

members of the group behind Timon adopted a passive and even bored stance, as if nothing of what was said could be new to them. They were dressed in saint-like white capes, and the position adopted, with hands crossed over their chests, was meant to suggest some angelic acolytes of an evangelist.

However, everybody in Romania knew that those who had power were far from righteous, and the sets of abstract values preached by the non-realistic Timon did not apply in the real world of Athens, as elsewhere. Raicu deftly choreographed the semantic slippage that resulted from all the definitions of political and human values in theoretical terms, tying up the dialogic confusion with shortly conclusive and persuasive categories. While Timon's apparent coherence and force of exhortation eluded the audience, the director suggested the slipperiness of transmission and of cognition. Values were relative, Raicu seemed to conclude through his interpretation of this Shakespearean character, but they could nonetheless be defined quite precisely in context, once paradigm shifts had been recognized. In an attempt to address the issue of the meta-theatrical interpretation of all Shakespearean plays, Mihai Raicu transferred the prologue from *Henry V* to this production of *Timon of Athens*. Thus, he invited the audiences to formulate opinions regarding the up-to-date messages this theater succeeded in conveying. This 1974 production was the prelude to a new stage version of *Timon of Athens* directed by Dinu Cernescu in 1978 at the Nottara Theater in Bucharest. The play's tone was as harsh as its author had intended it to be, and the political insinuation was evident, as it had been in all of Cernescu's productions of Shakespeare's tragedies during the Communist period.

A 1976 *Macbeth* at the Ploiești Theater, directed by Aureliu Manea, proposed a different version of the theatrical metamorphic sign, influenced by the Japanese Kabuki theater. This was supposed to be the play of fanatical pursuit of power in the symbolic key. The tragedy progressed in a wintry ambiance, where dark deeds and snowy, foggy roads intersected in a cold sepulchral world. The stage was an empty snow-covered field, dominated by the royal throne, the symbol of Macbeth's power. This central wooden object was adorned with furs and animal heads, which were trophies of earlier conquests and omens of the death that was to come. According to the reviewer of this production, "the spectacle is seen as a cosmic duel between Good and Evil, between Life and Death, between order and chaos, or between nature and the human being as a representative of social convulsion."<sup>21</sup> The elements were visualized as violent forces of nature raised by and revolted at the evil unleashed by the humans. The

backstage curtain, made of shiny metal strips, figured the overflow of furious waters. White columns representing trees bent in the howling wind. Fire, lightning, and thunder gave the impression of an enraged universe. At the end of the tragedy, when the final order was installed in Scotland, the white snow symbolized light and purity, covering peacefully the final scene. The waters calmed down, fires ceased to traverse the stage, and cosmic peace was installed in the former space of crime.

In this stage version of *Macbeth* directed by Aureliu Manea, the weird sisters did not appear in a material way. They were the secret inflections of Macbeth's haunted conscience, and the "king hereafter" (1.3.48) prophecy became one of his multiple inner voices. This apparently realistic, non-magical approach might be interpreted in accordance with the atheistic requirements of materialist ideology, but audiences could also read in it the psychological collapse of the individual mind in a dividing and incoherent society. Moreover, by annulling the importance of the occult definitions in the characters' comportments, the director emphasized the issue of individual moral responsibility. The driving force of ambition and self-love propelled all the characters in this production. Everybody looked like Macbeth in this evil world, and the king was different only through the fact that he visualized his hallucinations. All spied on each other, hunted, and killed. In order to suggest the barbarity of all the people in Scotland, the actors' performances were marked by brusque action, grouchy timbre, and grunting sounds. A certain stylized influence of the Japanese theater was materialized through the parallel with a warlike and wild culture, where all the actions were driven and justified by ambition and merciless competition. The indirect reference was to the peculiarity of the Communist moral set of values. In an atheistic world that claimed the primacy of materialism and objectivity, ethics was a void principle. Vocally invoked in theory as "Socialist morality," this was just an empty notion with no actual resonance in the individual consciousness. Only ambition and the ruthless wish to reach their egotistic ends by whatever means possible drove those in power in that period. Aureliu Manea indirectly showed this social and psychological failure of the Communist regime by augmenting the scope of the deviation and extending the vice of moral transgression to every major character in the play.

After the celebrated *Hamlet* (1974) and *Timon of Athens* (1978), the director Dinu Cernescu staged another Shakespearean political play—*Coriolanus*—at the Nottara Theater (1979). This time, however, the director partly avoided the political implications, insisting