ET IN ELYSIUM EGO: SHAKESPEARE AND THE PLACE OF MEMORY

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What is it about Shakespeare's imaginary geography that has kept us hooked for four centuries to his fictional spaces? This volume is not so much about Shakespeare's afterlives in European / Romanian culture as it is, rather, about who we are in relation to the cultural catalyst we have come to conventionally rename "Shakespeare." His contemporaries euphemistically named him "Honey-tongued Shakespeare" (Weever xliiii), "our English Terence" (Davies xliiii), "nimble Mercury" (Freeman xliiii) or, most famously, "Sweet swan of Avon" (Jonson xlvi). None of these romanticized epithets, however, show who he was, but rather who his adulators were and how they chose to fictionalize his image. Many were the instances in which Shakespeare's "ghost of authority" (Franssen 6) was summoned to legitimize eighteenth-century and later latent desires to speak with the dead, translated into a fantasy. As Paul Franssen states, "Such fantasies often take the form of Shakespeare's ghost appearing on earth, or of mortals being granted an interview with his shade in Elysium" (6). In Book V of the *Aeneid*, the apparition of Anchises bids Aeneas to visit the underworld to meet his father in Elysium (5.731–35). In the Argument to Book V, in the 1596 translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* by Thomas Phaer, readers learn about the Sybil's prophecy to Aeneas, according to which he was to go to "the fields called *Elisii*, or fields of pleasure, where he should be enformed of all the race of his posteritie" (Vergilius sig. G4^{v}). Virgil's topography of the Elysian plains in Book VI is described as *regio*, "place" (sig. J4^{v}), which designates a limited part, a region, within a larger space. This is a privileged place reserved for the selected few, whereas others go to the Vergilian "Limbo" (sig. J3^{v}) space of forgetfulness.

In Elysium, it appears, one encounters both ancestors and posterity—the elusive afterlives. It is not surprising, therefore, that Roger Pringle published "A Poetic Fantasy" in Shakespeare's celebratory year (2016). As the title page states, the poem was "Printed for the author to send to friends whose hearts, he believes, are warmed by the tributes being paid to Shakespeare in this special year, though not perhaps by this one" (Pringle, overleaf). Pringle's modest statement, in itself, selects us among his "private friends," just as Francis Meres, in his *Palladis Tamia* (1598) wrote about the "honey-tongued Shakespeare" (281^{v}) and his "sugred Sonnets among his priuate friends &c." (281^{v}–282^{r}). Those of us presented with this

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poem at Halford, at a private garden party during the 2016 *World Shakespeare Congress* in Stratford-upon-Avon, were members of the Elysian fields of academia, gathered on that commemorative early August 2016. In Pringle's poem, Shakespeare's admirers meet at an imaginary Gala at the "Grand Old Hall of Fame" to present Shakespeare with the "Lifetime Award from the Academy of All Nations." Pringle discreetly names some of the official invitees ("Prince C, Judy D, Ken B, etcetera") and certain famous Shakespearean characters. Pringle's imaginary and real description of the event captures ironically the celebratory atmosphere of times past and present:

> The fantastic day arrives: fans gather on street corners
> to chatter in a hundred languages, bands begin to blare,
> daffodils are out in force, flags flutter, folk dancers caper,
> swans embark on manoeuvres, church bells go crazy,
> works by and about him bombard the bookshops,
> broadcasters, giving global coverage to the event,
> fall over themselves to find words to blazon his genius,
> and texters and tweeters are locked in the collective thrall,
> anticipating the conferment of the Lifetime Award.
>
> (Pringle, quoted with the author's permission)

This bathetic description—if it had been entirely true for this millennium's celebratory events—would have made us all feel embarrassed. Since I was not present at the April 2016 celebrations in Stratford-upon-Avon, however, I prefer to take it as just an ironic poetic fantasy—an evocation of what used to be the Bard's gala. Such a description (with the exception of "texters and tweeters") seems more suitable to the times when old Garrick staged the Shakespeare Jubilee in Stratford-upon-Avon to celebrate 200 years since Shakespeare's birth.

A more subdued academic salutation has been the high point of this year's events in Shakespeare's birthplace, during the 2016 *World Shakespeare Congress*. The commemoration was radically self-reflexive, because we were all members of the theatrical audience during the plenaries, at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon and at the Globe and the candle-lit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse in London. Maybe this is just as Shakespeare would have liked it—more suitable, as Pringle imagines, to the self-effacement of the "Great Man," who "slipped in quietly at the back some hours before" for the high ceremony of his own celebration. Pringle's ironic tone in this poem matches Shakespeare's humility, self-mirroring, and multiple ironies. From what I heard about the 2016 commemorative events in Stratford-upon-Avon in April 2016, however, I imagine an even more sophisticated model. Michael Dobson, Director of the *Shakespeare Institute*, presented us with a similarly self-effacing and elusive welcome address (when introducing the main speaker Gregory Doran, Artistic Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company), on the first day of the 2016 *World Shakespeare Congress* in Stratford-upon-Avon (Monday, 1 August, 2016). Dobson showed us a series of slides about Shakespeare celebrations throughout the centuries in Stratford-upon-

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Avon, including the April 2016 events. There was an audible gasp in the audience, followed by laughter, when we viewed a slide showing a large mass of people who all looked exactly like Shakespeare. It took us a while to understand that, as part of the ceremonies, exactly at 11 am, everyone in the procession and in the vast crowds donned a paper Shakespeare mask. This was a masque, a play-within-the-play. Michael Dobson's "provisional theory" about this imagistic excess is astutely expressive: "At the climax of an ecstatic massed public ceremony of Bardolatry, we were all assuming a little of the godhead" (Dobson, quoted with the author's permission). Dobson's final words, in his welcome speech, set us deferentially (and ironically) in our place: "Welcome to Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare is quite definitely a god."

Indeed, we all seem to want a slice of the god-like figure we have made of Shakespeare; we all want to be identified with this semi-divine celebrity; we all want to be in Elysium, led by his benevolent shadow. *Et in Elysium ego*. This egocentric and sympathetic feeling for our Shakespeare is part of the self-reflexive, almost narcissistic nature, inclined to self-mirroring and introspection—as in the theatre. The title of this collection of essays, however, has little to do with the romanticized, escapist metaphor of the poetic fantasy we have come to name "Shakespeare"—hovering in Elysium, between the worlds of the dead and the living (though, we hear, he *lives*).[1] We verge away from the tendency of ventriloquizing through Shakespeare's ghost and making his name the mouthpiece for individual ideas and values. Nor can we be totally free, however, of transferring to Shakespeare's image our systems of values, past and present, embedded over a 400-year legacy.

We all want to be reflected in the Shakespearean god-like mirror. In *Cymbeline*, Jupiter descends on his eagle and chases away to rest the "Poor shadows of Elysium" (5.5.191);[2] the god transmits, through Posthumus's parents and brothers, the tables of divine prophecy. Raphael Lyne links this scene with the non-illusionistic scenery of the court masque, associated with "seeing is believing" (49). Lyne considers that the appearance of Jupiter is "oddly pitched" and evokes "a strange rather than impressive image" (49). After having attended the 2016 production of *Cymbeline*, directed by Melly Still at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, I can see what Lyne means. The scene's meta-theatricality, the sense of overdoing it, which the masque transmitted, was overpowering. It seemed too much. No wonder that Posthumus could not interpret the message sent by the shadows in Elysium, inscribed in "A book?" (5.5.227). The Shakespearean

[1] The series of events organized by the British Council in 2016 under the title *Shakespeare Lives*, at http://www.shakespearelives.org/, gives us an exceptional panorama of theatrical and academic events around the world: learning through Shakespeare, tweets, and direct involvement in various Shakespeare projects. I particularly liked the *Living Shakespeare* collection of essays, in which international leading cultural and political figures (from John Kerry to Scottish musician Dame Evelyn Glennie) write essays on Shakespeare. Each time I visit this excellent website, I feel rewarded: *Et in Elysium ego*.

[2] References to Shakespeare's text are keyed to *William Shakespeare: The Complete Works* (The Oxford Shakespeare), eds. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (1992).

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theatrical book (?) defies definite interpretations, and questioning is all over the place. It is as if we are told nonchalantly: look, this is just a play; whatever you do, it is only a play.

For all these noble reasons, I will not consider Shakespeare as a name (implying authority), a ghost, or a friend, but a *place*: the place of the stage; the place reserved for the selected creative few; and the place we frequently and joyfully revisit. In classical mythology—so dear to Shakespeare and his contemporaries—the Elysian Fields, or Elysium, responded to the ancients' conception of the afterlife. This was a place separate from the realm of Hades, an in-between place reserved to the elect. In assessing the reception of Greek myth in Renaissance literature, David H. Brumble quotes Fulgentius, a sixth-century Latin interpreter of Virgil, who comments on the moment when Aeneas enters Elysium: "where, the labor of learning now over, he celebrates the perfecting of memory" (417). This is, indeed, the "perfecting of memory" we have been celebrating in/as Shakespeare's name, by instituting Shakespeare as a place.

Elysium is neither Hell, nor Paradise. It is an in-between place where later generations celebrate the rites of memory. In assessing the status of Shakespearean translation, adaptation, and criticism from a historical perspective, Ton Hoenselaars shows the in-between place of Shakespeare studies, trapped in a limbo space "Between Heaven and Hell" (50). Hoenselaars comments on the 1780 German play *Shakespeare in der Klemme* (*Shakespeare Trapped*) by German dramatist Johann Friedrich Schink and, in doing so, he traces metaphorically the between-two-worlds position of what we have come to term Shakespeare Studies, which also entertain close relations to Translation Studies and Cultural Studies:

> In it, we find the ghost of 'Schakespear' both in and out of Elysium. All is not well in Elysium. Although Schakespear has enjoyed peace and quiet in the company of canonical colleagues like Homer, Voltaire, and Corneille, as well as David Garrick, the ferryman Charon has now accidentally ferried across to Elysium the ghost of Jean-François Ducis, the infamous eighteenth-century French Shakespeare adapter, the successor to Voltaire at the Académie française, who reworked to contemporary French tastes not just Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but also *Othello*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *King Lear*, and *King John*.
>
> (Hoenselaars 54)

In the Elysian Fields of memory, the fantasies of Shakespeare's heritage that we have created along the four hundred years of remembrance have replaced earlier notions about language, character, plot, or authority. In translation studies, cultural translations have produced a refined instrument to position the playwright in various linguistic hypostases, and even to explore new languages (the imaginary Klingon of the *Star Trek* series) and sign systems. We hear alternative languages of the same scene in the same production of a Shakespeare play, and run along the corridors of emotion by experiencing harsh sounds, music, or acrobatics during a certain staging.

Shakespeare production history, translation, and criticism have moved to unexplored areas, and we hear about the "cultural turn" in translation studies

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(Bassnett 3), "spatial turn" (Dustagheer 570), "geocriticism" (Tally 2; Westphal 111), or "ecocriticism" (Brayton 63). In the introduction to an eco-critical dictionary to Shakespeare's plants and gardens, Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth define the garden as the "theatrical space," representing the experience between the sensory and the symbolic in Shakespeare's world: "Encompassing the idea of paradise intrinsic to Christianity, Islam, and their classical counterpart Elysium, the garden had become a place for solace, contemplation, exercise, play and display" (12). In our diverse re-interpretations of Shakespeare, therefore, classical Elysium is assimilated to the garden next door—or, probably, the herb garden at Shakespeare's Birthplace or at Hall's Croft in Stratford-upon-Avon—or, actually, at any place.

The title of the 2016 World Shakespeare Congress is *Creating and Re-creating Shakespeare* and, according to Peter Holbrook, the topic is expected to "inspire meditation and conversation, not only about Shakespeare's life and works, but about the countless ways in which he continues to be 'new born' for us all, through acts of reading, performance, scholarship, critique, celebration" (1). Not only is Shakespeare "new born" in myriad ways, but in many spaces. In the seminar "Shakespeare and the (Re)-Creation of Early Modern Geographies" at the 2016 Congress, for example, we exchanged ideas with an excellent array of European, American, and Chinese scholars—including an exceptionally creative younger generation. Shakespeare criticism is moving to new levels. The place of the stage is now the point of convergence of many factors, at once stage, place, and cultural encounter. Shakespearean scholarship is a meeting place for various nations and critical practices. Current productions of Shakespeare's plays constantly challenge deep-seated ideas and practices and foster the dialogue between cultures, generations, political limitations, and even create their own worlds of illusion.

The Shakespearean place in Elysium is often an illusion in the making. In the non-conformist space of a New York warehouse, named the McKittrick Hotel, the Punchdrunk troupe involved the audience in participatory presence to an adaptation of *Macbeth*, entitled *Sleep no More* (2013). In this site-specific interactive theatre, audiences followed the characters through various rooms and a variety of settings. The production adapted the story of *Macbeth*, deprived of most spoken language, set in a dimly-lit establishment of the 1930s, called the McKittrick Hotel. The website introducing the production was confusing because visitors were informed that the old hotel had been recently restored. Actually, it was just a block of warehouses in Manhattan, transformed into a hotel-like performance space with overlapping and simultaneous action developments. Thus, the production created its own illusion, entertained by the website, and some members of the audience actually believed the constructed fiction. While waiting in line to see the play, I heard a young couple next to me earnestly relaying the fake information conveyed on the website—which they consulted on their smart phone, naturally—according to which the place was an old haunted hotel. In all seriousness, the young couple explained how the hotel was completed in 1939 and was intended to be New York City's finest luxury hotel, but it was never opened and was left sealed. The information was not true, but innocent net-consuming readers absolutely believed it, and were ready to

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WhatsApp the data to others. They all hoped to travel to the make-believe world of *Macbeth* and mystery. Everything was done in the name of Shakespeare, and producers counted on the audience getting directly involved in the production. Shakespeare is a place in itself, the place of the mind, where we celebrate who we are by entertaining and revisiting the previously established locations of cultural memory.

The place of Romanian scholarship in the Shakespearean Elysium has already been established by the *Shakespeare in Romania* project (2005–2009) and the subsequent collections of academic essays emerging from the publication of research results: *Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Romania* (2006), *Shakespeare in Romania: 1900-1950* (2007), *Shakespeare in Romania: 1950 to the Present* (2008), and *Shakespeare in Romania: Texts 1836–1916* (2009). European Shakespeare scholars, such as Stanley Wells, Ton Hoenselaars, Balz Engler and Ángel Luis Pujante, have written Forewords to these collections of essays. If it were only for this and we could proudly state that world-wide academic collaboration in Shakespeare studies is an accredited fact. The Craiova Shakespeare Festival is an acknowledged theatrical event in Romania, and leading Shakespeareans, such as Sir Stanley Wells and Michael Dobson, attended the Festival, as part of the Shakespeare-400 celebrations. The academic event organized by the National Museum of Romanian Literature at the Romanian Academy, entitled *Shakespeare in Romania, Shakespeare in the World*, hosted a large number of members of the national and international Shakespeare community. And the number is ever growing, and the places of celebration multiply, like a cipher, as Polixenes says about his appreciation of Sicilian hospitality in *The Winter's Tale*:

> And therefore, like a cipher,
> Yet standing in rich place, I multiply
> With one 'We thank you' many thousands more
>
> (*The Winter's Tale* 1.2.6–8)

Standing in the rich Shakespearean place, we can multiply the value of our "thank you" a thousand fold. This collection of essays is just an instance of this incredible proliferation.

The papers in this volume are as varied as their authors' preoccupations in Shakespeare studies are. Romanian Shakespeare criticism, production history, and translation is very much alive these days, as Mădălina Nicolaescu, Nicoleta Cinpoeș, Odette Blumenfeld, Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, Oana-Alis Zaharia, and George Volceanov have pertinently shown. Nicolaescu traces Shakespeare criticism in socialist Romania during the nineteen fifties and sixties and notices the "wedge" between Shakespeare studies and Shakespeare in performance; eventually, as Nicolaescu argues, a bypass was operated via the auspicious intervention of cultural journalism. Cinpoeș examines comparatively productions of *Hamlet* on the Romanian stage and abroad on tour, as well as Michael Hytner's 2010 production at the London National Theatre, to argue that shadows of Romania's communist

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past keep wandering the Elysian Fields of theatrical production decades later, in a creative negotiation between *posthistoire* and *newhistoire*. Odette Blumenfeld looks at representations of the scene of Ophelia's madness by Romanian directors Alexandru Tocilescu (1985) and Tompa Gábor (1996) to highlight resourcefulness and ingenuity in Romanian communist and post-communist theatre. Criticism produced on the occasion of Shakespeare's tercentenary (1916) placed Romania on the way to secularization and modernization, as Matei-Chesnoiu argues in this volume. Zaharia examines the early nineteenth-century Romanian translations of *Julius Caesar* (1844) and *Macbeth* (1850) and links the tendency to Frenchifize the text to the cultural need to highlight the Latin origin of the modernized Romanian language, in the period of the 1848 revolution. Still keeping in the area of Romanian Shakespeare translation studies, but moving to the practice of translation, George Volceanov traces an accolade that includes the Romanian team among the participants to *The Great Feast of Languages* at the *Shakespeare World Translation Conference* in Cologne (2016).

In point of textual studies, Adrian Papahagi examines the structural and epistemological momentum of "nothing" in *King Lear* by comparing the Quarto (Q1) and Folio (F1) versions. Looking at the structural and lexical recurrence of "nothing" in the play, Papahagi keeps in mind the theatrical effects of this suggestive repetition and argues that Cordelia's "nothing" incorporates ethical, philosophical and dramatic after-effects. Working in the line of transmedia discourse and continuing in the disturbing world of *King Lear* and tragic anagnorisis, Jean-Jacques Chardin looks at reflections of the heart and the eye in relation to early modern medical and moral treatises and emblems. Emotional engagement suggested by the language of the heart is contrasted with the cognitive capacity of the eye as the main conduit of sensory perception and clear-sightedness, while, as Chardin argues, both are found deficient in the tragedy's interrogative mode, which dramatizes a "disheartening" sense of waste. Romanian productions of Shakespeare's plays are so diversified in directorial interpretation and variety of perspectives that it is quite difficult to discern a dominant line or advance a specific theatrical construal. Ana Maria Munteanu reviews the production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* directed by Marcel Ţop at the Constanţa State Theatre (2015)—an excursion along the lanes of memory about the hippie movement of the sixties and the contemporary Romanian sea-side experience on a beach at Vama Veche—and defends the theatre's infinite potential for transformation.

In the area of intertextuality and comparative literary studies in the reception and adaptation of Shakespeare, Romanian scholarship is equally well-represented. Pia Brînzeu traces the large number of "intertextual ghosts" that the Shakespearean canon has summoned and deals with narrative aspects of "play-giarism," generated by an ever-increasing number of "wreaders" and rewriters drawing on Shakespeare. Taking readers through a diversified range of literature, such as the novels *Nature of Blood* (1997) by Caryl Phillips, *Indigo* (1992) by Marina Warner, *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) by Sudanese writer Tayeb Salih, *Sycorax* (2006) by John Brian Aspinall, or *Shylock is my Name* (2016) by Howard Jacobson, Brînzeu

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summons several shadows from the Shakespearean Elysium and argues for the continuity of the intertextual game. Indeed, after seeing Howard Jacobson (live) on the Shakespearean stage at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, in conversation with Adrian Poole, during the 2016 *World Shakespeare Congress*, I could say a thing or two about self-reflexivity through the multiple Shakespearean mirrors. Marina Cap-Bun traces the influence of Hecuba's story in *Hamlet*, *Coriolanus*, *Troilus and Cressida*, and *Titus Andronicus*, and argues that the Hecuba motif is summoned whenever Shakespeare dramatizes women in distress. Moreover, for Hamlet, Hecuba is connected with theatricality. As a case study of a post-modern reinterpretation of the Hecuba myth, Cap-Bun examines the 2014 production of the play *Why Hecuba* by Matei Vişniec, produced at the Kaze Theatre in Tokyo, and points out the story's continuity in the theatre world.

Moving even further in time and space, and across various media (such as anatomic art, and poetry by Seamus Heaney and Charles Baudlaire) Estella Ciobanu connects apparently incompatible textual threads to argue for the common intertextual roots of the *memento mori* motif in poetry and the visual arts. Shakespeare's theatre—via *Hamlet* and the meta-theatricality that this play evokes—becomes, in Ciobanu's argument, the textual interface among the physical, metaphysical, and fantasies of corporeality. Equally inventive in connecting invisible cross-media intertextual strands, Lucia Opreanu looks at Shakespearean echoes in film, literature, and popular media culture—specifically a 2007 episode of *Doctor Who*, entitled "The Shakespeare Code;" the short story "The Muse" by Anthony Burgess; and a Blackadder television episode—to argue that the "protean figure" summoned by varied texts and propagated in media culture "is still remarkably vital." Having attended the RSC première of *Hamlet* at the Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon (August 2008), directed by Gregory Doran and featuring David Tennant as Hamlet and Patrick Stewart as Claudius, I can draw significant bridges between this Shakespeare production and media culture. The gallery audience at that particular opening night was formed almost exclusively of teenage *Doctor Who* fans, while the earlier generation of *Star Trek* viewers filled the stalls of the theatre audience. Youth flocked to see the transmogrification of Doctor Who into a wild and witty Hamlet. Hours before the start of the première, I was told that the bid for a ticket on e-bay for this production had mounted to a staggering £500. To be or not to be at the première of that particular *Hamlet* production?—that would have been the crucial (but rhetorical) dilemma for a Romanian academic visiting the *Hamlet* Elysian fields. *Et in Elysium ego*.

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