# TO BE OR NOT TO BE POSTMODERN: ROMANIAN APPROPRIATIONS OF "SHAKESPEARE" AND THE IDEA OF POSTMODERNITY

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**Abstract**. *Drawing on postmodernist critical theory and geocritical literary studies, this paper challenges the suitability of studying Romanian translations of Shakespeare as cultural projects* per se *and asks for an integration of these aspects in the larger cultural frameworks of the periods in which they were produced and the geographic coordinates of the country that produced them. Considering Baudrillard's concept of* simulacrum*, the "as-if" nature of reality—likened to theatricality— this study invites to a reconsideration of Shakespeare's iconicity in the light of postmodern theories and practices. The study examines a corpus of Elizabethan translations of Ovid and Montaigne by Arthur Golding and John Florio to prove that translation practices in Shakespeare's time fulfilled a functional purpose of attuning the emerging English national language and culture to classical and contemporary values. In the same manner, the Shakespeare icon was used by late-nineteenth-century Romanian translators to fashion an emerging cultural identity congruent with the system of European values. Just as Shakespeare could be interpreted as a postmodern author before postmodernism, translations of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century Romanian culture are landmarks that challenge pre-established notions of iconicity and rate the vitality of a particular culture.*

**Keywords**: *Romanian Shakespeare, Ovid, Montaigne, post-modernist critical theory, geocritical literary studies, translation studies*

The contemporary cultural icon suitably named "Shakespeare" is an eclectic product of both postmodern critical theory and postmodernist interpretations of the Elizabethan author's plays in the theatre. Just as the word *postmodernism* has been used in different ways and, therefore, can refer to different things, the relational quality of what we now name "Shakespeare" has been exploited by critics and theatre directors alike. Jean Baudrillard famously claimed that everything today is composed of *simulacra* of previously existing things (166–84). A simulacrum is a copy, something having merely the form or appearance of a certain thing, without possessing its essential substance. Nothing ever refers to any "real" that would exist beyond the endlessly circulating world of signs. Postmodern pastiche puts together a large number of references, allusions, copies and altered versions of other texts with no overriding principle and where everything has equal value. Therefore, postmodernist eclecticism is often said to destabilize the authors, genres, and idioms from which it borrows its elements. Does this practice destabilize the previously unshakeable stability of Shakespeare's authority as the icon of literary value? Or does Shakespeare's iconicity give its strength to various postmodern interpretations? This paper will highlight the paradoxical ambivalence of Shakespeare's cultural appropriations in the light of postmodern theories and practices. The argument will address the challenges of translations of Shakespeare's works in the Romanian culture and the modes in which these translations responded to particular social, political, and spatial prerequisites.

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Moreover, the paper will prove that, according to the translators' statements contained in the paratexts, Elizabethan translations of the classics in Shakespeare's time were used in a similar manner—and for the same reasons—as late-nineteenth-century Romanian translations of Shakespeare's plays.

There are no simple answers to the questions about Shakespeare's iconicity mentioned above, because the eclectic mix and variety of approaching Shakespeare in the past half-century have been overwhelming. There is a postmodern "Shakespeare" created by academia, mostly in American universities,[1] and postmodern interpretations of individual plays in theatre[2] and film[3] productions, as well as several variant translations (into Romanian, for example) of a particular Shakespearean play, used in certain postmodern productions of that play. Each of these cultural constructs is an innovative form of approaching Shakespeare from the margins, in a postmodern perspective. In this way, the vitality of any culture is often measured by the status Shakespeare has within it. Contemporary readers and writers continue to exploit Shakespeare's cultural afterlife in a vivid and creative way, in what has been termed as Shakespearean "appropriation" or, according to Terence Hawkes, "a transfer of emphasis from 'text' toward 'context'" (xiii). As Stephen Bretzius rightly observes in *Shakespeare in Theory: The Postmodern Academy and the Early Modern Theater*, "Shakespeare's centrality to a wide array of sometimes competing and contradictory postwar critical paradigms emerges itself as one more effect or consequence of this larger institutional displacement, from the early modern theatre to the postwar, postmodern university" (2). Just as, in early modern theatre, there was an ambivalent relation between appearance and reality, the "as-if" (simulacrum) nature of contemporary culture is further underlined by the way it specifically relates to the Shakespeare cultural icon.

The works of Shakespeare have come into the postmodernist environment with high-minded expectations. On the one hand, the *Complete Works of Shakespeare* (as it has been passed down through the centuries via the 1623 First Folio), or the Shakespeare canon, represents perhaps the most highly valued text of all literature. For instance, on the BBC radio show entitled *Desert Island Discs*, guests choose the seven recordings and one book without which they could not live; but they consider the complete Shakespeare and the Christian Bible as taken-for-granted necessities. As we can observe, the value of Shakespeare is guarded as a kind of cultural treasure. This value remains intact even in the age of postmodern eclecticism, as film and TV directors create innovative productions of the plays. As seen in the postmodern light, we enjoy Shakespeare on the basis of the "as-if" or the simulacrum of his greatness. Shakespeare has come to mean for many theatre directors and actors a symbol of the theatre. In addition, many famous lines in the Shakespeare canon seem to refer to the theatricality (the "as-if" nature) of life or to the fragility and emptiness of language. An example in this respect is Macbeth's statement that life is a tale "Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing" (5.5.25-27).[4] In the

[1] To give only one example of each postmodern critical theory initiated in the field of Shakespeare studies, it is necessary to mention: the new historicist Shakespeare, initiated by Stephen Greenblatt, in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (1988); feminist Shakespeare, in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* (Swift Lenz et al. 1983); psychoanalytical Shakespeare, interpreted in *After Oedipus: Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis* (Reinhard Lupton and Reinhard 1993) and *Shakespeare in Psychoanalysis* (Amstrong 2001); presentist Shakespeare, outlined in *Presentist Shakespeare* (Grady and Hawkes 2007). See also *Shakespeare and Contemporary Theory: New Historicism and Cultural Materialism* (Parvini 2012).

[2] See *Contemporary Shakespeare Production* (Coursen 2010).

[3] See *Authorizing Shakespeare on Film and Television* (Pittman 2011).

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same line of reasoning, Hamlet's iconic "To be or not to be; that is the question" soliloquy (3.1.58-90) states what a postmodernist might easily refer to as the ontological ambiguity of existence.

Whether we approve or disapprove of it, postmodernism describes situations that have apparently replaced those that previously dominated: values of truth, reality, authority, taste, or judgement. Postmodernism supplants these traditional values with an eclecticism of styles and genres that give the impression to repeat them in an endlessly vacant way. At its best, postmodernism is aware of having supplanted what was previously a dominant and oppressive value system built on binary oppositions, hierarchies and privilege—and Shakespeare in earlier interpretations (Romantic, Victorian, etc.) would qualify as such an example. At its worst, postmodernism is a chaotic and disorderly mélange where "anything goes," according to Jean-François Lyotard (76).[5] In this respect, for example, there is an American online resource centre for fishing and camping tips entitled *Shakespeare*, a free application with the complete works of Shakespeare on the AppStore and iTunes, or a chain of restaurants and *pâtisseries* in the United Arab Emirates named *Shakespeare and Co*. On the other hand, postmodernism is also connected with "historical eclecticism," "nostalgia for the past" and "usable traditions," as Andreas Huyssen avers (112). From this perspective, the plays themselves, in their eclecticism and in their often violent abuse of the generic stabilities of Renaissance literature, can be regarded as postmodern before postmodernism. For this reason, "Shakespeare" would qualify as a rightful justification for the numberless postmodern appropriations of his works, seen from various perspectives and adapted to various spaces.

The cultural space of appropriation for the artistic paradigm named "Shakespeare" has become particularly important in recent critical theory. As Frederic Jameson observes, the crisis in historicity dictates a return to the question of temporal organization "in the postmodern force field" and a return to "the problem of the form that time, temporality and the syntagmatic will be able to take in a culture increasingly dominated by space and spatial logic" (323). Indeed, the cultural space of reception and adaptation of Shakespeare's works in the canon has acquired new meanings in current critical practice. Poststructuralists[6] and postmodernists have attributed cognitive significance to the culturally mediated spatial sensibilities and acknowledged the tension between literature, the production of culture, and the politics of place. In addition, the interdisciplinary "spatial turn" in literary and cultural studies has been pinpointed by theoreticians such as Michel Foucault and his heterotopias ("Of Other Spaces" 22; "Space, Power, Knowledge" 136), Deleuze and Guattari and the "deterritorialization" process (111–48; 167–91), and the premise concerning the "production of space" by French Marxist philosopher and social critic Henri Lefebvre (171). According to Lefebvre, "Today, the analysis of production shows that we have passed from the production of things in space to the production of space itself" ("Space" 186). In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau argues for a distinction between *lieu* and *espace*—the first being a particular, specific place that can be seen in opposition to mobile and indeterminate "space" (117).[7] In Certeau's account, *lieux* are characteristically constructed by the strategies of dominant groups, who use techniques such as

[4] All references to the Shakespeare text are keyed to *The Complete Works* (Wells and Taylor 1992).
[5] Lyotard argues that, in postmodernism, "Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture" (76).

[6] For a review of post-structuralism and "relational space" in human geography see *Post-Structuralist Geography* (Murdoch 2006).
[7] For related arguments emphasizing the primacy of space over place and narratives as "spatial syntaxes" see Certeau 115.

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mapping, planning and inscription to stabilize the meanings of particular locations, asserting thereby the primacy of place over time.

Perceptions and representations of space in literature, therefore, can be interpreted in various ways, according to the particular culture that produced or translated the specific works. Geocriticism as a critical method that focuses on space, places, and geographical interaction in literature has been conceptualized by Bertrand Westphal and Robert T. Tally, Jr. In Westphal's view, "Geocriticism will work to map possible worlds, to create plural and paradoxical maps, because it embraces space in its mobile heterogeneity" (73). The conceptual framework of geocritical practice, according to Westphal, is delineated by spatiotemporality, transgressivity, and referentiality, and "transgression imposes heterogeneity, along with polychrony (the combination of different temporalities) and polytopy (the composition of different spatialities)" (6; 43). In a similar line of thought, Monica Matei-Chesnoiu discusses the representations of geographic features (rivers, sea-cities, and islands) in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays as a new form of "geoparsing" literary discourse (7). In the light of these postmodern critical theories, it is helpful to interpret comparatively the techniques of translation and interpretation of literary texts in two different—and yet similar—spaces and time periods: sixteenth-to-seventeenth-century England and nineteenth-to-twentieth-century Romania. With the advent of modernity at the turn of the twentieth century, Romanian culture adopted Shakespeare in a renewing mode, reshaping a specific cultural identity based on archaic language and practices according to the models of modernized Western theatre. This process is similar to the approach to translations and adaptations of the classics in the Elizabethan period. Moreover, echoes of these classical texts are found in the theatre of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. These discourses are testimonies of translating culture into the practice of translation in different geographic spaces, three centuries apart.

The "culture-and-society" mode of reflection as theorized in Britain by Richard Hoggart (379–80), Stuart Hall (277–94), and Chris Barker (130–33) has been constituted as a theoretical framework that takes into account multiple voices and languages and draws on different conceptual streams and methodological approaches. This domain is continuously extending its boundaries to include social theory, cultural anthropology, ethnography, and—more recently—cultural geography. The notion of interdisciplinarity invoked here—an issue also discussed by Gibson and McHoul (23–35)—draws attention to "the centrality of articulation" of various disciplines, as Paul Bowman argues (182). Therefore, the interdisciplinary approach emphasizes the meaningful points of contact among diverse areas of knowledge rather than isolated concepts applied to individual fields. For this reason, transgressing the boundaries among disciplines reveals their inherent difference and diversity. Approaching comparatively the translation practices of Shakespeare's time as culturally edifying and nationally oriented products, along with the late nineteenth-century Romanian appropriations of the cultural icon named "Shakespeare," could reveal similar goals and practices. Indeed, early modern English translators of Ovid and Montaigne had the same ultimate goal as the early Romanian translators of Shakespeare's plays: to frame an emerging national cultural identity according to universally accepted models. Their analogous aspirations revealed the fashioning of subjectivity and the modes of experiencing cultural and social space.

When the cultural-spatial critical lens focuses on Elizabethan translation theories and the practice of translation in Shakespeare's time, research highlights the polyvocality of the genre and interdisciplinarity of the intellectual approaches. In the introductions to the English translations of late-sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century versions of texts written in French,

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Italian, and Latin, translators illustrate, in an exemplary manner, the dialectics of their profession. They admit to being confined by the inherited state of their language and, at the same time, being free to mould and extend its limits. For example, in his dedication to his patroness, the Countess of Bedford, John Florio (the translator of Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* into English, published in 1603) finds an analogy in classical mythology on the subject of translation practice. He considers his art like that of Vulcan, who "hatchet this *Minerva* from that *Jupiter*'s bigge braine" (sig. $A2^{r}$–$A3^{v}$). Florio sees himself as the "fondling foster-father" of Montaigne's brainchild ($A2^{r}$); he transported the symbolic child from France to England, dressed him in English clothes and taught him to talk "our" tongue—although, he admits, "with a jerke of the French Iargon" (sig. $A2^{r}$).[8] Indeed, in Florio's view, the translator is a craftsman (like Vulcan, the god of metalworking and the forge in ancient Roman mythology). A translator does the best service he can to his native language and culture by making known the works of contemporary or classical thinkers, whose works are under the sign of Minerva, the goddess of wisdom.

Taking into consideration the cross-cultural refashioning of translated texts in Elizabethan England, it is relevant to concentrate on the high point of English translators' activity around the turn of the sixteenth century and shortly after. For this reason, this paper will further consider one of the translators that have marked the genre: Arthur Golding, the translator of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Golding's translation[9] ran through seven editions from 1565 (when the first four books were translated) to 1612. In his dedicatory epistle in verse, addressed to the Earl of Leicester and dated Barwicke, 20th of April 1567, Golding lists the moral lessons to be drawn from each of the fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses*, published in the 1593 edition. Finally, he concludes by comparing his patron's "honor, health, and welth" to that of Nestor or Tithonus in classical mythology; while Nestor was described in Homer's *Iliad* as a wise man who fought on the side of the Greeks in the Trojan War, Tithonus was the lover of Eos (the dawn) and was often represented as a rhapsode with a lyre in his hand. The metaphor proclaims the Earl of Leicester as a patron of the arts, who supports the dawn of literature and translation in Elizabethan England. Golding includes himself among the "students" who "travel to enrich our toong with knowledge" (sig. $A4^{v}$)[10] and be an asset to their native country. It is clear, therefore,

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[8] In Elizabethan English, a "jerk" was a quick pull or twist; therefore, the translator admits to the influence of the French language (or "jargon") in his translation, but the cultural appropriation aspect is prevalent.

[9] Liz Oakley-Brown's introduction to *Ovid and the Cultural Politics of Translation in Early Modern England* highlights the importance of the vernacular renditions of the poem in fashioning early modern English identities (1–22). In "Translating the Subject," Oakley Brown argues that English versions of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in particular the anonymous fable *Narcissus* (1560), Thomas Peend's story of *Hermaphroditus and Salmacis* (1565), and Arthur Golding's *Metamorphosis* (1567), are arenas for complex shifts in the construction of the English subject at this time; Golding's translation depends on Calvinist policy and defines the English, Protestant, masculine subject (48–84).

[10] The full fragment of Golding's dedicatory epistle to the Earl of Leicester is the following:
And therefore breefly too conclude, I turne againe to thee
O noble Earle of Leicester, whose life God grant may bee
As long in honor, health, and welth as ancient Nestors was
Or rather as Tithonussis: that all such students as
Do travel to enrich our toong with knowledge heretofore,
Not common to our vulgar speech, may dayly more and more,
Proceede through thy good furtherance and favour in the same
To all mens profit and delight and thy eternall fame

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that translations of Ovid (among others from classical writers) were used to extend the linguistic and literary horizons of Elizabethan culture.

The influence of Ovid on Shakespeare has been demonstrated by several critics.[11] As one of the editors (1904) of the 1567 edition of Golding's translation of the *Metamorphoses*[12] states, "Amongst the direct sources of Shakespeare's works, after North's *Plutarch* and Holinshed, probably the most important was Ovid" (Rouse i). Demonstrating that the classics have a central importance in the structure of Shakespeare's imagination, Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor conclude that "This was the result of the prestige of antiquity, the influence of Renaissance humanism and the character of the educational curriculum" (2). As for the consequences of Ovid's use in grammar-school education, Colin Burrow notes that Elizabethans would be able to "hybridize" (18) the classics: "They could ornament and embellish Ovid, as Shakespeare does in *Venus and Adonis*, weaving him into a mass of textual authorities culled from a wide range of classical and post-classical reading, encrusting him so thoroughly with adages and exempla, chronographies and *sententiae*, that his original outlines were entirely obscured" (Burrow, "Shakespeare and Humanistic Culture" 17–18). The texts under discussion highlight the functionality of Elizabethan and Jacobean translations of classical and contemporary literature and their role in shaping the cultural identity of the emerging English nation. As Shakespeare used, combined, and conflated other writers' stories to show his audiences the political and social realities of his time, the age's translators did their cultural work of interpreting foreign texts by using the "clothes" and the tools of their trade, adapted to a specific geographic space.

Culturally-framed and geographically-determined translations of Shakespeare's plays, as seen from an intertextual postmodern perspective, in the light of cultural geography and geocritical literary studies, acknowledge that translation is by no means a neutral form of mediation but rather one which alters the original in various ways. This kind of translation affects not only grammatical structures but also the cultural assumptions underlying the language of a text. The space in which the rhetorical functions develop is just as important as discourse itself. Translation that calls attention to these markers of national difference is, thus, an important vehicle of aesthetic education, a project at once literary, social, and political. Therefore, it is essential to highlight the importance of these features for current ideas in postmodern translation theory about the inseparability of literary works from their linguistic and cultural contexts. In addition, analyses of a corpus of Elizabethan English translations of classical and contemporary authors (from Latin, Spanish, Italian, and French) existing in Shakespeare's time demonstrate

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And that (which is a greater thing) our native country may
Long time enioy thy counsell and thy travell to her stay. (sig. A4$^{v}$)

[11] A number of studies deal with Ovid's influence on early modern English literature. For example, in tracing the presence of pagan myths of metamorphosis from antiquity through the Renaissance, Leonard Barkan discusses the revival of paganism in the European Renaissance and Ovid's impact on literature and visual arts in this period (171–241). Exploring the reception of Ovid in English literature, in the chapter "Ovid and Ovidianism: influence, reception, transformation" (1–21) Sarah Annes Brown aims to establish a continuous "Ovidian" tradition of the *Metamorphoses* (17). Discussing Shakespeare's myths derived out of Ovid, Charles and Michelle Martindale observe the Latin poet's popularity at the most prolific time of Shakespeare's creation, noting that "in the 1590s there was a general vogue for Ovidian narrative, which waned thereafter" (82). Robin Headlam Wells, in *Elizabethan Mythologies*, parallels the masque in *The Tempest* and Gonzalo's dream of an egalitarian utopia with Ovid's version of the Golden Age myth (74–75). See also Colin Burrow, "Ovid" (93).

[12] A more recent edition of Golding's Ovid, by John Frederick Nims in 1965, was republished in 2000 by Paul Dry Books. In the introductory essay to this edition, entitled "Shakespeare's Ovid," Jonathan Bate points out the fact that Shakespeare drew copiously on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: "Scholars have calculated that about ninety per cent of Shakespeare's classical mythology refer to stories included in this epic compendium of tales" (Bate xlii).

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that Elizabethan authors used translations for the same purposes: to renew language and practices and to keep in touch with the new cultural frames. Their work was a form of resistance and conformity, at the same time, to the social, political, or religious pressures of the power establishment.

Exploring the ways in which Shakespeare's plays were rewritten, appropriated and disseminated via translations and adaptations in 1890s Romania, it is possible to find certain similarities with 1590s Elizabethan England in point of the production of functional translations of the classics. For example, several of the topics related to the formation of a national language and identity, which demonstrate the significant role that translation had in this process, were treated similarly by sixteenth-to-seventeenth-century English writers and by nineteenth-to-twentieth-century Romanian translators. Like their English predecessors, Romanian intellectuals in the 1890s defended the importance of a unified national language and of an original, national literature in the process of defining and stabilizing Romanian national identity. In addition, Romanian religious orthodoxy had a partial influence in shaping national identity, just as Anglican Protestantism worked its meanings in Elizabethan England. Romanian translations and imitations of those foreign works belonging to the world literature canon were deemed to be instrumental for the attainment of these aims. For this reason, Shakespeare was a central cultural project in Romania in the 1890s. Authors approached the practice of translation pragmatically and provided functional translations, adjusted to cultural, political, and geopolitical purposes

The status of an emergent culture in the nineteenth century, located at the margins of Europe and barely shaping its cultural identity according to Western values, Romanian culture attained a critical point as concerns the intellectual potential in the 1890s. Following the 1859 unification between Wallachia and Moldova and the 1877 liberation from Ottoman rule, the country was ready to embrace modern values, and translating Shakespeare was a primary task. Sean Cotter comes in support of this idea in his analysis of Constantin Noica's definition of "Romania as Europe's Translator." Regarding Romanian culture and the need for translation, Cotter notes:

Translation is a central concern for the 'minor' countries of Eastern Europe, small geographical areas with relatively few native speakers in each language. The anxiety of minor status, at the crossroads of empires, extends to a mistrust of translation's globalizing reach. Translation into English, German, or Russian can be read as the translation out of national specificity, the end of a national idea. Yet a minor country can never be truly insular. Because of its minor status, it must interact with major countries and cultures (an awareness that the major is not obligated to share). The minor country constantly faces the practical need for translation in order to be understood abroad and to digest major cultural texts at home (Cotter 79–80).

Indeed, Sean Cotter's analysis of the need for translation in what he calls "the minor national imagination" (80) is exceptionally pertinent. Therefore, it is possible to show similarities between Elizabethan culture in the unstable conditions of the 1590s and Romania in the 1890s. While fostering an emerging sense of nationhood, the Elizabethans were marked by their insularity and made assiduous attempts to rise to the level of France or Spain—the undisputed powers of the time. The exit ways out of the marginal status and the position of political weakness consisted in adopting classical culture cogently. In a similar manner, in the desire for international recognition, Romanian intellectuals in the 1890s promoted a pragmatic engagement with major cultures—and the adoption of Shakespeare as a classical figure was chief among their goals.

Three case studies have been examined in support of the idea of cross-cultural translations in a specific space and time, namely 1890s Romania: *Julius Caesar* by Barbu

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Lazureanu (1892) and by Scarlat Ion Ghica (1895/1896), as well as the translation of *Antony and Cleopatra* by Scarlat Ion Ghica (1893). Forged directly from English and printed in Bucharest at lucrative printing presses, these translations were stepping stones in shaping cultural identity in accordance with western history and Roman values, as they were perceived by (and re-written for) the Romanians. These translations of the plays had been used for the stage, as documented by the archives of the National Theatre in Bucharest. It is important to note that translations of Shakespeare—who was considered a "classic" in nineteenth-century Romania—contributed to the modernization of both national theatre and language practices. In this respect, in analyzing the making of Romanian cultural identity, forged in the late-nineteenth century marked by modernization, Alex Drace-Francis concludes: "the structure of Romanian cultural identity is not specifically Romanian but is built up around an ongoing relationship with a variety of normative models located elsewhere" (199). Such a normative model was represented and justified by the exceptional expansion of literary translations of Shakespeare's plays during the 1890s period. I argue that the adoption of "Shakespeare"—not only as a literary model but as a figurehead of cultural and moral values—was specific to this particular space and time. Mainly *Julius Caesar* was a play that adduced the values of Latinity closer to the Romanians' home—if we consider that they had ever left the land during the period of Cyrillic religious writing in Romanian culture or the Slavic and Turkish influences in the language. In addition, increased literacy in 1890s Romania, the development of print and of the periodical press[13] represented factors that facilitated these cultural achievements.

The questions investigated in this paper focusing on three Romanian translations of Shakespeare's plays include the relation of these 1890s translations to the movement of democratization and the renewing parameters of national identity. Did the two translations of *Julius Caesar* reflect the notions of bourgeois liberalism and constitutional democracy related to the adoption of the 1866 Constitution[14] in the Romanian Principalities? Did the connection between the historical Julius Caesar and the Dacian Kingdom of Romania's classical past[15] play a role in the selection and the recurrent translation of this Shakespearean play in 1890s Romania? Did the ambivalence of the dramatic representation of Roman values in both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the relations between East and West, subjection and power, affect the Romanian translation of the play in this period marked by an emerging sense of national identity within the geopolitical context? How relevant was the connection with Roman history, interpreted through the filter of a time of change (the Elizabethan fin-de-siècle when these plays were written), for the period of change represented by the 1890s Romania? The answers to these questions lie in the production and dissemination of the translations of these Shakespearean Roman plays at this particular time and in this particular space.

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[13] Cultural historian Alex Drace-Francis documents that the number of pupils enrolled in primary education in Romania more than doubled from 1865 to 1890 (149); the number of urban high-schools doubled, from 30 in 1865 to 73 in 1890 (150); as for the printing press, in 1859 there were presses in only seven of the localities of the Principalities and by 1890 this number had risen to forty (161); after the election of Carol of Hohenzollern as ruling prince of the Romanian United Principalities in 1866, "journalism and printing spread to smaller provincial centres and became a truly national phenomenon" (172).

[14] The Romanian Constitution adopted in 1866 was modelled on the Belgian Constitution of 1831 but it was adapted to the social realities of the Principalities. For a historical survey of the adoption of the Romanian Constitution see Hitchins (114–15).

[15] Historian Keith Hitchins states that the Dacian king Burebista took the side of Pompey in the civil war between him and Julius Caesar; he made an enemy of Caesar and, if Caesar had not been assassinated in 44 BC, he would have mounted a punitive expedition against the Dacians. Moreover, Burebista himself suffered a similar fate at the hands of his nobles, at about the same time with Caesar (7–8).

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Romanian translators sought to renew linguistic practices based on respected classical models, in order to emphasize an emerging sense of nationhood drawing on the Romanians' Latin origins. Shakespearean representations of Roman history—revealed through the translations of *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*—were used to allude to contemporary political issues, such as the destabilizing force of power conflicts and (civil) war. Translations of Shakespeare's Roman plays in the 1890s reflected the movement towards democratization, manifested through the notions of bourgeois liberalism and democracy related to the adoption of the 1866 Constitution in the Romanian Principalities. However, the ambivalence of the dramatic representations of Roman values in both *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, the oppositions between East and West, influenced the Romanian translators' choices in this period, marked by an emergent sense of national identity within the geopolitical context. Roman history—interpreted through the filter of a time of change (the Elizabethan fin-de-siècle when these plays were written)—was reflected in the period of change represented by the 1890s Romania. In this way, these translations debated ambivalently the values of Latinity to suit the Romanians' aspirations. This aspect helps to better understand Romanian alterity in the geopolitical context.

In point of literary translation, the 1890s period was marked by an intense translation activity that mainly aimed to further the standardization of the literary Romanian language and to support the formation of an extensive theatrical repertoire. Concerning the appropriations and translations of Shakespeare in Romania, the 1890s interval was dominated by the production of numerous target-oriented, indirect translations and free adaptations, rendered under the influence of the French neoclassical rules. The translations were no longer from French and German intermediaries but from English, and they demonstrated a revival of the interest in the Latinity of the Romanian language. Despite the fact that many previous translations of Shakespeare were published in Cyrillic alphabet, they paved the way for the increasingly modern versions produced after the 1890s, when the newly-recuperated Roman alphabet was gradually asserting its valorising power. For these reasons, Romanian translations of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra* contributed to an increased interest in demonstrating the Latin origin of the Romanian language. Despite the fact that these versions contained many archaic terms and words with religious connotations—mostly based on the Slavic vocabulary used in church practices—translations of these two Roman plays represented one step ahead on the way towards the modernized language used in a specific historical and literary context.

By opening up and finalizing a discussion on what aspects are recognized in each culture/context, how they are similar and how they may be different, we can learn far more about translation and our own attitudes and prejudices than by applying norms or theories. The fin-de-siècle periods have always been times of change. In the 1890s—a transitional period in Romanian history and culture—translations of Shakespeare as a classical model played a crucial role in the process of cultural exchange. The Elizabethan 1590s was a similar time of change, in which translations/transformations did their cultural work in the construction of national identity. By interpreting translations in the cross-temporal, cross-cultural, and cross-spatial modes, this paper has demonstrated that the geographic location of a specific culture influences the way this culture positions itself with regard to the geopolitical factors. The parameters for the adoption of translations of respected texts—whether they are from classical authors in the Elizabethan period or from Shakespeare as a classic in the Romanian fin-de-siècle—are represented by polychronicity (1590s and 1890s), multicultural variety (English and Romanian cultures in the multilingual European context), and polytopicality (the British Isles geography and Romania as

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an island of *Romanitas* among neighbouring Slavic nations). The complicated networks created by the translated texts in geopolitical contexts demonstrate that geographic space influences the porous cultural boundaries and the perception of the other as much as the economic, political, or religious factors do. Therefore, the challenges of the cross-cultural/cross-temporal/cross-spatial translations are meaningfully inscribed in the historical, economic, religious, but mostly geopolitical parameters of the changeable fin-de-siècle.

The translation strategies and cultural initiatives for the new theatre adopted in the late-nineteenth century in Romania concerning "Shakespeare" display similar characteristics to those produced in Shakespeare's time. Mentalities and translation practices evolve over time and, especially at turning points in specific cultures, translation practices fulfil an essential role in aligning the values of that culture with the globalizing and modernizing tendencies. For this reason, the turning point in early modern English culture was marked by the expansion of the world view caused by the recent geographic discoveries and travels, which called for new voices to mirror those mentalities; Shakespeare was there to speak for the emerging English nation. Similarly, Romania—at the turn of the nineteenth century to the twentieth—was renewing its cultural voice in the light of a unified national language and the formation of the national state. Shakespeare was there as well to speak to the Romanians through the voice of his translators. They re-wrote the iconic author in a globalized perspective, while fashioning an emergent cultural identity. As in any postmodern approach to literature, the authority of "Shakespeare" was, at the same time, appropriated for cultural renewal and modernization and undermined by contradictory eclectic tendencies. This is what "to be or not to be" means in the Romanian reception of "Shakespeare."

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