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## **Researchers for Iași, Revolving around Shakespeare's Plays**

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**Abstract:** Using as a starting point the vast project on the playwright's works, outlined between 1925 and 1932 by Ioan (Iancu) Botez, remembering the essays of Ion Omescu, actor at the National Theatre from Iași, going through Odette Blumenfeld's analysing pursuits and reaching the efforts of young Drama department PhD researchers from Iași, we find ourselves in front of a long road where past and present signs meet – together under the same Shakespearean unifying arch.

In this article, one of our concerns is to find answers to natural questions related to this topic. We will analyse, for instance, the reception area of the Bard's creation and if there are transformations or even interruptions of the hermeneutical process of the playwright's work. Another aim is to observe if there are preferences for distinct dramas or subjects which could describe a certain theoretic perspective direction. We want as well to discover which of these theoretic ideas and in what way influenced stage directing and to see more clearly if there existed and still exists a consistent and constructive dialog between researchers and practitioners.

**Key words:** William Shakespeare, research, Ion Omescu, dramaturgy, stage directing, interferences.

To say that Shakespearean works, whether we are talking about dramaturgy or about sonnets, have been a major direction of important research in our country is a statement that at first may sound at least tautological or cliché. The phenomenon is more interesting when it comes under the microscope of "criticism of criticism" or, more precisely, of "research of research" - if we are to play with words. More specifically, we are referring to the fact that the changes in reception, more visible or blurred, followed in their diachronic course, in the connections that the various study or creative disciplines establish among themselves. We notice how Shakespeare becomes a huge range on which lay, layers over the layers, the thoughts of the theoreticians, translators, the notes of those who give life on

stage to the Great Will's verses – expressions of certain moments in the history of society, mentalities or ideologies that cross the epochs. In fact, the infinitesimal approach to the subject is important, but also the continuous detachment that the reception process should often take, as if correctness is ultimately established by putting together both the detail and the general plan. Reading from both perspectives helps fine-tune with finesse the nuances in such a vast field as the one described in Shakespearology studies.

If we take a look among the contemporaries of the playwright, we will see, for example, that in 1598 to Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (a treaty of great importance in the field of literary history) the sonnets seemed “mellifluous and hony-tongued”<sup>1</sup>, and to Richard Barnfield the word curdled in “hony-flowing Vaine”<sup>2</sup>. Ben Jonson, the Bard's friend and rival, with all his subjectivity, talked about “the very rich imagination, bold ideas and gentile expressions”<sup>3</sup>, when about the wisdom that was “in his power; if it were also the building”<sup>4</sup>. We can amuse ourselves with these remarks today, but in the context of the late fifteenth century, in the Elizabethan Renaissance, they are the first steps and the first reactions to the Globe actor's style. The reception process is a fluctuation that takes into account the aesthetic and stylistic intricacies of the age, ideologies, tendencies and, last but not least, reflects the personality of the writer as commentator of another writer's work. In other words, Shakespearology has experienced different moments, also experiencing periods of some apathy or ignorance of the playwright's texts, but also stages of exaltation. It is a known fact that during his life, his works enjoyed great popularity among spectators and less in the academic elites. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries only catch a glimpse of his work, perhaps also because the models that are valid in the transition to Classicism are still the ones from Antiquity. The Shakespearean Revival, according to some historians, has changed with norms and mentalities at a distance of one hundred and fifty years (Roth, 1988, p. 9).

But if we come closer to our cultural area, suggesting to observe in more detail how *Hamlet's* author has been received in Iași in the last hundred years, what will we discover? That is the question we're asking.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Meres, *Palladis Tamia*, <https://www.bartleby.com/359/31.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Barnfield, *A Remembrance of some English Poets*, <http://spenseriens.cath.vt.edu/TextRecord.php?textsid=32914>.

<sup>3</sup> Ben Jonson, apud Stanley Wells, *Shakespeare pentru eternitate / Shakespeare for All Time*, translated by Ioana Grojdea, Anca Irina Ionescu (ed.), București, Lider Publishing House, 2002, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Ben Jonson, *Idem*, p. 100.

Among the first works representative of the study of Shakespearean drama, we can stop on those who belong to **Ioan (Iancu) Botez**. A figure forgotten today – and we say it with regret – Ioan Botez was an English teacher in several high schools in Iași, following a career in the university environment and taking the position of Dean of the Faculty of Literature and Philosophy of the University of Iași for ten years (1926-1936). He had the chance to study English in London at University College, where, for three years, between 1908-1911, he pursued a PhD. Returning to the homeland, in 1912 Ioan Botez publishes *Aspects of English Civilization*, a book that enjoyed five editions until the establishment of the Communist power in 1945.

To the Great Will's dramaturgy, he dedicated an ample project, made up of four essays, appearing in plaques: *Hamlet in the Shakespearean Tragedy* (1925), *King Lear and Dramatic Conception of Shakespearean Theatre* (1927), *The Sentiment of Vengeance and the Supernatural in Hamlet* (1928), joined three years later by *Shylock within the Shakespearean Literature* (1932). Today the four parts of his extensive project are in the archives of the Mihai Eminescu Central Library in Iași. Ioan Botez follows a way of mainly philological interpretation based on the key of the text, character and theme. The analysis of *King Lear*, which he seems to be extremely attached of, he does with a clear attraction and without shying away from big words. Somewhat reminding of the English playwright's contemporaries' expression, preserving an undeniable admiration for the verse, for the eloquence of the stylistic figures, the critic considers the piece to be “*a gigantic, immortal construction*” (Botez, 1927, p. 23) and, at the same time, the conclusion is immutable. “None of Shakespeare's works include such a tumultuous storm of human passions like *King Lear*” (Botez, 1927, p. 22). The research is not just a story, a description combined with a few reading notes, but also a contextualization of the period, a detailed discussion of the relationships between the characters, as well as the drawing of intertextual bridges. But often the tone is more than appreciative, exalted sometimes, such as in passages like this one:

But any good play makes the scene no longer in the theatre but extends it in our imagination. Here, and only here, the effigy barely sketched by the author acquires the breath of specific organic life, evolving in character, delimiting himself in a dramatic personality. [...] Completing the personalization of characters is not only achieved by the words that fix them for a few moments on stage, before us, but by the collaboration of our expanded imagination through their presence. If the writer cannot disturb us, embarrass our soul and make us collaborators, he is not a creator, but a photographer – and the photographer, no matter how fine the machine he has in his hand, is nothing

but the merit of the apparatus, which is not his creation. The great creators in literature are painters, not photographers. (Botez, 1927, p. 17)

There are also some ideas that we can look at today with scepticism – almost one hundred years passed between the remarks of the teacher of the East and those who read the works of Great Will in 2018. Even in the above paragraph, the distinction that he makes between painter and photographer, the latter understood more in the sense of executor and copyist of reality, and not as an artist, is today dated. Even more bizarre can seem the observations he makes about the absurd dimension of the tragedy of the crazy king: “The story of King Lear from the very beginning is absurd; Hamlet and Macbeth start as absurd, for the supernatural is absurd” (Botez, 1927, p. 20). Ghosts, showings, and all that signifies the absence of the present, signs that are so consistent today for scenic representations, fall for our critic, as we can see, under the sign of the supernatural. A few pages later, he talks about defiance of limits in the case of great love, taking as examples Romeo and Juliet, but above all the couple Othello-Desdemona, who he says, go above any bans of the time to live their passion. He then concludes – too generally, we may add today: “Great love, great passions are absurd and absurd is their most certain criterion” (Botez, 1927, p. 21). The fact is that for Ioan Botez the absurd was not the aesthetic category that we understand today, and even less the literary one. There are obvious differences between the absurd as Jan Kott perceives it about this play<sup>5</sup> and the valences that the philologist gave it in 1927; and the comparison casts an unfavourable light on the older researcher, but on the other hand it shows us that the significance of paradoxes, contradictions, the split of logic already concerned Ioan Botez.

To *Hamlet* he gives two studies, which makes us believe that it is the most loved subject of the theorist (and we will see that today’s readers still find interest in the never-exhaustible meanders of the tragedy of the prince of Elsinore<sup>6</sup>). In the two consecrated texts, as is natural, the protagonist is at the

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<sup>5</sup> In the emblematic volume for the 1960s-70s, *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, Jan Kott talks about the absurd elements of *King Lear*. After making a history of tragedy until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Polish critic justifies the aspect of the verbosity of the text. It is enough to discuss the fundamental principles of the tragic, including the absence or violation of common logic, the presence of the grotesque, dehumanization, then to make a direct and as far as possible parallel between *King Lear* and some texts by Samuel Beckett – sequences from *Waiting for Godot*, *Endgame* and *Acts Without Words* – as well as comparisons with *Le tueur sans gages* by Eugene Ionesco. “For once, in *King Lear*, Shakespeare shows the paradox of pure theatre. It is the same theatrical paradox that Ionesco uses in his *Le tueur sans gages*.” (Kott, 1964, p.150).

<sup>6</sup> We refer to two of the PhD theses that discuss *Hamlet* in detail, either entirely or consistent portions, theses presented in the Doctoral School of the Faculty of Theatre in Iași.

centre of attention. More importantly, the English-language teacher does a psychological analysis, and it also gives the impression that he is psychoanalyzing Hamlet. There is, indeed, a long way to the character file, or until the subtleties of the young Wittenberg student's words are understood. But the path is open through the lines already laid down with the knowledge of both the English language of the Elizabethan Renaissance and the elements of a hermeneutic that redefine the dark walls of the Danish city in a new light. Hamlet brings the critic to a perennial conclusion: the melancholic, meditative prince is an idealist, and the tragic is born from his confrontation with the lack of consciousness of those around him, thus defining a *symbol of the modern man*. The sense of vengeance and supernatural in Hamlet opens with a theoretician's statement of generalized validity, becoming a cliché formula of introductions through school textbooks:

Hamlet lives so alive and in accordance with the immutable laws of the human soul that he becomes a representative and a symbol. In his soul our life is mirrored just as the drop of dew mirrors the whole universe. (Botez, 1928, p. 5)

The exegete notes:

The interest of modern critique for Hamlet is steadily increasing. Today, Hamlet touches more than ever: this is obvious from the appearance, almost every week, of a magazine study, a volume, or even a newspaper flyer on the misunderstood character of the immortal hero. And from which theatrical repertoire is he missing and how many conferences about Hamlet are not in the world of great literature. Hamlet has become a criterion for the dosing of the preoccupations of high intellectuals in civilized countries. (Botez, 1928, p. 6)

Of note to the direction of research open by Ioan Botez is the polemic tone he sometimes reaches. He is not afraid to contradict the voices that accuse the Shakespearean hero of cowardice and vigorously combats the idea of a sickly Hamlet:

This is not the place to put 'aboulia', 'animal forgetfulness', 'melancholy', or other mental illnesses and deficits, or even more serious disease symptoms, with which the hero Hamlet is gifted by criticism. (Botez, 1928, pp. 11-12)

Still, his studies now show us the face of literary analysis, the preoccupations of the one attracted primarily by the act of reading. His quests are far from answering the questions of an actor or a director, nor does he propose such directions. In the rhetoric of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the discourse seems to end in considerations with definitive valences, but what matters a lot are some principles that the author of the four texts constantly pursues: the use of sources from a current bibliography for that time, the

contextualization and the creation of a unitary intertextual fabric. At least the three criteria mentioned are starting points in the instrument used by the researchers in subsequent periods.

Also, under the dust of forgetfulness, among the names of those who contributed with Shakespearology studies – as we shall see in Iași – not many, and perhaps that is why their significance should be emphasized – there is also Ion Omescu, actor at the National Theatre in Iași after 1953 and between 1964 and 1966. It is just that his presence in the East is relatively short and fragmented, and most of the books dedicated to the great Will appear after 1970, outside Romania, but we did not want to go over the valuable contribution that had been outlined during the period he acted the roles of Bălcescu, Neron or Romeo at our National Theatre in Iași. Not to mention the fact that in the theatre where Vasile Alecsandri was manager, he played a successful and memorable Shakespeare show at that time. A complex personality, talented in matching the lyrics on the verse, but also in dealing with the plays as author of dramatic texts, actor with remarkable roles in Bucharest, Iași, and theatres in Bacău or Giurgiu, Ion Omescu also belonged to the intellectual ranks condemned to the canal work by the Communists after the regime was established.<sup>7</sup> A brilliant mind, a destiny that, sadly, demonstrates that we cast our cultural elites into oblivion too soon, Omescu is among those rare birds – floating in the landscape of artistic life – as a seeker on the road to the character and through the fine print of the text. The critically acclaimed actor (reviews in the “Theatre” magazine) is doubled by philosophical thinking, by academic structure, as well as by excellent command of English, French, and German languages.<sup>8</sup> In 1972, his year of

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<sup>7</sup> He was arrested in 1949 for trying to cross the border in a fraudulent manner, and the detention lasted until 1953. In 1957 he was arrested and sentenced for seven years to prison and went through the Jilava, Gherla, Periprava, and Salcia detention facilities. This time, fraud was the public spread of forbidden texts, because the Secret Police had discovered the manuscript from the period he lived incarcerated during his first prison term.

<sup>8</sup> We cannot overlook the testimony of Alexandru Mihalcea in the article *Poets in the gardens of Akademos in Balta Brăilei*, published in “Cultura” magazine, no. 519, 13 June 2015: “To say that he was fluent in French, English and German means to not comprehend the true size of his mastery of those languages; I have witnessed bizarre scenes, spent in that sordid savage place, becoming an academic space, for example the explanations given to our colleagues Fredi Kraus or Rudi Wentzel relative to a word in the Althochdeutsch. Haunted by great inner storms, Omescu graduated from the Dramatic Art Conservatory, studying in parallel Physical education at ANEF and the law. ‘Maître – that’s what we all called him - Maître, did you have the ambition to compete with Pico della Mirandola?’ He was content to smile enigmatically.” The article was posted on the site <http://revistacultura.ro/nou/2015/06/poeti-in-gradinile-lui-akademos-din-balta-brailai/>.

departure from Romania, he was already considered as an exegete of Shakespearean creation<sup>9</sup>, being invited to an international profile meeting in Stratford upon Avon. Sharing the fate of the Romanian intellectuals who left the country in the years of the communist regime<sup>10</sup>, the actor will remain in the capital of France, obtaining the academic title of Doctor at Sorbonne Paris VII in 1974. He does not stop practicing the theatrical art to which he devoted himself totally, from the position of the pedagogue, as a professor of art at the Maastricht Conservatory, or the one of a private theatre conductor.

We are, in fact, with Ion Omescu's evocation, on another stage of research related to the Iași space: a stage where the actor, the erudite reader with real valences of theoretician and ingenious director, happily and interestingly blends with the man tormented by questions, challenges of the scenic space and the subtleties of the text. The imperative need to find access ways, keys opening the doors and paths of dramatic writing can easily be ascertained. In the presence of this author and his essays, we are under the sign of a living hermeneutic that creates bridges between the distant voice of the inhabitant of the Elizabethan world and the tumult of modern existence. So, Shakespeare is not an echo, but a vivid tone, and *Hamlet* is not just a piece of paper, but breathes in the sensitivity of the person who embodies it or who dreams of the hero with the pen in his hand. As stage director, he directed *Othello* at the Municipal Theatre in Bacău (1970) and later in Belgium (1991). As an exegete, he will publish in 1987 *Hamlet or the Temptation of the Possible* (at the prestigious Presses Universitaires de France). He wrote in 1990 *Othello, chef d'oeuvre en sursis*, whose preface is signed by Jan Kott, and in 1993 appears *Shakespeare son Art et sa Tempête (Shakespeare: His art and Tempest)*.

*Hamlet or the Temptation of the Possible* is an impressive palimpsest, in which the tragedy is regarded both in the context of its age and its valences of universality, in which the image of the author almost melts into that of the unfortunate Danish prince, and in which some solutions or proposals are streamlined and effective for a director or actor. Ion Omescu's thoughts are unpredictable, but always based on a solid critical apparatus. Journeys from one dramaturg to another, from text to exegesis and personal considerations, lyrical inflections, passions that stir up the creator are – here – the springs that integrate the play and reveal a man and a generation: the savant actor in the

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<sup>9</sup> He had published *The Sign of Irony. Measure for Measure. Coriolan* at Cartea Românească Publishing House.

<sup>10</sup> We can also mention Radu Penciulescu, settled in Sweden in 1973, George Banu, who also settled in Paris in 1973, Andrei Șerban, Lucian Pintilie, and Anca Ovanez.

landscape of a Romania under the totalitarian regime, separated from Europe by the Iron Curtain.

Let's look inside those pages. Intertextuality becomes a massive collage that gathers and seems to be born of one another, the contemporaries of the actor at The Globe Theatre.

On the small Elizabethan scene, *this little O*, flow spaces, missing worlds, continents. The Titans unleash humanity and the gods. Tamerlane unleashes his hordes, and Richard Gloucester sweeps the shadow of his own hump. Surprised over his test tubes, Dr. Faust, the alchemist of darkness, tries to wrest nature its last secrets. (Omescu, 1999, p. 37)

In the same time, we realize that, with the same approach practiced by Jan Kott, the Romanian essayist opens the window of the act of interpretation broadly, showing, for example, how the Elizabethans resemble the rebels or the subjects of the totalitarian regimes that broke, between the East and the West, after the Second World War. In the past, the State and the Church were absolute power poles, and the arch over time traces the same ostracizing ideology in the demons of the dictatorships of the twentieth century:

We imagine how reluctantly Marlowe has liquidated a character [Doctor Faustus, author's note] that looked so much like him. But what could he do? The State and the Church have discovered these terrible children, who did not miss a chance to manifest their pagan, earthly nature. Their spirit of rebelliousness. [...] or simply as Shakespeare's fools. If they put up a repentant face, here and there – by writing a eulogy to His Majesty – they did it to save their beloved monsters and stab scene kings, cursed kings of course. But they all were, or they ended up becoming.” (Omescu, 1999, pp. 37-38).

An “enormous sense and monstrous view” – but with a nuance other than that of Caragiale – sneak into the shape of the ideas. Gravity is not only in the tone of the scientist, it is a thrill coming from the years of detention and from the crisp figures of those who felt so close and threatening the absurdity of the communist regime. Attracted by grotesqueness, the macabre image completes the disaster. The lines become fragments of pure poetry, even when Omescu draws the great lines defining the Renaissance tragedies:

Melancholy, the disease of the age, fills the scene. The bodies are writhing, the corpses are exposed, the black suit gives a distinction to the massacre. The good and bad finally die together eventual victims of the extraordinary and coincidences. [...] Hamlet apparently submits to the exigencies of drama after accommodating himself, not without weight, on the bed of Procust of an older intrigue. (Omescu, 1999, pp. 39-40)

Fascinated by the image of the gentle prince, Omescu sinks into the deepest and most troubled waters to discover the “character” there – the alien

being, chased uninterruptedly by the actor. It is enough to give sense to the theme announced in the title.

But Hamlet's thinking has a double direction: it lends itself with the same ease to the counter-sense movement. We could call it *the temptation of the possible*. Hamlet gathers and scatters. A spread like no other, which transforms man from here and now into an irreplaceable being of distances. (Omescu, 1999, p. 47)

As for the themes that already crossed the directories and studies of the '70s, Omescu, for example, finding the points of tangency, approached the problem of Hamlet's inaction by giving a possible orientation:

The incalculable marks the tragedy of the intellect that dries out its act, still demanding certainties to turn it on. Hamlet abstains out of despair over the possible. (Omescu, 1999, p. 49)

And the thread of the idea is resumed a few pages later:

Hamlet has a mission: to avenge his assassinated father, to restore the overturned order of the world. Hamlet has a vice: losing himself in the possible. His simulated madness helps (or should help him) to accomplish his mission, satisfying his vice. It gives him, in a certain way, the unity of being. (Omescu, 1999, p. 58)

In fact – returning to a question that we were trying to elucidate – how does theory reflect in the stage practice? Was the director helped by the essayist? How did Omescu take over his hermeneutical “diaries”? The Shakespeare recital performed at the National Theatre in Iași was a successful one. The poet Emil Brumaru recalls this event, not without a wave of nostalgia:

I was fortunate enough to see the scene of the steep conquest by Richard III, the crazy and ugly, of Lady Anne mourning after the death of her father and husband, murdered by the cynical contender at her hand, directed and played by Omescu, in a Shakespeare recital that made a lasting impression. (Brumaru, Niculescu, 2014, p. 47)

At the beginning of his career, in the role of Romeo, the actor from the Iași National Theatre was a pleasant surprise in the eyes of the critics. Under the guidance of director Val Mugur, the young Montague had force and sensitivity when incarnated by Omescu. We will note a unanimous opinion among the critics, Romeo had already borrowed the features of Hamlet. N. I. Popa noted at the time:

Ion Omescu in Romeo has remarkable physical qualities, silhouette, elegance and spiritualized expression of the figure. He is a brave, troubled man, and stalked by the temptation of Hamlet, which even Shakespeare suffers from in this text. Ion Omescu is not a lyric, nor a romantic enthusiast. Hence the unequal aspects of his play: excellent in the cerebral passages, when Shakespeare theorizes love and makes general considerations, the actor stops and stifles the feeling of love when he should exalt it. I think Ion Omescu

would be much more in his element in other Shakespearean roles, as in Richard III, illustrated in the Shakespeare recital, or in Hamlet. Still, in Romeo, he compensated with superior technique what he lacked in the spontaneity of the game. (Popa, 1956, p. 16)

Titus Lapteș added:

Ion Omescu knew how to easily switch to a variety of different nuances, to always be fresh and convincing. Especially the lyrical part of the role has found an excellent teller. Perhaps sometimes, Ion Omescu, especially in Romeo's rationale, went along a line of cerebralism that belongs to a range of other Shakespearean characters (Hamlet). But in order to realize Romeo's role, a continuous artistic search is necessary, each show must be a new added stage. (Lapteș, 1956, p 18)

Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, with the desire for a balanced look, remarked the beauty of Shakespearean poetry, also complaining that Romeo was rather a mask through which, in fact, the unfortunate son of Elsinore was reached. We quote from his article:

Ion Omescu tells the Shakespearian verse with a clarity we would sometimes want to be blurred, but which – we have to admit it – ensures its superiority to all the other interpreters. As for the character, Ion Omescu initially created a Romeo whose juvenility and amorous superficiality were to be emphasized by gesture more than by word, which, in the first scenes, led to an external interpretation. [...] Ion Omescu gave, especially in the Mantua scene, a Romeo closer to Hamlet, living not by moments of soul beatitude, but by the precognition of death, of unhappiness, which was growing inside him. (Doinaș, 1956, p. 24)

On the other hand, Adrian Pintea's memory takes us to a reality that is not always consistent with the "guides" in the director notebook. Working at the Craiova Theatre, on Ion Omescu's *Hamlet* project, the experience was not one that could be finalized:

It was somewhat a failure to work with Ion Omescu; quite dramatic, otherwise. I can't explain why such a theoretical wealth did not find any practical, functional representation on stage. We were floating in a highly seductive cultural cloud, but... On stage everything was very attractive but immaterial, it stumbled upon the dissolution of a harsh reality. (Pintea, 1997, p. 3)

Hamlet was the author's *quest* for the temptation of the possible. Don Juan, Icarus, Ulysses, Oedipus joined him – as the reading of poems reveals to us. But as intimate as the character's soul lives in the actor, as vital as he is to the mind of the exegete, it is equally difficult to show it to the audience. In light of the relationship of interiority-exteriority, the process of writing and reading creates a narrow frame between the author and the reader, between the book and its reader. It happens quietly, and most of the times the dialogue is

silent, mental. On the other hand, the scenic process is extrovert, the actor exposes the character and presents it to the auditorium. The actor is in sight, the character must reach and convince the audience. How much of the inner, whispered dialogue with the character is retained? For Omescu, issues of this type were freedoms, but also barriers. “Hamlet of mine”, as it brings it to itself with warmth and emotion, is also an obsessive horizon and it is itself a form of being.

Despite all this, Omescu admits, for example, in *The Sign of Irony*, that sometimes the two worlds, the one of the book and the reality of the stage, can be at an appreciable distance. That there can be one without the other, and even that the histrion’s universe can easily be lost in the face of ever-higher, independent-of-gesture literature or the light of a reflector. Conscious of the taste of frustration he notes:

For us, the actors that loved so many times on the stage, gave our spirit and were reborn, wore rags and crowns, theatre is a compendium of the world. And we’d like to know what it’s based on [...]. The word, of course, the logos of the text. But the logos creates its own world without the support of the other elements. The music of the verse does not need the voice of the actor, and the eyes of Oedipus, eaten by ink or smeared with the blood of birds, do not help the vocabulary despair. (Omescu, 1972, p. 23)

We are intuited in these lines with the sense, somewhat pessimistic, perhaps annoying, which Albert Camus<sup>11</sup> described in the *Myth of Sisyphus* as the sense of absurdity of the actor’s life consumed on stage. He then insists on the idea, as though with greater certainty:

The great literary works degrade in contact with the stage. *Hamlet* is no longer *Hamlet*. A perfect text no longer needs material representation, and an imperfect one does not deserve to stand at its foundation. (Omescu, 1972, p. 23)

We would not overlook the feeling that in such statements – and because of their definitive tone– perhaps, and the failure of personal projects, the author himself falls into the trap of idealizing the literary art, thus creating borders.

After the 1990s, locally, focus in the field of exegesis and of translation was constant. We will further mention some of the directions that researchers have undertaken at the Faculty of Letters in Iași, wanting to find out the links that have been preserved over time, between the oldest analytical theses and the recent ones. New research trends in the philological area keep the essay style at a distance, preferring an objective-based analysis. In addition, the

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<sup>11</sup> He also quotes the author of the novel *The Plague*, when he remembers the image of the rats that haunt the city.

context is that of conferences, through means of debate, so that the materials can then see the light of print in collective volumes. Professor **Odette Blumenfeld**, from the English Literature Department, a well-established theatre critic and commentator in Romanian and foreign magazines, is one of the main organizers of meetings between Shakespeare specialists. As stated in the opening of the 2011 publication, the fruit of the International Conference *Shakespeare and Europe. Nation(s) and Boundaries*, one of the main goals is to observe how the presence of Shakespearean creation reflects in different European cultures. Blumenfeld's concerns in the world of Shakespeare are also reflected in a series of analyses that address transdisciplinary, intercultural dramatic creation, unifying literature, theatre, sociology, politics, and more. We will quote just a few of the important articles: *Shakespeare in Post-revolutionary Romania: the Great Directors are Back Home*, an article present in "Shakespeare in the New Europe" (appeared at Sheffield Academic Press in 1994) and also the *Strategies of Power: Richard III and Richard II on the Romanian Stage of Shakespeare in Romania: 1950 to the Present* (volume published by Humanitas Publishing House in 2008). These are joined by comparative studies such as *Shakespeare's King Lear - Bond's Lear: A Comparative Study* published in the volume *Mapping the Future* from the Universitas Publishing House in 2007; as well as the *Cultural Exchange and "The Merchant of Venice"* appeared in *On Page and Stage: Shakespeare in Polish and World Culture* (published in Poland at Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas in 2000). Beyond the fact that the name of the professor at Al. I. Cuza from Iași appears between the same cover with those of European as well as American or Asian Shakespeareologists, the involvement and the steps of Odette Blumenfeld have served as a method for younger researchers. The conferences dedicated to the Bard have continuity in Iași: the meeting themed around rediscovering his creations from the perspective of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – materialized in 2016 under the title *Re-Reading, Re-Writing, Re-Contextualizing Shakespeare*.

We also notice at other scholars in the philological area of the English Department of Iași University the desire to put "old Will" under the multiple lenses of observation – whether the hermeneutic or those linking the philological and spectacular or filmological fields (a direction followed by Veronica Popescu's article entitled *Montagues and Capulets, Star-Cross Lovers and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Veronas* from the volume *Shakespeare and Europe. Nation(s) and Boundaries*, where the author develops a broad analysis of the most famous tragedy of love in dramatic literature and its metamorphoses on the big screen). A separate chapter of considerable significance is represented by the branch of translation. A thorough analysis

is made by Rodica Dimitriu in *Shakespeare in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Romania: Individual and Collective Translation Projects*. Also, in this case, there are visible the relations the research sphere has with other artistic spheres, but especially the political and social ones. The author comments:

In Romania like (almost) anywhere else in the world, there is an extremely rich history of the reception of Shakespeare via published as well as performed translations of his work. From the extremely vast array of possible case studies this paper will firstly examine four (individual and collective) translation projects which, chronologically, are not too wide apart: Dragoș Protopopescu carried out his individual project (mainly) in the 1930s and 1940s, just before the communist age; the first collective communist project was developed between 1955 and 1963, the bilingual anthology of Shakespeare's plays undertaken by Leon Levițchi and Dan Duțescu was published in 1964; the second collective communist project led to the (re)publication of the (new) translations of Shakespeare's plays between 1982 and 1990. However, these important cultural initiatives differ in terms of mainstream ideologies, translation policies, and the ensuing translation norms under which they were completed. (Blumenfeld, Popescu, Dimitriu, 2011, p. 297)

Beyond the research undertaken individually by the restless spirits of teachers or actors, as we have seen, especially in the last decade, Shakespeare is found in doctoral studies at the Faculty of Theatre. That is how the **Doctoral School of Theatre in Iași**, through the coordinating professors and the interest of some of its students, gathered around theses and referral sessions the people and ideas of substance that practically made the best transition from the pure theoretical area to the one of stage practice. In analysing the works devoted to the Shakespearean plays we could see that even if he did not occupy the first place in regard to the weight of the researches that included him directly, the British playwright was dethroned, in this case, only by the theses dedicated to Chekhov (five, so not at such a distance), a body of solid analytical texts was built around the figure and creation. And at the same time responding to the immediate needs of actors, directors (even actors-directors, those who have both views). It also opens up new reception tracks and launches new challenges that the authors notice within their research. So, our attention has been directed to the research that has been completed, excluding, for better guidance, the projects that have not yet materialized in a single, publicly supported thesis.

In the last ten years, four are the opuses representing the finalization of the Shakespeareological research in the Iași theatre doctoral school. In chronological order, these are:

- *Stage Composition of the Character, applied in the Shakespearean Theatre*, author Doru Aftanasiu, coordinator Bogdan Ulmu, 2011;
- *The Shakespearean Monologue in the Contemporary Romanian Performance (1990-2015)*, author Antonella Cornici, coordinator Anca Maria Rusu, 2016;
- *Hamlet – The Triangle of Death: Madness, Love and Fear*, Alexandru Savu, coordinator Bogdan Ulmu, 2016;
- *Shakespeare Transcendent: Hamlet and Macbeth, Two Possible Inner Paths*, Monica Broos, coordinator Florin Faifer, 2018.

As I have previously appreciated, there are many areas the former doctoral students explored with their tutors: whether they are actors involved in the pedagogical process, or they are influenced by the directorial vision, they make the direct link between the view of the text (which they work with) and the scenic process they are directly involved in. With academic rigour, well-coordinated, the scientific works, some later published as books, the four graduates of our Doctoral School detach themselves from the obsession of a role or play and think from an interdisciplinary perspective, but also from the perspective of their own sustained efforts. And through these open gates, through the questions they are still looking for answers, they manage to leave the way open for future seekers fascinated by the “storms” and lulls of the Shakespearean text.

## Conclusions

The great volume that we have not yet been able to analyse, we still want to add, complement and analyse the process in a wider work that we are foreseeing. One thought haunts us alike, namely that perhaps the present thesis should have been devoted the space of a doctoral thesis, to have enough space for detailed remarks to make even more sense of the links between the authors studies and ideas that cross the lines laid on paper. We know, at the same time, that research is an endless journey that does not belong to a single author, the sole master of the truth of the direction upon which they ponder. By resuming techniques, transforming ideas, repositioning elements of analysis, the map and the chronological axis of the research indicate the way in which the premises of a common platform were created. The “Shakespeare Planet” is inexhaustible and attracts in its net the theorists and practitioners alike. At least until we do not get to exclaim like Ion Omescu, with the obvious despair of the seductive trappings of interpretation: “What desperation for an erudite, what horizon for a man of theatre!” (Omescu, 1999, p. 88). Perhaps it is then

necessary to close the book and go to the theatre, leaving Hermes preoccupied with the deciphering of the signs in front of him, to step into the temple of the reassuring Thalia.

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