reality's consciousness). From this analysis made on the motif world as theater found in the Shakespearian works we can say that the English play writer had a special relationship with the theater. Tradition says that the play writer *Ben Jonson*, when seeing the inscription in golden letters above the door of *The Globus* theatre, under the statue of Hercules who was carrying the earth (*Totus mundus agit histrione*), composed the following distich:

“We, after the world, we do what we see:

Because be are both actors and spectators.” (our translation)²

Our research continues with a sperate sub-chapter in which we analzye through the comparative method the presence of the motif theatrum mundi in Shakespearian plazs as well as in the works of Mihai Eminescu. We identified several common elements, one of these begins from the suposition that Eminescu was a goos conesseur of the english literature especiallz that related to rmanticism, and in this case Shakespeare's literature. But Eminescu did not limit himself to just reading the works of the british writer – the original version or through the german translations, he even studied them attentively. Therefore, the jonction with the Shakespearian genius was made either through a direct contact or through the works of Rousseau, Fichte or Herder.

The exegesis of Eminescu's works emphasize as a motif correlated to that of world as a theatre the one where life is seen as a dream. The comparison of the life with a dream is the conclusion of a tumultuous reflection made on the fragility of human life. Hamlet's tragedy is constructed on this very idea:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

.....To die, to sleep;

To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,³

We find the same idea in Eminescu's poem entitled *The Separation*:

Therefore in this world we are meant to pass

As the dream of a shadow and the shadow of a dream...⁴.

² Mihnea Gheorghiu, *Scenes from the life of Shakespeare*, pag. 226-227, Ed. Tineretului, Bucharest, 1960

³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, pag. 95, Ed. Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 1996.

And in *Poor Dionis*:

Was it a dream or not, this is the question⁵

We have to notice that Eminescu does not introduce his thoughts in the elegy from above, but it represents, according to modern critics an example of intertextuality. Other influences enter in the category of coincidences, connections and elective affinities. Another aspect that sustains the thesis of a direct Shakespearian influence is represented by the parallelism of characters. From Eminescu's works we can sense a complex of Hamlet as for example in the poetry *Mortua est* where the human conscience is busy with essential questions as the sense of existence:

And in the end who knows if it is better
To be or not to be.... But does someone know
That what does not exist, does not feel pain,
And many pains are few pleasures
To be? Foolish and sad and empty.....⁶

Besides Mihai Eminescu and William Shakespeare, a third writer who used the motif world as a theatre was the Spanish writer Calderon de la Barca. His perception on the idea of world as a theatre and life as a dream has been studied in chapter four from our PhD thesis. Calderon's work will have the mark of his period and of his personality. Therefore in his play entitled *The Great Theatre of the World*, he sets on the stage his ideas regarding the human condition. God is sort of an author of the theatre who distributes every role which the actor must interpret as good as possible. No one can do anything to change it. Compared to renaissance's tradition, Calderon goes back to the medieval fatalism according to which roles can not be changed. This idea resembles the senior's one emphasized by the Spanish baroque and intrinsic to the ideology of the nobility. It has its fundament in the intellectual formation of the play writer. The stoic paradigm, as orientation to life, harmonized by theological preaches gave him the resignation attitude. To these we add a good knowledge of scholastic philosophy from which he borrows the systematic thinking and rigorous argumentation which become characteristics of his

⁴ Mihai Eminescu, *Poems*, pag. 31, Ed. Saeculum I.O. Editura Gemina, Bucharest, 1995.

⁵ Mihai Eminescu, *Literary prose, Poor Dionis*, pag 65, Ed. Pentru Literatură, Bucharest, 1964

⁶ Mihai Eminescu, *Poems*, pag. 58, Ed. Saeculum I.O. Editura Gemina, Bucharest, 1995,

theatre considered a *thought theatre* compared to the spontaneity of the one created by Lope de Vega.

The Great Theatre of the World is the synthesis of the general picture of human life presented as a comedy played by God – Author and people. The idea of living in the world as in a comedy, of the world as a big script of a theatre and the image of abandoning the costume at the end of the play, all of these have been taken by Calderon from the *Moral Letters* addressed to Lucilius by Lucius Anneus Seneca și from the *Dialogues of Lucian*.

Calderon de la Barca will repeat the motif *theatrum mundi* in an explicit way even in the play (*No hay más fortuna que Dios*), with some small differences. The one that distributes the roles and costumes is, this time, The Distributive Justice, in a way in which people instead of giving the Providence this task, they think that this distribution is due to the caprice of a false god – Fortuna. Calderon is the one who will offer the best scenic version to the Cosmo-vision life as a dream, the main moment of his creation, the play *Life is a Dream (La vida es sueño)*, play that appeared in 1635. The ideological content of the drama *Life is a Dream* is wide and profound. The drama, the expression of a deep pessimism which affirms the vane and ephemeral character of human things, idea sustained by the title and argued along the play, closes in it the belief of an ascetic stoicism which has its roots in the beginning of humanity. Through the plays *The Great Theatre of the World* and *Life is a Dream*, Calderon de la Barca exposed the old Spain with its mixture of light and shadows, with its vanities and dreams of its decadence.

The last chapter of our PhD thesis was dedicated to the Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu. In this case it was difficult to establish a demarcation line from which we can consider that we are out of the sphere world as a theatre, especially at Eminescu whose erudition allowed a wider game of ideas and cultural connections. The motif world as a theatre will appear explicitly in the works made by Eminescu during his youth. The way Eminescu looked at the world was completed by a superior understanding of the life's show.

From the motif world as a theatre it is born the idea of detachment of the man of genius in front of all kind of visions of every day life; idea which was taken by Eminescu not only from Schopenhauer but also from Buddhist sources. The scope of the

detachment of the genius could be: to run from all the patterns in order to avoid the lie and the imitation of authenticity; to separate himself from the common world and to place himself on a superior position, to gain the tranquility of a fertile solitude made in the order of the ideas, of creation or to know himself better. Each of these options is sustained through the poem *Glossa*. A strong connection with the metaphor *theatrum mundi* is made through the title of one of the versions of this poem. Therefore, the title of one of these versions is *En Spectateur* which indicates an express preoccupation of the poet for the motif world as a theatre.

This chapter continues with a study made on each of the stanzas of the poem *Glossa* in order to decode the signification of the motif world as a theatre seen through the eyes of Eminescu.

Our PhD thesis ends with a comparative study which as special as everything presented until now, that is a comparative study between the work of Mihai Eminescu and that of Calderon de la Barca with an explicit reference to the motif *world as a theatre*. The width and the innovation brought by this paper can be discovered only after a thorough lecture of the entire thesis that has almost three hundred pages.