

ROMANTICISM IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE GREEK TRAGEDY ON THE ROUMANIAN STAGE

The modern Roumanian theater was established in the XIXth midcentury decades in the dizzy battle for the forging of a national consciousness, for the independence of the country, for our liberty and for social justice.

In the romanticism—then fully asserted by the whole European culture—the Roumanian writers and actors found a real support in their efforts to create a modern literature and art.

As fiery and enthusiastic animators of their time and real stimulators for the renewal and awakening of their country, the Roumanian romanticists attached to their homeland, have brought to full value the historical and popular inspiration. Social criticism, exposure of the misuses of the feudal world as well as the criticism of the new bourgeoisie, belong to the fundamental features of that young dramaturgy, which associated these characteristics with a warm and youthful praise of the most important moments in the history of their country.

The rapid growth of the country, the economic, social and intellectual changes, imposed more and more strongly the realism.

Born and asserted in the generous river-bed of romanticism, the realism in Roumanian art and literature grew and acquired authority without brutally destroying the precious romantic subjectivism, the lyricism, the dreams and bounds that tied it to a poeticized past, to the folklore. It makes no attempt to define itself by denying romanticism, but by association and mutual completion, covering and removing the onesidedness of the latter by the choice of themes and procedures, thus underscoring the rational and objective support for the knowledge of the "créateur." Great syntheses with generalizing values, are thus acquiring authority. Lyrics, picturesque literature, live history are being completed with observations, significant details and the economic, social, moral and psychological determinations.

On the stage, the enthusiasm and the rhetorics which were specific to the beginnings, are replaced by measure and precision in characterisations, and detailed social, moral and psychological portraits. But—as a romantic per-

manence—day dreaming, inner warmth, lyrics, close communications and sensitiveness have been maintained up to our days.

The association between the romanticism and realism specific to Roumanian acting and stage managing, found an interesting and particular valuation field also in the interpretation it gave the ancient tragedy.

The problems connected with the presence of Greek tragedy on the Roumanian stage are many and captivating. The comparison between the original versions and the translations, reveals both the value and the limits of the latter, the characteristics of the poetic and the philosophic universe as conveyed by the intermediary of translations. The studies devoted by Roumanian scholars to ancient tragedies—although modest in size—have brought interesting ideas and thoughts, thus representing to a considerable degree a valuable contribution at a universal level. The tragic themes and the Greek myths have been given an interpretation which is particular to our way of thinking, being adjusted to the spiritual needs of the era in which we live.

For the historian of the theater the most important attraction lies in the stage destiny of the Greek tragedy in Roumania, the manner adopted by Roumanian actors and stage managers to give life to its heroes and its tragic conflicts, the response of the people attending the performances, the influences and the echoes awakened.

The history of the Greek tragedy in Roumania begins with Euripides' *Hecuba*¹ enacted in Bucharest at the "Cişmeaua Roşie theater in 1819, a performance which was extremely important as it was the first one to be given in the Roumanian language in the capital of the country. The choice of the play was determined by the revolutionary impetus at the beginning of the past century, by the struggle of the Roumanian intelligentsia for the assertion of the national conscience, for the creation of a literary language and of a national theater art.

A decisive role was assumed by the friendship between the Roumanian youth and the Greek revolutionaries which were active at that time in our country. Although the performance was given by the collegians from "Sfîntul Sava," led by Ion Eliade Rădulescu, it left deep traces for the understanding of Greek tragedy. The meaning of the performance deepened and broadened with the passage of time, both for the courage of staging a valuable philosophic and human message and for strongly marking the beginning of a Roumanian language theater.

1. Translation from the greek by A. Nănescu.

A real contribution of this performance may also be found in the interest of the attendance for the work of this great tragedian. It was thus normal that the first translations from the Greek tragedians should also be from the works of Euripides.

In 1865, P. Ioannide supplies another Roumanian version of *Hecuba*,¹ followed, a year later, by *Hippolytus*.² In 1879, Petre Dulfu supplies a versified translation of *Iphigenia in Aulis*, to which he later adds *Iphigenia in Tauris*.³

Man's struggle for his full achievement, his striving to go beyond his limitations, the acceptance of sufferings and sacrifice as a possibility for purification, the seeking of great truths, the protest against injustice and tyranny, unravelled from the Euripidian tragedy, deepens the interest for Greek works, enhancing the field of the known authors and their works. The people of the theater turn to the works of Sophocles. In 1890, the well known actor C.I. Nottara, a man of culture and initiative, rose in support of the tragedy *Oedipus King* struggling to introduce it into the repertoire of the National Theater.⁴

The Roumanian theatrical art at that time was in a period of full assertion for originality. The romantic play style, detached from the early century pathos is enriched with characteristic details allowing for the unveiling of social, historical and psychological determinations. At the same time it maintains, however, an enthusiasm full of poetry and a winged and contaminating abandonment, which were almost lost in the European theater under the strong impact of naturalist theories and dramaturgy.

In *Oedipus King*—revived in the theatrical season of 1890-1891, but this time as a National Theater performance and maintained in its repertoire almost without interruption up to 1923-1924⁵—the actors, with Nottara in

1. *Hecuba* translated by the same P. Ioannide is published at Craïova.

2. *Hippolytus* — under the title "Ippolyty" is also published at Craïova.

3. In 1879, *Iphigenia in Aulis* was published at Cluj (in the magazine "Amicul Familiei"), a year later the translation appears also at Gherla. In 1902 both *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*, appear in Bucharest in the magazine "Convorbiri Literare." In 1905, N. Bănescu publishes at Craïova (Ed. Stabilimentul Industrial de Arte Grafice) *Hecuba* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. *Alcestis* is translated and published at Pitești in 1916 by Mihail Iorgulescu. The same translation is printed by "România Nouă" in 1921 in Bucharest.

4. The first performance in the benefit of C.I. Nottara, takes place on the 18th of March, 1890 (music by George Ștefănescu, scenery by Romeo), with the following cast: Oedipus - C.I. Nottara; Creon - M. Mateescu; A messenger - N. Petrescu; An envoy - V. Leonescu; An old slave of Laïos - Petrescu; The Coryphee - A. Marinescu; Jocaste - A. Ciupagea; 1st young woman - Zoe Ștefănescu; 2nd young woman - Constanța Jianu.

5. The performance is officially introduced in the repertoire of the National Theater

their lead, have succeeded in interpreting in a pathetic and convincing way man's struggle against the unknown, cold, unforgiving and relentless laws of the destiny. The discovery of meanings with deep contemporary echoes, especially the underscoring of human dignity and the passionate search for truth, have lent an unusual animation to the play. The problem of costumes and decors was solved by having recourse to the iconography of the Vth century (B.C.), and especially to neoclassic painting. The photos taken, the descriptions of the theater columnists of that time clearly evidence the presence in the performance of a romantic pathos toned down by a sense of balance and a concern for exactness specific for the epoch. In *Oedips King*, C.I. Nottara has underscored the courage of the hero, the pride of an honest and unimpeached man, his will to keep his head up at any price. Some interesting individualization trends have been evidenced by the stage arrangement for the choir. Here we can detect the impact of the Shakespearean and Schillerian modalities in arrangements of mass scenes—the group made up of well defined individualities, usual at that time, a real conquest of the romantic theater and the trends for underlining the unique personal data.

The interest for Sophocles' work is markedly made manifest with great strength, almost explosively. In 1891, a group of students belonging to the "Unirea" Association, enacted *Antigone* under the direct guidance of Paul Gusty, the stage manager, and C.I. Nottara.

The performance went beyond a simple dilettante attempt as the students showed not only worthy concerns for art and culture, but above all the wish to convincingly materialize their "esprit" of protest. They emphasized the necessity to bravely defy tyranny, thus carrying further a good many stresses from *Oedipus King*. The first translations from Sophocles are directly connected to the above mentioned performances. *Oedipus King*, translated by Edgar Th. Aslan appears in 1894,¹ *Antigone* by Mihail Dragomirescu in 1896.²

on the 21st of February, 1891, with nearly the same cast and setting. Only the choir director (A. Marinescu was replaced by G. Cîrje) and the 2nd Priestess (C. Jianu) were changed. In 1896, the role of the herald is played by Vasile Cernat, the Coryphee by Achile Georgescu and Jocasta by Z. Jianu. Almost all National Theater actors became acquainted with the problems of ancient tragedy owing to *Oedipus King*. In 1923-1924, when it was last played with C.I. Nottara in the leading role, we only find I. Petrescu (Thyresias) from the old cast. In the other roles: I. Dumitrescu (Creon), M. Constantinescu (the Coryphee), G. Melișanu and I. Sahighian (Zeus' Priest), G. Orendi (the Corinthian slave), Constanța Demetriade (Jocasta) Eugenia Ciucurescu and Agepsina Macri (1st Priestess; T. Văleanu 2nd Priestess).

1. Bucharest, Ed. I.V. Socecu, with an introductory study by Alexandru A. Sturza.

2. *Antigona*, Bucharest, Ed. "Convorbiri Literare," 1896, preface signed also by Mihail Dragomirescu.

In their wish to enhance the ancient repertoire, especially the works of Sophocles, the National Theater of Bucharest, stages *Electra* in the 1909-1910 season.

Although this performance was far from having *Oedipus*'¹ echo, its arrangement was dictated by the same high quality romantic breath, shaded by the concern for psychological truth. The clash between *Electra* and *Clytemnestra* acquired the meaning of a struggle for justice, for achieving it beyond the ties of blood.

C.I. Nottara remained for a long time the ideal interpreter of ancient tragedy in the eyes and minds of theater goers. The Theater tour with *Oedipus King* undertaken in December 1921 by Alexander Moissi gives rise to comparisons which evidence more convincingly the gains acquired by the Roumanian theater in the interpretation of the great tragic hero. Besides strongly imposing his convictions, C.I. Nottara also contributed to the training and development of certain actors and theater experts which carry on many of his thoughts and ideas, as for example Zaharia Bîrsan, Olimpia Bîrsan and Ion Tilvan, who between the two World Wars have founded the National Theater in Cluj, keeping the repertoire and the performances at a high level of quality. One of Zaharia Bîrsan's best performances was just *Oedipus King* (the performance of 14th October 1924²) where the well known theater man interpreted the leading part, developing with much originality all the knowledge he had acquired under his master C.I. Nottara. In *Electra*,³ set on the stage and interpreted by

1. In 1896, a new translation of *Oedipus King* due to S.P. Simonu and published at Bistrița, was followed in 1903 by Mihail Iorgulescu's version of *Oedipus at Colonos* (published at Vălenii de Munte with a preface by Nicolae Iorga). Their printing is resumed as hardly a year went by without the publication of a new edition. In this atmosphere of increased interest for Sophocles' work also appears the first translation of his complete works. Eugenia Dinescu publishes at Cîmpulung (1909-1910) three volumes: *Electra*; *Philoctetes*; *Oedipus King*; *Oedipus at Colonos*; *Antigone*; *Ajax*; the *Trachinians*; In 1910 a new translator from Greek appears, perhaps one of the most interesting, George Murnu, who translates *Electra* for the National Theater of Bucharest. Maintaining his admiration for Sophocles, Mihail Dragomirescu translates also *Oedipus King* (București, Ed. Casa Scoalelor, 1925). Up to 1944, *Oedipus King* is also excellently translated by George Murnu (Bucharest, 1943) and Victor Eftimiu, the latter being published in 1944 in the volume "Three Classics," along with Euripides' *Elena* and Aeschylus' *Eumenides*.

2. Stage manager - Zaharia Bîrsan. Cast: Oedipus - Zaharia Bîrsan; Creon - N. Dimitriu; Tiresias - C.A. Rusei; Jocasta - Miți Ignătescu; the Priest - Dem. Psata; A messenger - Gh. Bănuțiu; A slave - A. Popovici; An envoy - C. Simionescu; the Coryphee - Al. Serban; 1st Priestess - V. Cronvald; 2nd Priestess - M. Miriam etc.

3. Stage manager - Olimpia Bîrsan. Cast: Electra - Olimpia Bîrsan; Orestes - I. Tilvan;

Olimpia Birsan on the 28th February 1928, the echoes of the Bucharest experiments were again felt, where the gains acquired in understanding and interpreting Greek Tragedy could be perceived.

C.I. Nottara as a professor with the "Drama Art School" imposes in colleges the mandatory custom of the study of a role from antiquity, thus enabling pupils to become familiar with all problems in connection with the presentation of ancient heroes, the reciting of the verses, the achieving of a tense and strained atmosphere which are specific to this particular repertoire.

When speaking of the contribution of our actors to the re-evaluation of Greek tragedy, above all that of Sophocles, we cannot overlook the name of Agatha Barseescu, the Roumanian actress who played with great success on the Austrian, German and American stages, bringing an important contribution to some ancient tragedies' performances widely discussed. In 1887, at Vienna's Burgtheater, Adol Wilbrandt succeeded in achieving his great dream, that of mounting *Oedipus at Colonus*¹ on the stage of the Imperial Theater, before he left it, like a swan song, in the leading role being Emmerich Robert. He gave the role of *Antigone* to Agatha Barseescu, of whom he was extremely fond owing to her genuiness and sincerity and the poetic pathos she showed in the interpretation of ancient heroes of romantic plays or in the neo-classical ones, especially in *Hero* by Grillparzer. The remarkable originality of this actress was due not only to her temperament but also to her poised abandonment, to the sense of balance created by the Roumanian theater where she originally developed herself the balance between the passionate outbursts and the subtle psychological portraits of the characters.

In 1914, in New York,² together with the Irving-Place German Theater, led by Rudolf Christians, Agatha Barseescu appears as Jocaste of *Oedipus King*, in a great performance, staged with the Metropolitan House, which was highly appreciated by all American theater critics.

The fact that Euripides' name was connected, in our country, to problems of man in the face of war, to the compassion felt for all those suffering

Clytemnestra - M. Miriam; Hrisotemis - S. Jipescu; Aegistus - D. Constantinescu; The leader of the choir - M. Mateescu; An old man - I. Vanciu; Pilades - I. Suchi etc.

1. In the cast: Creon - Hallenstein; Polynikes - Devrient; Theseus - Reimets; A nobleman - Lewinsky etc.

2. 27 April 1914. Cast: Oedipus - Rudolf Christians; Jocasta - Agatha Barseescu; Creon - Otto Stoeckel; Tiresias - Heinrich Marlow; the great priest of Zeus - Ernest Robert; 1st citizen from Theba - Ernis Helznagel; 2nd citizen - Willy Wahl; 3rd citizen - Paul Dietz; A messenger - Heinrich Mattheus; A shepherd - Christina Ruh etc.

from the great and absurd clashes between nations, above all the women who—unhappy victims dragged into slavery—only by superhuman efforts succeeded in maintaining their dignity, explains the emphasis which, for decades, fell mainly on the Trojan Cycle tragedies: *Hecuba*, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*. Only after the First World War, when Stefan Bezdechi translated *The Bacchantes*, *Alcestris* and *The Cyclope*¹ the field of interest broadens, having a corresponding impact on the theater and exerting thus a pressure for the enrichment of its repertoire.²

Another great work of Euripides appears on the stage almost a century after *Hecuba*, symbolically representing a new journey's end. That is *Iphigenia in Aulis* with which a group of young actors from the National Theater open in the summer of 1911 the history of the open air shows.³

For the first time the theater gets out of the sacred enclosure of the National Theatre, leaves the Italian scene, with all its servitudes, and attaches itself to nature, to the majestic scenery of the mountains and fir-trees of Sinaia, or— a year later, in 1912—to the blue immensity of the Black Sea. Among the cast: Lucia Sturdza Bulandra, Ronald Bulfinsky, all trained under the guidance of Alexandru Davila, the adept of simple and natural acting, based on nuances and a close attention given to all psychological meanders.

To the natural scenery—the mountains over Sinaia and the sea at Constanța—only the battle tents of the Greeks are added so that the actors enjoyed a full freedom of movement. The costumes are tailored with extreme minuteness, the emphasis falling—more than in *Oedipus King*—on colour, richness of the ornaments and embroideries and on the brightness of military armours, bringing out, at the same time, the beauty of the verses, and poetically emphasizing the meanings of the play.

With the year 1916—when Victor Eftimiu writes *Prometheus* where he took over the ancient myth and completed and transformed it after his own vision—a new phase in the understanding of the Greek tragedy in Roumania is opened up. Not only does he begin the chapter of a Roumanian dramaturgy on mythological themes, but he focusses the attention of the spectators on

1. Bucharest; Ed. "Cultura Națională," 1925. In 1944, St. Bezdechi translates also *Hippolytus* (Sibiu, Ed. "Cartea Românească," Cluj), where the authority of this well known expert for classics was recognized. *The Bacchantes* was enacted on Dec. 12, 1936.

2. *The Bacchantes* was played at the Cluj National Theater in 1936. Stage manager - I. Tilvan. Cast: Pentheos - L. Divarius; Agave - Magda Tilvan; Cadmus - Titus Lapteș; Tiresias - C.A. Russei; the Coryphees - Viorica Juga, M. Munteanu etc.

3. The initiative belongs to the actress Ortensia Brăneanu-Achaume and to a group of learned men among which the writer Brătescu-Voinești and the poet Ion Minulescu.

Aeschillian creation which – in comparison with his followers – had been hitherto left in the dark.¹ The feverish search for major themes which should help him to synthesize the First World War's experience of the Roumanian intelligentsia led this playwright towards the image of Prometheus. In the making of the hero he had chosen, he added the unyielding strength and superiority created by Aeschil, the meditating mood, the sensibility and the fiery imagination of the romantics. Prometheus is placed on circumstances which belong especially to the medieval and romantic theater. In Themis – Prometheus' mother – we find some traits of Mary from the Christian Mysteries, and in Eromene, the total devotion and the boundless love of the romantic hero. The image of Hephaistos, the lame blacksmith, with his giant anvil flooded by the devouring flames, gradually changes into that of Dante's inferno and in his discussion with Prometheus there is a foreboding of the devil's disputes with God from Goethe's Faust. Than and Li, Man and Woman, the first beings brought to light by Prometheus, are symbolic figures, simply and suggestively outlined.

Prometheus was well received by the attendance, both in the country, where it was given many times, and abroad, being translated in German, French and Italian. The favourable echo of the play determines the author to approach the myth of the Atrides in *The Atrides* and that of Oedipus in *Thebaide*. However, in the latter two plays, the wish to treat the matter after the rules of the "well written" play, led him to a dilution of the problems, to an emphasis on the external events. Oedipus departs from the image created by Sophocles, his determination to act being lost for the benefit of introspection, and the Kings of Argos have yielded their greatness of hate for the simple desire for revenge.

Yet, the plays have focussed the attention of the public on the ancient myths' heroes in a form which was accessible to the people between the two World Wars, who were prone to psychological speculation and experiments, encouraging, at the same time, other playwrights to engage on the same path. The most remarkable attempt to resurrect the image of Oedipus we find in George

1. The Aeschillian creation was known especially by studies and comments. In 1899, N. D. Burileanu had published an essay about *The Persians*, where he praised the poet's patriotism. N. Bănescu, the well-known translator, published also, at the beginning of the century, some studies where he emphasized the epics and the revealing force of the Aeschillian tragedy such as: *A Study on the Evolution of Antic Drama*, "Roumanian Literature and Art" (Anno VI, 1902, p. 633); *Shakespeare and Aeschil* ("Roumanian Literature and Art," Anno VIII, 1904, p. 429),

Enescu's opera, composed in this period, in which the music emphasizes more suggestively man's struggle for his freedom and for his spiritual ascension. The wish to encompass the whole myth, to go up to the end of the character's destiny, seems to be common to both George Enescu and Victor Eftimiu in his *Thebaide*.

The recourse to the ancient myth, which has become one of the main traits in contemporary theater, has been made in Roumania in our own way, by starting from the romantic interpretation and arriving, especially after the Second World War, at emphasizing problems of great actuality. In 1947, Radu Stanca resumes Oedipus' image and changes it into a painful appeal for human solidarity, for understanding and harmony. In *Oedipus Rescued*, the great hero, old and tormented, is on his way to Colonos. But he cannot find peace if he does not kill Eumetes, whom he encountered on the way of his bitter wandering. Eumetes, in turn, cannot reach the end of his way if he does not remove Oedipus. But both of them raise above their destiny, by helping each other and thus winning an incomparably more valuable victory.

In *Alcestis*, Dan Botta associates the antic myth with the idea of the impossibility for modern man to understand truth, to be able to dissociate it from delusion, the idea of the deflecting mirrors from the Pirandellian theater—Come tu mi vuoi (As you want me!). Alcestis resurrected from her grave is only a deceit, a thought, a deluding presence. For Admetus she is Alcestis, but at the same time she is another being for each of those present.

The trends towards variation in the Roumanian theater between the two World Wars, the emphasis on the assertion and development of a Roumanian stage managers' school, the increasingly marked interest for the contemporary problems and drama experiences, along with the circulation of ancient themes in national or European neoclassic or neoromantic versions, succeeded in almost removing the antic tragedy from the Roumanian stage. And despite the fact that it still enjoyed a certain amount of success, a discrepancy was found as between the initiatives of the theater people and those of scholars. Now, the printed letter proves to be stronger, more enterprising, translators and commentators are more present in the popularization of the ancient works than in the preceding period.

There was in 1919-1920 a National Theater performance with *Hecuba*, but it did not raise above the level of a simple and pious anniversary.¹ *Oedipus*

1. Bucharest, January 12, 1920. The cast: Hecuba - Olimpia Birsan; Agamemnon - G. Dumitrescu; Polydor - N. Bălățeanu. The others: Cleo Pan, Ana Luca-Moldovanu, Tina Serban a.s.o.

King, on the stage of the same theater is only the apotheosis of C.I. Nottara's creation, and the revival of the performance in 1938, at the Cultural League Theater, does not bring anything new as compared with the preceding interpretation. The only new thing was a performance of *The Bacchantes* at Cluj National Theater which was only due – as mentioned before – to the influence of the prestige won by Stefan Bezdechi's translation.

In cultural life, in the preoccupations of the intelligentsia, the ancient tragedy is increasingly present. The translations are on the increase, the studies are enhanced; there is a striving for the foundation of a Roumanian exegesis. The Greek tragedy is now considered in its totality and evolution, beginning with Aeschil and ending with Euripides. There were discussions based on comparisons, with a strong emphasis on the works of the father of tragedy.¹ The translations made by Ion Foti in 1924, *Prometheus and the Persians*,² convincingly reveal the variety of procedures, the titanic spirit of the Aeschillian hero. *Prometheus* retains again the attention of the public, partly owing to Nicolae Iorga's translations, who also adds a prologue, penetrated by a deep confidence in man and a pathetic hate against tyranny. George Murnu supplies a good version of *Orestis*.³ Victor Eftimiu, in turn, asserts himself not only as a follower of ancient themes, but also as a translator, supplying a variant of *The Eumenides*. The admiration for Aeschil decided Dimitrie Cuclin to write a moving drama-musical variant of the first part of Orestia, *Agamemnon*, and Alice Voinescu⁴ to publish a study devoted to Aeschil.

After the Second World War there is a profusion of studies, comments and translations; the repertoire is broadened and new forms in the theatrical interpretation of the Greek tragedy are sought. The studies of Liviu Rusu, Aram Frenkian, Mihail Gramatopol, Octavian Gheorghiu⁵ were published. The

1. To be noted is the fact that there have been real spurs for enacting Aeschil's plays. In the newspaper "Rampa" of April 27, 1923, in its article "Project for the Repertoire of a Popular Theatre", Emanuil Cerbu advocates the enacting of *Prometheus in Chains*.

2. Bucharest, Ed. Cultura Națională.

3. Bucharest, Ed. Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă, 1942.

4. Alice Voinescu. *Aeschil*. The study appeared in 1946, Bucharest, Ed. Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă, and contains valuable conclusions.

5. Liviu Rusu. *Aeschil, Sophocle, Euripide*, Bucharest, Editura Tineretului, 1961; Aram Frenkian, *The meaning of Human Suffering*, Bucharest, Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1969; Aram Frenkian is also the author of a chapter devoted to Greek Drama in the "Course for the History of Greek Literature" (the classic period), Bucharest, Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, 1962. M. Gramatopol: *Moiră, Mythos, Drama*, Bucharest, Editura pentru Literatură Universală, 1969; O. Gheorghiu: *The Ancient Theater*, Bucharest, Ed. Meridiane, 1970.

publication of several treatises of the history of universal theater completes the existing overall look on the Greek tragedy.¹ Also some prefaces, as for example the one signed D.M. Pippidi to the anthology *Greek Tragedians*,² contribute with thoughts and ideas bearing new implications.

But the most interesting feature, in this period, is the attempt of the theater people to renew the modalities for the interpretation of the Greek tragedy. At the beginning they were concerned more with seeking connection points with the existing tradition and with emphasizing the echoes which should be closer to our time, closer to the fresh experience of the war.

The social changes which were then taking place increasingly imposed solemn "deep conversations" on the subject of the duties of man towards the community and himself.

Thus, on the 3rd of November 1944, was produced at the National Theater of Bucharest *Oedipus King*, and in 1948 *The Persians* at the National Theater of Iași.

The courageous daughter of Oedipus, capable to oppose tyranny at the price of her life, acquires the value of a symbol; *Antigone* is thus given in the season 1953-1954 at the studio of the Theater Institute of Bucharest, in 1958, at the Teatrul Tineretului (Bucharest),³ in 1961-1962 at the Oradea Theater (Hungarian section),⁴ in 1964 at the Iași National Theater.⁵ In all

1. O. Gheorghiu: *The History of Universal Theater*, vol. I, Buc., Ed. Didactică și Pedagogică, 1963; Oon Zamfirescu: *The Universal History of Theater*, vol. I, Bucharest, Ed. ESPLA, 1958.

2. Alongside with the preface by D.M. Pippide we can quote several others, i.e.: George Fotino, - preface to the complete works of Sophocles, *Electra*, Bucharest, Ed. pentru Literatură, 1965; Mihail Nasta - preface to *Aeschil, The Persians, The Seven against Thebes*, translation by Eusebiu Camilar, Bucharest, ESPLA, 1960; Tache Aurelian - preface to: *Aeschil Sophocles, Euripides, The Persians, Antigone, The Trojans*, Bucharest, Editura Tineretului, 1962. D. Marmeliuc - preface to *Euripides, Alcestis, Medea, The Bacchantes, The Cyclope*, translated by Al. Pop, Bucharest, Editura pentru Literatură, 1965. We would also mention the fact that D. Marmeliuc was reputed as a connoisseur of Greek tragedy even before the Second World War, in his study: *Sophocles, Ajax, The Trachinians, Antigona*, Cernăuți, Ed. Codrul Cosminului, X-XII, 1939, pp. 269-388.

3. Stage manager - A. Pop Marțian. Cast: Creon - Pop Marțian; Antigone - Olga Tudorache; Ismene - Ana Dornescu etc.

4. Stage manager - Szomboti Gille Otto. Cast: Antigone - Vitalyos Ildiko; Eurydice - Ferenczy Anna - Maria; Creon - Dálnoky Andras; the Coryphee - Halasi Gyula; Hemon - Paloczzy Frigyes; Ismene - Gabor Katalin etc.

5. In 1964, February 28. An excerpt. Antigone - Adina Popa together with *Prometheus, Oedipus* and *The Trojans*. Stage-manager: Crin Teodorescu. Scenery - Mara Ene. The cast:

these interpretations one can note the specific romantic antithetic trend, the idealization of the positive hero and the absolute condemnation of the autocrat who limits the will and liberty of others, with the emphasis falling mainly on the open clash between Antigone and Creon.

In 1957-1958, *Hecuba*¹ by Euripides is resumed at the Cluj National Theatre, where the right of the slaves to defend themselves against their masters is exalted.

Hecuba marks the return to the work of Euripides, to an Euripides closer to social problems, concerned with the destiny of man involved in the major political and moral conflicts. To other cultures Euripides was the psychological playwright, the secularizer of tragedy, but to us he remained, almost up to now, the expositor of inhumanity, the defender of the weak and oppressed. The passage from *Hecuba* to *The Trojans* was natural, the latter being more strongly connected with the protest against unjust war. Both Euripides' work and Sartre's² variant were played, the latter with its contemporary lucid, direct and stern emphasis. Yet, foremost in the conscience of theatergoers remained the tragedy of the great ancient writer.³

A moving performance was achieved by Anca Ovanez at Iași with the great Euripidean work.⁴ The stage manager sought to create in the first place an original setting and new relations between actors and spectators. Renoun-

Hecuba - Margareta Baci; Oedipus - C. Dinulescu; Tyresias - Teofil Vilcu - ect. *Prometheus* was performed in the same year 1964, in Galatz.

1. Stage manager - St. Braborescu and I. Tilvan. Scenery: Mircea Matcaboji. Cast: *Hecuba* - Magda Tilvan; Polymestor - Ion Tilvan; Talthibios - C.A. Russei; the choir - Olimpia Arghir, Maia Tipan, Constanța Constantinescu etc.

2. *The Trojans*, in the adaptation of Jean Paul Sartre was first given at the Theatre Institute "Szentgyorgy Istvan" in Tîrgu-Mureș, in 1966. In the theater season 1966-1967 it is given at the Hungarian Theatre in Cluj, with a cast where we find Balogh Eva, Pasztor Ianoș, Laszlo Geroch etc. In the season 1968-1969 it is performed at the Bucharest National Theater with the following cast: Andromache - Silvia Popovici; *Hecuba* Irina - Rachișeanu; Cassandra - Adela Mărculescu; Helen - Valeria Gagialov; Talthibios - Lazăr Vrabie; Menelaos - Emanoil Petruț; Palas Athena - Simona Bondoc; Poseidon; Emil Liptac. [In 1969-1970 it is performed at the Timișoara State Theater. Stage manager: Mircea Marosin. Cast: *Hecuba* - Elena Ioan; Andromache - Coca Enescu; Cassandra - Irène Flamann; Helen - Florina Cercel - Perian; Menelaos - Vladimir Iurașcu etc.

3. First performance at the Craiova National Theater, 1964. Stage manager: Georgeta Tomescu. Cast: *Hecuba* - Elena Sereda; Cassandra - Nilă Dorina - Bentamar; Andromache - Anca Neculce etc.

4. Iași National Theater, season 1968-1969. Cast: *Hecuba* - Adina Popa; Andromache - Cornelia Gheorghiu; Cassandra - Violeta Popescu; Helen - Liana Margineanu; Poseidon - Costen Constantion; Menelaos - Teofil Vilcu etc.

cing the huge and somehow conventional hall of the theater, they preferred to arrange, on the stage, an amphitheater with simple and primitive wooden banks, around an arena where the destiny of the unhappy Troyans followed its course. The possibility offered by the stage manager to the choir to beat with their fists on the rough and uneven wood, to make a prolonged echo out of the moaning of their despair, created an atmosphere of aching charm, which deeply shattered the attendance, imposing on them a more direct and sincere acceptance of the protest against war, a violent participation in the sufferings of the characters. Due to the cast of singers in the choir, the word changed into a harrowing melody, into a real chanting lamentation, prolonged and obsessive.

Alongside with *Hecuba*, the re-appearance of *Iphigenia* was natural. However, for a beginning she is no longer a young woman doomed to sacrifice, but a priestess consumed by home-sickness – *Iphigenia in Aulis*. In September 1964, Ianos Veakis, the stage manager, opens the season at the Timișoara Theater,¹ with the wonderful Euripidean tragedy. In the perfect handling of the choir, in their undulous movements brusquely interrupted, in the music suggesting atmosphere, one could feel an interesting assimilation of the lesson in major ancient theater given by *Piraiikon* on the occasion of his tour in 1962. However, in scenery and costumes, as in interpretation, especially that of *Iphigenia* by Gilda Marinescu, there were features of rare and genuine originality. On a background of burning red colour, a simple white marble portico; this was the decor for a dramatic consumption for a far beloved country and for the brutal contrast between the world of order and that of violence. The latter, maintained all along the performance, was emphasized in both the primitive costumes coats of mail and animal hides – as opposed to the refined Greek fabrics – and in the play of the actors.

Iphigenia in Aulis,² the suave but energetic hymn of victory over oneself, re-appeared on the Roumanian stage in 1966, at the Cluj National Theater due to Vlad Mugur. The performance was a sensitive synthesis of word, dance and music. In collaboration with Pascal Benteoiu, composer, and the scenery painter, the stage manager placed the plot on a rocky beach, deprived

1. Scenery - Elena Veakis. Cast: *Iphigenia* - Gilda Marinescu; *Orestes* - Eftimie Popovici; *Pylades* - Miron Nețea; *Athena* - Coca Ionescu; the *Shepherd* - Spiridon Cojocaru; *Thoas* - Stefan Iordăchescu etc.

2. Cast: *Iphigenia* - Silvia Popovici; *Clytemnestra* - Silvia Ghelan; *Agamemnon* - Valentin Dain; *Achilles* - George Motoi; *Menelaos* - Gh. Nușescu; the *Coryphee* - Melania Ursu etc.

of light, like a land of hopeless suffering. The feeling of despair was also deepened by the accompanying music which rendered a strange depth to the *movements and dances*.

Euripides' work *The Bacchantes*, was resumed on the stage of the Theater Institute (1969), and *Medea* was played for the first time. If we except *Medea* (stage manager: Ion Bara; leading role: Eugenia Dragomirescu) presented on T.V. a few years earlier, the performance of July 1970, at the Comedy and Drama Theater of Constanța,¹ may be considered as the first Roumanian attempt to enact the great Euripidian tragedy. Played in the open, *Medea* represented a resumption of the experience initiated in 1912 by the actors of the National Theater with *Iphigenia in Aulis*, making use of the restless and impressive background of the Black Sea, to give a certain depth and width to the performance.

The real changes which appeared in the psychology of the attendance, in their taste, the preferences for the tense moments of life materialized in severe, great and concentrated pictures, are especially manifest in the discovery made by the Roumanian theater of *Orestia*² by Aeschil, *Electra*³ and *Philoctetes*⁴ by Sophocles.

From Sophocles' works, there were revivals with *Oedipus King* and *Oedipus at Colonos*,⁵ but the performance did not evoke the same echoes as before; it could no longer be compared with what happened decades before, when the creation of C.I. Nottara in the role of the unhappy Theban king dominated for more than 30 years the stage of the National Theater. Surely

1. July 28, 1970. Stage manager - Gheorge Jora. Scenery - Constantin Lucaci; cast: Medea - Marcela Sassu; Jason - Sandu Simionică; Aegeus - Dan Herdan. In the other roles: Romeo Mogoș, Jean Ionescu, Zoe Caraman, Longin Mărătoiu, Obren Păunovici, George Stancu etc.

2. Theater season 1963-1964, Bucharest, "Lucia Sturdza Bulandra" Theater. Stage manager: Vlad Mugur. Scenery: Heinz Novac. Music: Pascal Benteoiu. Cast: Clytemnestra - Beate Fredanov; Cassandra - Ileana Predescu; the Coryphee - Petre Gheorghiu; Orestes - Lazăr Vrabie; Apollo - George Oancea; Aegistus - Mircea Albulescu; Athena - Flavia Buref; Electra - Lucia Mara etc.

3. *Electra* is staged at the Tirgu Mureș Theater (State Theater) in 1966-1967 (Roumanian section). Cast: Electra - Ioana Citta Baci; Clytemnestra - Fana Geică; Orestes - Tudor Branea etc.

4. *Philoctetes* is given at the Iași National Theatre in 1968-1969. Stage manager: Aurel Manea. Scenery: Mara Ene.

5. *Oedipus King* and *Oedipus at Colonos* are given in 1964 at the C.I. Nottara Theater in Bucharest. Stage manager: Mircea Marosin. Cast: Oedipus - Ion Dichiseanu; Oedipus in *Oedipus at Colonos* - George Demetru etc.

we can now talk of a transfer of interest from text to music, from the word recited on the stage to the song. Thus, the opera *Oedipus* by George Enescu with David Ohanesian in the leading role, acquired the same significance as the one borne at the beginning of the century by the National Theater performance.

In a quite different way was the tragedy *Philoctetes* received. The unhappy owner of Heracles' bow appeared surprisingly close to our time, to the spirit and anxiety of our epoch. Due to the vision of the stage manager, *Philoctetes* changed into a present and heated debate on the theme of the unjust war and of the impossibility of the man in the street to rise against it. A military bivouac, made of beams, in a scenery of rugged rocks, men run wild, dressed in primitive armours, a prey to unbridled instincts, that is the world in the middle of which a helpless and struggling *Philoctetes* seeks understanding, solidarity and emotional and spiritual communication. The performance was definitely a demonstration of the helplessness of man isolated in an unjust world, in a world of inevitable allegiance or death.

The Roumanian theater strived to find its own way for the interpretation of Greek tragedy, selecting the works which fully answered the spiritual and esthetic needs of the time, underlining *Oedipus*' love for truth, the Trojan women's struggle for maintaining human dignity, and the heroic significance of *Iphigenia*'s death.

Romantic impetus, enthusiasm, lyrics, have accompanied the interpretation of the great heroes of mythology. We definitely can no longer talk about the romanticism specific to Nottara, full of rhetorics, manifest gestures and verbal expression. But in spite of this it exists; it may still be found in the internalized, live and warm play of the interpreters, in their wish to move the attendance, to communicate with them directly, to create an emotional, real participation, to present heroes under exceptional circumstances, but essential for understanding human destiny.

The latest Greek tragedy performances in our country – *The Trojans* and *Philoctetes* at Iași, *The Bacchantes* in Bucharest, *Medea* at Constanța, have proved that the doors are open to the most daring experiences, especially to those of the youth who are more sincere towards themselves, less submitted to models and limitations, but conscious of the organic necessity to keep the bounds that unite us to the past. They also are romantic, but their romanticism is rough, violent, deprived of sentimentalism, nevertheless it is as generous as the one that animated the shapers of Roumanian culture.