

**„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF LETTERS**

**PhD Thesis**

***Traces of theatricality in  
Ion D. Sîrbu's writings***

**SCIENTIFIC COORDINATORS:**

**PROF. DR. ION VARTIC**

**PROF. DR. MIHAI MĂNIUȚIU**

**PhD STUDENT:**

**EUGEN RADU WOHL**

**CLUJ NAPOCA**

**2012**

TRACES OF THEATRICALITY  
IN ION D. SÎRBU'S WRITINGS  
- SUMMARY -

CONTENTS

---

Introduction.....	3
Chapter 1. Theatricality and Performativity. Defining the working concepts.....	10
Chapter 2. Theatricalization of the biography: The performance of jester Gary.....	49
Chapter 3. The antitheatrical project of Ion D. Sîrbu's playwriting. The rigid mask of the playwright.....	72
Chapter 4. The theatricality of the anthumous writings. The Storyteller, the Narrator, the Author.....	108
Chapter 5. The spectacle of solitude. Theatricality and performativity in Ion D. Sîrbu's interviews and letters.....	171
Chapter 6. The posthumous works. The orphan form, the exploded form...193	
Conclusions.....	218
Bibliography.....	227

**KEY WORDS:** theatricality, performativity, *theatrum mundi*, antitheatricality, antitheatrical prejudice, character, performer, carnivalization, literary form

The paper discusses Ion D. Sîrbu's writings – not so much his plays, focusing more on his short stories, novels, letters and diary – from the perspective of *theatricality and performativity*. Our goal was to describe the theatrical and performative mechanisms of Sîrbu's works by investigating the strong connections existing between their destiny and the destiny of their author, between Ion D. Sîrbu's "masks" and the theatrical, structural and formal, metamorphosis of his literary works. Therefore, ours is an interdisciplinary analysis combining perspectives from different research areas (Performance Studies and Literary Studies) in order to offer a more complete approach to Sîrbu's works.

The thesis is structured on six chapters. Except for the first one, which is meant to provide the theoretical frame of the analysis, the following ones have been ordered based on a *scale of theatricality* of Sîrbu's works, starting from Sîrbu's openly declared refusal of *theatricalization* – represented by the "antitheatrical project" of his plays – and culminating with an "explosion" of theatricality on all levels, made obvious by his posthumous works, especially the novel *Adio, Europa!* and the atypical formula of *Jurnalul unui jurnalist fără jurnal*. Between these two referential values, all of Sîrbu's other writings have been discussed based on their *theatrical* dimension.

The first chapter of the thesis, *Theatricality and Performativity. Defining the working concepts*, represents an attempt to examine the phenomenon of *theatricality* and *performativity* by looking at the different definitions of the two concepts and analyzing their transformations and mutations in different fields of study. The focus was to investigate the possible manifestations of *theatricality* in non-dramatic writings, in order to extract several working definitions which could be applied in order to understand the *theatricality* of Ion D. Sîrbu's writings.

The second chapter, *Theatricalization of the biography: The performance of jester Gary*, aims at emphasizing Ion D. Sîrbu's histrionic nature, by exploring the complex connections between *biography* and *creation*, between *fictional* and *theatrical* in the construction of the "autobiographical", because in Sîrbu's case, *biography*, *history* and *bibliography* are strongly linked together, making it nearly impossible, or utterly redundant, to separate these dimensions.

The following two chapters, *The antitheatrical project of Ion D. Sîrbu's playwriting. The rigid mask of the playwright* and *The theatricality of the anthumous works. The Storyteller, the Narrator, the Author* discuss the ways in which his consciously designed "antitheatrical project" influences all of Sîrbu's writings which were published during his lifetime, his theatre plays and his prose volumes: stories (the volume *Povestiri petrolene*, 1973), short stories (the volume *Șoarecele B și alte povestiri*, 1983), and his two children's novels (*De ce plânge mama?*, 1973 and *Dansul ursului*, 1988). If compared to other playwrights or writers of the time, we can speak of an *atypical approach* to theatre and prose from Sîrbu's part. In the midst of the Communist Regime, most of the playwrights and writers who refused to officially embrace the official doctrine of social realism, in order to survive aesthetically, had to resort to *parable, hint* and *metaphor*. Sîrbu, although not entirely dismissing the use of a metaphorical language, believes that the message should be delivered clearly and *unmediated* to the audience or readers. That is why, as he himself admitted, his plays are primarily destined *for reading*, albeit by using the stage, actors, settings or light-design, and his prose praises clarity above all else. His *anti-theatrical* attitude is aimed at the uses of the theatre as a means of official propaganda, and the "suffocation" of the message with an abundance of stylistic ornaments.

The fifth chapter, *The spectacle of solitude. Theatricality and Performativity in Ion D. Sîrbu's interviews and letters*, discusses Ion D. Sîrbu the *performer*, and this side of his is made obvious by the various interviews which he gave during his lifetime, but especially by the large amount of letters he sent to his friends, and which were, partly, gathered in volumes in recent years – *Traversarea cortinei. Corespondență cu Ion Negoitescu, Virgil Nemoianu, Mariana Șora* (1994), *Printr-un tunel. Corespondență cu Horia Stanca* (1997), *Scrisori către bunul Dumnezeu* (1998), the „epistolary” novel *Iarna bolnavă de cancer* (1998), *12 scrisori exemplare* (2002) – or published in several cultural magazines. Ion D. Sîrbu, the *performer*, represents the *artistic double* of Ion D. Sîrbu the spontaneous storyteller. By assuming the role of the *performer* (a complex position situated on the narrow demarcation line between *fiction* and *reality*), Sîrbu gives his letters a fundamental performative dimension which is the equivalent of a symbolical "transfer" into the realm of fiction.

The final chapter of the thesis, *The posthumous works. The orphan form, the exploded form*, analyses Ion D. Sîrbu's *posthumous* works – the novels *Lupul și catedrala* (1995) and *Adio, Europa* (volume I in 1992 and volume II in 1993), and also his “diary”, *Jurnalul unui jurnalist fără jurnal* (volume I in 1992, volume II in 1993). These writings represent the highest level of the manifestation of theatricality, as they consciously break the rigid limits of the genre they were, formally at least, attributed to and, at the same time, they represent a form of “inner liberation” for an author who continuously struggled with the hardships of a totalitarian political system. Convinced that his works will not be published during his lifetime, Ion D. Sîrbu feels *liberated* and strives towards a *personal, subjective, total art form*. In his “underground laboratory of creation”, he creates an alternative world for him and his characters, a fictional world which is free, complex, and above all *theatrical*.

*The conclusions* of the study resume the reasons why *theatricality* and *performativity* appear as indispensable dimensions of Ion D. Sîrbu's works. A *sine qua non* dimension of his literary works, *theatricality* is able to give testimony of the common destiny of an author and his literary works.