

Proposal for Senior Honors Thesis

HONS 497 Senior Honors Thesis **Credits** 2 (2 minimum required)

Directions: Please return signed proposal to the Honors Office **at least one week prior to your scheduled meeting with the Honors Council**. This proposal must be accepted by Honors Council the semester before presentation.

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Primary Advisor: Dr. L. Monique Pittman

Thesis Title: The Romanian Bard: Translating Shakespeare for a Post-Communist Nation

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Expected date of Graduation: May 2020

I. Provide goals and brief description of your project or research.

Though Latin in language and culture, Romania stands pretzled in the midst of Slavic nations. Having suffered from nested orientalism in the context of Western European assumed superiority, a marginalized Romania combats attitudes of cultural inferiority. Detecting the perceived prestige of William Shakespeare, Romanians latched onto his works as a tool to contest their reduced status as a nation, therefore sparking a tradition to perform, translate, and adapt the celebrated canon of William Shakespeare.

Throughout the past century in Romania, Shakespeare's functionality regularly shifted. For example, in Communist-controlled Romania, Shakespearean theater articulated dissent against the political regime; yet now post-Communist era Shakespearean theater acts as a vehicle to voice a desire to assimilate into Western civilization. Romanian-British Shakespeare scholar, Nicoleta Cinpoes, argues that *Hamlet* acts as the ventriloquist of Romanian history; now, *Hamlet* continues the tradition of voicing Romanian's desires through other means. New Romanian translations of Shakespeare's works, known as the Opere Series, emerged leading up to the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death in 2016. These new translations serve to revive the Bard's words and meaning in third millennium Romania. Likewise, the International Shakespeare Festival in Craiova, Romania boasts a similar goal, to elevate Romanian cultural status. The curious question remains, are these methods a means of bringing the world of Shakespeare to Romania or bringing Romania to the world of Shakespeare?

Thus, I seek to assess these methods by which Romania grasps for the cultural prestige of Shakespeare. As Romania stands on the margins of Western civilization and culture in 2018, so it stands on the sidelines of European political and economic partnership. In addition, 2018 commemorates Romania's 100th anniversary of unification; yet instead of enriching Romanian cultural practices, the Opere translations and the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival seemingly overshadow the celebration of Romanian culture with an elevation of a British literary

icon. Romania's fight on a micro level to be accepted in Western culture through Shakespeare is only a battle for the larger macro war the nation fights to be fully accepted in the European Union. In this manner, Romania uses a form of soft power, a non-violent mode of persuasion and influence used by nation-states, to become an economic and political partner with Western Europe.

By and large, Romanian history echoes a lingering and ugly history with Russia and the Soviet Union. With recent Russian aggression on the rise, many believe this is the era of the "new cold war". Although the iron curtain fell over thirty years ago, Romania remains as an ideological battlefield within Eastern Europe, clinging to western cultural values as an example for neighboring nations like Moldova. The yearning for Shakespeare in the twenty-first century is not only a desire for Western assimilation but also a confrontation of Russian cultural values. In using Shakespeare, through both the translations and the festival, Romania facilitates soft power in trying to persuade Western Europe it is of equal status through cultural and social capital. In other words, Romania hopes to capitalize on these forms of cultural products in order to be ultimately assimilated into Western Europe.

To summarize, through exploration of Romanian nationhood and culture, I investigate Shakespeare's purpose in Romania, specifically his transition from a voice of dissent against the Communist regime to a vehicle for cultural, national, and political acceptance in Western Europe. Through examination of the New Romanian translations as a cultural product, close textual analysis of the *Hamlet* text within the series, and analysis of the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival, this project theorizes the methods and practices that drive Romania towards their desired goal of assimilation through soft power. To that end, this project will explore the following research questions:

1. What role does Shakespeare play in Romania's nation building?
2. What is soft power?
3. How do the Opere Romanian Shakespeare translations and Craiova Festival act as cultural and social capital?
4. How does this internal battle of cultural identity mirror the external political and economic problems of Romania?

II. Outline your methodology. Please be specific. How does this achieve your goals and how reliable is it?

Literature Review

To explore the cultural function of Shakespeare in post-Communist Romania, this project begins with a comprehensive secondary literature review of existing scholarship on Shakespeare translation and adaptation in Romania—focusing especially on the Communist era and on the post-1989 context. Because this project examines the newest translation project led by George Volceanov (Opere Romanian Shakespeare), I conducted a literature review of previous scholarship on the theorizing of translation activities and on the history of Romanian translations of Shakespearean texts. Further, I have collected information on the means of production and the sponsoring organizations behind the publication of the Opere Romanian Shakespeare series.

Close-Textual Analysis

In order to examine how Shakespeare transforms into a Romanian nationalist tool of the twenty-first century, I conducted a word-by-word, close textual analysis of Volceanov's translation of *Hamlet*, chosen for its historical significance in Romania. I am a fluent speaker of both English

and Romanian, making feasible this extensive study of a translation. I have compared and contrasted the English and Romanian idioms, noting the word choices and phrases. Through analyzing the text, I examined how the editor's word choices and explanatory footnotes are indicative of a push for Western cultural acceptance.

The next phase of my research includes evaluating George Volceanov's, the main editor of the translations, claims. Repeatedly he asserts that the main motive of the translations was to revive the Bard's words by using modern Romanian vocabulary and creating distance from the previous Communist-censored translations, ones flooded with Russian language influence. His claims to distance from "red" Shakespeare obliges me to conduct a close textual analysis between an older Communist-era text of *Hamlet* and the Opere text.

Translation & Nationhood Studies:

This project's larger purpose serves to further investigate the intersection between imaginative literature and national identity. I use the definitions and notions of nationalism, translation studies, cultural sociology, and soft power to theorize Romania's political climate within Europe. These theoretical understandings provide the framework for examining the Opere Romanian Shakespeare translations and the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival as capital to facilitate soft power.

Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu identifies and defines cultural and social capital in terms that accurately help describe the forms of soft power evident in the translations and the festival. Cultural capital refers to institutionalized prestige and social capital indicates networks of influence. To illustrate, the New Romanian translations, specifically the *Hamlet* text, act as cultural capital while the Craiova International Shakespeare Festival functions as social capital. For the translations, I conduct a line-by-line translation of an English *Hamlet* and a Romanian *Hamlet* noting all the choices made by the editor. I examine the festival through press articles and promotional materials released, specifically a fifteen-video collection on the festival's official YouTube page. These forms of cultural and social capital are an effort to become an equal economic and political partner within the European Union.

III. Explain in what sense your project is original, unique, or beyond normal senior expectations. How does it relate to current knowledge in the discipline?

This project bridges my two disciplines of literature and political science. I demonstrate the importance of exploring a nation's identity through its cultural practices. In this project, I examine Romania's cultural identity as it intertwines with its historical and current political climate.

Considering Romanian is my native language and English is my academic language, I am able to work as a bilingual scholar. While plenty of work is being done on this phenomenon in Romanian-language journals, I am able to contribute in the English-language Shakespeare studies field.

Additionally, the Opere Romanian Shakespeare translations are a new cultural product and as of yet there is limited academic analysis. Further, as the Craiova Shakespeare Festival 2018 occurred in the

Spring, I seek to contribute to the discourse surrounding its phenomena. The Romanian Shakespeare studies world is slowly expanding, and I am hoping to join the conversation.

This project also dovetails with my research advisor's current work on the role Shakespeare plays in various forms of twenty-first century European nationalisms. As Shakespeare moves away from its status as a hegemonic white cultural authority it is important to examine "global Shakespeare" and the diverging strands of Shakespeare studies.

IV. Include a substantive annotated bibliography of similar or related work.

"About Shakespeare..." *Vimeo*, uploaded by Simion Buia, 19 April 2016, <https://vimeo.com/163478517>

This 40-minute video is an interview with George Volceanov who is the official editor and project manager of the New Romanian Shakespeare translations. This interview allows me to test Volceanov's claims about the translations to my evaluation of the translations. *This source is in Romanian.*

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 2006.

Benedict Anderson defines nations as an imagined political community wherein nations are simple constructs of imagined borders. He articulates the problematic roots of constructing nations based on different strands of nationalism. Anderson's theoretical definition of nationhood provides insight into my examination of Romanian national and cultural identity.

Bakic-Hayden, Milica. "Nesting Orientalism: The Case of Former Yugoslavia." *Slavic Review*, vol. 54, no. 4, Winter 1995, pp. 917-931.

Milica Bakic-Hayden's article explores nested orientalism as seen in Eastern Europe. She examines how since the Ottoman Empire, Eastern Europe, specifically the Balkans, has been pushed aside and categorized as "other" in Europe and often seen as backwards compared to Western Europe. Bakic-Hayden brings forth the questions of cultural and ethnic identity throughout former Yugoslavia and argues it will be always subject to a redefinition. This article serves as relevant because Romania also suffers from nested orientalism and ultimately is the cause of its desire to gain Western cultural affirmation.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator." *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913-1916*, edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, The Belknap of Harvard UP, 1996, pp. 253 - 263.

Walter Benjamin argues that translation is a form of art. He questions whether or not the original can ever be fully understood through translations. Benjamin concludes a translation must be a supplementary poetic form to the original work; the translation should essentially illuminate the original work. This essay provides analysis to my work investigating the legitimacy of the New Shakespeare Romanian translations, specifically the *Hamlet* text I translated.

Wong, Melissa Wansin. "Negotating Class, Taste, and Culture via the Arts Scene in Singapore: Postcolonial or Cosmopolitan Global?" *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1, Spring 2012, pp. 233 - 254.

Melissa Wong's article illustrates how Singapore moves from its status as a developing nation towards a cosmopolitan cultural capital. She argues Singapore distances itself from its postcolonial insecurity as a rising economic powerhouse through cultural and arts festivals in an attempt to gain Western affirmation. Wong uses Pierre Bourdieu's theories of cultural capital and symbolic power to demonstrate her argument. Wong's paper acts as a model for the means by which I want to evaluate Romania's similar predicament of gaining Western affirmation through cultural capital.

Cinpoes, Nicoleta. *Shakespeare's Hamlet in Romania 1778-2008: A Study in Translation, Performance and Cultural Adaptation*. The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010.

Nicoleta Cinpoes catalogs the history and significance of Shakespeare's crown jewel play, *Hamlet*. She traces the history of its translation, performance and cultural adaptation. Her book acts as especially vital to understand the rich history of *Hamlet*, and ultimately Shakespeare, in Romania.

Cinpoes, Nicoleta and George Volceanov. Introduction. *Hamlet*. By William Shakespeare, edited by Nicoleta Cinpoes and George Volceanov, Tracus Arte, 2016, 59-69.

The introduction by the two main editors of the Romanian *Hamlet* text serve in identifying their claims of what the translation achieves. *This source is in Romanian*

Cinpoes, Nicoleta and George Volceanov. *Hamlet*. By William Shakespeare, edited by Nicoleta Cinpoes and George Volceanov, Tracus Arte, 2016.

This is the primary *Hamlet* text that I translated line by line and compared with the Arden version. *This source is in Romanian*

Hanna, Sameh. *Bourdieu in Translation Studies: The Socio-cultural Dynamics of Shakespeare Translation in Egypt*. Routledge, 2016.

This resource attempts to utilize Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production as a lens to evaluate drama translations. Hanna examines four of Shakespeare's most translated tragedies in Arabic to demonstrate how translation studies intersects with cultural studies. A chapter specifically explores drama translations as cultural capital and acts as the foundation to examine the New Romanian Shakespeare translations as cultural capital and the Shakespeare Festival as social capital.

Kaplan, Robert D. *In Europe's Shadow*. Random House, 2016.

Robert Kaplan documents Romania's journey from a Communist backwater country to a tourist hotspot in Eastern Europe. He scrutinizes the methods by which imperialism, geography, and history all shape a nation and ultimately foreshadow its future. Kaplan's book supports my understanding of contemporary Romania through its political, national, and historical identity.

Lanier, Douglas. "Shakespearean Rhizomatics: Adaptation, Ethics, Value." *Shakespeare and the Ethics of Appropriation*. Edited by Alexa Huang and Elizabeth Rivlin. Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 21-40.

Douglas Lanier's article observes the new direction Shakespeare studies is turning towards, re-conceptualizing the field of Shakespeare studies. He argues that Shakespeare studies should act as a rhizome and theoretical model, eventually leaving behind the ultimate authority of the text and allowing for different strands of Shakespeare studies to develop. Lanier's theory offers my project a relevant "so what" and reveals the importance of diversifying Shakespeare studies.

Matei-Chesnoiu, Monica. *Shakespeare in the Romanian Cultural Memory*, Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2006.

Monica Matei-Chesnoiu's book considers Shakespeare as an integral part of Romanian cultural memory. She argues its marginalization in Europe caused its desire to adopt, adapt, and appropriate Shakespeare in order to emerge from the cultural shadows of Europe. This resource is useful to the larger discourse of Romania and Shakespeare studies as Matei-Chesnoiu traces the importance of Shakespearean theater in Romania from its usage as tool of dissent against the Communist regime to a cultural marker for integration into Western Europe.

Nye, Joseph S., Jr. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. Public Affairs, 2004.

Joseph Nye's book advances his term "soft power". He defines soft power as using the economic interdependence, institutional power, and attractiveness of culture as a means to influence other nations. This source is useful in revealing how Romania strives towards producing cultural festivals and Western ideals in order to achieve partnership on an economic level.

Pittman, L. Monique. "Shakespeare and the Cultural Olympiad: Contesting Gender and the British Nation in the BBC's *The Hollow Crown*." *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare Appropriation*, vol. IX, no. 2, Fall/Winter 2015.

L. Monique Pittman's essay examines BBC's *The Hollow Crown* as it premiered under the giant celebration of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad including the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the London Olympics. She argues about the dangers of the British nationalism on display as it voids any questioning of Shakespeare's cultural authority. Pittman's consideration of the cultural productions during the 2012 Cultural Olympiad is useful as I compare Romania's similar attempts to champion nationalism during its celebration of 100 years of unification.

Renan, Ernest. "What is a Nation?" *Becoming National*, edited by Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, Oxford UP, 1996, pp. 42-55.

Ernest Renan's essay outlines a theoretical definition of nationhood as being rooted in memories and carefully curated histories. Renan's theorization of nationhood is useful in my investigation of Romania's nationhood building methods and notions of identity.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Edited by Ann Thompson and Neil Taylor, The Arden Shakespeare, 2006.

This is the English text I selected to compare the Romanian *Hamlet* translation. This edition is practical in comparing because it is championed as scholarly and used widely in academia. Further it is the Q2 edition and I examined the Q2 in the Romanian edition for its general acceptance as the most scholarly edition.

Volceanov, George. "Un altfel de Shakespeare – unul fără perdea." *Dilema Veche*, April 2016, <http://dilemaveche.ro/sectiune/tema-saptamanii/articol/un-altfel-de-shakespeare-unul-fara-perdea>

George Volceanov's essay provides the claims and reasons behind the New Romanian Shakespeare translations. Volceanov, the main editor, argues his main goal and purpose for the translations is to revive Shakespeare's relevance within the Romanian public and distance from the previously communist censored translations. This resource is useful in the larger discussion and assessment of the translations. *This source is in Romanian.*

V. Provide a statement of progress to date and list the research methods coursework completed.

The origins of my nationhood theoretical framing paired with Shakespearean close textual analysis developed from Dr. Pittman's class (ENGL 372). Even further I have taken Approaches to Literature (ENGL 267) and Literature and the Arts (HONS 265) as core classes within my discipline to be able to perform close textual analysis and thoughtful framing of the cultural practices impacting and influencing nationhood building.

This past semester I spent time in Washington, DC taking public policy and economic courses that assist my analysis of the new nationalism rising in Eastern Europe and the importance of examining Shakespeare's functionality in a post-Communist nation such as Romania.

Thus far I have presented the beginnings of my research at the National Collegiate Honors Council (November 2017) based off a preliminary paper. The substantial paper includes a brief overview of theoretical framings, analysis of Romania's complex national and cultural identity, and a close textual analysis of my line-by-line translation of the new *Hamlet* text in Romanian. I have also begun comparing a Communist-censored *Hamlet* with the new Romanian translations to further test the editors' original claims. The project will continue to develop as I examine Romania's current political climate in addition to the recent International Shakespeare Festival in Craiova, Romania.

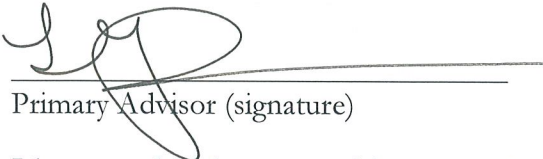
Department Chair Approval

- This student's performance in his/her major field is acceptable.
- He/she has completed the requisite research methods coursework for the research to be pursued.
- I understand that he/she plans to graduate with Honors.


Department Chair (signature)

Research Advisor Approval

I have read and support this proposal:


Primary Advisor (signature)

I have read and support this proposal:

Secondary Advisor (signature)

If human subjects or if live vertebrate animals are involved, evidence of approval from the Institutional Review Board or an Animal Use Committee is needed through the campus scholarly research offices (Ext. 6361).