

Intermediary Scientific Report

Metadrama, Memory, Identity in Concentrationary Theatre

(PN-III-P1-1.1-PD-2016-1124)

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 distanciation

The two research stays at the National Library of France, Paris (22 January - 10 February and 22 October - 5 November 2019) 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 difficult to find in Romania. We thus included among the studied works plays and performances such as *Le Cinquième Evangile* by Slobodan Snajder (2005), *Eldorado Terezin* (directed by Claire Audhuy, Cie Rodéo d’âme, 2017) or *Kamp* (Hotel Modern, 2005). At present we work on a set of 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 Kertesz, 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 have towards the traumatic event, a distance which is also to be seen in their relationship with 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, (the *in 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.

Deliverables:

Published works

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

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 (to be published).

Article: Dana Monah, „Théâtres en lambeaux. Ebauches de spectacles dans le théâtre concentrationnaire”, in *Thélème. Revista Complutense de Estudios Franceses*, ISSN: 1139-9368, e-ISSN: 1989-8193. **Revistă ERIH+, indexată Dialnet, Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), Modern Language Association Database** (under evaluation)

Book chapter: 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 Andrés Visky’s *Juliet*”, in *Perspectives on Shakespeare in Europe’s Borderlands*, eds. Mădălina Nicolaescu, Oana-Alis Zaharia, Andrei Nae, Editura Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2019, ISBN 978-606-16-1063-1. (to be published)

Conference participation:

Dana Monah, „Dispositifs spectaculaires mémoriels dans le théâtre concentrationnaire” in *Shared memory(ies). II EASTAP Conference*, School of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, Lisabona, 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*, organized by Facultatea de Istorie, Filosofie și Teologie, Facultatea de Litere și Facultatea Transfrontalieră, Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos”, Galați, România, 21-22 November 2019.

Throughout this year, several meetings have been held between the project leader and the mentor (Prof. Simona Modreanu) in order to discuss theoretical and organisation issues, the activity plan, as well as to identify the conferences and journals in which to present the results of the project.

Iași, 2 December 2019

Project leader,

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