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THE FIRST TRANSLATION OF HAMLET INTO ROMANIAN BY IOAN BARAC (1776-1848)

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Abstract

Hamlet was one of the first Shakespeare's plays that were introduced in Romania. The first attempts to translate his works into Romanian date back to the XIXth century, and the Romanian translations were based on French Translations of the plays, given the strong cultural relationships with France and the fact that many scholars of the time knew French. Ioan Barac (1776-1848) was an Austrian translator and poet, born in Romania. He was one of the first to translate Hamlet into Romanian, working on Friedrich Ludwig Schröder's German version of it. Ioan Barac's interpretation of Hamlet in Romanian was written in the form of a manuscript, using the Cyrillic alphabet. In his version, Hamlet is presented as the flawless hero, as his growing wealth helps him defeat his cheating, murderous enemies. The denouement transforms him into a conqueror of fate, he surpasses all of the hardships and survives all of Fortuna's trials, finally reaching his father's throne. Aside from these changes, there are also certain parts that disappear. It seems like Barac continues to cut out and simplify his version not because he was forced by censorship or some theatrical purpose, but simply because this was his way of working on a translation.

Keywords: Hamlet, Barac, translation, Shakespeare, Romanian

Rezumat

Hamlet a fost printre primele piese ale lui Shakespeare care au ajuns în România. Primele încercări de traducere a lui Shakespeare în limba română datează din secolul al XIX-lea, iar traducerile au avut la bază un intermediar francez, fapt explicabil prin relațiile culturale strânse cu Franța și prin cunoașterea acestei limbi de către mulți oameni de cultură români. Ioan Barac (1776-1848) a fost un traducător și poet etnic imperial austriac, născut în România. El a fost unul dintre primii care a tradus Hamlet în română, lucrând din versiunea germană a lui Friedrich Ludwig Schröder. Interpretarea lui Ioan Barac a lui Hamlet în românește este în formă de manuscris și a fost scris în alfabet chirilic. Hamlet al lui Ioan Barac apare ca eroul fără cusur, iar curba sa de avere îl face în cele din urmă să triumfe asupra adversarilor săi adulteri și ucigași; deznodământul îl transformă în învingător al Soartei, el depășește toate greutățile și supraviețuiește încercărilor Fortunei și este instalat, în cele din urmă, pe tronul tatălui său. Pe lângă aceste modificări sunt și formule care dispar. Se pare că Barac continuă metoda eliminărilor și simplificărilor dintr-o rațiune care nu este impusă de cenzură sau de vreo finalitate teatrală, ci, pur și simplu deoarece aceasta este maniera sa de a lucra.

Cuvinte-cheie: Hamlet, Barac, traducere, Shakespeare, limba română

Ioan Barac (1776–1848) was a poet and translator of Romanian origin who lived in the Austrian Empire. He was born in Alămor, Sibiu County, and his

father, Ioan, was a priest. He attended the Reformed Gymnasium in Aiud, followed by law studies in Cluj, as he was drawn to the Hungarian culture. In 1801, he taught at the Romanian Orthodox School in Avrîg. The next year, he became a teacher at the first Romanian school in Șcheii Brașovului, which was annexed to St. Nicholas Church. At the same time, he also functioned as a magistrate and, in 1805, he took over the position of Romanian interpreter for Brașov City Hall, which he held for the rest of his life. In 1837, he edited "The Sunday Paper", the first illustrated magazine in Transylvania. His first published work, "The Story of Arghir the Handsome and of Helen the Beautiful and Lonely Queen" (1801) was one of the most widely read and appreciated Romanian books of the first half of the 19th century and appeared in many editions. He was one of the first to translate "Hamlet" into Romanian and used the German version belonging to Friedrich Ludwig Schröder. Between 1846 and 1840, he published eight volumes of stories from "The Arabian Nights" and introduced stories featuring Till Eulenspiegel and Mattie the Goose-boy. His original work included *Adevarul* (The Truth) and *Cercul Timpului* (The Circle of Time). The prefaces he wrote featured interesting pre-modern aesthetic and literary ideas.

Barac was a folk poet, not only in the style of his verse, but also in conception, as he himself confesses in the preface to *Kartigam*: "Having this passion for poetry since I was young, I spent all the days of my life writing many things, among which this story." During his stay in Aiud and Cluj, the Hungarian literature was in a process of enthusiastic rebirth, which had three directions given by the three different schools: French, classical and national, he himself being an adept of the last one mentioned, "This poetic school, poets less gifted than Gvadányi, Dugonics and Fazekas are part of, has generally displayed less good taste, but showed much more consideration and patriotic enthusiasm. Their great merit is that they showed vivid interest in the vernacular and the folklore and then dilligently got their inspiration from both" (Katona & Szinnyei, 1911). And yet, he was not a poet, but a rather poor interpreter most of the times, as his translations lacked literary value and were written under the Hungarian literary tendencies of the time. The translations he started in 1775 and continued to work on until the modern era, in 1825, stand proof of it. "Barac doesn't seem to translate, he shortens them, he skips their essential ideas. It is a shoolboy's work" (Bogdan-Duică, 1933).

Unusually hard-working and quite renowned in his time, along with Vasile Aaron and Dimitrie Țichindeal, Ioan Barac was an important representative of the so-called Transylvanian School, at a time of persecution of the Romanian culture in Ardeal when progress was a zealously pursued goal. Comparing the Germans, the Hungarians and the Serbians, Vasile Aron

records this in his preface to "Reporta din Vis", 'and yet for those who have toiled for years not only in the Hungarian and German languages, but also in Serbian, the number of beautifully, well-written books is impressive! (...) But for them to come to life and bring comfort and hope to the readers, there is still need of more opportunities for education, more means and privilege" (*Catalogul manuscriptelor românești*, vol. I, p. 460, apud Bogdan-Duică, 1933, p. 17). Barac's 17th-century house, located at 3 Piața Unirii in Brașov, is listed as a historic monument by Romania's Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs.

When first translated by Ioan Barac, a parson in the Transylvanian city of Brașov – Kronstadt, at the beginning of the XVIIIth century - about the 1820's, Hamlet was practically perceived as a XVIIth century German „Familientragödie". In Barac's translation, the main character is a flawless hero and his gradually increasing wealth eventually leads to his triumph over his murderous and adulterous adversaries; the denouement turns him into a defeater of Fate as he surpasses all hardship and survives Fortune's trials to finally be installed on his father's throne. The final scene does not follow the original English text: The King and Queen lose their lives and the whole country was shaken and they put Hamlet the Prince on his father's throne – Curtain (Act) a (5) fifth, (16) entering (Scene), p. 296 of the manuscript. This is the tragic end of the Danish king and queen who made the people of Denmark tremble with fear, but they eventually put Hamlet on the Danish throne.

Ioan Barac's interpretation of Hamlet in Romanian was written in the form of a manuscript, using the Cyrillic alphabet and contains a number of 54 hand-written pages (page 242 to page 296 of the manuscripts collected by Ioan Barac, *Scrieri în Versuri și Proză* (= *Poetry and Prose Writings*), first half of the XIXth century, a total of 373 pages) are now kept in the Depository of Documents in the Library of the Romanian Academy, manuscript n° 209, titled *Amlet, Prințul dela Dania. O tragodie în (5) cinci (acte) perdele* (= *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, a Tragedy in five acts*) by William Shakespeare. (Performed in the Royal Court Theatre" = the play was staged at the Royal Habsburg Court Theatre) the Romanian title being the original title of the German translation published by Heufeld in the Vienna edition of 1772. The parts were put together in a single volume that was donated to the Library of the Romanian Academy by the Allpious Ioan Barac of Brașov, the author's close relative. With the exception of two scenes from act I, II and V, which were transliterated by Ion Colan in his "Life and Work of Ioan Barac", and alternatively by G. Bogdan Duica in his biographical study titled "The Work of Ioan Barac", this translation by Ioan Barac has never been printed or published and is now being carefully kept in the archives of the Library of the Romanian Academy. Barac distances himself from the original Anglo-Saxon Shakespearian spirit, which thus becomes "double-distilled" and the Romanian influence is felt all through the text. In other words, Barac keeps both the

British literary perspective and the Romanian one, becoming part of the Romanian culture from this very first transcoding of the target text. His language uses the sounds and rhythms of the XVIIIth century Transylvanian Romania. There is both an aphoristic and moralist conciseness about the sententious language Barac makes his characters use.

Let us consider, for example, the urging parental advice Oldenholm gives his son Lertie. The very first comparative look emphasizes the provinciality and parochialism of his style, maybe because Barac was a parson, the language imbued with Transylvanian regionalism, which to us, today, may sound like clumsy archaisms, as G. Bogdan-Duica remarked, "the asperities of an unrefined language". To conclude, a question arises – how can we achieve a perceptible measurement of our cultural past and an accurate evaluation of the past coexisting with the acute sense of the present in our post-modern world?

A good analysis of Barac's translation of Hamlet requires observing other translations of the time that influenced his work. Heufeld's translation (1773), after another one Wieland made (1766), where parts of the original text are cut or more simply phrased. These changes and shortenings stand proof of a tendency to progress in making texts more prosaic. Apart from the gradually disappearing formulas, we notice a fundamental change of tone of the character of Hamlet, who becomes melancholic, while poetic and doubtful in the original text. It seems that Barac keeps using the method of elimination and simplification for reasons that have nothing to do with censorship or any theatrical finality, simply because it is his way of doing things.

Similar to the translation of one of his Hungarian contemporaries Kazinczy (Ferencz), made after a text by Schröder (1790), Barac's interpretation lacks the depth of the tragic effect, of the poetic form, and parts of the original text can no longer be found in it.

In order to follow the making of Barac's translation of Shakespeare's work, we will consider Bayer's critical analysis.

Hamlet's stage glory started in Cluj and headed West with a troupe from Ardeal that made it to Debrețiu (1798 and 1799); and, on the other hand, without leaving Cluj, where Barac lived, and where it was staged again in 1800, 1804, 1805, 1810, 1812.

In Cluj, Hamlet had been presented before Barac finished his studies in Aiud and Cluj. Knowing he was familiar with the flourishing literary life in both Aiud and Cluj, Barac most certainly knew how popular Hamlet was, but, without any evidence of it, I could not say "I am certain he did see or read the play at the time" (Bayer, p. 157, apud *Bogdan-Duică*, 1933, p. 125).

According to G. Bogdan-Duică, Hamlet's title in Barac's manuscript, is recorded at n° 209 at the Romanian Academy.

"Amlet

Prințul de la Dania.
O
Tragodie
în cinci peredele.
După Sakespear
Sau producăluit în k. krăescul
Teatru al Curții”¹.

This is the exact title of the 1772 edition (Vienna). For his translation, however, Barac did not use this Heufeld text, but the modified version and/or the version modified by Schröder in 1777 (Hamburg). There is no Laertes in 1772 Heufeld text, but the character is present in Barac’s translation in Act I, Sc. 8, not only in the table of characters.

Laertes had also been present in the two remakes from 1777 (Hamburg, Herold Library) and 1778 (Hamburg, I.M. Michaelsen): Of the two editions, scene 40 (The Prince, then Ghildenstern) of Act IV; In the Michaelsen edition it is Sc.15, also in Act IV. This means that Barac used the 1778 Hamburg edition for his translation.

A representative scene that helped identifying the edition that Barac used for his Hamlet translation is the last scene in Act IV, which sounds in Romanian as follows:

„A patrasprezecelea arătare.

Craiul, apoi Ghildenstern.

Craiul. Du-te, nebuno, care poți tu să te scobâlțest întră mine și întră el, fiul tău? Dar nu vezi tu, acest fiu al tău turbează după sângele meu ca un foc nestins. Să să ducă la Englitera - așa; dar acolo să și moară.Vino, Ghildenstern! (Vine Ghildenstern).

Ghildenstern. Iată eu Măria ta!

Craiul. Am lipsă de tine, dragul meu,că Hamlet au omorît pre bătrânul Oldenholm în turbarea sa. Și o așa nenorocire ameliņa dela el cătră toți. Gătește-te de drum, că el trebuie să să ducș la Englitera, că împrejurările statului nu suferă să mă pui în primejdia care în tot ceasul o ameliņa nebunia lui, ci caută să ocolesc.

Ghildenstern. Eu mă voi gâti de drum. Că aceasta este o frică sfântă pentru atâtea sute de suflete, de a-i păzi, care traesc întru Maestatea ta.

Craiul. Cautați trupul lui Oldenholm,și-l îngropați pă taină, să nu afle nimenea de să va putea.

Ghildenstern. Tocma acum am aflat Măria ta o împrejurare care îți ameliņa primejdie:cș tânărul Laertis,aruncat de vânt, să află în port. Lezne poate să auză de moartea tătâni-său. Apoi nu va căuta el izbândă?

Craiul. Tocma cătră el va fi mântuirea, ducerea la Englitera a lui Amlet spre pedeapsa morții. Dar cum va putea afla el? Când moartea lui Oldenholm nu este

¹In English: *Amlet, Prince of Dania, a tragedy in five acts after Shakespeare was produced at The Royal Theatre.*

știută la nimenea și caută să și rămâe tăinuită. Mergi și îi căutați trupul; și te gătește de drum. Îți voiui și da împuternicire numai de cât”.

Barac translated Scene 8 of Act II (Hamlet allein), which in the original text is a reply from Act I, Scene 5, right after the disappearance of the spirit and Horatio and Marcellus enter, in verse:

“Amlet (singur)

Oh cete cerești cu gloate!

O pământ! mări și toate

Dar tu ce zici, iadule?

Oh inima mea cea mare

Ține-te în vine tare!

Vai! Vai! blestematule!

Iubitele mele vine!

Țineți-vă forte bine!

Nu cumva să vă slăbiți!

Nu vă lăsați a vă teme,

Să nu cumva fără vreme

Sămi vă îmbătrâniți,

Ci să mă purtați vânjoase

În puteri și sănătoase!

Și la tine să gândesc?

Cum să nu gândesc la tine?

Ba toate alte mai bine

Ce-i în lume voiui uita,

Toate ideile mele,

Cărți cetite, și pre ele

Toate le voiui depărta.

Orice din copilărie

Am avut spre bucurie

Toate le voiui pune jos,

Și porunca ta cea mare

Cu multă înfierbântare

O ascult mai bucuros.

Oh ceriule! Oh muere!

Oh om rău! Spurcată here!

Om de răs, spurcatule!

Muere făr’de rușine!

Om făr’de lege ca tine

Nu e blestematule!

Astfelu unde să mai poate

Să le iau în scris pre toate”.

(Scrie)

“Puteți râde surezând,

Râdeți acum, ce vă pasă

Ori și unde va să iasă!
 În fărâdelegi răsând!
 Auziți ce-mi zice mie?
 Sănătate bună, ție
 O fiul meu cel iubit!
 Adu-ți aminte de mine
 Și te socotește bine
 C'ai văzut că sânt scârbit" (*Filele*, p. 257-258).

Comparing this version and the original text, we notice the following differences: the word *nerves* in Shakespeare's text becomes *vine* (veins), memories no longer fade away, they are put down according to the Hungarian *le-tenni* and hardly ever add any new idea (Bogdan-Duică, 1933, p. 130).

After Weilen, the scene where the beautiful white bosom was deleted, in Schöder, the verses addressed to the Queen by Oldenholm appear in act III, scene 2; in Barac's version, they appear as being truncated - act III, scene 2:

"Zi, mândro, că cele s(f)inte
 Și că adevărul minte
 Și că el va fo greșind;
 Să nu crezi că arde focul
 Și soarele în mijlocul
 Verii ziua strălucind;
 De nu crezi, puțin îm(i) pasă,
 Numai atâta să iasă
 Din inima ta, poftesc
 Ca biruință să fie
 Și să-mi crezi tu numai mie
 Precum că eu te iubesc".

Another scene that reflects the expression of the Shakesperian work in Barac's vision is scene 7 from act III, which, according to the original text, is the equivalent of scene 2 from act II after the departure of Rosenkranz and Guildenstern:

"Amlet (singur)
 Acuma sânt numai eu
 Să-m[i] mai vărs amarul mieu
 Aha tu curvariu de casă,
 Spărgătoriu de bună masă!
 Fără suflet ucigaș!
 Un vânzătoriu preste fire
 Și fără milostivire,
 Mai mult ca un ciumăgaș,
 Amestecătoriu de sânge,
 Nu te temi că te vor strânge
 Pentru tâlhăria ta?
 Om rău și fără simțire

Făr'de lege preste fire
 Care grea seamă vei da!
 Oh, ce de nimic răbdare
 Mă oprește așa tare?
 Pre mine, un fiu ce sânt
 Al prea scumpului meu tată
 Să nu-mi izbândesc odată
 Moartea lui de pre pământ?
 Să mă las ca o muere
 Slabă și fără putere,
 Care numai cu ocări,
 Cu limba își izbândește
 Spre vrajmaș și-l ocărăște
 Cu hule și cu mășcări.
 Dar sânt vreri în căpățân!
 Și cu sabia în mână!
 Oh, vai de voi slăbiciuni!
 Socotește înaițe,
 Tu precepere și minte,
 Privind la deșertăciuni,
 Am aflat că vinovatul
 Îș[i] dobândește păcatul
 În teatru atunci când
 Așa faptă îl lovește
 La suflet și îl rănește,
 Lucru potrivit jucând;
 Când omorul limbă n'are,
 Îi aduce oarecare
 Povestiri și graiuri vii
 De fapta cea tăinuită,
 De omor ca dovedită
 Rămâne la oameni vii,
 Voiu să le dau înaintea
 Cuvânt la acești vuminte
 Teatraliști a juca
 O faptă asemănată
 Cu a bunului meu tată
 Omor, și-l voi apuca,
 Atunci, dacă n-are limbă,
 Să-i văz fața cum să schimbă,
 A craiului vinova,
 Rama deschizându-i-să
 La os pătrunzându-i-să
 Păcatul cel încuibat;
 Apoi voiu vedea mai bine
 Că Duhul care la mine
 Noaptea mi s'au arătat
 Va fi duhul ce mă pune

Să fac și eu o minune
 La ce m'au înfierbântat,
 Așa cursă-i voiui întinde
 Prin care eu îi voiui prinde
 Și îi voiui descoperi
 Cunoștința sufletului
 Cu prihana cugetului,
 Precum se va nimeri.
 Eu sm un temei mai mare
 Decât acea arătare
 Care mi s'au arătat;
 O privesc să fie
 Care să-mi arate mie
 Păcatul cel neertat,
 Ca să prinz cu cunoștința
 Sufletului și căința
 Craiului a să muștra
 Dându-să de gol pe sine
 Să priceapă ori și cine
 Că nu va putea răbda".

Barac's text resembles an autochthonous popular ballad, in which one is surprised to find the presence of the first person of the present tense of the verb "a voi" (to want), its future tense "voiui" (I will), the gerundial that lengthens the state of things ("deschizându"-opening, "pătrunzându"-entering), the verb being dominated by all these moods at a lexical and morphological level at the same time, through an attitude of genuine familiarity.

As a consequence, the Anglo-Saxon atmosphere is not only diminished, but completely eliminated, the morphemes that the protagonist utters sound very Romanian in style, with many interrogations and rhetorical exclamations, which turn the translation into a personal creation, thus leading to the disappearance of the original scenes of the Shakespearian drama lyric poem.

The fact that Barac's translation would have had the merit of being published in 1928 is justified by Bogdan-Duică (Ion Colan, p. 49, *apud* Bogdan-Duică, 1933, p. 133) through Ophelia's monologue in Act III, Scene II, which corresponds to Ophelia's last line in Act III, Scene I in the original text:

"A unsprezecea arătare.

Ophelia (singură)

Oh ce suflet nobil s'au stricat aici. Ochiul unui bărbat de curte, limba unui învățat, sabia unui viteaz, așteptarea ca să înflorească nădejdea statului, oglinda în care toți se oglinda, ca să-i placă. O modelă dela toate ce este mare, frumos și vrednic de iubire s'au nimicit cu totul. O eu nenorocita care odată cu așa poftă sugream armonia lingușirilor lui și acum caută să văz în ce chip își dă din sine duhul cel mai frumos tonul cel mai stricat, ca și clopotul cel spart și cele neasemănate flori ale virtuții care acum înfloria cum se veștelesc într-o întunecare nebunii! Oh vai mie! căci am văzut ce am văzut și căci văz ce văz (Să duce)".

In his analysis, Bogdan-Duică refers to Ophelia's Songs (Act IV, Sc, 5, V, 6, V, 10) concluding, „ The evidence entitles me to say that only an insane Englishman, or maybe a German, also insane, would consider publishing Barac's entire Hamlet, which translation will, however, be mentioned in some detailed history of how Hamlet became known, in the still unwritten chapter about Shakespeare in Romanian” (Bogdan-Duică, 1933, p. 134).

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