

throughout its history. Regardless of the dominant foreign influences that marked the Romanian cultural space, within it there was also a strong commitment to respect for the “national essence”. The shifting territorial design and the mixed influences that crossed the Romanian cultural space both before and after the foundation of a Romanian national state are the proof of a *histoire croisée* marked by constant fluidity. The constant tension between foreign and national values or, in other words, between Europeanism and autochthonism, is still unresolved in today’s Romania. This fluidity marked the local theatre practice and, hence, the early reception of Henrik Ibsen on the Romanian stage.

1.3 Previous research on Henrik Ibsen’s presence on the Romanian stage

Although previous research on Henrik Ibsen’s reception in Romania is not extensive, it has the utmost significance. Specialists in Romanian literature, universal and comparative literature, theatre studies and Scandinavian studies, have approached the topic, but there are still gaps that require new data to replace old material lost through inadequacies in condition or archival storage.

Previous researchers started their inquiries on Ibsen in Romania by employing a literary rather than a theatre studies approach. Their investigations are full of biographical and literary references, and previous research on Ibsen’s theatrical reception has focused on reconstructing the chronology of the performances. Although this latter research has not provided critical analysis of Ibsen performances on the Romanian stage, it is an indispensable contribution to further research in this direction. The chronological display of the Romanian Ibsen performances based on the information provided by the books and articles has provided the materials for the IbsenStage Romanian dataset. Thus, the fieldwork of previous researchers has provided the factual framework for this thesis. As the information is sometimes incomplete or incorrect, this research also has corrected minor errors in pre-existing event records, enhanced the information within these records, and added new records of stagings into the database.

There are four significant moments in the research on the Romanian reception of Ibsen that paved the way for this study: the lecture of Gheorghe Adamescu held in 1928; the book published by Ovidiu Drîmba in 1956; the book published by Ion Vartic in 1995; and the various pieces of research on the reception of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre published by Sanda Tomescu Baciu.⁹

Gheorghe Adamescu was the first researcher who investigated Ibsen’s reception in the Romanian theatre. The lecture he gave at Ibsen’s commemoration in 1928 was later

9 Other researchers also wrote brief articles on the topic occasionally, yet in this section I have only considered those whose contribution marked a turning point in Romanian Ibsen research. One of these secondary contributors is Lucian Sinigaglia (2008; 2009; 2010) whose three articles on Henrik Ibsen in Romania promise an investigation into both the literary and theatrical reception. However, the articles neither add new information, nor propose a new approach, but rather keep to the same path as the previous researchers. Moreover, recurrent inaccuracies, a lack of reliable references, and the poor quality of the critical approach make this contribution less relevant here. Another similar example is an article of Valeriu Munteanu (1977: 13–15).

published in a booklet together with a list of translations, a short chronology of the Romanian Ibsen stagings, and a bibliography of the most valuable contributions on Ibsen published in periodicals at the time. The lecture focused on the biography of the playwright and on literary aspects from his plays, only briefly touching upon Ibsen's Romanian stagings in the concluding part. Beside its historical and documental significance, the final part of Adamescu's lecture is relevant to this research because it highlights the negative reception of Ibsen's plays in the Romanian theatre until 1928:

Putem afirma că piesa jucată la Teatrul Național din București n'a avut succes; Nici Strigoii, în 1897, n'au avut o soartă mai bună; După războiul, teatrul lui Ibsen a început a fi mai bine primit pe scenele noastre. (We can state that the play performed at the National Theatre of Bucharest was unsuccessful; The *Ghosts* performance in 1897 did not have any better destiny; After the war, Ibsen's theatre started to be better received; my translation.) (Adamescu 1928: 23)

But, in spite of these these first negative reactions, Adamescu indicates Ibsen's status as a canonical playwright in Romania:

Este incontestabil că orice părere ar avea cineva despre unele construcțiuni ale lui, oricât de greu s'ar înțelege unele piese ale lui, Ibsen rămâne un dramaturg genial, care a înnoit poezia dramatică. (It is indisputable that no matter the opinions regarding some of his [dramatic] structures, or the difficulties in understanding some of his plays, Ibsen is still a brilliant playwright, who renewed dramatic poetry.) (ibid: 24)

Approximately 30 years later, at the Ibsen celebration of 1956, Ovidiu Drîmba published the book *Însemnări despre teatrul lui Ibsen [Notes on Ibsen's theatre]* (1956)¹⁰. The text has a similar approach to that of Adamescu, as Drîmba starts his account by focusing on biographical and literary aspects. The contact of the Romanian culture with Ibsen's work is then approached through a chronology of the first Romanian translations and of all the performances that took place on the national stage. Drîmba also points to the large number of articles, reviews, interviews and translations based on Ibsen's works published in periodicals. However, in contrast to Adamescu's brief remarks on Ibsen's presence on the Romanian stage, Drîmba adopts a highly praiseful, even partisan view on the literary and theatre reception of Ibsen in Romania, thus augmenting the symbolic value of the playwright that Gheorghe Adamescu acknowledged in his lecture. In fact, the critic uses Ibsen's local reception as an example to demonstrate that the Romanian culture also adopted the European theatre canon. Undoubtedly, Drîmba provides valuable historical information, yet his approach focuses more on Ibsen's symbolic importance than on the assimilation process of his plays on the national stage.

In 1995, approximately 40 years after Drîmba published his investigation, Ion Vartic's *Ibsen și teatrul invizibil. Preludii la o teorie a dramei [Ibsen and the invisible theatre. Introduction to drama theory]* (1995) became the most powerful book on Ibsen's theatre reception in Romania. The study consists of four chapters and focuses mainly on drama theory. In the

10 Republished in Drîmba (1997).

first three chapters, the author accounts for the impact of Ibsen on the modern theatre writing through a comparative literary approach. However, it is the detailed chronology of the Romanian Ibsen performances in the fourth chapter that is of interest to this research. Vartic demonstrates accuracy in his descriptive overview, which was built on numerous theatre reviews and memoirs that document the performances. The information on performances and the bibliographical material mentioned in this book constituted the main source material for the events registered in IbsenStage and the basis for my further archival research.

Vartic's chronological account is organised by play, yet the historical tracing and description of the performances of each play do not provide the reader with a critical perspective on Ibsen's reception in Romania. Vartic addresses each play and the individual events one by one. There is no connection between them, and no larger panorama of their temporal and spatial distribution to help the reader configure the development of Ibsen's reception on the Romanian stage based on criteria other than chronology and play. Vartic recreates the history of each event by repeating the reviewers' opinions, yet he seldom investigates the status of Ibsen performances in the changing context of Romanian theatre history. His main intention is to present a chronology, while any investigation into the patterns concerning Ibsen's reception in Romania is secondary to his project. This explains why the critical commentary appears as a concluding appendix at the end of the fourth chapter and does not sit at the core of the analysis.

For the purpose of this research, the hypotheses presented by Vartic in the book's final chapter on "Why is Ibsen (not) staged?" (ibid: 236–249) deserve further exploration. This chapter is not only the conclusion of the entire book, but also an invitation to further investigate the reception of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre:

Timp de un secol – adică între 1895 și 1994 – pe scenele românești au fost realizate 109 montări ibseniene. E mult, e puțin? Greu de spus deocamdată. (For almost a century, – between 1895 and 1994 – there have been 109 Ibsenian mise-en-scènes. Is this a lot, or not? Difficult to appreciate for the moment; my translation.) (ibid: 236)

Vartic does not provide the reader with a statistical overview, yet he points that Ibsen was constantly performed on the Romanian stage for a century (1895–1994), compared to other playwrights:

Tatăl neîntrecut al teatrului modern sau *zeul Ibsen* pare să fie, în perioada menționată, mult mai prezent pe scenele noastre decât urmașii săi, adică Strindberg, Hauptmann, Pirandello, Cehov, O'Neill, Miller, Tennessee Williams, și chiar decât Shaw (jucat intens la noi) [...]. [...] istoria modernă a spectacologiei românești îl are, în mod constant, alături pe Ibsen. (For the aforementioned period, the *unsurpassed father* of the modern theatre or *Ibsen, the god*, seems to be more present on our stages than his successors, namely Strindberg, Hauptmann, Pirandello, Chekov, O'Neill, Miller, Tennessee Williams and even Shaw (intensely staged here) [...]. [...] the modern Romanian performance history has constantly had Ibsen by its side; my translation.) (ibid: 236)

To add more, Vartic highlights the Romanian audience's great interest in Ibsen's realist plays, whereas the early and the late works were mainly absent from the repertoires. For

instance, *An Enemy of the People*, *Ghosts* and *A Doll's House* were performed the most during Henrik Ibsen's early reception on the Romanian stage. The critic also considers that Ibsen's Romanian reception was influenced not only by the development of the national theatre, but also by the changes in the political context. Thus, he claims that the Romanian audience witnessed more successful and influential Ibsen productions in the first half of the 20th century than in the communist period. However, he neither explores the historical argument, nor the notion of "success" in clarifying Ibsen's impact on the Romanian stage.

Vartic also touches on the topic of the audience response to Henrik Ibsen's plays at the end of the 19th century. He sees them as challenging, both nationally and internationally:

Primele reacții ale spectatorilor au fost violent negative. [...] Asemenea efecte s-au înregistrat, cu duimul, și în lumea bună a culturii europene. (The spectators' first reactions were violently negative. [...] But similar reactions could easily be found in Europe's high-culture societies; my translation.) (ibid: 239)

He further explains this reaction by suggesting: "Cum bănuia Maiorescu, publicului nu i-a fost deloc ușor să se atmosferizeze în spațiul cerebral al acestui tip de dramă" (as Maiorescu supposed, it was not easy for the public to *acclimatize* to the cerebral space of this type of drama; my translation.). (ibid: 238). However, Vartic does not insist on: 1. who the audience was and which criteria regulated their presence at the theatre; 2. how the audience split throughout time once the theatre market had grown; or 3. differentiate between critical and financial impact.

Moreover, Vartic considers Ibsen's early Romanian stagings as a proof to demonstrate that the Romanian culture was connected to the main European theatre traditions and movements of the time. While the critic does not analyse the relationship of the Romanian and the foreign cultural space specifically with regard to Ibsen, his references to the Romanian theatre culture's encounter with the French, German and Italian interpretations of Ibsen on the national stage invite further investigation. Beside the recognition of Ibsen as a canonical playwright in the Romanian theatre, Vartic's undeniable critical legacy also consists of aspects such as his emphasis on the role of the Romanian actors or directors in disseminating Ibsen on the local stage and their impact on future generations of Ibsen interpreters. Vartic highlights that Ibsen was constantly part of the repertoire performed or directed by great Romanian actors such as Artistizza Romanescu, Aglae Pruteanu or Petre Sturdza, and directors such as Paul Gusty, leading to the playwright's continuous presence on the national stage. In addition, the critic points at the impact of the French, Italian and German Ibsen traditions on the Romanian actors and directors, and thus highlights how the Romanian theatre culture is deeply connected with the European.

Vartic's groundbreaking study highlights the most important aspects that I will also focus on, namely the historical context, the foreign theatre influences upon the Romanian theatre and the role of cultural agents in promoting Ibsen. The comprehensive bibliographic reference make Vartic's book the most important resource to which I have constantly returned, as no other Romanian scholar has built a Romanian Ibsen dataset so rigorously.

After 1995, the Romanian Ibsen research had Sanda Tomescu Baciú as the main promoter not only of Ibsen studies, but also of Scandinavian studies in general.¹¹ She contributed to the development of a research hub concentrated on Scandinavian literature where both students and renowned scholars were involved.¹² Thus, Ibsen's Romanian reception became a relevant research topic, even though the few studies that were written focus mainly on literary aspects.¹³ In addition, the studies on Ibsen written by Gheorghe Adamescu, Ovidiu Drîmba and Ion Vartic highlight an academic practice marked by discontinuity across decades. By contrast, Sanda Tomescu Baciú's contribution to the promotion of Scandinavian studies led to a constant interest in and development of Ibsen research among the Romanian researchers. The articles she wrote on Ibsen's Romanian reception are a proof of her constant contribution to the field, as she briefly investigated the reception of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre both at the turn of the 20th century and in the communist period (2010: 79–86). Her studies are marked by a theatre historiographical approach, investigating either all plays performed in a specific period (Tomescu Baciú 1994: 504–511) or just a single play – *A Doll's House* (Tomescu Baciú 1993: 416–419) – in order to analyse the impact that Ibsen's dramas had on “the conscience of the audience” (Tomescu Baciú 1994: 504). In contrast to previous studies, Sanda Tomescu Baciú's approach is focused not only on the chronology of the stagings, but also on the contexts encompassing the productions. This approach also applies to the project *Skisser over mot-takelsen av Henrik Ibsen i noen rumenske tidsskrifter* [*Sketches regarding Henrik Ibsen's reception in some Romanian Journals*] (1999), developed by some of Sanda Tomescu Baciú's students. Such projects demonstrate the recent enthusiasm for conducting research on Ibsen's Romanian reception.

To conclude, the previous researchers provide more of a descriptive history than a critical analysis of Henrik Ibsen's reception in Romania. However, their contribution has been essential in the construction of an accurate Romanian IbsenStage dataset. Finally, they point at premises and details further explored in the following parts. Thus, this thesis is indebted to the data provided by previous researchers and takes one step further in investigating Ibsen's reception on the Romanian stage.

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- 11 Sanda Tomescu Baciú is Professor of Norwegian Language and Literature, founder and Head of the Department for Scandinavian Languages and Literatures at the Faculty of Letters, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.
- 12 Sanda Tomescu Baciú's book *Peer Gynt și miturile nordice* (2000) is a literary-mythological analysis of *Peer Gynt* based on her PhD dissertation *Mitologie nordică și reflexele ei în literatura norvegiană* (1998); Crina Leon's book *Henrik Ibsen și cultura germană a timpului său* (2011) approaches Henrik Ibsen's contact with German culture; other short literary studies published by MA students and PhD candidates in *Studia UBB Philologia* also reflect the major interest in a literary perspective on Ibsen's drama: Simina Răchiteanu, “Transcendence and Religious Imagery in Ibsen's *Master Builder*” (2014: 101–109); Anamaria Ciobanu, “From Ibsen to Beckett: Aspects of Human Condition” (2015: 133–147); Gianina Druță, “The Mythological Body as an Expression of the Misfit in *Peer Gynt*” (2015: 189–198).
- 13 The most concrete example is the 2006 issue of *Studia UBB Philologia*, which focused solely on the reception to Henrik Ibsen in Romania and among the Romanian literary and theatre critics. The issue celebrated the 100th anniversary of Ibsen's death and included studies by Mircea Muthu (2006: 105–107) and Ilinca Stîhi (2006: 109–114).