# OPHELIA'S MADNESS AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN TWO ROMANIAN PRODUCTIONS

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ABSTRACT
This paper will focus on the *Hamlet* productions at the Bulandra Theatre, Bucharest (1985) and the Craiova National Theatre (1996), and will consider them as belonging to the category of "rewrightings". Consequently, in analysing them, we shall be primarily interested in what the two directors, Alexandru Tocilescu and Tompa Gábor, did "with" or "to" this classical text in which, as Kott states, "there are many subjects one can select. But one must know what one selects and why." Following his piece of advice, this paper will concentrate on Ophelia in general, and on her madness, in particular. That is why our critical discourse will primarily rely on the psychoanalytic and feminist approaches. Moreover, in the "decoding" of these productions, we shall take into account the fact that the transfer to a foreign environment requires not only linguistic translation but also cultural adaptation. Consequently, the analysis of the translated versions will consider the degree to which they keep alive the essential meaning of the original text, what was omitted from or added to it, the impact of these alterations on the overall meaning, whether the spirit of the Shakespearean language, rich in connotations and figures of speech, has been preserved, etc. On the other hand, in describing the manner in which Ophelia's madness was staged, we shall rely on a close reading of the text and our familiarization with the performance history of the part and shall bring to the fore what was innovative in the two directors' vision on it. In short, this in-depth examination of such theatrically signifying systems as facial expression, gesture, movement, costume, hairstyle, music, setting, props will only prove once more that Shakespeare constructed this scene as a performance within the play, i.e. as a metatheatrical moment.

KEYWORDS: "rewrighting", cultural adaptation, "the female malady", theatrical communication, theatrically signifying systems, metatheatricality.

The two Romanian productions of *Hamlet* that this paper focuses on—the 1985 one at the Bulandra Theatre, Bucharest and the 1996 one at the Craiova National Theatre—undoubtedly belong to the category of "rewrightings"—a term coined by Amy S. Green in 1994 in order to define the contemporary directors' endeavour of revising old plays, i.e. of "shaping them into new theatrical events" (Green xi). However, as Charles Marowitz suggests, a timid tendency of taking for granted the liberty to remake or rework what the Bard had put down on paper goes as far back as the Restoration, which "did not restore the Shakespearean tradition that flourished at The Theatre, The Curtain and The Globe" (Marowitz 119). Consequently, the British critic makes it clear that, even then, the only obligation to



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the texts was that of "preserving what is essential and unalterable" (120). This is as much to say that the innovations brought by the staging of Shakespeare's plays began to tell a lot about the *zeitgeist* of the periods in which these productions were made. No wonder that the spectators watching such performances have increasingly become more interested in what the directors do "with" or "to" these texts which, in time, have proved to be "open to a large number of interpretations" (Brook 76). However, what is obvious and certain is that the directors' work can rightly be labelled "an act of criticism" (Berry 17). By enjoying such a status, the two productions to be analysed in this paper may be regarded as joining "the megagigantic body of commentary on *Hamlet*" (Levin 215) and as illustrating the generally accepted idea that this play means different things at different times—in our case the communist and post-communist periods in Romania. Although these thought-provoking productions may help us revise and enrich our views of the play, they make us the more realize how right Jan Kott was when he stated: "One can perform only one of several *Hamlet*s potentially existing in this archplay. It will always be a poorer *Hamlet* than Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is; but it may also be a *Hamlet* enriched by being of our time" (Kott 58). It is also Kott who prophetically warns us that "there are many subjects in *Hamlet* … But one must know what one selects and why" (59).

Trying to follow his piece of advice, we decided to concentrate on Ophelia, one of the two women in an impressive list of male characters. Moreover, her being present on stage in only five of the twenty scenes of the play to utter a text ten times shorter than that of the protagonist is proof enough of her marginalization by gender. However, paradoxically, this is a part most actresses dream of performing and drama critics think it a duty to comment upon. The latter have done their job so well that they have brought to public attention, as Elaine Showalter rightly remarks, a whole series "of contradictory Ophelias" (Showalter 127) alternating "between strong and weak on the stage, virginal and seductive in art, inadequate and oppressed in criticism"(127). At the same time, analysts in adjacent fields have defined her from psychoanalytic perspectives: Jacques Lacan refers to "the object Ophelia"(Lacan 11, 20, 23), i.e. the object of Hamlet's male desire; the Jungians view her as Hamlet's anima (Coursen 91-3); Gaston Bachelard has coined the term 'Ophelia complex' (Bachelard 109-125) to emphasize the symbolic connections between women, water, and death, drowning being considered a truly feminine death; or feminist critics—a victim of patriarchy, i.e. an obedient innocent manipulated by her father, brother, lover, even court and society; a creature of lack, in the jargon of French feminists, deprived of thought ("I think nothing, my lord", 3.2.111), sexuality and language, i.e. on the side of negativity, absence, silence and, consequently, escaping representation in patriarchal language and symbolism (Showalter 115)—an interpretation supported by the Shakespearean text, which refers to her speech as being "nothing" (4.5.7), mere "unshaped use"(4.5.8), the suffering / delirium remaining in the body itself to be, however, expressed through it ("winks, nods, gestures", 4.5.11); the image of both Angel and Monster, i.e. the embodiment, as Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert suggest, "of just those extremes of mysterious and



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intransigent Otherness which culture confronts with worship or fear, love or loathing" (Gilbert and Gubar 26); a young woman whose madness is, of course, gendered, as it refers, like "the female malady," a term coined by Elaine Showalter, to the mental and emotional disturbances that are in close connection with the questions of femininity, female sexuality and the possibility of describing them in language. Far from being exhaustive, this list of interpretations points to what Elaine Showalter rightly envisaged as a "Cubist Ophelia of multiple perspectives" (Showalter 127).

The actresses, on the other hand, have always tried to excel rivals and precursors in presenting Ophelia's madness which, in her case, is clinical / pathological, "a product of the female body and female nature" (Showalter 117). They were joined by painters who have been interested not only in Ophelia's madness but also in her drowning as reported by Gertrude in a language revealing a typically feminine sensuality. The proliferation of such works of art determined a medical historian like Sander Gilman to remark that psychiatrists could easily have compiled manuals of female insanity by simply chronicling these illustrations of Ophelia (Gilman 126). This is as much to say that they began to play a role in the description of this affliction. In short, the particular circumstances of her madness have made her "a potent and obsessive figure in our cultural mythology" (Showalter 114).

On the other hand, in describing the manner in which Ophelia's madness has been performed on stage along the centuries, it goes without saying that a critic should rely on a close reading of the text and his familiarization with the performance history of the part in order to bring to the fore the innovative vision of a director (an actress) on it. A simple example in this respect is offered by the details concerning Ophelia's appearance on the Elizabethan and Jacobean stages, which have for a long time served as a reference point. They were meant to emphasize a dishevelled appearance as an undeniable sign of female insanity: a white dress, whiteness being considered till late in the nineteenth century part of the essential feminine symbolism associated with Ophelia, but also "perhaps emphasizing a view of her as a forsaken would-be-bride" (footnote to Shakespeare 374); "fantastical garlands" of wild flowers which might have suggested "the discordant double images of female sexuality as both innocent blossoming and whorish contamination" (Showalter 117); loose hair; wild eyes. The tradition of performing the part added to this appearance a singing hard to comprehend, a "distracted manner of playing on a lute" (stage direction in the "Bad" Quarto), and uncontrollable gestures—all meant to emphasize extreme distress.

It is against these conventions that the romantic actresses and the twentieth-century experimental directors rebelled. Harriet Smithson, the most outstanding representative of the former, used her mastery of the language of gestures, acquired after serious training in the art of the mime, to attempt to depict "the state of Ophelia's confused mind" (Raby 63)—all in all an intensely visual performance that was extremely influential for the next 150 years. The latter group seems to continue her new, audacious approach to representing the madness of the character. However,



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we must not underestimate the fact that these directors certainly got an unexpected help from Freud and his disciples, who did their best to re-sexualize Ophelia. As early as 1949, Ernest Jones argued that "Ophelia should be unmistakably sensual as she seldom is on stage. She may be 'innocent' and docile, but she is very aware of her body" (Jones 139). And in a theatre, even more centred on the actor's body, remarks like this have certainly stimulated the use, sometimes in excess, of the other "theatrically signifying systems" (Kowzan 54) circumscribed to the actor: facial expression, gestures, movement / body postures.

That madness is one of the most important themes of the tragedy—if not the major one—is proof enough that Shakespeare was familiar with what was written about this affliction in his time and, more than this, had a first-hand experience of it through the meetings with the patients suffering from it and hospitalized at Bethlehem Hospital (Bedlam), which was regularly open to the public. Consistent with Timothy Bright's theories, the dramatist provides Ophelia with a natural humour—love-melancholy—, attacks it with shocks, and shows madness as the consequence of these shocks (Mazzaro 97-108). It is easy to name a few of them: her father's warnings against the dangers of that natural emotion, their transformation into orders that request complete obedience, as he cares more for his position of "assistant of state" than for her daughter's feelings; Hamlet's sudden conversion from a gentle lover into an abusive, sarcastic and violent one that hates and condemns all women, a change coming as a blow she cannot understand; Laertes' leaving for France; her father's murder and "obscure funeral" (4.5.205); Hamlet's departure from Denmark. All these devastating shocks make her feel lonely, frightened, without any reliable support in a world that is more and more "out of joint" (1.5.186). They represent enough cause for her going mad. This is her response to the contradictory directives she has received from those round her and which, in fact, were a reflection of their "unacknowledged interpersonal falsities" (Leverenz 140).

In the nineteenth century, Ophelia's madness was associated with some of the features evinced by a hysteric: a certain degree of emotional instability, an intense craving for affection and protection, outbreaks of strong emotionalism. By the middle of the next century, her psychosis was identified as schizophrenic, i.e. as being marked by introversion, a tendency to fantasy, but without an extreme mental disorder, delusions, inability to distinguish reality from unreality. After 1970, feminist critics have re-evaluated Ophelia's madness and have ever more often regarded it as protest and "rebellion against the family and the social order" (Showalter 126). Finally, we may say that madness is the only opportunity Ophelia has to express herself freely, though rather incoherently— she "speaks things in doubt / That carry but half sense" (4.5.6-7)—, to draw the attention upon her and make the others listen to what she has to say. And her endeavour to accomplish this clearly reinforces the fact that madness produces and is produced by a fragmentation of discourse. Her lines may be confused, but they have "matter" (4.5.172). In fact, the manner in which she tries to express herself is "more oblique, pictorial, and symbolic" (Lyons 73). It is in this context that her madness may be regarded as a



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performance, her songs and gestures being deliberately meant to offer clues to the causes of her distraction. Moreover, like any gifted actress, she is aware that this is her moment and that the others should listen to her by all means. Hence, the compelling repetition of the line: "pray you mark" (4.5. 28, 35). In other words, she illustrates the common opinion that people in such a condition have often shown a great courage whenever they have had the guts of uttering terrifying truths.

And, indeed, in Ophelia's case, this connection between madness and language is clearly evinced in what she says, i.e. something she would not, or could not, have said if sane and in an environment as that offered by the tense life at the court of Elsinore, where she had to suffer "a torrent of abuse" to be noticed in "the authoritative power of language used to maintain patriarchy" (Findlay 195), to straightjacket "the expression of unhindered sexuality" (Burnett 30). The images contained in her songs allude to her emotions and frustrated desires, to her female sexuality and are in conflict with the voice of patriarchal authority her mind has been forced to accommodate. Her language can, thus, be viewed as "centripetal" (Mazarro 105), i.e. the words move from seemingly random allusions towards meaning or centrality, while her rage surfaces, from time to time, in voice or gesture. Thus, if previously, each of her appearances has offered the others a cue for talking about sex, it is she who, in this scene, in the song about Saint Valentine's Day, openly refers to a maid's deflowering—"Then up he rose .... / Let in the maid that out a maid / Never departed more" (4.5.54-55)—and to young men who "will do't if they come to't" (4.5.60). These remarks bring to the surface a hidden, repressed desire, since sex was a topic her brother and father forbade her to discuss, their major advice to her having been that of not "opening" her "chaste treasure" to Hamlet's "unmaster'd importunity" (1.3. 31-32). Moreover, it is obvious that some of her lines seem carefully aimed, while the flowers she offers to almost each of those present bear connotations most appropriate for reinforcing personal character traits; both instances point to the fact that Ophelia, protected by genuine madness, may do much to uncover what she kept repressed or what she really thought about the others.

However, an analysis like ours, i.e. of the way this scene is staged and performed, will have to rely not only on the verbal level, but also on a detailed examination of costume, hairstyle, bizarre behaviour, disposition disorders—sadness, anger—, gestures, facial expression, relationships to those present on stage. This is but fit since even the Gentleman who reports Ophelia's madness to Gertrude comments on her speech, behaviour and even on how those listening to her should take her ravings, at this point even insisting, in words that remind us of Polonius' opinion on Hamlet's madness, that there "might be thought" (4.5.12), "half-sense" (4.5.2) in them. In other words, it is a description that directors should consider as a kind of stage directions to be followed in their staging and the theatre reviewers should take as a valuable help in discussing the work of the former.

Of the two Romanian productions, the closest to the Shakespearean text, i.e. keeping most of it, is the 1985 one directed by Alexandru Tocilescu, the performance having lasted for almost five hours. Nina Cassian reached the final version of the play-script after she had carefully examined significant previous



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translations of the play, those signed by Vladimir Streinu, Ion Vinea, Leon Levițchi and Dragoş Protopopescu, had read once more different English editions of the text and some French and German translations, had listened to and selected from the translation solutions for different lexical units coming from the director, some actors and even other poets asked to give a helpful hand. The staging, on the other hand, tried to enhance the political connotations of the play, to make people realize that what it wanted to convey was "an anti-system" message. And, indeed, the similarities between the life in the kingdom of Denmark, Shakespeare's substitute for England, and that of the Romanians in the last years of Ceauşescu's rule were quite striking: a totalitarian regime, people kept under constant surveillance by an extremely "efficient" secret police (the famous *securitate*), a merciless repression of any opposition to the regime, a general atmosphere of distrust, suspicion and fear, a plethora of opportunists eager to please those in power for personal gain, leaders without scruples ready even to commit crimes only to secure their position. As far as the protagonist was concerned, the director decided to work with the interpretation that did not view Hamlet as "a unifying subject" (Belsey 41-42). In other words, in shaping Hamlet, this production favoured "multiplicity over a stable core, and this became its *modus vivendi*" (Cinpoeş 173). In short, we may speak of several roles / identities assumed by Hamlet, the character. This made the task of the actor performing this character the more difficult and exciting. Ion Caramitru's acting was a tour de force that met the expectations of both the public at large and the drama critics, proof of that being the appreciation he received from *The Times* which, in 1990, placed him among the top five best actors who played the part of the tormented Prince of Denmark in that period.

The set for the whole production, including scene 5 of act 4, which was primarily devoted to representing Ophelia's madness, was created to suggest that Elsinore was a microcosm for a prison state, for a world of crime and terror, of strict surveillance, spying and duplicity. The black Perspex chessboard-like stage floor could both mirror and distort. The back wall of the stage was covered with black mirrors and had, in its middle, two French windows built in to be used as entrances and exits. They could be reached by mounting some steps leading to a platform on which they opened. Enjoying a higher position, the platform was also used, in certain moments, as the locus of power, for it was from there that the King and the Queen would give orders regarding the state affairs. The wall was meant to reinforce the isolation of the rulers from their people, "their lack of political transparency" (Cinpoeş 173), while, for those inside the castle, the multiple mirroring in the set increased their feeling of insecurity, of being spied.

Before the beginning of the scene to be analysed, a pianist—a character introduced by the director in the cast—began to play a tune. The piano was placed on the raised platform to the left of the stage. How were we to interpret the role of this speechless presence? As Ion Caramitru remembers in a recent interview (2016), the pianist's music always preceded the episodes with the Ghost. It was as if, through it, the Ghost could get hold of Hamlet, could talk to something inside him. In other words, the pianist, through his music, was meant to strike a chord in Hamlet's soul



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and stimulate his mind. So, we, like Nicoleta Cinpoeş (174), cannot but wonder whether the director did not want us to look at him as the protagonist's *alter ego*. Extrapolating from the above, we may say that the music to be listened to, at this point in the play, may have turned into a warning signal for the spectators of the fact that Ophelia would soon become a ghost, or that the mad character to be seen was very much concerned with the death of her father, his hasty burial, and the absence of Hamlet.

While the pianist was doing his job, the Queen and a maid, both dressed in costumes that suggested an opulence and fashion typical for the eighteenth century, entered the stage and sat down on chairs placed on the right side of the central stair and remained in an almost motionless position. After a while, the Queen placed the small mirror she had kept in her lap in front of her face. The presence of this female accessory may have reinforced different meanings. Her resorting to it may be interpreted as the traditional gesture of a woman who, aware of no longer being so young, was interested in her looks—the main asset in her endeavour of keeping alive the love and admiration of the others for her beauty—a reaction that betrayed a normal feminine desire. But, it may have also suggested her concern with checking whether her face was still a successful mask, an appearance for her true nature.

In the meantime, on the sounds of the music played on the piano, the Gentleman, dressed in late-nineteenth century attire, entered the stage from behind the two women who were still sitting. He looked attentively around him as if trying to see whether he had been spied on. The speech he began to deliver was meant to inform the Queen about how dangerous for her reputation Ophelia might become if her Highness continued to refuse receiving her. While listening to all these, the Queen got up, started moving to the front stage with a pace that suggested inner turmoil, nervousness. At this moment, Horatio, dressed in a costume suggesting a young man of the twentieth century—a pullover, a scarf round his neck, a long overcoat—, joined the Gentleman in the latter's request; his persuasive method was that of beseeching her through most eloquent gestures, including kneeling in front of her. His insistence in this matter was rather puzzling, unless he was really afraid that Ophelia could hurt Hamlet's reputation, had she been aware of the true circumstances of her father's death. Finally, the Queen made a gesture with her hand towards the Gentleman, as if to order to bring her in, a kind of silent acceptance of his demand. Consequently, he left the stage to return with Ophelia a bit later. In the meantime, the Queen delivered her short aside. In order to underline the fact that its first line—"To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is" (4.5.17)—contained a reference to herself, she rubbed her forehead with her hand. When it came to the second line—"Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss" (4.5.18)—though she did not seem to take Ophelia's madness seriously, since she called it "a toy," she, nevertheless, considered herself so vulnerable that she could not refrain from thinking in perspective and took it as a possible warning of an impending disaster. That is why she uttered this line with the back to the audience and with the hand pointing to one of the French windows, the very place through which that threatening danger might penetrate her protected space. The last two lines of the aside—"So full of artless



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jealousy is guilt, / It spills itself in fearing to be spilt" (4.5.19-20)—, quotable commonplaces indicating a renewed awareness of guilt, were uttered facing the spectators, thus suggesting that the truth contained in them was of interest to them as well.

When the spectators first caught sight of Ophelia, they were struck by some peculiarities in her appearance—dishevelled long hair, large staring eyes, disarray in her dress which allowed a shoulder to display an exaggerated nakedness—all of them part and parcel of the conventional means used to suggest madness or distress in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama as well (Dessen 36-8). On the other hand, black, the dominant colour in her dress, placed the actress performing Ophelia, Mariana Buruiană, in line with those who, beginning with Ellen Terry, had tried to make the character gain in visibility by clothing her in Hamlet's colour, and thus challenge the tradition which established that, in this scene, Ophelia should be dressed in white.

At first, she looked around, stared at the audience, then noticed the Queen and uttered the well-known inquiry—"Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?" (4.5.21)—resorting to a rather ironic tone, the line having been read in a similar manner by other actresses as well. Gertrude's answer—"How now, Ophelia?" (4.5.22)—may be read in different keys according to the mood /feeling /attitude the actress was requested to adopt. In this production, she seemed to have chosen to underline the character's reluctance / displeasure at having to receive Ophelia and converse with her. Coming face to face, the Queen put her hands on Ophelia's shoulders, a kind of protective gesture mixed with some pity for the wretchedness of the girl. Ophelia, in her turn, caressed the Queen's cheeks with her fingers, touched her body, from top to bottom, ever more quickly and forcefully, with hands that betrayed nervousness; then she kneeled, kissed the edge of her cloak. However, all this time, she held her head up, her eyes trying to catch the Queen's sight, since the latter avoided looking straight into hers—a reaction that suggested an attempt at hiding a guilty conscience—and even used her hands in a manner that pointed to a possible rejection. We may thus say that this Ophelia seemed to be testing the Queen to find out whether she might be that parental figure she had been looking for after her father's death, or whether she knew more about that death and hid the truth from her and, consequently, could not be trusted.

While doing these, Ophelia also started singing. At first, what she uttered were simple whispers and mumblings, so that what was generally considered to be a reference to her lover could not be inferred from the disparate sounds the spectators were allowed to hear. The only lines clearly voiced—"How should I your true love know / From another one" (4.5.23-24)—could be considered as reinforcing, at the verbal level, what her bodily and gestural languages had been striving to mean, i.e. to express doubts concerning the Queen's personality. This was the more so since the lines referring to the emblems characteristic for a pilgrim were omitted in this production, which, thus, modified the whole meaning of this song fragment.

Still in a kneeling position and strongly clinging to the Queen's dress, Ophelia began to sing, ever more clearly and loudly, the lines that referred to her



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father's being dead, her sorrow turning the song into something close to a dirge. Astonishment and horror could be read in the Queen's facial expression. However, while singing "White his shroud as the mountain snow" (4.5.36), this Ophelia left the Queen and opened a box from which she took a piece of paper, which, in her sick mind, may have been the equivalent of the shroud mentioned in the song. All in all, this theatrical object reinforced, at the nonverbal level, the fact that certain meaningful associations were present, even in the disordered mind of a mad person. She then got up and addressed the next lines, containing an indirect allusion to the fact that her father had a hasty burial without the pomp that a state official deserved—"Which bewept to the grave did not go / With true-love showers" (4.5.37-38)—to the King, the very high official that had most certainly ordered this type of funeral. Both the content of the lines and Ophelia's deictic orientation when singing them were proof enough that, in her madness, she also had moments of lucidity. In such an instance, Ophelia was even able to make such a remark as "Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be" (4.5.41-42), which, due to its generalizing value, the Ophelia of this production did not address it to the King or the Queen, but to the audience, thus pointing out that it was not only the royal couple, but also the spectators who were expected to "botch the words up to fit to their own thoughts" (4.5.10), especially if they had guilty consciences. Then Ophelia got closer to the King again, and her next line, "God be at your table" (4.5.43), was delivered while looking into his palm, as if trying to find a hidden truth.

The music for the song about Saint Valentine's Day was based on a melody whose rhythms made the actress move at an ever more rapid pace and in an extremely agitated manner. In the climactic moment of this frenzy, she laid hands on the King's back and tried to turn him round. Seeing a danger in this sudden violent excitement, the Gentleman seized her, took her by her arms and helped her mount a chair. It was from this high position and from this place of visibility that Ophelia sang loudly, in a voice betraying despair, of things she had censured and repressed for a long time. The most important ones she gave special emphasis in her singing concerned lusting lovers who deflowered young maids and then left without fulfilling their vows of marriage. However, the calm, sarcastic manner in which the last lines—"So would I ha'done (i.e. wed), by yonder sun, / And thou hadst not come to my bed" (4.5.59-60)—were uttered rather than sung made the spectators aware of the fact that she had surpassed that moment of paroxysm. On the other hand, the song's references to sensuality, loss of virginity, and absent faithfulness suggested—as many commentators had remarked and this staging reinforced—Ophelia's realization that she may have interested Hamlet "only in terms of her potential illicit expression of sexuality" (Stanton 179), hence the woe and mental anguish to be noticed in the actress's voice inflections.

At her first exit, she took Horatio's arm in hers and then, while walking arm in arm, she spoke, in a normal tone, of all being well and of patience. But, when uttering "My brother shall know of it" (4.5.70), she looked the Queen straight in her eyes, while a vague threat was perceived in her voice, as if indirectly blaming her for hiding things. In this staging, her leave-taking (4.5.72-74) was addressed as



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follows: "Good night, ladies" (to Gertrude), "good night" (to Gertrude), "Sweet ladies good night" (to Claudius), and "good night" (to the audience). In this instance, we see "the mad person as *contrary*" (Cohen 123).

Claudius began to speak after Ophelia's exit, assigning the cause of her madness wholly to grief over her father's death. He then started to list the "sorrows" that had come upon him and Gertrude: Polonius's death, Hamlet's removal, the people's unrest, Ophelia's madness, Laertes' return and his claims that represented a source of danger for them. However, the second part of this scene did not begin with Laertes' unexpected entrance followed by the Danes. In this staging, it was Ophelia who entered through the main French door, while we could distinguish some vague silhouettes of soldiers behind it. She had a bunch of flowers in her hands and seemed to be completely withdrawn in her world, in which grief for her dead parent loomed large. Laertes made his appearance through a side door and the first person he saw was Ophelia; she did not recognize him and rejected his embrace. The song she immediately started singing combined a line referring to her father's funeral, "They bore him barefaced on the bier" (4.5.164), with a moment of distraction: on her knees, she held the flowers as if they were a child to whom she wanted to sing the line "Hey non nony, nony, hey nony" (4.5.165) as a melody reminding the audience of a lullaby. Such a reading of the text emphasized mad Ophelia's rejection of the reality of her father's death and her pathetic belief that Polonius would recover. This song was followed by a remark, "O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false / steward that stole his master's daughter" (4.5.172-173), which, though somewhat confused, still had "matter" (4.5.175) in it. This was the more so since, in this production, it was emphatically addressed to the King.

Ophelia's next preoccupation was to offer flowers to those present on stage. The types of flowers referred to in this staging were somewhat different from those in the Shakespearean text, yet they were as carefully aimed at. Laertes received a forget-me-not instead of a "rosemary," the association with "remembrance" being thus stronger, as it was included in the very name of the flower, and "pansies" that she connected with "thoughts," but we may extend the connotative meanings to encompass reverie, meditation (the French *pensée*), as well as love. And, indeed, after graciously offering them to Laertes, she got closer to him, caressed his face, called him "my lover"—a word that was not in the original script—and kissed him on his lips. In other words, in this staging, Ophelia, in her distraction caused by the intense sorrow of having been deserted by all the male figures she had loved, took Laertes for a lover, a kind of protective figure. To the King, she gave foxtail instead of "fennel"—a choice through which this production wanted to indirectly underline the fact that he was versatile, dangerous, in short, untrustworthy—and "columbines," flowers symbolically suggesting inconstancy; these flowers, thus, indirectly reminded those present, through their symbolism, of some significant features of the King's personality. The Queen received a lemon-thyme instead of "rue," a flower which, in some literary contexts, alluded to the hidden joy of the senses, but in others, like in folklore, it may connote grief and even death. She kept for herself some "flowers of shame," a name coined by Romanian old people to



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designate the flowers that belonged to the species scientifically known as *Daucus Carota* (wild carrot), yet telling in itself if we referred to this play. In other words, the Romanian version avoided using the word "rue." In this context, "yours," which replaces "your rue" from the original script, in the line "you may wear your rue with a difference" (4.5.183), though at first sight rather ambiguous, made sense, for, in Gertrude's case, the difference was to be noticed in the connotative dimensions of the flowers Ophelia associated with her personality: the lemon thyme alluded to a satisfaction of her sexual desires and appetites, while the flower of shame might have suggested regret and repentance—contradictory feelings, yet most appropriate for a woman in her situation. We may infer from Ophelia's attempt to identify with these flowers of shame either a hidden feeling of guilt or of sorrow for a dead father. Then she picked up a daisy, the flower that may be associated with dissembling, infidelity, but did not give it to anyone. Finally, Ophelia felt sorry for not being able to give those present some violets, flowers usually connected with love, faithfulness, constancy, for, as she said, they "withered all when my father died" (4.5.185); their absence was, thus, interpreted as reinforcing Ophelia's grief at the loss of her father's paternal concern and love. All in all, this was an instance which clearly pointed out that she may do and mean much, protected by genuine madness.

Yet, as previously mentioned, this Ophelia was also able of experiencing transitory moments of lucidity. One of them was when she emphatically uttered, with reference to her father, the line "they say a made a good end" (4.5.186), which she addressed to the King, thus indirectly suggesting that she had her doubts when it came to the manner in which her father found his death.

Back into the world of her madness, Ophelia began to sing again, this time on her knees and with the eyes looking upward, as if ready to pray. When she reached the lines "Go to thy death-bed, / He never will come again" (4.5.194-195), she collapsed on the floor, put her hands on her breast, a position reminding of a corpse in a coffin. It was a most appropriate posture for reinforcing the meaning of the song's words, and also for being a forewarning sign of what was going to happen to her. She then raised her head, looked at those round her while delivering her final lines—"And of all Christian souls, I pray God. / God be wi' you" (4.5.200-201)—a kind of anticipated farewell.

What followed was an example of the changes and omissions operated at the level of the textual layout. Consequently, Ophelia did not leave the stage, as it was indicated in the minimal stage directions; she remained lying on the floor, murmuring words that did not make up a coherent utterance, paying no attention to Laertes' desperate gesture of repeatedly calling out her name in order to draw her attention to him. Her demeanour seemed to illustrate her brother's early, rather shocking remarks on her: "O heavens! is't possible a young maid's wits / Should be as mortal as an old man's life?" (4.5.159-160) Therefore, scene 6 no longer began with the short dialogue between Horatio and the two sailors—a part which was completely omitted—but with Horatio, on his knees, reading Hamlet's letter to an Ophelia who continued to be completely absent-minded. However, when she heard the name of her lover, she got anxious, lifted her head, touched fondly Horatio's



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face and even kissed him on his lips, the normal behaviour of the young woman in love she had been not long ago.

The next scene no longer began with the conversation between the King and Laertes, which was also omitted, but directly with Gertrude's hurried entrance, which seemed to interrupt an apparently tête-à-tête meeting of the two. However, she had good reason for having dared to do this, since what she had to say, the news concerning Ophelia's drowning, was far too stunning not to be shared immediately. Her account of Ophelia's flowery death in the brook, which was not one of an eye witness, somewhat romanticized it, undoubtedly serving as an appropriate contrast to the bloody death both plotted and executed at the end of the play. We may, thus, say that, in this production, the scene of Ophelia's madness and the description of the manner in which she died—Gertrude's famous willow tree monologue—contributed to reinforcing the idea that death was in the air. Moreover, in keeping Ophelia on stage in two of these three scenes, the director, Alexandru Tocilescu, wanted to give stronger coherence to the subplot having Ophelia as protagonist.

The 1996 *Hamlet* directed by Tompa Gábor at the Craiova National Theatre built on some obvious postmodernist prerequisites: identity was elusive; irony and parody were Hamlet's major "weapons" for exposing both the others and himself; the atmosphere in which the characters evolved was one of ambiguity, irony, and interrogation. In fact, Tompa Gábor's choice of the ironic mode as a way of treating the text unequivocally placed his reading in line with Umberto Eco's opinion that the past, including its cultural icons, should be revisited "with irony, not innocently" (Eco 67). As a result, his production had one foot in the narrative past—*Hamlet* as a tale of deeds, not feelings, the public story of an unnatural world—and one foot in contemporary critical approaches to the text, especially those encouraging a reading centred on theatricality, since the play had much more to offer in this respect than the mere staging of the play-within-the-play or the fencing match. All the major characters were, in some way, acting a part, as there was no other choice for people who had to resist expressing what they knew but to shield themselves by adopting roles and false identities. This is as much to say that what the spectators saw on stage was a life dominated by playing / acting, i.e. by seeming rather than being. This means that they did not experience any illusion of a true Danish reality, no matter how remote; this was only a play, a fiction.

The theatrical space as conceived by the director and the stage designer, T. Th. Ciupe, strengthened, by making visible, a major theme of the Shakespearean text: the mirror motif. As the curtain rose, the spectator could notice a smaller stage in the centre of the regular one. Upon closer look, they realized that it was an open parallelepiped: one of its surfaces was the stage floor, while its opposite was a mirror reflecting the actor moving on stage in front of it, a doubling that reinforced playing. Its upper surface, to be reached by climbing the two stairs on each side of this "stage-within-the stage," was a kind of platform representing the place of power and authority. It was from here that the King and the Queen addressed the court and took decisions in most important matters of state affairs. It was from here that they watched the play enacted just below them; the image, as a whole, visually reinforced



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the fact that the royal couple was perfectly "reflected" in the wicked one of the play-within-the-play. This was but fitting for a play that doubled and redoubled its situations, its characters, its events and, ultimately, its meaning, i.e. a play that "unfolds through its various 'doubling devices' the reducible paradox of the ghost being and not being something or somebody *else*" (Wagner 149).

No wonder, then, that Tompa Gábor deliberately paid special attention to the Ghost and assigned it a debatable, yet plausible, interpretation. It disclosed itself as a man in flesh and blood only to Hamlet. The costume, the hairstyle and the beard made it strikingly resemble Shakespeare's figure, as it had been handed down to us in a famous period portrait. It became obvious that, in this production, the Ghost, the figure in the cast, set the play in motion, i.e. urged Hamlet to turn the heard into the visible, while the Ghost, alias Shakespeare, the writer of the script, urged Hamlet to turn the script into an enacted / visible performance. In other words, if the Ghost wanted him to be a dutiful son, Shakespeare wanted him to be his stage manager. In short, Hamlet could be viewed as Tompa Gábor's alter ego.

The eclecticism of the costumes and the vagueness of the setting strongly sustained the director's intention of avoiding any anchorage of his staging into a definite historical period. It was an elusiveness that reinforced the basic premise of this production: everything told in the play could have happened long ago or yesterday, and could happen at that very moment—a reading of the play that pointed out its clear contemporary political overtones. Consequently, an analysis of this mise-en-scène did not have in view only those aspects able to generate an overall meaning, but also those small details that helped the actors to add fresh insights into their characters. It was in the light of the latter approach that the scene of Ophelia's madness could be described.

In Tompa Gábor's staging of the scene of Ophelia's madness, the Gentleman did not appear at all, so that the opening dialogue was only between the Queen and Horatio. The Queen started by being firm in her decision of not speaking to Ophelia and ended up with what seemed to be a concession made to a friend of her son and a disinterested adviser. However, the tone of her voice suggested a kind of desire to rather avoid meeting the girl, since she was the only one—with the exception of Hamlet—who was able to give her details about the circumstances of Polonius' death. Consequently, in contrast with most other productions, in this one, it was Horatio, and not the Gentleman, who brought Ophelia on stage. Moreover, the Queen's short aside, in which she referred to her guilty conscience, was omitted, a sign, out of many others, that the director's main purpose in staging this scene was to concentrate almost exclusively on Ophelia.

At Ophelia's entrance on stage, her appearance displayed very few of the traditional conventions which had been associated with female insanity since the Elizabethan times. She was wearing a decent, long-sleeved dress in Victorian style, her hair was not dishevelled; her being barefooted and her now and then odd smiles and laughs were the only visible signs of her unnatural disposition.

The Queen being at a certain distance and with the back to her, Ophelia's question—"Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark" (4.5.21)—uttered with a



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smile on her face and in a tone that was not the ironic one adopted by many actresses, but a rather jocular one, typical for the histrionic schizophrenic—was meant to provoke the interlocutor to react, i.e. to turn with the face towards her. The actress performing the Queen, before doing that, frowned and had a short laugh closer to a grin—a sarcastic reaction to what seemed to her an odd question. When face to face, Ophelia began her "show." Her first song was drastically shortened, being made up only of the lines "How should I recognize your true lover" and "By his cockle hat or boots and sandals" (4.5.23, 25) which were clearly addressed to the Queen and manipulated the deictic elements in such a way as to indirectly underline her majesty's easy morals. In other words, it was but obvious that this production did not want to foreground the general context of the time in which the play was written, i.e. the allusion to the characteristic iconographic emblems of pilgrims and to pilgrimages undertaken even by women. It was a choice that dismissed the interpretation that could connect these lines to Ophelia's plight. Being an echo of the Walsingham ballad—an old medieval ballad which brought to the fore "the association between pilgrimage and female empowerment" (Alison Chapman 127)—these lines were probably meant to suggest that, by comparison, Ophelia's condition, that of being trapped in the frozen world of Elsinore, was a tragic one.

Occupying a centre stage position, Ophelia began to sing the next song—"He is dead and gone, lady" (4.5.29)—, a lament on her father's death. She performed it almost like an opera prima-donna, aware of the emotional impact it should have on an audience. Her posture—closed eyes and hands lifted up to the shoulders—and the grief in her voice were typical for the delivery of such mournful songs, meant to convey a deep sense of bereavement. However, the last three lines—"Larded with sweet flowers, / Which bewept to the grave did not go / With true-love showers" (4.5.38-40)—were sung as she tried to get closer to the Queen till she faced her again. The manner in which she gazed at her, together with the words of the song, seemed to represent Ophelia's indirect way of blaming Gertrude and the others for having forgotten Polonius too quickly.

This staging made clear the four-part division of Ophelia's answer to the King's question—"How do you pretty, lady?" (4.5.41)—thus pointing to the manner in which Ophelia's mind rambled, determining her to produce some utterances connected with the situational context, and others completely dissociated from it—something typical for a schizophrenic personality. While starting to move with open arms and a smile on her face towards the King, Ophelia delivered, in a rather joyful tone, a generalized blessing / benediction—"Well, God'ield you" (4.5.42)—, which makes sense in the frame of the traditional turn-taking pair of question and answer. Her next remark—"They say the owl was a baker's daughter" (4.5.43)—was interpreted by the director of this production as being nonsensical, as an example of another collapse into madness, which was reinforced at the nonverbal level by frantic wringing of her hands. This meant that, in its transfer into another culture, this utterance lost its status of allusion to a folkloric story that may have come to her mind because it also dealt with the tragic fate of a daughter who, like her, chose obedience to her father—a decision with disastrous consequences for she was



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transformed into an owl, a bird generally regarded as symbolizing death, darkness, despair. In other words, the fact that Ophelia referred to this story may have suggested that she was somewhat aware of the wrongness of her choice and the bleakness of her fate as the result of impossible circumstances. In short, we may say that this odd hint proved that there was method in her madness. Her third remark—"Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be" (4.5.43-44)—was viewed, as in the case of the 1985 production, as a moment of lucidity, as a statement endowed with generalizing value, yet not necessarily echoing "other passages in the play that question what happens after death, both to the spirit and the body" (Chapman 115), as some critics have suggested. This is the more so since she uttered it in a jocular tone, accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders, a gesture expressing doubt, a feature inherent to the very content she tried so hard to deliver. The last part of this attempt at a dialogue with the King, once again a benediction—"God be at your table" (4.5.44)—was interpreted, in this staging, as expressing the hope that the King's dining table will be full of food. Hence the gesture that accompanied the uttering of this wish: she pressed her hand on the King's belly. Its religious overtones, the wish for God's presence at table, were, thus, completely overlooked.

Finally, it was the King who, from the stand point of his patriarchal authority, voiced a final conclusion as to the meaning of her utterances: a "Conceit upon her father" (4.5.45). It was a correct evaluation. That was why she refused to comment upon it—"Pray, let's have no words of this" (4.5.46)—but, on the other hand, advised those present to explain it, if asked by "somebody," with the meaning of her St. Valentine's Day song. Moreover, when she uttered "somebody"—a word used to replace "they ask" from the Shakespearean text—, Ophelia pointed with both one hand and her gaze upwards, as if to heaven, thus suggesting that the word may have referred to her own father to whom, as a woman now enjoying freedom from any patriarchal power, she was not afraid to show, through singing, exceptional sexual boldness. This may explain why this production relied only on the first part of the song, the other one dealing with the ruin of the young woman being omitted. This Ophelia started singing out loud, making wide gestures, enthusiastically eager to identify with the "I" of the song, i.e. "the maid" who was at her lover's window long before he got up to be the first girl seen by him on the morning of St. Valentine's Day and, thus, be confirmed as his Valentine or true love. However, when she sang of his opening "the chamber door to let in the maid" (4.5.53-54), she covered her face with her hands as if ashamed to refer to a lusting lover and the possible deflowering of the maid. It was a well-chosen gesture meant to suggest the proper behaviour of a virgin—in most such cases probably a normal reaction imposed by the superego. But after she sang the last lines of this first part of the song in a less spirited manner—"that out a maid / Never departed more" (4.5.55)—she simply passed by the Queen and slapped her on her buttocks, thus indirectly alluding to the fact that Gertrude had acted like the maid in her Valentine's Day song, i.e. she eagerly put herself into a man's bed. It was a pity that the part of the song referring to the sexual double standard as an important factor in women's psychological vulnerability had been omitted in this staging.



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Before her exit, Ophelia was lucid enough as to try to calm herself down, both through words—"I hope all will be well, we must be patient" (4.5.68)—and gestures. Then she adopted a serious attitude when she lamented her father's death—a loss that seemed almost unbearable to her, and mildly warned the others that her "brother shall know of it" (4.5.71). The last part of Ophelia's speech was dominated by such speech acts as an expressive, when she thanked the King for the good counsel he gave her, and a directive, when she ordered her coach, both acts being accompanied, at the nonverbal level, by fitting gestures—a nod and a pointing to. Her leave-taking resembled the 1985 staging, since it also reinforced the idea of "the mad person as *contrary*" (Cohen 123).

When Ophelia showed up again, she was carrying a large bundle on a shoulder. She looked at Laertes without showing any sign of having recognized him, then put down the bundle, kneeled and opened it. Both those present on stage and the spectators in the hall were amazed to see that it contained some dolls. Consequently, it was but natural that the only line she sang, a tune without distinct words—"Hey non nony, nony, hey nony" (4.5.165)—should sound like a lullaby. When Laertes touched her shoulder, she suddenly got spirited, stood up and immediately turned the line "You must sing 'Down, a-down'" (4.5.171) into a command addressed to him, i.e. she made a pause after "You" and pointed with a finger to him. The next line "and you, 'Call him a-down-a'" (4.5.172) was delivered while lifting a doll and twisting it nervously in her hands. In other words, the pronoun "you," interpreted in most productions as referring to all those present on stage, was clearly particularized in this mise en scène, thus reinforcing indirectly her isolation and estrangement from those at court.

The staging of the flower-giving episode relied on the translation used by the 1985 production, i.e. on the same flower substitutes. However, what individualized it was the discrepancy between the verbal level and the nonverbal one. While speaking about and commenting upon the flowers she intended to give to everyone present on stage, what Ophelia was actually offering them were parts of the dismembered body of a doll. It was a discrepancy that rendered more vivid the depth of her madness. What were we to make of it? What may this substitution have meant? Certainly, each spectator may have had an opinion in this respect. It may have reinforced Ophelia's immersion into the past, primarily her childhood, that period of innocence and carelessness, as it may also have been a warning signal of her desire to die, since we noticed a kind of eagerness and even voluptuousness in her action of dismembering the doll. It may also stand as a reminder of how the others had manipulated and abused her, never taking into account that she could think and decide for herself. It may have hinted at the contemporary feminist theory that focused on the perception of the female body as fragmented.

On the other hand, the director's decision of not using real flowers in his staging involved an indirect usurpation of their symbolism, i.e. of the generally accepted idea that a madwoman, in giving away her wild flowers and herbs, was symbolically deflowering herself. It also suggested a partial departure from a tradition that had insured the flowers a constant theatrical presence, a tradition



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strengthened by the flower theme taken up and expanded in the description of both the way in which Ophelia found her death and her funeral, where the Queen threw flowers on the corpse or coffin as she said "sweets to the sweet" (5.1.232), and her brother's promises that violets would spring "from her fair and unpolluted flesh" (5.1.229). In short, we may say that the presence of flowers in three related scenes did nothing else but to emphasize their raison d'être in the Shakespearean text, due to their symbolic value.

Coming back to Tompa Gábor's staging, we immediately notice that Ophelia displayed some logic in her selection of the persons to whom she gave the bodily parts substitutes for the flowers. She gave Laertes an arm instead of a forget-me-not. Though its symbolism did not refer to "remembrance," as the flower did, it could still be associated with what Laertes stood for vis-à-vis Ophelia: power / male authority and protection. She offered the King the doll's head as a replacement of the "pansies" which, as we have noticed in the above comments, she rightly associated with "thoughts," i.e. with their traditional symbolism. In this context, the body part she gave the King also made sense, since the word "head" symbolized mind, wisdom, but also the masculine, virility, i.e. attributes that fit a king and were an appropriate addition to the meaning conveyed at the verbal level. The Queen received an arm and a leg as substitutes for fennel and some columbines—flowers that may have connoted infidelity and insincerity—features that, to a certain extent, characterized her personality. The trunk of the doll replaced the flowers of shame, the flowers she kept for herself. This substitution had a grain of logic in it if we took into account that she had in view that part of the body which also contained the organs, usually kept hidden from sight. The frenzy with which she pressed the front side of the trunk against her breast and belly may have suggested an attempt at hiding what may have been connected with her own sin. With no other part of the doll's body left to give to the others, while she was trying to refer to a daisy, she suddenly got agitated, began to shriek, to lift her hands to her head, to look horrified at her own image in the back stage mirror, to laugh uncontrollably, in a word, to show an intensification of the symptoms typical for a madness fit. But, if we consider that this flower was associated with dissembling, could we not take Ophelia's violent outburst as a performance to deceive the others? This was the more so since, when she immediately mentioned the violets, she seemed to have already calmed down. These were flowers that, on the one hand, may have signified love and constancy, but, on the other hand, may have been viewed as death-flowers. If Ophelia underlined the former signification, associating their withering away with the loss of someone she loved, Laertes referred to their latter connotation when, in act 5, he said that they would grow on Ophelia's grave. The line that followed this episode—"They say a made a good end" (4.5.178)—was clearly addressed to the King, since she was looking straight into his eyes; her ironic gaze tried to convey the contrary, as far as the circumstances of her father's death were concerned, while the insinuating tone strengthened that view.

When Ophelia started singing again, we noticed the wanderings of a disordered mind for she passed from a song fragment to lamenting her father's loss.



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The former was represented by a single line "For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy" (4.5.179), the Romanian version adding the word "archer" to individualize Robin and, thus, like many critics, to call attention only to its relation to the Robin Hood ballads, omitting, probably out of ignorance, that the name Robin was, in the sixteenth century, "one of the cant terms for the male sex organ" and, consequently, its mere use by Ophelia "seems to be Shakespeare's way of establishing through one of the mad songs her abnormal preoccupation with sex" (Morris 603). While singing this fragment, this Ophelia was trying to wrap her dolls in the bundle. Out of the extensive song that follows, this production has kept only three lines—"he is dead, / He never will come again. / His beard as white as snow" (4.5.184-87)—to which was added a line not sung earlier: "They bore him bare-faced on the bier" (4.5.160)—all of them circumscribed to the grief caused by her father's death. Thus, it was but fit that this line be sung in a tone reminding of a dirge. As she moved slowly towards the front stage, with the bundle kept in her arms as if it were a child, her voice got ever feebler. Finally, she collapsed in a crouching position, her head leaning on the bundle. She would no longer make any sign that might suggest movement or reaction to what the others were saying. It was as if she were experiencing a death in life, a clear forewarning of what was going to happen with her quite soon. It seemed that, in this production, it was this nonverbal level that worked as a substitute for the line "Go to thy death-bed" (4.5.185) from the Shakespearean text, a command meant for herself.

Omitting the episode in which Horatio met the two sailors, this production, like the 1985 one, kept Ophelia in the same inert position on stage, while Horatio, when getting on stage, approached her with the compassion usually felt for a lost soul. He lifted her head tenderly, took her corpse-like body in his arms, and began to read Hamlet's letter. He was patient enough to stop from reading once in a while and wait for a reaction from her. He even kept repeating Hamlet's name, using each time a different intonation. Unfortunately, everything was in vain, for she made no gesture to show that she had heard him. In short, at this point, the director wanted to emphasize that madness could also be taken as a kind of death and he came up with the most appropriate visual signs for reinforcing this idea, and the painful situation it engendered.

Through its detailed analysis of just one scene and of the evolution of only one character, this paper aimed to prove that the spirit of the tradition established in interpreting plays by the studies published in *Les voies de la création théâtrale* in the 1970s is still alive. As it was but most appropriate for such an undertaking, we relied on a close reading of the Shakespearean text as a constant reference point for our investigation; we assessed the translation into Romanian as a transfer which combines attempts at fidelity to the source text with a process of re-contextualization; and we looked at the two productions under discussion as showing the ability of the two directors to "engage critically and productively" (Leitch 9) with the text, our interest being in finding reasons for what was omitted from / added to it. We provided arguments to explain Shakespeare's choice of madness as the major topic of the play and tried to establish the main reasons for



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Ophelia's insanity, focusing primarily on the psychological realities of her own existence. Finally, our in-depth analysis of the manner in which Ophelia's madness was staged in the two Romanian productions does nothing else but to confirm the widely accepted opinion that Shakespeare constructed this episode as a performance within the play, "creating a metatheatrical moment in which he calls attention to the tension between body centered and scripting playing" (Bialo 297), i.e. between the verbal / language and the nonverbal / gesture. Moreover, Ophelia's singing and gesturing, the major elements of her performance, constituted a shock not only for the other characters witnessing her performance on stage, but also for the spectators watching it from their seats. In fact, it is through the meanings they are most likely to convey that she elicits the pity of the latter ones and certainly "heightens their own empathic involvement" (Resetarits 216). In short, our minute investigation of the manner in which the 1985 and 1996 Romanian productions of *Hamlet* envisaged and staged one of the most famous scenes in the play was meant to prove that Laertes was right when he characterized Ophelia as "A document in madness—thoughts and remembrances fitted" (4.5.171).

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