Hamlet at the End of History: The Specter of Capitalism Haunting Communism

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Abstract: In this paper I analyze two versions of Hamlet written and published after the fall of communism in Romania and Russia. Starting from the distinction made by Carl Schmitt in *Hamlet or Hecuba* (1956) between the real Elizabethan temporality that erupts in Hamlet and the atemporal-literary form of tragedy, I explore the mutations of the tragic produced by the adaptation of Shakespeare's play in the post-communist East.

Keywords: tragedy, Hamlet, post-communism, capitalism, Romania, Russia

Citation suggestion: Iovănel, Mihai. "Hamlet at the End of History: the specter of capitalism haunting communism." *Transilvania*, no. 5 (2024): 64-70.
https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2024.05.07.

On December 22, 1989, at 12:50 p.m., the anti-communist Romanian revolution breaks out on television screens. A group of excited people—mostly men—come on the air, waving victory signs and shouting: "We won!" Among them are the poet Mircea Dinescu (one of the most visible dissidents of the last years of communism) and the actor Ion Caramitru, later joined by the popular film director Sergiu Nicolaescu. Those who turn on their television sets at that moment feel as if they are watching a play—a parody or something highly experimental—although the underlying story escapes them. The show has the feel of a theatrical hit. Including the detail that it was broadcast in a time slot when nothing was scheduled. TVR's schedule that Friday was supposed to start at 1 p.m. with Telejurnal, followed by "Agriculture—Priority Programs" (from 1:25 p.m.), "Full Unity in the Romanian Homeland: Patriotic, Revolutionary Verses" (from 1:45 p.m.), a program of workers' songs, "One When, One Will" (from 2 p.m.), "We Build Much and Beautifully" (from 2:20 p.m.), then "The Pride of Being a Citizen of Socialist Romania." Thus, the live broadcast of the revolution comes at an empty, unscheduled moment. It is an improvised form that replaces the official program. The sense of artistic improvisation is heightened by the presence of professionals like Caramitru on the set.[1]

But as the "play" goes on, the sense of reality becomes stronger and stronger, even if it will continue for a while in improvised forms—improvised, at least apparently, because the planned nature of these broadcasts will be intensely guessed about. Three days later, on December 25, Nicolae Ceausescu, the communist dictator, is shot in a staged trial along with his wife Elena Ceausescu (the second most powerful person in the state). This marked the end of 42 years of communist rule in Romania. Caramitru had appeared recently at the National Theater in a production of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* by director Alexandru Tocilescu. Hamlet had been haunting the communist East. A Bulgarian play staged in 1988, *The Murder of Gonzago* by Nedialko Iordanov, offered a critique of the totalitarian

1. See more on this event in Victor Morozov, "Într-un oraș mic: Revoluția Română, între Videograme dintr-o revoluție și A fost sau n-a fost?," *Transilvania*, no. 11-12 (2019): 115–120; Victor Morozov, "Cvasi în direct: evenimentul revoluției române în Istoria lui Mihai Iovănel," *Transilvania*, no. 7-8 (2021): 133–138.

system of repression.[2] Heiner Müller's play *Hamletmachine* played a crucial role in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.[3] It is not difficult to understand why. *Hamlet* is a play about the crisis of sovereignty in a state that Prince Hamlet famously compares to a prison ("Denmark is a prison"). Although critics since Goethe and Hegel have interpreted the Danish prince's reluctance to take immediate revenge as inaction and passivity, Hamlet ultimately triggers the resolution of the sovereignty crisis through violence. The end of the play is a bloodbath in which Hamlet himself meets his end, along with Claudius, his uncle who murdered his father, married his mother, and usurped his throne.

But it is precisely this explicitly anti-communist characterization of many productions of *Hamlet* in the late communist East that became problematic at once after the collapse of communism.[4] The piercing approximations to the dark and oppressive reality in the communist productions no longer find a connection to the material and psychological reality under the new socio-political conditions. Although a part of the old communist bureaucracy manages to reproduce itself in the new regime, the system changes fundamentally, starting with the fact that freedom takes the place of the repressive system. Ion Caramitru talks about this turn of events in a 2016 interview:

> "Immediately after 1989, around the beginning of January 1990, I was rehearsing for the show that was about to be performed, and in the evening, in the dressing room, before going on stage, I panicked because I didn't know what I had to act. The show had a strong anti-establishment connotation, it was very anti-system. What could be sadder and more relevant than the fate of a young man living in a closed, militarized world, a world of crime and terror? That was the *Hamlet* we played. In fact, this play, no matter in which country it was performed, no matter if that space was overshadowed by tyranny, always had a great social impact. On the night of the performance, I realized that the world had changed, that we lived in freedom (...). I didn't know what I was going to play that night and what I was going to tell people. I had never experienced that feeling of panic before a performance. What else could this *Hamlet* have to say to the audience? I was terrified, I wanted to run away, because I felt that I had to imitate things that I had acted organically before, that I had lived. The only way out was to let the text take me, which I did. I decided to say the text and see what happened. Slowly, slowly, a different kind of revelation settled in, because I realized that this text was living through itself. If I had to give a definition of what I experienced then, it would be something like this: until 1989 I played Hamlet, after that Hamlet played me."[5]

Caramitru describes from the perspective of an actor—who in 1989 had also transformed himself into a political actor on a stage that was no longer a theater—how the form of the play proves to be more comprehensive than the content/interpretation that is actualized at a given moment in a given historical context. As the context changes, the new context becomes resistant to the old, now stale, interpretation. But the work itself allows its transformation into a version that satisfies the new context. Of course, not every play has this quality—most are discarded in the initial stages of evolution. Plays that are smash hits of one moment are forgotten the next. The centuries-long critical obsession with *Hamlet* stems not only from its famous ambiguity, its resistance to interpretation, but also from the unbroken way in which this remarkable interpretive plasticity has been linked over time to a long series of historical contexts that have found in *Hamlet* the most proper key to interpretation. In a story by Borges from the collection *Ficciones*, "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero," the mystery of events in the distant past that took place "in an oppressed and tenacious country: Poland, Ireland, the Republic of

2. Ileana Alexandra Orlich, "Staging *Hamlet* as Political No Exit in Géza Beremény's *Halmi*," and "Nedyalko Yordanov's *The Murder of Gonzago*: Reading Bulgaria's Communist Political Culture through Shakespeare's *Hamlet*," in *Subversive Stages. Theater in Pre- and Post-Communist Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria* (Budapest-New York: Central European University Press, 2017), 115–154. For the larger context of the history of the tragedy in Romania, see Andrei Terian, "Tragedy in Romanian Literature: Some Conceptual Delimitations," Transilvania, no. 5 (2024).
3. Andreas Höfele, *No Hamlets: German Shakespeare from Friedrich Nietzsche to Carl Schmitt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 276–292.
4. For the "obsession" of having an anticommunist narrative in Romanian literature see Mihai Iovănel, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane: 1990-2020* (Iași: Polirom, 2021). See also Bogdan Contea, "Romanul comunismului românesc înainte și după istoria lui Mihai Iovănel," *Transilvania*, no. 5–6 (2023): 65–73.
5. "Inverviu cu Ion Caramitru," *Adevărul*, April 22, 2016. https://adevarul.ro/stil-de-viata/cultura/interviu-ion-caramitru-pana-in-1989-eu-il-jucam-1703672.html.

Venice, a South American or Balkan state..."[6] is solved when the historian investigating the facts discovers that they faithfully reproduce the text of Shakespeare's plays. "That history should have copied history was astonishing enough; that history should have copied literature was inconceivable...", comments the character in the story,[5][7] but in fact history does end up copying literature. Not only in the sense of those motivational influences in which, as Karl Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), the French revolutionaries of 1789 found inspiration in the writings of the ancients, and in which passages from the literature of people dead for hundreds and thousands of years have, over time, crept into the core of the hottest reality. But also, in the sense that historical events, once reduced to a narrative model, can be illuminated by equivalences with other narrative models, even if the latter were elaborated not by the movement of history but by that of the writing hand.

This mythic function of literature was not even fulfilled by Hamlet, in which Carl Schmitt saw "a hieroglyph of the Western world."[8] The plasticity of Shakespeare's play, "this inexhaustible mutability," as Schmitt also called it,[9] is also verified in the context of post-communism. Writing about Marx's legacy in the 1993 volume *Spectres de Marx* [Specters of Marx], in which he polemicizes with a 1989 article by Francis Fukuyama that proclaimed the Hegelian end of history that would necessarily follow the collapse of communism,[10] Jacques Derrida discusses at length the specter of Hamlet's father returning to demand revenge from his son. This is not a mere literary reference to the specter that haunted Europe at the beginning of Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*[11]. Like Hamlet's "time (...) out of joint" (the dislocated reality that needs to be put back in order, recomposed), the death of the Great Father is one of the most important themes of post-communism. The totality of communism must also be symbolically killed in the form of the figure of the father, whose sovereignty is to be redistributed. Thus, even after 1989, the figure of Hamlet continues to mediate the relationship with the specter of communism. In Russia in the first post-communist decade, Hamlet is the most popular play by Shakespeare.[12]

In what follows, I will examine two plays from Romania and Russia that rewrite/ adapt Hamlet after the fall of communism, paying particular attention to those "dark areas"[13] that are configured almost counterintuitively, despite the rational expectations we might have, knowing—with the luxury of hindsight—the historical context and the profile of the authors. These "dark areas" signal problematic distortions caused by the encounter between the atemporal form of the literary source and the concrete temporality of the context in which the latest version is produced. It is precisely the problematic character of this conjunction that interests me here; I see in them indications of a speculative reading of the system in which they are produced. The source of the distinction between the two temporalities is, of course, Carl Schmitt's classic 1956 study, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of Time into the Play*. According to Schmitt, the conflict in Hamlet arises from series of "structurally determining, genuine intrusions" into the present in which Shakespeare lived—the civil war between Catholicism and Protestantism, especially the struggle for succession in the last years of Elizabeth

6. Jorge Luis Borges, "Theme of Traitor and Hero," in *Ficciones*, edited and with an introduction by Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963), 336.
7. Borges, *Ficciones*, 337.
8. Andreas Höfele, "The Tragedies in Germany," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, edited by Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 723.
9. Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba: The Intrusion of the Time into the Play*. Translated by David Pan and Jennifer R. Rust (New York: Telos Press Publishing, 2009), 8.
10. Starting with the collapse of communism, Fukuyama proclaimed that history had come to an end: in other words, that the victory of liberal democracy (whose "ideal (...) could not be improved on"), brought about by the death of its opponents, brought about the cessation of all contradictions, pushing the world system into a state of eternal perfection. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), XI.
11. See Stefan Baghiu, Anca Simina Martin, "Tragedy of Monsters: Vampire Fears, Melodrama, and the Modern Horror," *Transilvania*, no. 5 (2024).
12. "Despite changed economic and political conditions, *Hamlet*—of all of Shakespeare's plays—continued to appeal most to Russian directors wishing to speak to their times. Between 1994 and 1998, there were nine productions of the play in Moscow alone." John Givens, "Shakespearean Tragedy in Russia: In Equal Scale Weighing Delight and Dole," in *The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy*, eds. Michael Neill and David Schalkwyk (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 774-775. See also Marcela Kostihová, "Shakespeare after Shock Therapy: Neoliberalism and Culture in the Postcommunist Czech Republic," in *Postcommunism, Postmodernism, and the Global Imagination*, ed. Christian Moraru (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 117–136.
13. Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 44.

I's reign—in the tragic, literary, and timeless form of a radical conflict within a family. It is precisely this eruption of real temporality into the timeless form of tragedy, Schmitt argues, that produces the disturbances that make Hamlet's behavior resistant to unambiguous interpretation.

The first play is *Emanciparea prințului Hamlet* [The Emancipation of Prince Hamlet] by Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (b. 1964), first published in 1992 in the anthology *Avanscena* and reprinted in 1997 in the anthology *Moartea lui Ariel* [Death of Ariel].[14] It is dedicated to Ernest Jones, the psychoanalyst known, among other things, as the author of *Hamlet and Oedipus* (1910, 1949), one of the most influential interpretations of Shakespeare's play. Jones's thesis is that Hamlet's inability to act is due to the relationship between the moral duty to avenge his uncle's murder and his repressed identification with the murderer.[15] Mungiu-Pippidi is trained as a psychiatrist, although after the fall of communism she specialized in political science and political sociology. The play mediates between these disciplines: on the one hand, it rewrites Hamlet as a psychodrama staged in a psychiatric hospital; on the other hand, it examines the sources of power in a capitalist system in the form of an allegory. There are several hints that the play is in fact an allegorical reference to the situation in Romania, such as when a patient proclaims that "times have changed"[16]—change being one of the key words of post-communist Romania's transition to capitalism. The same goes for the freedom proclaimed by the hospital's patron—himself a psychiatrist, but also the owner of the psychiatric unit: "I decree freedom of speech! (...) Freedom of censorship! (...) Absolute, necessary and universal freedom! Everyone is obliged to take part in it! Those who don't get out of bed, those who sit in the corner, those who bite their nails, those who masturbate or have escape plans, have no place in our society. (Lowering his voice) But they will stay here. We don't let anyone go who hasn't been completely cured."[17] The space in which the action takes place is not accidental. Communist society has often been compared not only to a prison but also to a sanatorium. Several subversive anti-communist novels published in the last years of communism are set in such a space.[18]

In Alina Mungiu-Pippidi's play, the patron buys the hospital and imposes his rules—the rules of the free market, where whoever owns the capital controls the knowledge—on the doctors. Under his command, a psychodrama is staged around a patient who thinks he is Hamlet (whom I will refer to hereafter as "Hamlet"), the son of a recently deceased businessman whose business has been taken over by his brother, who, as in Shakespeare's play, has also married his sister-in-law, in which all the people close to "Hamlet" outside the hospital are involved, as well as the patients and doctors inside the hospital. But behind the patron's seemingly progressive discourse, which in theory aims to cure "Hamlet," there are in fact purely psychotic motives. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi's play is basically a version not only of Shakespeare's play, but also of Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether" (1845), in which the patients of an asylum take control of it, lock the doctors in their place, and convincingly perform their new roles by simulating rationality in front of an outside visitor until they are unmasked. Although the Patron also feigns rationality, his psychotic motives are revealed by his extreme libertarian philosophy, which looks to detach the individual from society:

> "What society does—or constantly tries to do—to those who make it up [is] to convince them that its needs come before their needs, to minimize and depersonalize them. And what are you doing here? You are convincing them that society is right. You shock them with electric shocks, you give them brutal and blind neuroleptic therapy, and you try to do the same thing: depersonalize them. By diminishing the individual, you also diminish his symptoms, you reduce him to a wretch with no will and no mind of his own, convinced—perversely—that society wants what is good for him, and you send him back out into the world to crawl among his own kind! (...) Let us contribute as much as we can to the true becoming, to the realization of each human being as a true personality! The hospice is full of people who never had the chance to realize their dreams! If they can't fulfill them in the world, at least let them do it here: let each one of them be and become what he has wished for. And when they have fulfilled their ideals, send them back whence they came, and

14. Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *The Emancipation of Prince Hamlet*, in *The Death of Ariel* (Bucharest: Unitext, 1997), 5–52.

15. Ernest Jones, "The Œdipus Complex as an Explanation of *Hamlet's* Mystery: A Study in Motive," *The American Journal of Psychology*, no. 1 (1910): 72–113.

16. Mungiu-Pippidi, *The Emancipation of Prince Hamlet*, 7.

17. Mungiu-Pippidi, *The Emancipation of Prince Hamlet*, 18.

18. E.g. Petre Sălcudeanu, *Biblioteca din Alexandria* (1980).

> we shall have normal behavior from them, not because we have killed in them their deepest aspirations and hopes, but because they have fulfilled them with true satisfaction!"[19]

When the Patron's experiment—which, in fact, aims not so much to cure "Hamlet" as to punish society by turning into psychotic patients the representatives of society whom he manages to co-opt into the psychodrama—finally fails, it is programmed into a bloodbath. And the Patron, also murdered, returns as a ghost to deliver a speech legitimizing the absolute freedom of the individual in relation to the rest (other people, nature): "I am your father, Hamlet, and I return to tell you: Nature is our work. Nothing is more legitimate than your impulse. If you want to kill, kill! We all want to be murdered for revenge. Do not waver!"[20]

The second play I will be discussing is *Hamlet. Version* by Boris Akunin (b. 1956), published in Russia in 2000.[21] The author's name is actually a pseudonym under which the Nipponologist Grigori Chkhartishvili hides; under this pseudonym he became famous in post-communist Russia as the author of detective novels set in the second half of the 19th century.[22] Akunin rewrites Hamlet, retaining the verse structure but drastically reducing the number of scenes, although the narrative development remains close to Shakespeare's text until the end. The most important change concerns Horatio's role: at the end of the play, after almost everyone else has died and Hamlet has ended with the famous words "The rest is silence," Horatio reveals himself as the puppet master of all events. It was he who disguised himself as the ghost of Hamlet's father to urge the bereaved prince to avenge his father; it was he who conceived of the theatrical performance—the play within the play—that unmasks Claudius; it was he who engineered the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and orchestrated Hamlet's capture by the pirates; it was he who proposed the duel between Hamlet and Laertes, taking care to poison the swords; it was he who caused Gertrude to commit suicide under the burden of remorse for having caused the suicide of Hamlet's father through her association with Claudius. Horatio's purpose in weaving this kingdom is to place Fortinbras, Prince of Norway, on the throne of Denmark—Fortinbras was his close accomplice in the plot. The fulfillment of Horatio and Fortinbras' plan leads to the resolution of the civil war between Hamlet and Claudius or between Claudius and Polonius—the latter, in monologues or dialogues with his son Laertes, in turn raises claims to the throne, dreaming of becoming Polonius the First. In Akunin's play, it is important to note that not only is Fortinbras a foreigner, but Horatio is also a native of Swabia; the other characters notice his accent—marked in the text by the detail that Horatio is the only one who speaks in prose, not iambic verse.

What unites the solutions of both plays is that they seem to validate the fears—which often take the irrational form of conspiracy theories[23]—of those who have emerged from communism and, having entered a cognitive labyrinth (i.e., structural difficulties of understanding that arose during the prolonged transition from communism to post-communism, a process without historical precedent and therefore experimental[24]), evaluate the solutions coming from the West at the end of the Cold War and the "end of history." In both plays, the conflict is subordinated to forces outside the agency of individuals, to master puppeteers or "master-signifiers" (the Patron in Mungiu-Pippidi, Horatio-Fortinbras in Akunin)

19. Mungiu-Pippidi, *The Emancipation of Prince Hamlet*, 20-21.
20. Mungiu-Pippidi, *The Emancipation of Prince Hamlet*, 52.
21. Boris Akunin, *Hamlet. Version*, translation by Mihaela Lovin and Ileana Alexandra Orlich, foreword by Ileana Alexandra Orlich (Bucharest: EuroPress, 2014).
22. Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 202–207.
23. Anastasiya Astapova, Onoriu Colăcel, Corneliu Pintilescu, and Tamás Scheibner (eds.), *Conspiracy Theories in Eastern Europe. Tropes and Trends* (London-New York: Routledge, 2021). For a more abstract perspective on conspiracy theories, see Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic. Cinema and Space in the World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). See also Liviu Chelcea, and Oana Druță, "Zombie Socialism and the Rise of Neoliberalism in Post-Socialist Central and Eastern Europe," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57, no. 4–5 (2016): 521–44.
24. "During the endless transition from communism to neoliberal capitalism, the East entered a cognitive labyrinth that defied understanding as a result of its complex economical and political articulations." See Mihai Iovănel, "Inside the Labyrinth. The Post-Communist Novel Between Anti-Communism and Nostalgia." Central Europe, no. 1 (2024): 50. See also Andrei Terian, "Representing Romanian Communism: Evolutionary Models and Metanarrative Scenario," in Beyond the Iron Curtain: Revisiting the Literary System of Communist Romania, eds. Stefan Baghiu, Ovio Olaru, and Andrei Terian (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), 23–42. For the Cold War and "the end of history" see Cosmin Borza, Claudiu Turcuș, "Tragicomedia Occidentului: emigrația economică în romanele și filmele românești din anii '90," Transilvania, no. 5 (2024).

who manipulate and control the plan of individual actions. In both plays, Hamlet loses his original agency (however undermined by his "passivity" and regardless of the latter's motivation) because he is caught between two socio-political systems, or rather in transition from one system to the other. For Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, the Western model confronting the post-communist East offers the scene of a struggle for survival configured as Social Darwinism, in which the power provided by the possession of capital dictates the laws of human configuration. And Akunin's play presents a version of the "knife in the back" theory that brought Nazism to power in Germany after World War I: in this scenario, Horatio plays the role of the quintessential foreigner, the caricatured Jew who led to Germany's downfall. Akunin's fall of the Danish throne into the hands of the Norwegian prince allegorizes the fall of the countries of the former USSR, especially Russia, into the system of Western domination. This is also the reason "'The Turn' of 1989 replaced Hamlet with Fortinbras as the iconic representative of the West" in postcommunist Russia.[25]

This reactionary turn is even more interesting because both Mungiu-Pippidi and Akunin played progressive roles in their respective countries. Mungiu-Pippidi combined her academic work—as one of the most internationally visible scholars in post-1989 Romania—with forms of political activism aimed at monitoring and reducing corruption and making the political choice and decision-making process more transparent. Akunin was among the critics of Vladimir Putin after the invasion of Georgia and Ukraine and chose to emigrate to the United Kingdom, with the result that he was denounced by the Putin regime as a "foreign agent" and his writings were banned in Russia. But this information only reinforces the tragic core of the two versions of *Hamlet* they wrote. If Hamlet was originally a tragedy about the religious schism between Catholicism and Protestantism,[26] a conflictual rupture still relevant today from the perspective of reactionary but still practically unresolved concepts such as Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" (based on a clash of religions), the two versions of Hamlet analyzed in this essay show how the schism is reconfigured into a clash of socio-political systems—communism and capitalism. This fact is even more relevant because both plays were written after the official "death" of communism and the "final" victory of capitalism by authors who cannot be considered apologists for communism. The two plays suggest that Hamlet remains relevant as a tragic myth not because its form is sufficiently ambiguous and "out of joint" to allow for endless updates, but because it allows for a re-actualization of the historical conflict that "irrupted" its original Elizabethan version and marks modernity to this day.

As Derrida has shown, even after the "end of history," the specter of communism returns to the space of capitalism, apparently triumphant on the ruins of communism, to muddy the waters and show that this conflict remains irresoluble in modernity, whatever the balance of power may be at any given moment. The two plays analyzed suggest that it is not only a temporary psychological conflict—now historicized—produced by the transition from a political system that offers security in the data of an equalizing poverty (communism) to a promising but threatening system (capitalism). It is also an allegorical representation of the cognitive labyrinth that the communist states entered after the collapse of communism, from which there is no satisfactory exit in sight. In the anti-communist adaptations of *Hamlet*, the communist adaptations of communism focused on the prison present, which was denounced with all the energy that censorship allowed. In the post-communist versions of *Hamlet*, the future is examined under conditions of freedom, but this freedom brings no reassuring promises,[27] a reversal of the beginning of *The Communist Manifesto*, in which the specter of communism haunted the capitalist forms of 1848.

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25. "Fortinbras's entrance in a business suit and a golden mask—a star warrior of capitalism—marked the end of Heiner Müller's seven-and-a-half-hour production of Hamlet (including, as a kind of interlude, Müller's own *Hamletmachine*), which opened at the Deutsches Theater in East Berlin in March 1990." Andreas Höfele, "The Tragedies in Germany," in Michael Neill, David Schalkwyk (eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Shakespearean Tragedy, 723.

26. "Mary Stuart is still for us something different and more than Hecuba. Even the fate of the Atreides does not touch us as deeply as that of the unfortunate Stuarts. This royal line was shattered by the fate of the European religious schism. From its history grew the seed of the tragic myth of Hamlet." Carl Schmitt, *Hamlet or Hecuba*, 52.

27. "The political dimension of tragedy does not consist in illuminating the shifts of power, as happens in the long procession of sovereigns in the histories and even in Julius Caesar; it consists rather in posing the question of whether a cultural foundation of power is still possible, and in answering it in the negative. In the histories, sovereign power is a given that no one questions, and so the dramatic interest is concentrated on the development and the question of the conflict that occurs over it. In tragedy, on the other hand, sovereign power has become an insoluble problem: forced to face this fact, the hero can no longer believe in his struggle for power and abandons it as a meaningless enterprise." Franco Moretti, "The Great Darkness. Tragic Form as the Deconsecration of Sovereignty," in *Signs Taken for Wonders. On the Sociology of Literary Forms* (London-New York: Verso, 2005), 64.

Acknowledgement: This work was funded by the EU's NextGenerationEU instrument through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Romania - Pillar III-C9-I8, managed by the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, within the project entitled *Measuring Tragedy: Geographical Diffusion, Comparative Morphology, and Computational Analysis of European Tragic Form (METRA)*, contract no. 760249/28.12.2023, code CF 163/31.07.2023.

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