

Scientific Report on the implementation of the project
Metadrama, Memory, Identity in Concentrationary Theatre
(PN-III-P1-1.1-PD-2016-1124)

Stage I (October-December 2018)

The project activities were organised according to the plan that had been structured in the project proposal, as follows:

Task I.1: update of the theoretical framework (metafiction, the play-within-the-play device)
A documentation research was conducted in Romanian libraries as well as in the online catalogues of international libraries (BNF, RERO, Gaston Baty Library) as well as in online databases.

Task I. 2: a survey of available theoretical literature on Holocaust and Gulag drama and performance

The survey of the theoretical studies on the Holocaust drama and performance enabled us to identify a series of works that will constitute the basis of our own theoretical models.

Task I. 3: enlarging and classifying the text and performance corpus;

The information included international databases enabled us to establish a first draft of the dramatic texts and performance corpus, which will be systematically investigated during the second stage or the project.

Stage II. (January-December 2019)

Fluctuating identities and power relations in concentrationary theatre: actor/ spectator/ director – ethical and aesthetic aspects

Task II. 1: enlarging and classifying the text and performance corpus (part 2)

Task II. 2: proposing a typology of the inner fictions

Task II. 3: elaborating a taxonomy: theatres of presence vs. theatres of memory

Task II. 4: update of the theoretical framework of the project (possible worlds theory, metalepsis, theories of theatrical relation)

Task II. 5: “theories” of the embedded concentrationary performance: players’ attitude towards the performance, reasons for the inset performance

Task II. 6. examining constructions of identity through drama techniques: actors’ and directors’ identity; metalepsis as identity-rewriting device

Task II. 7. examining constructions of identities through drama techniques: spectator/ spect-actors’ identities: participant/witness/ critic; empathy and distancing

The two research stays at the National Library of France, Paris (22 January - 10 February and 22 October - 5 November) enabled us on the one hand to add new plays and performances to the works that we will analyse, and on the other hand to get access to theoretical literature which is difficult to find in Romania. We thus included among the studied works plays and performances such as *Le Cinquième Évangile* by Slobodan Snajder (2005), *Eldorado Terezin* (directed by Claire Audhuy, Cie Rodéod’âme, 2017) or *Kamp* (Hotel Modern, 2005). At present we work on fifteen plays and performances published/ performed between 1960 and 2017.

We studied a series of reference works essential for the understanding of concentrationary literature, with special focus on the issue of memory (Max Silvermann, Catherine Coquio, Sabine Sellam, Tzvetan Todorov, Marianne Hirsch), Holocaust theatre (especially the figure of the witness, the use of puppets), theories of theatrical relation, but also writings of the practitioners (Charlotte Delbo, Imre Kertész, Andras Visky).

We classified the selected authors according to their relationship with detention, considering that it can have an impact on their approach to the concentrationary world: survivors (Charlotte Delbo, Liliane Atlan, Armand Gatti), members of the second generation (Andras Visky) or persons having no direct experience of the concentrationary universe (Matei Visniec, Enzo Cormann, Juan Mayorga, Claire Audhuy). We included prisoners’ plays in the list of studied works only if they were written after liberation (Delbo) – supposing a distance towards the traumatic event – or when they were included in works of other artists (Hachenburg/Audhuy), considering that the perspective of the survivor will provide unity to the chosen corpus.

These delimitations enabled us to elaborate a taxonomy based on the distance that the chosen plays and performances construct with the traumatic event, a distance which is also to be seen in their relationship towards the secondary fiction: if with Visniec, Visky, Sobol or Delbo the inner performance is placed within the camp, and aims (at least as a first step) at escaping from the concentrationary reality, with Mayorga, Cormann or Gatti we deal with a theatre of memory: characters try, through theatre practices, to re-enact an almost forgotten traumatic event – theatre enables them to go back to the camp.

A second typology distinguishes between performances initiated by the prisoners, in secret or with the (tacit) agreement of the authorities (Delbo, Visky, Visniec, Sobol) and theatre imposed by the authorities, as a means of manipulation and humiliation (Mayorga, Cormann, Audhuy, Sobol, Snajder). These positions impose different functions of the inner fiction: in the first case it enables a partial distance towards the concentrationary universe, in the second metatheatre is an instrument meant to help unveil the truth, through an incursion in the mechanisms of horror.

We also analysed the specificities of the inner fictions. These can be either adaptations of classical plays, with whom the actors-prisoners are familiar with from their pre-prison life or scripts composed during detention, which reflect concentrationary reality.

A series of case studies (Visky, Delbo, Visniec) helped us analyse the modalities in which fictive characters appropriate repertoire plays (Shakespeare, Musset, Ionesco, Beckett) in order to tell their own story, to express the trauma related to the loss of freedom and of their beloved ones. We thus analysed adaptation practices, (*their absentia* performance, narrativisation, casting), as well as distancing techniques, through which characters transform the fictions in instruments of translating trauma.

These analyses enabled us to formulate some considerations on the identity constructions facilitated by the theatrical techniques: role playing is a way of negotiating one's relationship with detention, of constructing an indirect approach towards the traumatic event. In many cases, the prisoner-actor borrows the perspective of the witness, instituting a direct relationship with the spectator, who is asked to listen to the testimony.

These considerations lead us to identify some particularities of the metatheatrical devices in the plays and performances that we analysed. The embedded performances are extremely fragile devices, which testify to the difficulty of narrating the concentrationary experience, to the impossibility of saying everything, and raise important questions about the ways in which the totalitarian prison experience can be conveyed. The concentrationary hell must be filtered through screens of forgetfulness and distance. At the same time, the metatheatrical devices speak about the need of testimony, through direct relationship with the spectator-witness.

Stage III. (January-November 2020)

In 2020 we carried out activities as specified in the project proposal, as follows:

Stage III (January-December 2020): the framed fiction as a storytelling device: elaborating a model of the relationship between the framing and the framed fiction, as means of articulating the traumatic experience

Task III. 1 update of the theoretical background of the project (theories of trauma and traumatic memory, post-memory)

Task III. 2 in-depth analyses and interpretations of plays

Task III. 3: elaborating a theoretical model for the analysis of the relationship between framing and framed fiction

During the first months of 2020 we carried out documentation work in order to extend the theoretical and methodological framework of the project (David Colin, Nathalie Heinrich, Yannick Malgouzou). In the meantime, we made the necessary corrections and editing for the publication of two articles that had been accepted in 2019 by international journals, and which were published in 2020.

The lockdown period of March-May 2020 and its effects made it impossible to travel for an extended period of time and made organizers cancel two international conferences in which we were planning to take part with papers ("Jouer la comédie, jouer pour de vrai : emboîtements fictionnels dans *Eldorado Terezin* de Claire Audhuy", in the international conference *Le Seuil, Journées de la francophonie*, Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași

27-28 March 2020, and “Funny Dictators: Metadrama and Rewriting in *Ubu Rex With Scenes from Macbeth* (SilviuPurcărete, 1990)”, in the international conference *Dunsinane and the contemporary rewritings of Macbeth* Lyon, France, 16-17 October 2020).

However, director Claire Audhuy allowed us to access the video recording of her production *Eldorado Terezin*, based on a play written by a 13 years old prisoner in the Terezin ghetto. We analysed this production in the article « Mise en scène et réécriture de la Shoah dans *Eldorado Terezin* de Claire Audhuy », in *Acta Iassyensia Comparationis*, no. 26 (2), 2020.

One of the aims of the project was exploring a larger concept of prison/detention/concentrationary space, which goes beyond the idea of physical detention in a prison/camp. We aimed at investigating plays and performances where detention is suggested, without constituting an explicit reference. We tackled this concept in the play review *Ubu Rex With Scenes from Macbeth*, a production directed by SilviuPurcarete. The review was published in *Cahiers Elisabethains* (an ISI-indexed journal).

Between 30 July – 11 August we carried out documentation work at the national French Library, where we studied a series of publications difficult to find in Romania (especially on the use of puppets to represent the victims: Raphaële Fleury (dir.), *Marionnettes et pouvoir. Censures, propagandes, résistances*, Deuxième époque, 2019, Hélène Beauchamp, *La Marionnette, laboratoire du théâtre*, Deuxième époque, 2018, Jean-Luc Mattéoli, *L'objet pauvre. Mémoire et quotidien sur les scènes contemporaines françaises*, PUR, 2011). We also finalized the documentation for the studies published in 2020.

The investigations were centred on the analysis of the relationships between the frame fiction and the framed one in the plays and performances of our corpus. **The puppet figure** (be it a table puppet, a real size puppet, an object or a character treated as a puppet) seemed relevant for the relationships which are built between the two types of fictions. The puppet, as a prosthesis of the human body, most often manipulated at sight, is a witness of the porous borders between the two worlds. It enables ontological crossovers and asks for a non-realist approach to the embedded universe. In the plays and performances that we analyzed, puppets represent victims as well as perpetrators. They set us free from the codes of psychological theatre and enable the representation on stage of realities which would be more difficult to represent with actors, such as extreme violence and death.

The analyses of the productions *Kamp* (Hotel Modern, 2005) and *Eldorado Terezin* (Rodéo d'âme, 2017) enabled us to identify another device with an embedding function: the low-resolution cameras create a focalized universe, in which the spectator's view is oriented towards chosen aspects of the concentrationary world. The spectator has, at the same time, a panoramic view on the represented universe and a focused one, provided by the cameras. He/she is thus placed in the uncomfortable position of a witness who sees too much/too little of the concentrationary world.

The dissemination activities through papers given at conferences and articles will be followed by a workshop entitled *Puppets and Puppeteering in Concentrationary Theatre*, which will be held online for students at the George Enescu Arts University, on 9 December 2020. If in our lectures and seminars on Theatre Studies and Literature and Arts at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University we tried to familiarize philology students with political theatre and metatheatrical devices, this activity, addressed to drama students, will hopefully provide

us with some feedback from future theatre practitioners and their students on issues related to our research topic.

National and international visibility:

Research stays:

22 January – 10 February 2019, National Library of France (Paris)

22 October – 5 November 2019, National Library of France (Paris)

30 July – 11 August 2020, National Library of France (Paris)

Deliverables:

Publications:

Article: Dana Monah, „Guilty Memories: Remembering the Theresienstadt Ghetto in Concentrationary Theatre”, in *Colocviiteatrale/Theatrical colloquia*, nr. 28, 2019, p. 30-39. ISSN 2285 – 5912 și ISSN-L 1584 – 4927(online) (**Revista ERIH+, indexată CEEOL, EBSCO, SCIPRO**)

Article: Dana Monah, „Fragile Fictions: Shakespeare and Musset in Concentrationary Theatre”, in *Agathos: An International Review of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 11, issue 1, 2020. [**Revistă ERIH+, indexată EBSCO, ProQuest**] ISSN: 2069-1025; e-ISSN: 2248-3446.

Article: Dana Monah, „Théâtres en lambeaux. Ebauches de spectacles dans le théâtre concentrationnaire”, in *Thélème. Revista Complutense de Estudios Franceses*, vol. 35, no. 1, pp. 63-70. ISSN: 1139-9368, e-ISSN: 1989-8193. [**Revistă ERIH+, indexată Dialnet, Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Modern Language Association Database**]

Article: Dana Monah, « Mise en scène et réécriture de la Shoah dans *Eldorado Terezín* de Claire Audhuy », in *Acta Iassyensia Comparationis*, no. 26 (2), 2020. ISSN (online) 2285 – 3871. (accepted) [**Index Copernicus, Central and Eastern European Online Library, DOAJ**]

Bookchapter: Dana Monah, « Le Syndrome de Shéhérazade dans le théâtre concentrationnaire », in Bernard Guelton (dir.), *Fictions secondes. Mondes possibles et figures de l'enchâssement dans les œuvres artistiques et littéraires*, Paris, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2019, p. 93-102. ISBN: 979-10-351-0298-2. ISSN: 1639-4518.

Book chapter: Dana Monah, “Shakespeare’s Text as Trauma-Rewriting Device in András Visky’s *Juliet*”, in *Perspectives on Shakespeare in Europe’s Borderlands*, eds. Mădălina Nicolaescu, Oana-Alis Zaharia, Andrei Nae, Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2020, pp. 173-186. ISBN 978-606-16-1063-1.

Bookchapter: Dana Monah, „When The Puppets Tell The Concentrationary Inferno. *Eldorado Terezín* (Rodéo D’âme, 2017) And *Kamp* (Modern Hotel, 2005)”, in Anca Doina Ciobotaru

(ed.), *Art and Research – Contemporary Challenges*, Sciendo, 2020. ISBN: 978-83-66675-19-3 (accepted).

Play review: “Ubu Rex with Scenes from Macbeth”, in *Cahiers Elisabethains*, Special Section. Shakespeare under global lockdown, vol. 103, 1, 2020, pp. 160-162. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0184767820946175r> [ISI-indexed journal]

Conference participation:

Dana Monah, „Shakespeare’s Text as Trauma-Rewriting Device in Postcommunist Drama”, in International Conference *The Circulation of Shakespeare’s Plays in Europe’s Borderland*, Universitatea din București, 8-9 November 2018.

Dana Monah, „Dispositif spectaculaires mémoriels dans le théâtre concentrationnaire” in *Shared memory(ies). II EASTAP Conference*, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, 23-25 September 2019.

Dana Monah, „Stories that heal: Literature as Survival in Fiction of the Romanian Gulag”, in The International Conference *Thirty Years since the Fall of Communism. Visual Narratives, Memory and Culture*, conferință organizată de Facultatea de Istorie, Filosofie și Teologie, Facultatea de Litere și Facultatea Transfrontalieră, Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos”, Galați, România, 21-22 November 2019.

Dana Monah, „Când marionetele povestesc infernul concentraționar: *Eldorado Terezin* (Hanuš Hachenburg/Claire Audhuy, 2017)”, Conferința cu participare internațională *Artă și cercetare – provocări contemporane*, Universitatea Națională de Arte George Enescu Iași, 6-7 November 2020.

Iași, 2 December 2020

Project leader,

Lect. dr. Dana Monah