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'Thou art translated:'
A Midsummer Night's Dream
and the Translations of Culture in Romania

Writing about the "functional" role of Shakespeare translations in the Low Countries, seen in relation to the literary and theatrical systems in which they occurred and by which they were conditioned, Dirk Delabastita notes that "Shakespeare in the Netherlands has a split personality." (Delabastita 1993: 221) The author observes the marked difference between the literary and the theatrical Shakespeare in early translations and explains the relatively slow penetration of translations of Shakespeare into the core of literary and theatrical progressive movements through the persistence of the high authority of French Neoclassicism in European drama. As a so-called *francophone* country, Romania is even more likely than the Netherlands to have been influenced by French models in theater and literature. The first Shakespeare translations were made in mid-nineteenth century via the French versions of Le Tourneur, and theater directors of the time preferred to use these strongly modified and romanticized interpretations in their productions. Moreover, since Romanian is a romance language, there is a striking similitude with French in point of dealing with translations from English. As Jean Michel Déprats observes, there is a difference of proportion, of volume, between English and French, and this feature makes the French translations of Shakespeare seem too slow and exceedingly heavy (Déprats 2001: 25) Like the French versions, the Romanian Shakespeares, even when in verse, need more words and diction space than the English original texts.

In examining the history of Romanian translations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the past century, my study approaches these texts from the historical, linguistic, theatrical, and from a cultural perspective. Few echoes from the contemporary translation research can be applied to this essay. The plain reason is that, in the periods in which the Shakespeare translations I am referring to were effected, there was no mention of the translator's invisibility (Venuti 1995), or meaning that is attached to a translation loosely (Benjamin 1992), or translation norm, model, and difference. This is a traditional historical approach, simple in its practicality, which aims to show and, maybe, to demythologize the concepts of "domestication" versus "foreignization" in literary translation. By fragmenting and exploiting contradictions inherent in the process of translation of one comedy during various periods of linguistic, cultural, and political progress in Romania, this study elucidates a cone of shade in the national negotiations of European Shakespeares. I hope to show how this particular text is used to reflect the changing conditions in this eastern part of Europe in the period of a century. The focus here is on the relationship of the Romanian translations of the *Dream*, not to the first, but to the second language, highlighting the different ways in which Romanian language is altered and expanded by contact with the Shakespeare text. Likewise, I intend to demonstrate that the early translations of the play have inserted Romanian cultural and folklore allusions, achieving ethnocentric and theater-oriented versions, which would be an explanation for the auspicious conditions and large number of performances this play has seen in Romania, as elsewhere.

One caveat I have to point out is that in none of the Romanian printed versions of the comedy have I been able to identify the original English text that the translator had used. This inscrutability of the sources is a recurrent Romanian cultural inclination, probably emerging from the chameleonic tendency of a small peripheral culture vis-à-vis the English, German, or French cultures. Therefore, I have to ignore the references to particular English editions of the play by using a single testimonial source text, the *Arden* edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* edited by Harold F. Brooks. Even so, there are so many linguistic, folkloric, mythological, literary, and theatrical points to ponder on in these Romanian translations of the *Dream* that a particular English edition would only complicate matters to a higher degree. Moreover, these Romanian translations are based on a different concept of fidelity. They fragment the original totality of the Shakespeare text, starting with a perception of insufficiency. The Romanian translator from any period senses a quality in the Shakespeare language, reflected in the original text, which the target language lacks. The translator is faithful to this conception and tries to recreate it in the Romanian language. A translation in this sense starts with criticism and ends by

pointing, not to the first, but to the second language. It explores the translator's native language and, if successful, changes it by assimilating this insufficiency and transgressing it.

1893: Theatrically Imaginative Translation

G.P. Sterian creates the first translation of the *Dream* for the comedy's first Romanian production on stage, on 24 January 1893, at the Bucharest National Theater. The famous Romanian actor D. C. Nottara played Oberon and directed this notable production, which was graced at the première with the presence of King Charles I of Romania and his Queen Elizabeth, the minister of culture, the general director of the theaters, and many other personalities. The translator was a member of the cultural committee officially in charge with producing this play. What makes this *princeps* Romanian translation and production piquantly and disturbingly similar to the circumstances of the play's production in the Elizabethan period is the fact that the occasion for the production of this comedy was also a noble wedding. When Prince Ferdinand, the king's nephew and heir, married the Princess Maria, the royal family celebrated their wedding with a production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, involving all the official and cultural faculties of Romania in this project. The last page of the printed translation is an ode dedicated to the royal couple by the poet Dumitru Constantin Olănescu, which begins and ends with „Welcome to us, Bride and Groom!" (Sterian 1893: 121–123)

The Romanian translation of the *Dream* is in prose all over, but the play's verse passages have an internal rhythm that distinguishes them from the prose portions in the original text. The title page announces that this is a "fairy comedy," and the translator used the Romanian word *feerie*, which is derived from the French *féerie* and *fée*. Though there are no act divisions in Q1 and no scene divisions in the F text, this translation announces 3 acts and 4 tableaux, with detailed setting descriptions for each scene. For instance, at the end of the *Dramatis Personae* list, the reader finds out that "The scene is set in Athens, in heroic times, as imagined by poets and artists in the Renaissance." (Sterian 1893: 13) The translator gives very accurate stage directions, which emphasizes the fact that this is a theater-oriented version. The tone in the opening scene is grandiloquent and heroic, with a tendency to hyperbolic language. Theseus and Hippolyta address each other in redundant paraphrases of royal grandeur, probably meant to highlight the princely status of the wedding that occasioned the production.

For instance, Hippolyta calls Theseus "Grand Duke" and he addresses the Queen of Amazons as "Wonderful Queen! Unvanquished warrior!" when neither of these appellations exists in the Shakespeare text. Moreover, before the entry of Egeus, Hermia, Lysander, Demetrius, and Helena,[1] an entire declamatory passage is introduced. After having been reminded by Theseus that he had conquered her with his sword, the acquiescent Queen of Amazons admits her defeat, and invites her "master" to sit by her. In response, Theseus addresses a direct exhortation to the audience from the haughtiness of his throne, inviting them to be merry and happy, because anxiety has no place among them. (Sterian 1893: 14–15) The translator of this theatrically bombastic and archaic Romanian version affords many reallocations of dialogue, additions of music cues to the stage directions, and effects a large number of cuts and annexations to the original text.

The Romanian rendering of the title (*A Dream on the Night of Sânziene*) testifies to a form of cultural transmigration in translation, because the night of *Sânziene* is the exact equivalent of the Midsummer Night in Romanian folklore. Though the comedy's title can be read as both *The Dream of a Midsummer Night* and *A Dream of Midsummer Night* (Brooks 1993: xx), the translator's choice to emphasize the folkloric reference is disturbing, considering the similarities between the English and Romanian folklore practices, emerging from a common European pastoral community. The Christian celebration of St. John's Eve on the night of June 24th is also associated with pagan rites in Romanian folklore. The name "Sânziene" comes from the Latin *Sanctus dies Johannis*, it refers to the celebration of St. John on June 24th, and it is an alternative designation of the wood fairies in Romanian. (Fochi 1976: 316–20) As a folk festival, this is a time of summer feasting and a celebration of love in Romanian folklore. Children, maids, and women go to the woods on this particular night and collect magic herbs, including a plant by that name ("sânziana" or *Gallium verum*), they make flower garlands, put them under the pillow, and dream about the predestined lover. The supernatural creatures populating the woods, the Romanian equivalent of the fairies, are called *zâne* or Sânziene and they are said to give magic power to the healing herbs, to lure humans into the woods and make them mad, and to predict marriages in the coming year. Sterian's late nineteenth-century translation of the *Dream* is the only one in the series that preserves this folkloric allusion with important archaic resonance in the title.

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[1] In the Shakespeare text, Helena enters after the exit of Theseus *et al*, which gives Lysander and Hermia a moment of intimacy before Helena's appearance. The scene with Hermia and Lysander alone is completely dropped in this Romanian version.

An interesting choice of the translator concerns the rendering of the references to mythology. While Theseus mentions "Diana's altar" (1. 1. 89) in his announcement of the punitive consequences of Hermia's disobedience of her father's will, Sterian uses "Artemis's altar" (1893: 18). The Greek version of the goddess's name implies the translator's assumption that his readers/audiences are familiar with both names, but the Greek direction yields a more scholarly interpretation. In like manner, when Lysander refers to the moon, he calls it "Phoebe" (1. 1. 209) in the Shakespeare text, while Sterian uses the Greek name Selene. In his disenchantment of Titania, Oberon uses the antidote flower of chastity, which he names "Diana's bud" (4. 1. 72), and in the Romanian translation it is "Artemis's flower." (Sterian 1893: 89) Shakespeare uses the artifice of Greek and Latin denominations, mostly borrowed from Plutarch in the case of the characters' names, in order to create the impression of an imaginary classical world, eruditely familiar and yet different for the Elizabethans. Had Sterian used only the Latin references mentioned in the original text, he would not have achieved the same effect, because Romanian audiences and readers were accustomed with allusions to Latin mythology. The Greek names, however, bore a mark of classical erudition and difference that had the same effect on Romanian readers and audiences as the Latin cognomens of classical gods would have had on the early modern spectators.

In point of language, this nineteenth-century Romanian version of the *Dream* is a testimony of the disruptions and incoherence between the two language systems, which are not symmetrically organized. Therefore, the translator must render the original sense and a concrete motivation, a form, a volume, a metaphor. For example, Hippolyta's "Four nights will quickly dream away the time" (1. 1. 8) is translated as "the nights will quickly turn into large clouds of dreams." (Sterian 1893: 14) In addition, the use of monosyllables in Shakespeare may have an allegorical meaning, such as, for instance, Puck's and Oberon's occult incantations. In this case, language is atomized in a succession of brief vocables. These are the verbal translations of magic action and have a special persuasive force on the audience. With particular care for this aspect of his version, the Romanian translator renders Oberon's spell when he charms Titania with the magic flower (2. 2. 26–30) and Puck's faulty enchantment of Lysander (2. 2. 65–82) in the same verse form as the original, only changed to rhyming quatrains instead of couplets. Thus, the translation preserves the incantation force of the original text and, when read aloud, has a special mesmerizing power.

Another incompatibility between the two language systems makes it impossible for the Romanian translator to achieve the same rhetorical effect as Shakespeare does. In English, the short words of Anglo-Saxon origin are confronted to the longer words of Latin extraction. Shakespeare uses

both registers with various purposes. When he wants to suggest deep emotion or to render magical incantations with eerie resonance, he uses solid monosyllables of Anglo-Saxon root. Whenever the argument reaches an ampler rhetorical scope on the rational side, Shakespeare uses sophisticated words of Latin derivation. This dramatic effect is lost in the translation into a romance language, which needs more words, most of them of Latin source, to convey the same meaning. The nineteenth-century translator solves this problem in a creative mode. Though forced to preserve the Latin grammatical structure of the Romanian language, Sterian uses a number of words of Slavic origin, extant in abundance in the Romanian antiquated vocabulary. Thus, besides the different sonority of various passages in the original text, the translator achieves the dramatic effect intended by Shakespeare, and a particularly attractive flowing quality of the archaic Romanian language. This artifice is impossible to be used in modern translations of the *Dream*, because the language has lost most of its Slavic-sounding words in favor of neologisms of French and even English derivation.

The Slav-origin words have a large number of "sh," "ch" and many palatal sounds, which gives a mellifluous sonority to the dramatic discourse. Moreover, in modern translations, Shakespeare loses the baroque plurality, which he exploits adeptly, expressed by the abundance of words. This nineteenth-century Romanian translation has the advantage of still preserving the honeyed language of mannerist expression, which was common to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, but is lost in later modern translations. For instance, the flower *love-in-idleness* is translated as *val-de-dragoste* (love-surge), where both words are of Slavic origin, though Romanian also has the French-derived neologism *amor* and the translator might have had a choice. Similarly, *Robin Goodfellow* is *Robin Băeat-Bun*, a literal translation where one word is Latin (*Bun*) and the other is Slavic (*Băeat*). At 1. 2. 35, Bottom' s bombastic language and his mispronunciation of Hercules as *Ercles* are rendered faithfully in the Romanian text as *Hercol*. The following verses in rhyming couplets respect the suggestion of breaking rocks by reference to a Romanian mythical folklore corresponding personage named *Sfarămă-Peatră* („Break-Rock"). The succession of „ă" sounds, like the final sound in „the," plus the abundance of gerunds reproduce effectively the dynamics and the alliteration of the Shakespeare text in this passage. This early Romanian translator has the advantage of being able to use vocabulary of Slav origin and the literary affectation that was still a fashion in the nineteenth century without falling into ridicule. His archaic discourse can still afford to be mellifluous and smooth, unlike the modern language, which has become more pragmatic, rugged, and abrupt.

1913, 1921, 1947: Poetically Theatrical Translations

The first half of the twentieth century sees some of the most beautiful translations of the *Dream*, made by famous Romanian poets, whose contributions marked a definite advance in the modernization and development of this language. They invested the foreign-language Shakespeare text with domestic significance, and negotiated the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign and significantly archaic text of the comedy by reducing the linguistic asperity and supplying another set of differences of a cultural nature. Through their work of translation, the popular Shakespeare play is inscribed in the Romanian theatrical and literary territory with indigenous intelligibility and attractiveness. The choice of discursive strategies belonging to these poets results in a virtuoso accomplishment, which is not exactly cross-cultural communication, but a complex community of the two languages. Though the Romanian they use has the fluency faculties of the archaic mode, their language accounts for the concepts of heterogeneity and hybridity applied from the direction of the Shakespeare text to the Romanian version.

The first twentieth-century Romanian translation of the *Dream* is by Șt. O. Iosif and it appeared in sequences in a Romanian literary journal in 1913.[2] The first full materialization in printed volume was forty years later, in 1956, when another Romanian poet, Florin Tornea, revised the translation and published it in a volume of Shakespeare's *Complete Works*, published at the Socialist State Publishing House. This cultural project of publishing Shakespeare frequently and in various translations was one among the many attempts of the communist regime at legitimizing their cultural supremacy by appropriating the works of the classics and giving them newly made-up aspects. This particular collection of the plays, however, contains one of the most accomplished Romanian translations of the *Dream* by Șt. O. Iosif. Devising initially a theater-oriented translation, which includes detailed stage directions for each scene, the Romanian poet succeeds in surpassing the seemingly incontestable differences between the two languages. He recreates a sort of musical idiom with different inflections than the original one, which is at once attitudinal, poetic, and theatrical. It is as if Shakespeare's English has lost its corporeality and has been re-incarnated into a distinct romance-language body.

A note on the front page announces that the present edition is a translation by Șt. O. Iosif edited by Florin Tornea. (Iosif 1956: 301) The original stage directions, designed by the poet in accordance to the requirements

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[2] The translation entitled *Visul unei nopți de vară* by Șt. O. Iosif first appeared in *Viața Românească* VIII (1913), numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5.

of the modern theater, have been faithfully rendered, and a footnote by the editor marked the stage directions in the Shakespeare text. This intervention of the editor in the clarification of the text differences in point of stage directions was necessary, because Şt. O. Iosif inserts elaborate suggestions of décor in prose, which creates a special poetic atmosphere non-existent in the Elizabethan theater. For instance, at Act I scene 1, Iosif's version of the *Dream* gives the following stage directions:

A grove near Athens. In the background, a sloping road forked into two paths, one to the right, the other to the left. In the middle, on the left, a small copse of flowery bushes, where Titania sleeps enchanted by Oberon's love weed. Night. Pale moonlight among the leaves. Stars. Roaming lights. Shreds of floating mist. Glow worms. Enter Puck. A fairy from the other side. (Iosif 1956: 323)

The translator creates a magic atmosphere through the mere description of the scenery, which in the original text reads simply: "Enter a Fairy at one door, and Puck at another." (Brooks 1993: 26) Such poetic artifices of theatrical visualization of the play's setting, though not exactly part of the actual strategies of literary translation have a role in creating a potent theatrical effect for the readers and the audiences, provided that the director follows the indications in detail. Iosif effects a cultural transliteration of the comedy's setting, by transposing the magic atmosphere into words of his own, and anticipating the enchanted effect of the actual verse.

The entire translation is in rhyming couplets and quatrains, except from the prose passages in the Shakespeare text. Some rhymes are rather forced and unusual, such as *mînia* (anger) / *Hermia*, or *Helena* / *Atena*, and *cetăţenii* (citizens) / *Atenii*. These inadequacies are rather an asset than a failure of the translation, however, because the poet forces the reader or the auditor to go along his rhythmic pattern and forge new rhymes from different or new pronunciations of the word. Being an accomplished poet, like Shakespeare, Iosif took special pleasure in evidencing the multiplicity of possible meanings derived from one word or expression. Probably aware of the fact that "wordplay and translation form an almost impossible match" (Delabastita 1996: 133), Iosif is not very much concerned with rendering the Shakespearean puns, ambiguities, and elaborate conceits where they occur in the text. Instead, the poet uses the Romanian language in the same way as Shakespeare does with English, by letting different possible senses glide over the central axis of meaning whenever the Romanian linguistic context allows it. Thus, instead of inventing comparable paraphrases or explicating the puns in the original text in elaborate footnotes, the Romanian poet creates his own wordplay by using the Shakespearean poetic strategy on the material of the second language. Because of this creative practice, the translation becomes target-language-oriented. In this way, Iosif's version

contributes to the enrichment of Romanian through the elegant and creative translation process of Shakespeare's comedy.

Another special Romanian translation by the poet G. Topârceanu, *Visul unei nopți de vară*, published in 1921, tells us a lot about the fascination which Shakespeare's verse exerted on Romanian poets. This writer goes so far as to identify his poetic muse with Titania, the Queen of Fairies, who is in love with an ass, in a poem entitled *Prefață* (Preface). In this literary parody using multicultural references, the poet reproaches his muse that she has deserted him, suspecting her of infidelity:

> Haven't you slumbered by a stream,
> Awakening in the velvet grass
> Confused, enamored with an ass
> Like in *A Midsummer Night's Dream?*[3]

Contrary to all expectations from a Romanian poet that was so attracted to this Shakespearean comedy, Topârceanu produces an all-prose translation, which does not even preserve the faint internal rhythm of verse in the verse passages from the source-language text. This particularly faithful Romanian version would be an excellent example for Venuti's concept of the translator's "invisibility." Though exceptionally versed in the ways the Romanian language works and sounds, Topârceanu chooses to remain in the background as a poet and let the essential significance of the text transpire through his simple prose translation. On reading this version, one has direct access to the informative and narrative dimension of the play, and the translator renders with utmost precision every metaphor, wordplay, ambiguity, or classical reference exactly as in the original text. It is as if this refined poet wants to make a statement by retiring to the background of the translation and letting the text speak. Instead of translating "himself" by translating Shakespeare, such as an eminent poet attuned to the specificity of the Romanian language would be tempted to do, Topârceanu prefers to appear as the mere storyteller of a comedy entitled *The Dream of a Midsummer Night*. Paradoxically, this focus on lexical concordance, with the poet paying special attention to the text's significance, makes the specific poetic action of the Shakespeare text come forward affirmatively. Thus, Topârceanu's translation becomes visible because it invites to an aesthetic and critical interpretation.

The elegant Romanian poet appears in full possession of his capacity of manipulating the language in the selected verse passages, which show that the translator could render precisely the lexical accuracy, rhythm, movement, and poetic density of the Shakespeare text. In the passages in

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[3] My translation from the Romanian text of the poem *Preface* by G. Topârceanu.

which only verse can render the magic of poetic discourse, Topârceanu uses rhymed couplets or quatrains. For instance, in the alliterative and burlesque passage where Bottom extols his artistic qualities for playing a tyrant or the all-destroying Hercules (1. 2. 27–34), the curt sequence of rhymed four feet verse is translated in eight-feet rhymed couplets. The double length of the verse form in Romanian is due to the metrical specificity of this romance language, which, like Latin, needs more words to express the same idea. Yet, the Romanian version preserves the rhetoric inflation and the mock-heroic tone of the original. At the beginning of Act II, which makes the transition from the real world of Athens to the magic world of the wood through the exchange between Puck and a Fairy, the fairy's words are in enchanting incantation modes. "Over hill, over dale,/ Over park, over pale" (2. 1. 2–15) appears in the same rhymed verse repetitive form resembling a spell, only that, again, the scansion reveals a double metrical structure.

Exceptional in its Romanian-oriented tangibility and physicality is Topârceanu's translation of the passage showing Oberon's enchantment of Titania (2. 2. 26–33). The first verses of the Shakespeare text are:

> What thou seest when thou dost wake,
> Do it for thy true love take;
> Love and languish for his sake.
>   (2. 2.26–8)

Topârceanu makes his verse form shorter, using many „sh" sounds (letter „ș"), and the directness of address and repetitions of sounds vibrate exactly like a Romanian ancestral magic incantation of love.

> Pe cine-i vedea
> Cînd te-i deștepta
> S-ă iubești,
> S-ă dorești,
> După el să lîncezești!
>   (Topârceanu 1921: 33)

This double strategy of preserving a precise but monotonous narrative tone throughout the translation of the play, with exceptional insertions of remarkable verse, has peculiar consequences on the Romanian readers and audiences. They perceive in this way that Shakespeare's English is a river in motion and Romanian is a river in motion, and they realise that the translator is forced to make ineffable connections between the two live languages. By paying attention mostly to hermeneutics, but also to the musical momentum of the vital verse in action, Topârceanu realises a dynamic

and vigorous poetic translation, which adjoins the reasonable pleasure of the text's meaningfulness to the delight of listening to its music.

A translation of the *Dream* that raises a number of unanswered questions is published in 1946, for the inaugural season of the *Odeon Theatre* in Bucharest. The printed text looks like an elaborate theatre program, with a scholarly introduction, anonymous too, and then presents the usual cast of Romanian actors, choreographs, and set designers, under the direction of Ion Şahighian. The front pages display sketches of the sets, designed by M. Marosin and Valentina Bardu, who are the winners of a national competition for designing the sets of this production. The following sixty-two pages are the translation employed in this remarkable spectacle, but nowhere can the reader find the name of the translator(s). I can only suppose the theatre employed them with the same purpose as the set designers, to offer a high-quality translation for a special production of the comedy. This Romanian version shows not only the translator's familiarity with the nooks and crannies of the English language, but also a good command of blank verse in Romanian. Yet, since the fluent body of the Romanian language can have the smoothest motion in hexameter, rather than iambic pentameter, this is the verse form used throughout the translation, except for the prose passages.

Like the previous early twentieth-century translations, the comedy's title is *The Dream of a Midsummer Night, Visul unei nopţi de vară*, a translation that precludes any connection with the magic St. John's Eve and the mystical connotations of the night of *Sânziene* in Romanian folklore. This title and its prosaic realist meaning suited very well a barely established communist regime that promoted the Marxist materialist view of the world, and whose adepts tried to appropriate every cultural item to suit their ideological needs. Because of this inclination and exigency of providing a positivistic and sanitary version of the *Dream*, devoid of all putrid scent of mysticism and mystery, the anonymous translator uses an elegant but spiritless language, barren of all poetry. The cultural insertions meant to give local colour to the Shakespeare text are taken from the domain of Romanian folklore, which is deprived of all references to occult practices. The young couples act and speak with the directness of country folk, and some of their classical names have become like the appellations of everyday Romanian youth. Helena becomes *Elena*, a very common Romanian name, and Lysander is *Lisandru*, which is a familiar rustic abbreviation of the name *Alexandru* in Romanian.

The mechanicals' language is even coarser than Shakespeare meant it to be, and the translator uses certain strategies pertaining to the rural colloquial Romanian language structure in order to render their rough exchanges. For instance, when Bottom wants to prove that he can play

Thisbe too, because he can speak in a "monstrous little voice" (1. 2. 48), the translator uses the specificity of popular Romanian, which, like Spanish, uses diminutives as terms of endearment. Shakespeare changes only one consonant to show the sonority of Bottom's small voice, and "Thisbe" becomes "Thisne" or "Thisby" in some editions.[4] In the Romanian version, Bottom – the would-be actress – calls his imagined lover-girl *Thisbişor*, which is a diminutive derivation from the name Thisbe, but sounds very uncanny in the context, because of the combination of a popular Romanian diminutive form appended to a classical name. A similar strategy makes the translator render "Robin Goodfellow" (2. 1. 34) as "Daddy Robin-the-Devil," (p. 21) followed by a series of Romanian folk references to the spirit as a devilish incarnation. In the same passage, "sweet Puck" (2. 1. 40) becomes "evil spirit," and "Hobgoblin" (2. 1. 40) is "the Evil One" (p. 21). All these periphrases with diabolical and malevolent connotations in Romanian culture make Puck seem an incarnation of malignant forces at work in a fairy world that looks like the Romanian countryside.

When the translator has two choices of words in Romanian, one of Greek origin and one of Latin derivation, he selects the Greek word because it might sound just as unfamiliar to Romanian audiences as Latin would to the English. The bewitched Lysander, on waking up, sees Helena with enchanted eyes, and addresses her with the majestic sounding expression "Transparent Helena!" (2. 2. 103). Although Romanian has this Latin-derived word transparent, in exactly the same spelling and similar pronunciation, the translator chooses the appellation *Elenă diafană!* This is a Greek word, penetrating into Romanian via the French *diaphane*, and the resonance of this exotic utterance has the same cadence as *trans-pa-rent* from Latin. Another opportune choice is Quince's famous „Thou art translated" (3. 1. 114), in the sense of transformed. This Romanian version is the only one that uses a similar word, the equivalent of „translate" in Romanian: „Vai, Bottom, cine te-a *tradus* în halul ăsta?" (Anon 1947: 33), which would be literally „Alas, Bottom, who has *translated* you so badly?" To the Romanian audiences, since this is a part designed for the theatre, the Latin prefix *trans-* would signify directly a process of transformation, metamorphosis, and the Shakespearean allusion would hit directly home, without the need of an explanatory note.

In order to parody the defective use of French in inappropriate contexts, like in Bottom's "Mounsieur Cobweb, good mounsieur" (4. 1. 10), the translator makes reference to a recurrent Romanian habit of using French unsuitably to show off a pretentious refinement and elevated education. In

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[4] For an elaborate explanation of the use of „Thisne" as a pet name for "Thisbe" see B r o o k s 1993, note 48–49, pp. 22–3.

addressing Cobweb, Bottom recites "Madame chère Madame, ma chère" (Anon 1947: 46). The popular, caustic, and coarse nature of the language employed in this anonymous translation is in strict accordance with the period's requirements of demythologisation of Shakespeare's language of magic. The purpose was the creation of a colloquial Romanian version that would appeal to the less educated masses.

The focus on the second language in these culturally oriented translations leads to the hypothesis that the modes in which all the early twentieth-century poets represent Shakespeare in their translations give us an image of how they reflect upon the fundamental potentiality and lyricism of the Romanian language. The translators sensed in the deep structure of this comedy a density of the figurative mode, by which Shakespeare's language moves from one semantic field to the next and navigates felicitously the most incompatible oceans of meaning. Consequently, the translators used different registers to render this closely-knit net of interactive themes and forms. They approached the English text with courage and lucidity and, in translating Shakespeare, they were showing what they felt Romanian poetry should be like in their specific time. Thus, in this period, approaching Shakespeare translation can be interpreted as a form of national poetic accreditation.

1981: Scholarly Aseptic Translation

A remarkable advance in point of erudite transference between Shakespeare's language and culture and modern Romanian specificity has been effected when remarkable Romanian specialists in English studies approached the translation practice from the direction of their professional academic position. Shakespeare scholars such as Leon Levițchi, Dan Dutescu, Alexandru Duțu, and Dan Grigorescu appropriate the Shakespeare text from the high level of their understanding of the Elizabethan language and cultural milieu, and achieve versions that negotiate the linguistic and habitat differences elaborately. These versions show the translators' linguistic skill and the high level of academic performance in the field of Shakespeare studies in Romania. In 1981, Dan Grigorescu publishes his translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in a collection of Romanian versions of Shakespeare's comedies in three volumes. The translation is in elegant rhyming couplets in hexameter verse form, and the prose passages have a particular distinction of internal rhythm.

Grigorescu disperses a large number of erudite footnotes along the text, explaining, for example, the origin of Shakespeare's classical allusions, the contents of the laws of Solon in Athens, or the multiple ironies addressed to the pompous names of certain tragedies in vogue in early modern theatre. When the issue of Flute's small voice is raised in Quince's cast of characters, the translator indicates in a footnote that "In Shakespeare's time, men were still playing women's parts." (Grigorescu 1981: 21, note 1) Moreover, at the beginning of the mechanicals' exchange (1. 2), the translator inserts a lengthy footnote explaining why he has chosen to render the names of these characters in the literal Romanian version. The reader finds out that

Shakespeare inserts these characters bearing English names, artisans from his Elizabethan period, in the classical milieu of his comedy, in order to stress the contemporary references to his time. I have translated the proper names, as the Russian and German translators did, because they are the clear equivalent of a nickname. Through this onomastic strategy, Shakespeare evidenced the comic of the mechanicals' scenes. (Grigorescu 1981: 18, note 1)

Many are the instances in which this academic translator inserts explanatory notes to justify his choices. Whenever certain individual wordplays needed the regulation of different linguistic and cultural mechanisms at the same time, Grigorescu justifies his choice and explains the syntagmatic paronymy. This Romanian version of the comedy tells readers all they need to know about the elaborate process of translation, which works on the physical body of two languages and tries to invest a foreign-language text with indigenous significance.

Professor Grigorescu strives to match coherently the scientifically informative content of certain Romanian equivalents to their English analogues. Thus, he translates the magic flower as *dragoste*. Yet, from a footnote, the reader finds out that in the original text the flower was called *love-in-idleness*, which corresponds to the pansy (Latin: *Viola tricolor*), and in Romanian the flower called *dragoste* (love) is a herbaceous plant with red flowers, by the Latin name of *Sedum fabaria*. (Grigorescu 1981: 31, note 1) When Bottom requires a prologue and Quince promises it shall be written "in eight and six" (3. 1. 23), the translator's footnote dutifully explains this is the form of a sonnet (Grigorescu 1981: 49, note 1). It only remained to be explained that this is the form of the Petrarchan sonnet, while Shakespeare preferred three quatrains ending with a couplet. This particular kind of scholarly translation into modern Romanian of Shakespeare's language exposes the unintentionally subversive side of these accomplished scholars' enterprise. While their extensive knowledge of English and of the early modern cultural paradigm permitted them to approach the text from a variety of perspectives, this very authority undermines the authentic quality of the translation,

because their language and erudite denotations cannot avoid the pitfall of intellectual hegemony.

This chronological study is a bipolar approach to Romanian translations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, from the linguistic and cultural perspective. Employing a positivistic research methodology, I tried to prove that the linguistic and cultural dimensions in these translations develop along analogous routes. Equivalence and faithfulness are the central concepts in all Romanian translations of the *Dream*, with slight differences of focus regarding the transposition of domestic cultural practices, especially Romanian folklore, into the translated text. All translations were theatre-oriented, yet the nineteenth-century translation plays on the cultural dimension and similarities, including the fact that the play was first translated and produced for a wedding. In this case, the translator and his indigenous cultural context become conspicuously apparent.

The early twentieth-century translations belong mostly to remarkable Romanian poets of the time, and they appropriate Shakespeare in the same way as they approach the tradition of their own creation. During the unfolding of the artistic process, these poets deal with the text's temporal and spatial *distance* and *difference* consistently, by not interfering too much with these concepts. In not trying to maximise or minimise the contrariety between the two texts, they just let the distinctions be as large as they are. Thus, the poets' act of translation is a way of making their clear statement about how a creative mind works, by allowing us insights into the way a creative mind interprets the product of another creative mind.

Modern translations of the *Dream*, starting with the post-war versions and continuing to the refined and aseptic scholarly version of the eighties decade, focus on linguistic equivalence as a central concept and evidence a remarkable erudition that is both an asset and a limitation. While paying extensive attention to the linguistic, mythological, and early modern cultural symmetry, the learned translator overpasses the issue of the text's corporeality. Modern translators need to speak a concrete language, which addresses the actor and audience directly and even aggressively in some cases. That is why many contemporary Romanian directors prefer to forge their own translations of the plays. These versions are at once more ephemeral, in the sense that they respond to the needs of a single production, and less scholarly, but definitely direct and theatrically physical. The director-translator pays attention to the oral style and preserves the text's theatricality, which resides in vocal energy and in the suggestion of action, of doing things with words. Whatever the translating strategies and techniques, the end is to make Shakespeare speak to us as we are.

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