

## Mihai Măniuțiu's *Richard III*: Inwardness Rendered Visible

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### ABSTRACT

*The paper analyses Mihai Maniutiu's 1993 production of Richard III at the Odeon Theatre (Bucharest). It stresses upon the fact that this staging is neither an illustration nor a translation or fulfillment, but a supplement, a term extrapolated by Marvin Carlson from Derrida's Of Grammatology. Consequently, the paper comprises extensive comments on what was omitted from the text or changed in the order of scenes and on what was added at the paraverbal level, with explanations of the relevance of such "interventions" for the global meaning of the production. The former process is clearly exemplified by the elimination of some characters -- Richmond, Richard's nephews -- or by beginning the performance with parts of the soliloquy Richard delivers on the battlefield at the end of the play. The latter process evinces such valuable additions as: the threatening omnipresence of a group of warriors with stylized movements, reminiscent of the caste-like dimension of the Japanese war rituals, that render visible on stage the idea of a cruel dictator ruling absolutely through the sheer terror engendered by the military force he relies on; the figure with a wolf's head, a directorial construct, Richard S Double, his shadow, the visualization of his primary, aggressive animality; Buckingham viewed as fascinated by Richard's dark, demonic restless side, following him because he cannot do otherwise, the two being caught in the net of a terrible game they play with childish obstinacy, the director thus advancing a shocking, oxymoronic proposition -- a candour of cruelty, a candour of crime -- an interpretation sustained by Shakespeare himself when he describes Richard as "too childish and foolish for this world"; the effective use of a theatrical object -- an apple -- that metonymically reinforces the miraculous and malevolent temptation of power, while the rolling of apples from the king's crown in the end unequivocally functions as a warning signal for Richard and the audience of the haste with which the mechanism of history will soon absorb him too; the use of candles and torches all along the performance with the exception of the ending where the strong light in the background connoting death represents an*

*object of supreme fascination Richard goes to with widely opened eyes, burning with curiosity. It is thus obvious that the production exploits /oexcess the suggestive power of the visual signs. It is an approach that gave no other option to the director but to adhere /o a postmodern conception of character as a combination of numerous projections, adopted stances, stylizations, as a network of selves. This is but in line with his strong belief that "proteanism – to be more people all the time – is the most authentic source of theatricality". That is why in Maniutiu's view, Richard's secret energy that delights and terrifies, his Machiavellian virtuosity and cynicism join to shape u consummate play-actor attracted only by the mechanism of the game he is playing, a personality with charisma that deep down in his innermost recesses is flooded by aggressive, diabolic urges rendered visible by his Double. (KEYWOKDS: Romanian production, supplement, paraverbal level, tie Double, addition, theatricality, visual signs, proteanism, player-king, character in postmodern aesthetics).*

## RESUMEN

*El artículo analiza Ricardo III, en la producción de 1993 de Mihai Maniutiu en el Teatro Odeón (Bucarest). Hace énfasis en el hecho de que esta puesta en escena no es ni una ilustración ni una traducción o realización, sino un suplemento, término extrapolado por Marvin Carlson de Sobre la gramatología de Derrida. En consecuencia, el trabajo contiene amplias explicaciones sobre las omisiones del texto o los cambios en el orden de escenas y sobre las adiciones a nivel paraverbal, con explicaciones de la relevancia de tales "intervenciones" en el significado global de la producción. El primer proceso queda claramente ejemplificado mediante la eliminación de algunos personajes – Richmond, los sobrinos de Richard – o por el inicio de la producción que incluye fragmentos del soliloquio que Richard pronuncia en el campo de batalla al final de la obra. El segundo proceso incluye tales decisivas añadiduras como: la amenazante onnipresencia de un grupo de guerreros de movimientos estilizados, reminiscencia de lo dimensión de casta propia de los rituales de la guerra japonesa, que hace visible en escena la idea de un cruel dictador absolutista que utiliza el más puro terror engendrado por la fuerza militar con la que cuenta; la figura con cabeza de lobo, un concepto del director, el Doble de Richard, su sombra, la imagen de su origen, una agresividad animal; Buckingham que parece fascinado por el lado oscuro, inquietante y diabólico de Richard, que le sigue de forma irresistible, atrapados ambos seres en la misma red de un terrible juego que ejecutan con una obstinación infantil (de esta manera el director nos adelanta una proposición escandalosa y oximorónica – un candor de crueldad, un candor de crimen –, una interpretación sostenida por el propio Shakespeare cuando describe a Richard como "too childish and foolish for this world"); el uso efectivo de un objeto teatral – una manzana – que refuerza metonímicamente la milagrosa y malévolamente tentación de poder, mientras la caída de manzanas desde la corona del rey al final funciona inequívocamente como una señal de aviso para Richard y para el público*

de la celeridad con la cual el mecanismo de la historia pronto lo absorberá a él también; el uso de velas y antorchas durante toda la interpretación a excepción del final, donde la fuerte luz de fondo, que evoca la muerte, representa un objeto de sumptuosa fascinación al que Richard se dirige con los ojos muy abiertos, con una curiosidad ardiente. Es por lo tanto obvio que la producción explota al exceso el poder sugestivo de los signos visuales. Se trata de una aproximación que no dio otra opción al director que la de adherirse a una concepción postmoderna del personaje, enfocado como combinación de numerosas proyecciones, posturas adoptadas, estilizaciones, como entramado de identidades, de acuerdo con su firme convicción de que "el proteísmo, ser muchas personas a la vez, es la más auténtica de las fuentes de teatralidad". Esto es por lo que en opinión de Maniutiu, la energía secreta de Richard que nos deleita y aterra, su maquiavélica virtuosidad y cinismo se unen para formar un consumado actor atraído sólo por el mecanismo del juego que está jugando, una personalidad carismático que oculta el hecho de que en lo más profundo de su interior rebosan agresividad, instintos diabólicos que hace visibles su Doble. (PALABRAS CLAVE : producción rumana, suplemento, nivel paraverbal, el Doble, teatralidad, signos visuales, proteísmo, personaje de estética postmoderna).

Many successful productions with Shakespearean plays on the Romanian stage after 1989 have evinced the commitment of well-established directors – Silviu Purcărete, Mihai Măniuțiu, Tompa Gabor, Alexandru Darie – to catch up with the movement of directorial reinvention of the classics defined by Jan Kott as early as the 1960s: "The classics become alive when a collision takes place: the collision of a classical text with a new political and intellectual experience, as well as the collision of the classical text with new theatrical techniques."<sup>1</sup> This vantage point undoubtedly rejects the idea of a fixed or correct interpretation, i.e. of "a permanent and unchanging significance"<sup>2</sup> of the text. This is as much to say that a Shakespearean play – though materialized in writing – is doomed to be reread/reinterpreted and finally "concretized anew again and again".<sup>3</sup> In these circumstances, contemporary directing of such plays can also be considered "an act of criticism",<sup>4</sup> a view that certainly strengthens the merging of the different horizons of expectations in such a way that the dead and the living are neither entirely continuous with, nor entirely separate from each other. Rather, "they become co-present

<sup>1</sup> Jan Kott, "I Can't Get No Satisfaction", *The Drama Review* 41(1968), p.145

<sup>2</sup> Patrice Pavis, "The Classical Heritage of Modern Drama: The Case of Postmodern Theatre", *Modern Drama* 29, p.8.

Patrice Pavis, *Theatre at the Crossroads of Culture*, Routledge, London, 1997, p.43.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph Berry, *On Directing Shakespeare*, Barries and Noble, New York, 1977, p.22.

within a plurality of spiritual potentials".<sup>5</sup>

Such productions, so rich in meanings, fascinate the audiences, yet also make us, the critics, use less and less the name of the great Will and more and more the name of the director. These critical remarks clearly suggest new attitudes as to the ownership of these plays. In other words, this type of staging is neither an illustration nor a translation or a fulfillment, but a supplement, as extrapolated by Marvin Carlson from Derrida's *Of Grammatology*: "A play on stage will inevitably reveal elements which are lacking in the written text, which probably do not seem a great loss before the performance takes place, but which are subsequently revealed as meaningful and important. At the same time the performance, by revealing this lack reveals also an infinite series of future performances, adding new supplements."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, such performances are materially unstable registers of signification, producing "meaning" intertextually in ways that deconstruct notions of fidelity, authority, or present meaning. It is in the light of such views that we shall try to analyze Mihai Măniuțiu's 1993 production *Richard III* at the Odeon Theatre.

Like many famous predecessors and contemporaries, Mihai Măniuțiu has succumbed to the temptation of writing down his opinions on the nature of the theatrical performance and, above all, on the relationship between the actor and the character, concerns so eloquently reflected in the very titles of such books of his as *Rediscovering the Actor* (1985) or *Act and Mimetic Representation* (1989).

For Măniuțiu, a performance is not an illustration, which is highly realistic, but a representation which, like in Meyerhold's views, is considered as hyperbolic and improbable. As regards the actor's art, the essential moment of this representation resides in the creation of "an I as supercharacter",<sup>7</sup> i.e. in the remodelling of the actor as a human prototype. In other words, the supercharacter is "a transfigured actor", one who, "without losing his/her identity reaches an all inclusive superidentity on a metaphysical level of existence".<sup>8</sup> The character thus constructed is but "another experience of the actor's own body, an experience keeping alive the illusion that it is a first and irrepeatable one".<sup>9</sup> This means that the actor's body must assume the representation of the other body, the imaginary one. Since he cannot imitate something that does not exist, he invents it and embodies this invention to bestow credibility upon it. The actor is thus

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<sup>5</sup> Roger Sell, "Simulative Panhumanism. A Challenge to Current Linguistic and Literary Thought", *Modern Language Review* 88 (1993), p.548.

<sup>6</sup> Marvin Carlson, "Theatrical Performance: Illustration, Translation, Fulfillment, or Supplement?" *Theater Journal* 37 (1985), p.10.

<sup>7</sup> Mihai Măniuțiu, *Redescoperirea actorului* [The Rediscovery of the Actor], Editura Meridiane, București, 1985, p.13.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

forced to come up with a third body which belongs to the intermediary, ambiguous world of transfiguration. In this context, the character appears as another existential opportunity for the actor, as a solution to his tensions, as a language for everything in himself/herself that could not be expressed. This is as much to say that the actor will live his/her parts as if they were some exceptional and unexpected circumstances/events of his own life. He will spiritually alienate from his own nature only to return, in himself/herself, to an yet unrevealed "I". We can thus infer that the character is inexhaustible because inexhaustible is the un-lived in the actor. As a result, the animation/the coming to life of the character in the ludic acts also represents, to the highest degree, an existential gain for the actor.

Mihai Măniuțiu, who has continually refined his theoretical statements, was lucky to meet an extremely gifted actor, Marcel Iureș, who, for almost twenty years already, has proved to be an ideal vehicle for putting into practice and spreading out the director's opinions which, unfortunately, do not constitute a system. At best, they are only able to promote a specific style of acting and directing. It was one of those rare meetings that have had the potential of developing into long-lasting collaborations beneficial for both sides. In fact, the example they set in the Romanian theatre has a rather shocking resemblance to the much talked about working relationship between Grotowski and Ryszard Cieslak. However, in Măniuțiu's case, thinking around performance has also been coupled with a serious exploration of the complex personality of representative characters in world drama. It goes without saying that Shakespeare's protagonists have occupied a central place. The Romanian director devotes to them a whole book of essays, *The Golden Round* (1989), a title which symbolically suggests "a highly privileged place in the social and human hierarchy".<sup>10</sup> Consequently, it came as no surprise that his staging of *Richard III* corroborated these two strands of thought with the many references in the Shakespearean text to Richard's "diabolical theatrical power"<sup>11</sup> to offer a daring metacritical reading brilliantly supported and emphasized by an excessive theatricality. This approach gave him no other option but to adhere to the radically altered conception of character to be found in postmodern aesthetics. Such a character, as Măniuțiu's Richard certainly is, has to reveal himself to the audience as the combination of numerous projections, adopted stances, stylizations, as a network of selves. This is but in line with the director's strong belief that "proteanism – to be more people all the time – is the most authentic source of theatricality".<sup>12</sup> Following in the footsteps of many contemporary stagings of the Shakespearean plays, Măniuțiu also resorted to cuttings in the text, most of them imposed by his daring decision of eliminating such significant characters as Richmond and Richard's nephews. The process did not affect the coherence of the performance as a whole. On the contrary, it helped the director to better focus

<sup>10</sup> Mihai Măniuțiu, *Cercul de aur* [The Golden Round], Editura Meridiane, 1989, p.6

<sup>11</sup> Phyllis Raekin, *Stages of History, Shakespeare's English Chronicles*, Routledge, London, 1992, p.73

<sup>12</sup> Mihai Măniuțiu, *Act și mimare* [Act and Mimetic Representation], Editura Eminescu, 1989, p.87

on Richard as a kind of evil seed springing in all the others with astonishing quickness. He is their bad conscience: it is only within their ravaged world that he feels "at home", saved from his obsession with being "different". In short, his energy was preseiited as acquiring the terrifying power of a scourge: he repays perjury with perjury, treachery with treachery, inurder with inurder, and then, with perfect justice, he becomes his own nemesis.

Măniuțiu's staging also gave a particular inportai-ice to those features that reveal Richard III as an inborn dictator. Thus, this Richard has a strong desire to reach his end in no tiine, a desire materialized in his deeds: the horrors and excesses he inaugurates his struggle for power are typical for those who already have it. He is repeatedly presented as "conquering" what is the easiest to be dominated in the others: their instinct of self-preservation, i.e. their fear of suffering. His pursuit of self-interest is emphatically rendered as taking place through the manipulation of collective beliefs. Finally, the inore preoccupied he is with the retention of power, the more power becomes an end in itself for, surely, the director must have found a valuable source of inspiration in Lord Acton's well-known reinarik: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

Furthennore, the idea of the lonely dictator ruling absolutely through sheer terror is "embodied", rendered visible on stage, i.e. at the paraverbal level by the threatening omnipresence on stage of a silent group of warriors. They are both passive witnesses/spectators to the enacted scenes of Shakespeare's play and participants in the theatrical event, piotectiing Richard, being his collective partner in his prankish war-like games, obeying blindly his orders, and, finally, giving their life tor him. They represent, in flesh and blood, that cruel, violent, aggressive side of Richard's personality. The extreme richness of their oriental-like costumes, their stylized movement reminiscent of the caste-like dimension of the Japanese war rituals constitute an addition/supplement that enhances the theatricality of the performance. In fact, at the press conference preceding the opening night, Măniuțiu stated: "I consider myself completely influenced by Kurosawa. Without his *Macbeth* I couldn't have staged any play by Shakespeare. He taught me how to read Shakespeare. He is not embarrassed to bring to the fore Shakespeare's barbarity, including the aesthetic one, to stress ii, to give a perfect reason to it and to reveal its deeper layers." In other words, like Ariane Mnouchkine, Măniuțiu resorted to these exotic images to alienate the spectators from all the clichés amassed over the years in the collective consciousness regarding medieval England and its protagonists as portrayed by Shakespeare in his chronicles.

Their expressionless faces, their disciplined bodies, their perfect demonstration of ability and physical strength, a kind of performance within the performance, reinforce their readiness to use violence at any time, the idea of unconditional submission to Richard. In fact, it is out of this crowd with no distinguishable personal features that the two killers, Catesby and all those who obeyed to Rieliard come to the foreground "to play" their part. In the last scene, before the decisive battle, they display, in stylized and perfectly synchronized movements, a sheer force that gives the spectators the creeps. They all perish like all "the faithful dogs" that prefer to die

with their master rather than surrender. However, this denouement is foreshadowed in an astounding theatrical moment: these samurai-like warriors create with their own bodies the image of a dragon with many heads of fire that will gradually fall down. Images like this are hard to forget. In fact, the performance as a whole relies on the director's feverish pictorial imagination and thrilling theatrical sense.

The very beginning testifies to such attributes. When the spectators enter the hall, the curtain is up and the stage is in darkness. However, on what at first sight seemed to be a bare stage, they can clearly see two parallel rows of candles. A little later, they are able to notice that there is a man asleep, lying on his back, near each candle. A penetrating roaring enhances the dread engendered by this first visual image. To be heard all along the performance, this noise gets, at times, apocalyptic overtones suggesting either the beginning or the end of the world. Slightly hesitant, Richard steps on the stage avoiding as much as possible the spots of light that try to catch a glimpse of his figure. In Măniuțiu's staging, the only light favoured by his Richard is the one coming from torches, flames, candles. In short, it is the light of fire, this primary element so rich in its symbolism. In fact, many of its symbolic meanings – authority and power, intense desire, destruction and death, forbidden passions – indirectly strengthen the parameters of the plot and some of the character traits of the protagonist. The choice of such a visual element as basic to the performance constitutes a valuable addition to its spectacular aspect.

However, this opening still has to satisfy the spectators' curiosity aroused by the presence, on the left side of the stage, of a figure with a wolf's head, the director's own creation, one of the most original elements of this production. He is Richard's Double, his shadow, the visualization of his primary, aggressive animality. The symbolism of the wolf, this zoomorphic totem, indirectly underlines Richard's evil nature, his cruelty, craftiness and bloodthirstiness. Their complementarity is often reflected in their gestures: they hold each other, they come together in embraces and screams that mirror the wild nature of the subconscious. If the dominant mark of Richard's intonation is a kind of sarcastic barking, the Double's indistinct sounds illustrate the premonitory-pathetic register. Through the Double/Wolf-Man, the inner invisible self and its powers are projected outwardly as a perceptive reality. In other words, the Wolf-Man, Richard's most trustworthy companion is presented as "a malevolent inner projection – an animal making visible the demonic forces of the murderous king".<sup>13</sup> This speechless character, a directorial invention/construct, though contradicting such authorized critical voices as that of Harold Bloom – "this Richard has no inwardness"<sup>14</sup> –, succeeds, through the use of other "languages of the stage" – gestures, movements to contribute to a deeper understanding of Richard's personality of a boundless energy, vitality and spiritual anguish.

The perfect integration of the Wolf-Man in the performance is a most clear and certain

<sup>13</sup> George Baiu, "The Double or The Power of Inwardness". *The Trilogy of the Double. Three Romanian Productions by Mihai Măniuțiu*. Unitext, Bucuresti, 1997, p.10

<sup>14</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Invention of the Human*, Reverhead Books, New York, 1998, p.66.

proof of the fact that character portrayal is a forte of Măniuțiu's staging. In this respect, Buckingham and his relationship to Richard is another case in point. Măniuțiu makes of him the other permanent presence on stage, in some way the opposite of the Wolf-Man. If the latter stands for Darkness with all its multiple implications, Buckingham, in the director's view, "is the happy, shining reverberation of the dark Gloucester".<sup>15</sup> He embodies the temptation of the joy of living that might have haunted Richard's subconscious, an aspect he has no time to attend to. The face of the young, athletic actor performing Buckingham irradiates a childish happiness. Like opposites that attract each other, he seems to be fascinated by the dark, demonic, restless side of the Duke's personality, the one embodied on stage by the Wolf-Man. That is why he follows Richard not out of interest, but because he simply *cannot do otherwise*. It is a compulsion that, in Măniuțiu's version, keeps them entangled in the net of a terrible game they play with childish obstinacy. A telling in itself example of such a stubbornness is offered by the test itself when it reveals Buckingham's refusal to repeat his request for the reward some other time. Măniuțiu's Buckingham gets angry like a child who was not given the desired toy. Finally, he realizes that there is no other choice but to assume the consequences of such a dangerous, risky, even foolish behaviour. Consequently, he becomes the protagonist of one of the most interesting scenes of this production. Brought in front of the king, he knows too well what to expect. He also knows that there is nothing that might convince Richard to show compassion, not even the memory of their former close friendship. However, the prospect of the imminent death does not seem to frighten him at all. In contrast with Richard's other victims who died with an expression of infinite hatred on their faces and a frightening curse on their lips, Buckingham's face is radiant with the joy of seeing his best friend again. So, he takes out of his pocket an apple and initiates a game with it that only he and Richard know how to play. He does it only for the pleasure of the game, knowing beforehand that he is going to lose. What follows is a moment of intense theatrical magic: two adults, who enjoyed killing and sentencing people to death, seem to have become children again, playing, in a very condensed form, the same mortal game they had begun together on the real stage of history. It is a reinterpretation of the character that renders his relationship to Richard more complex.

Moreover, the apple is not used only as instrumental in the two protagonists' game. Much of what it could symbolize – discord, sin, temptation, worldly desires, illusion/deception, immortality – is consistent with the characters' personality, behaviour and deeds. It gets a very specific significance in the last scene. In his famous nightmare before the battle, Richard sees each of his victims as holding an apple in a gloved hand. After uttering the curse, each of them places this primordial object of wrath and sin in the crown lying at the feet of the sleeping king. Richard wakes up and nervously grabs the crown. The apples – part of the dreamworld till that moment – acquire an indubitable reality for him. They roll ever more quickly in all directions, a telling warning signal for him and for the spectators of the haste with which the mechanism

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<sup>15</sup> Victor Scoradeț, "The Double of the Trinity?" *The Trilogy of the Double*, p.24

of history will soon absorb him too.

As was bit normal, Mihai Măniuțiu, like most directors who have dealt with this play, focused most of his creative energies on a fresh interpretation of the hero.

First, he tried to treat "differently" Richard's monstrosity. He rejected the traditional determinism according to which the appearance might explain the inner deformity of the character. His Richard is a compound of charm and terror so credible that he radiates an almost irresistible fascination. In other words, outwardly he has been made to appear as perversely attractive. His wit flashes rather than his sword, since he has the silent crowd of devoted warriors to do the "dirty" deed. In fact, he fascinates the spectator with the combination of devilish wit and Machiavellian dedication, i.e. a real pleasure in using people and manipulating them. It was obvious that Marcel Iureș resorted to exaggeration whenever he tried to exhibit brilliance in villainy. As a result, his Richard is a very special kind of monster, the moister as a sardonic humourist: every irony is carefully pointed out and underlined.

Secondly, a text often labelled as "the most stridently theatrical" of all Shakespeare's plays and a protagonist viewed by many as "the most theatrical character that Shakespeare created"<sup>16</sup> can easily prompt readings of the hero, like Măniuțiu's, centred on Richard's propensity towards playing/acting a variety of roles in order to deceive and discomfit the others. Consequently, Marcel Iureș's Richard seems an irresistible force, so resourceful that every challenge affords an opportunity for another dazzling performance which he couples with exceptional gifts of persuasion and dissimulation. That is why the crimes are for him mere "formalities" he must comply with. Each time he indirectly commits one, he has already thought of his next step. This is as much to say that this Richard is in love only with playing, an interpretation strongly brought to the fore by the whole production.

Indeed, the only moments when there is passion in Iureș's eyes are those in which he plays pranks with his warriors, the Wolf-Man or Buckingham. This raises a legitimate question: What could be childish in a couple of criminals? There have been accepted interpretations that have viewed Richard as being mad, as suffering from an inferiority complex, as killing out of dictatorial instinct and political calculation, but how could we accept a candour of cruelty, a candour of crime, Măniuțiu's shocking, oxymoronic proposition? Without resorting to arguments of a psychological nature – the absence of moral criteria in children – or to examples of infantile cruelty that might place Richard the adult in the sphere of the pathological, there is nothing to be done but to acknowledge the fundamental idea this staging is based on: Richard enjoys playing all the time. After all, doesn't Shakespeare himself describe him as "too childish and foolish for this world"? In other words, he experiences the bloodbath of reality – the action of the play – as a kind of second mimetic one, as a mirroring of what he had dreamt, conceived and exhausted on the primary, secret stage of his mind. That is why after each move/crime,

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<sup>16</sup> Brother Leo, *Contrast in Shakespeare's Historical Plays*, Haskell House Publishers Ltd, New York, 1973, p.69.

Marcel Iureş allows himself a moment of joy in which he skilfully enacts a kind of happy astonishment as if "telling" us with his eyes: "look, it worked. This is as much to say that this Richard is not attracted by power per se: what attracts him is the *mechanism* of the game he is playing. When he finally gets the crown, he can do nothing else but to begin to play with it in a manner surprisingly similar to the grotesque playing with the globe of Chaplin's dictator. He also takes off the royal robe and puts it on the Wolf-Man, while his twisted body remains in full view. Is this a kind of desperate gesture meant to disclose his desire to be accepted for what he really is? Can it also be interpreted as his realization that a king, like an actor, does his job properly only if he makes successful use of conventions or signs? Anyway, Marcel Iureş enacts the coronation scene as a perfect mixture of lucidity and madness or a simulation of it.

Spectator to his own performance, Iureş's Richard finds many opportunities to applaud his own creation in an appalling narcissism. Even the ghosts in his dream constitute for him a performance. He dismisses it with a scornful smile. Since he has not staged it, it is nothing but a failure. When he realizes that he is no longer able to stir up his own interest and curiosity, that the perfect simulations he had devoted to no longer attract him, this Richard understands that defeat and death are nearby. Fear creeps in his soul as soon as the spectator in him ceases to be enthusiastic about Richard the actor. The famous line "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!" is uttered by Marcel Iureş in such a way as to suggest the end of playing on the inner stage of the King-Fool and implicitly on the outer world of history. Moreover, this intruder/outsider, who did not have to answer for anything, begins to feel his body, acknowledging for himself with amazement that he is a common man of flesh and blood. Consequently, he accepts punishment, but rejects repentance with its train of expiatory feelings. However, in these last moments, there is already something else that fascinates this Richard. He seems to be attracted by an irresistible light. If at the beginning of the performance he desperately avoided it, now it represents the object of his ultimate, supreme curiosity. It is the Wolf-Man, the stage embodiment of his darker instincts, that leads him towards this light connoting death. It is an ending with which Mihai Măniuțiu wanted to suggest that Death was behind the game played by his Richard. It was not death as a supreme sacreerow, but death as an object of fascination.

As most other productions, Măniuțiu's is also a one-man play. Marcel Iureş proved to be a master of unexpected transitions from one mood to another, supported visually by convulsions of his body and audibly by inflections of his voice. He certainly liked the grotesque aspect of the character on its histrionic axis. His Richard was neither a common criminal nor a possessed being. His titanic will and evil genius manifested themselves in gestures that turned him into an artist of crime for whom killing was a spectacular ritual close to the Artaudian theatre of cruelty. The demonism of the character was suggested through subtle means: a certain way of looking when he scrutinized darkness, especially that inside him: an impression that he was constantly gazing *beyond*: an energy that was rather inner, of an occult nature.

All in all, Măniuțiu proposes to us, critics and spectators, a challenging reading of the Shakespearean text. His additions at the paraverbal level offer fresh insights. The main one, the Wolf-Maid "functions like a seismograph transcribing Richard's intricate relationship with his inner evil embodied on stage",<sup>17</sup> eventually rendering the King's identity more complex. If Shakespeare's Richard is politically irresistible, Măniuțiu goes beyond this by making him personally and physically irresistible too. In other words, one of the great surprises of this production is that we meet a very different Richard to the one who once frightened us by his resemblance to recent communist dictators. His secret energy that delights and terrifies, his Machiavellian virtuosity, his theatricality and cynicism join to shape a personality with charisma that deep down in the innermost recesses is flooded by aggressive, diabolic urges rendered visible by his Double. In short, this is one of those contemporary productions in which, though the text is still interesting in itself, it is the staging and the acting that make it ever more complicated and multi-dimensional.

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<sup>17</sup> George Banu. *op.cit.* p.11