

# *Shakespeare in the Romanian Cultural Memory*



## **Project for the Romanian National Council of Research in Higher Education 2005-2008**

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The project focuses on the reception of Shakespeare in Romanian culture by offering a systematic approach to the appropriation of the Shakespeare canon in Romania diachronically, from its inception in early nineteenth century up to the present. Theatrical productions, reviews, critical receptions, translations, and literary adaptations are brought into focus with a view to offering a comprehensive perspective. Such a global approach is the first of its kind in Romanian culture.

The Romanian contribution to Shakespeare studies is very rich and comprises important names of Romanian and English scholarship, such as Leon Levitchi, Alexandru Dutu, Dan Dutescu, Dan Grigorescu, Mihai Bogdan. However, there is no systematic approach to deal with this important amount of information, in accordance with current requirements of modern bibliographies and databases. The aim of this project is to record and publicize Romanian contributions in the field of Shakespeare studies and integrate them in the European and world circuit. In this way, an important part of Romanian culture will be known abroad through the circulation of Romanian translations, theatre, criticism, and literary adaptations. Moreover, Romanian culture itself will be able to define its identity in this particular aspect of the reception of Shakespeare as a fundamental text of European culture. This bibliographic and analytical research project extends over a period of three years.

The division of the research work along the three years is as follows:

- 2005-2006: Research of translations, productions, criticism, and adaptation of Shakespeare in the nineteenth century
- 2006-2007: Research of translations, productions, criticism, and adaptation of Shakespeare in the first half of the twentieth century (1900-1950)
- 2007-2008: Research of translations, productions, criticism, and adaptation of Shakespeare in the second half of the twentieth century to the present.

The results of the first year of research are posted partially on the *Shakespeare in Europe: SHINE* website. The volume entitled ***Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Romania***, Edited by Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, With a Foreword by Ton Hoenselaars (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2006) was published.

Essays in this volume belong to Shakespeare scholars from Romanian universities and they deal with various stages of the reception of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century Romania. The foreword by Ton Hoenselaars points out the scope of "European Shakespeare" research studies "to assess how each individual country contributes to this transnational phenomenon, to analyze how 'Shakespeare' is constitutive of what is generally termed 'Europe.'"

The introduction by Monica Matei-Chesnoiu points out the importance of Shakespeare's appropriation in nineteenth-century Romania at a time when the country was forging its way towards a conflicting modernity.

The volume contains eight essays by Romanian Shakespeare scholars and a bibliography of translations and critical studies in this period. The essays are: "Shakespeare in Eminescu's Early Gazeteering" (Eugenia Gavrilu); "Recycling Old Texts: Petre Carp's Translation of *Macbeth*" (Pia Brinzeu); "Shakespeare and Revolution (Ana-Maria Tupan); "English History from Page to Stage: An Early Romanian Translation of *Richard III*" (Monica Matei-Chesnoiu); "Illustrated Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Romanian Translations" (Ileana Marin); "Shakespeare's Influence on the plays of Ion Luca Caragiale" (Marina Cap-Bun); "Lexical and Grammatical Aspects of a Romanian Translation of *Hamlet, The Prince of Denmark* (1855)" (Aida Todi); "Psych Constructions in Shakespeare's Plays: A Comparative Study of Romanian Translations" (Camelia Bejan).

The volume was well received by the international academic community. Besides the entries in the World Shakespeare Bibliography, there are reviews in *Cahiers Élisabéthains* (by Ruth Morse), *Shakespeare Yearbuch* (by Tobias Doring), Romanian journal *Drama*, and the journal *Folio* (The Netherlands).

The results of the second year of research (2006-2007), containing Romanian translations, productions, and criticism about Shakespeare in the first half of the twentieth century continued to be posted on the *Shakespeare in Europe: SHINE* webpage. The volume entitled ***Shakespeare in Romania: 1900-1950***, Edited by Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, With a Foreword by Stanley Wells (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2007) was published. Essays in this volume belong to Shakespeare scholars from Romanian universities and they deal with stages of the reception of Shakespeare in the first half of the twentieth century in Romania.

The Foreword by Stanley Wells highlights the "profound" influence Shakespeare's works have exerted on many aspects of Romanian intellectual, artistic and political life. As Wells points out, "It is moving to read of Shakespeare's impact on Romanian intellectuals and artists in times of national conflict and repression" (8).

The Introduction by Monica Matei-Chesnoiu addresses the fundamental question: "which place is Shakespeare actually native to?" and explains it by the fact that "the Shakespeare text is responsive to action upon it, that it cooperates with adaptation, and offers itself up for conversion and transformation" (10).

The book contains ten essays by Romanian Shakespeare scholars and a bibliography of Shakespeare in Romania in the period 1900-1950. The essays are: "Haig Acterian: Spirituality and Shakespearean Catharsis" (Pia Brinzeu); "Before the Fall: Shakespeare's Modernity on the Romanian Stage - Ion Sava's *Macbeth* and the Turmoil of the Forties (Marian Popescu); "I am Always in Shakespeare: Recourse to Shakespeare in the 1940's - The Case of Mihail Sebastian" (Eugenia Gavrilu); "Our Virtues Lie in the Interpretation of the Time' - Dragoş Protopopescu's War Time Translations" (Mădălina Nicolaescu); "Early *Hamlets* in Romanian Productions: 1861-1942" (Monica Matei-Chesnoiu); "From Stage to Page: the Intricate Mechanisms of Intercultural Transfer - A Case Study of *Macbeth* and Caragiale" (Marina Cap-Bun); "Shakespeare in Romanian Art of the First Half of the Twentieth Century" (Ileana Marin); "Shakespeare: the Modernist Hypotext" (Maria-Ana Tupan); "The Earliest Romanian Critics of English Culture" (Dan Grigorescu); "Shakespeare in the Repertory of the National Radio Theatre: Silence Seen as a Figural Event" (Ana-Maria Munteanu).

The research for the third year (2007-2008) is ongoing. In this period we have the largest amount of material that has to be processed and published. The project will be finalized with a third volume, ***Shakespeare in Romania: 1950 to the Present***, Edited by Monica Matei-Chesnoiu, With a Foreword by Balz Engler. There will be another volume of Romanian texts of Shakespeare criticism, entitled ***Shakespeare in Romania: Texts 1836-1916***, and a CD-ROM with scanned and processed materials of all the texts resulting from this research.