

**Kristina GRGIĆ**

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
University of Zagreb (Croatia)

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## **Reception and Canonisation of William Shakespeare's Works in Croatian Translation Prefaces**

### **1. Introduction**

Translation research has only recently begun to focus more closely on the form and function of paratexts, drawing inspiration from Gérard Genette's seminal study of this seemingly marginal accompaniment to various types of texts, which is nevertheless laden with meaning. Adapting Genette's metaphor of a threshold, Kathryn Batchelor has provided a broad and functional definition of paratexts applicable within the context of translation studies: "A paratext is a consciously crafted threshold for a text which has the potential to influence the way(s) in which the text is received" (2018: 142). Batchelor also links her definition to Mona Baker's concept of translations and their paratexts as sites for framing or constructing narratives, viewed "as an active strategy that implies agency and by means of which we consciously participate in the construction of reality" (Baker, 2006: 106; see Batchelor, 2018: 145-147). In line with these views, translation paratexts can be analysed in terms of the specific narrative(s) they construct about the translated works and their authors, as well as the reception of these authors in a particular culture, as exemplified by the case of William Shakespeare.

As an object of any narrative of reception, Shakespeare carries significant symbolic weight or cultural capital in the sense outlined by Pierre Bourdieu<sup>1</sup> both in his native Anglophone culture and in the broader contexts of European and global culture (*cf.* Delabastita, 2009: 263-264). The fact that the latter is currently charac-

<sup>1</sup> For the significance of Bourdieu's economy of symbolic goods and field theory in the study of the global circulation of translated books, see e. g. Sapiro, 2008.

terized by strong Anglophone dominance has undoubtedly facilitated the worldwide canonisation of Shakespeare's works; however, their ongoing international dissemination has also enabled various forms and strategies of nonhegemonic appropriation (*cf.* Ciglar-Žanić, 2001). Since Croatian culture occupies a marginal position in relation to the aforementioned international contexts, its reception of Shakespeare is twofold: on the one hand, it is nonhegemonic by virtue of its marginality; on the other hand, this position has continually prompted Croatian culture to use Shakespeare for its symbolic de-marginalisation and cultural legitimation at both the European and global levels.

These attempts are grounded in a rich and varied history of Shakespeare's reception in Croatia, the beginnings of which coincided with the rise in his broader European reception in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When focusing on translations, this history is often presented in narratives of progress, tracing an outline from insecure beginnings to notable improvements and achievements in the second half of the twentieth century (Lupić, 2010: 148-149).<sup>2</sup> This has simultaneously helped position Shakespeare on the national agenda, making his figure and oeuvre a fitting testing ground for a number of important, and sometimes contested, issues in Croatian translation history.

While scholarly research has been central to constructing the overall Shakespearean reception narrative, its key stages and issues can also be mapped out through the analysis of translation prefaces to his works in Croatian, bearing in mind that a number of these prefaces constitute scholarly studies in their own right. This analysis will focus on a representative sample, selected in accordance with G. Genette's more inclusive definition of a preface, which encompasses "every type of introductory (preludial or postludial) text" (Genette, 2001: 161)- in this case, forewords, afterwords, and translators' remarks. The largest portion of the sample pertains to the twentieth century, the most significant and fruitful period for reception, and was largely published by Matica hrvatska (*Matrix Croatica*), one of the key Croatian cultural institutions,<sup>3</sup> which undertook the task of promoting Shakespeare by publishing all his works in Croatian. Beginning with the first edition of a translated play (*Othello*) in 1919, Matica hrvatska published

<sup>2</sup> Such teleological accounts of Shakespeare in translation are common in the history of his international reception (Delabastita, 2009: 264).

<sup>3</sup> That is, endowed with the power to consecrate or ascribe cultural capital (*cf.* Bourdieu, 1996; Sapiro, 2008: 155).

three series of translations-11, 16, and 26 works, respectively -during the twentieth century (both first and second editions), ultimately completing the task with the first edition of Shakespeare's *Complete works* in 2006-2007.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the 48 translation prefaces by Matica (excluding reprints), 11 prefaces in editions by other publishers have been consulted, considering the significance of the original text(s) (*Hamlet* – 2 editions) and their specific position in Shakespeare's oeuvre (the sonnets and the poem *Venus and Adonis* – 4 editions), as well as the importance of the translators: renowned writers Vladimir Nator (*Macbeth*, 1917) and Antun Šoljan (the *Šoljan's Shakespeare* series, 2021),<sup>5</sup> and theatre directors and translators Branko Gavella (*As You Like It*, 1957, 2007) and Vladimir Gerić (*Shakespeare's Selected Tragedies*, 2015 [the foreword and afterword]). The majority of the consulted prefaces are translatorial (in E. Dueck's terms; cf. Batchelor, 2018: 31), as they are not translated source text paratexts but were authored by the translators or Croatian scholars. There is only one translated epitext, i.e., originally published as a separate text (Genette, 2001: 344-370): a scholarly study by Jan Kott included in Matica's third edition of *The Tempest* (*Oluja*, 1979).<sup>6</sup>

In general, Matica's translators have proved to be important figures in Croatian translation history, many of whom were also well-known writers, scholars, and critics. Beginning with one of the most prolific figures, Milan Bogdanović, who played a major role in introducing Shakespeare to Croatian culture and theatre (with 13 translations published by Matica and 9 prefaces), the translators who wrote their own prefaces include Vinko Krišković,<sup>7</sup> Josip Torbarina, Luko Paljetak, Antun Šoljan,

<sup>4</sup> Matica's role in Shakespeare's Croatian reception has been critically examined by Ivan Lupić (2010: 145-220), whose research included translation prefaces to a certain extent, thus providing a foundation for this analysis (in addition to Lupić, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Šoljan's Shakespearean translations in this series had previously been published by Matica hrvatska.

<sup>6</sup> The source of this text ("*The Tempest*, or Repetition" in the English version) is not stated. The inside book cover (somewhat confusingly) describes it only as the preface authored by Jan Kott, which could lead a less informed reader to presume that it was commissioned for this edition (Lupić, 2010: 189). Part of another study by Kott is translated in the conclusion of the preface to *Richard III* by Giga Gračan (1982: 21-22).

<sup>7</sup> Krišković, who managed to publish only one play in translation (*Hamlet*), may have translated 24 or even as many as 29 Shakespeare's plays, whose manuscripts appear to have been lost (Hergešić, 1978: 80-82; Brlek, 2017: 15-16). Fourteen of his translatorial prefaces (out of the alleged eighteen) were, however, published in journals as epitexts, and later collected in separate editions (1934-1935; renewed and complete ed. by Brlek, 2017). This paper will refer to Krišković's first preface to *Hamlet*, which accompanied his translation (1926), noting that it is not identical to the later and revised epitextual version. Today unjustly forgotten, Krišković was not an English scholar by profession, but his studies of Shakespeare's plays demonstrate a commendable level of insight and expertise (Brlek, 2017: 7-8).

and Mate Maras – also the sole translator and preface author in Matica's *Complete Works* (the foreword and afterword). A number of Croatian scholars and critics were specifically commissioned as preface authors, such as Josip Torbarina (for texts by other translators), Mladen Engelsfeld, Ivo Šoljan, Giga Gračan, and Janja Ciglar-Žanić. Prefaces analysed from other publishers were also authored by scholars and critics: Vladoje Dukat (Nazor's *Macbeth*), Miroslav Beker and Mladen Engelsfeld (two separate editions of *Hamlet*), Boris Senker (V. Gerić's translations), Maja Tančik (*Šoljan's Shakespeare*), and Božica Jelušić (the Kajkavian translation of the sonnets).

In the narrative of “Croatian Shakespeare”, which can be reconstructed from the analysed prefaces, two major topics have emerged as the most prominent: Shakespeare's authorial image and his oeuvre, as well as reflexions on his Croatian reception history and translation-related issues.

## 2. Shakespeare: the Author and His Oeuvre

The tradition of “inventing Shakespeare”, as Stephen Orgel describes it—“the creation of an author suited to the increasing canonicity of the works” (Orgel, 2022: 1; cf. Lupić, 2007: 303-304)—has left its mark on his Croatian reception history. Accordingly, the analysed prefaces recognise Shakespeare as an Anglophone classic and, even more importantly from the Croatian perspective, as one of the key figures in the global literary canon. His canonical status is both implied and explicitly stated in scattered comments, particularly in prefaces to earlier editions, whose authors appear to have felt a stronger need to glorify Shakespeare as part of their strategy for appropriating the cultural legacy of the great classic. Vladoje Dukat's hyperbolic panegyric serves as an illustrative example:

Discussing the value of Shakespeare's poetic heritage would be akin to pouring water into the sea. Shakespeare, by common consensus, is universally regarded as the greatest dramatic genius this world has yet produced. (...) As a dramatist, Shakespeare belongs to all of humanity, just as Homer, as an epic author, is the property of all educated nations; a translation of a play by Shakespeare is seen as an enrichment of one's own literature (Dukat, 1917: VIII).<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> All translations from Croatian into English are mine.

One common point in both early and later praises of Shakespeare is the (presumed) universality of his oeuvre, which is equated with his ability to depict the core of the human condition and nature, particularly through his masterful characterisation (e.g., Dukat, 1917: XI-XII; Krišković, 1926: 8-15; Bogdanović, 1919a: 12-15;<sup>9</sup> Torbarina, 1979: 11-12; Torbarina, 1987: 14). Milan Bogdanović's preface to the aforementioned translation of *Othello* adds another point to the issue of universality, emphasising the international celebration of Shakespeare's 300<sup>th</sup> death anniversary during the First World War, creating an image of Shakespeare as a genius and benefactor of humankind capable of bridging divides between warring nations (Bogdanović, 1919a: 3-4).

Some prefaces present a portrait of Shakespeare the man, outlining key points of his biography (e.g., Dukat, 1917: V-VIII; Bogdanović, 1919a: 4-12; Angjelinović, 1958: 279-280; Gavella, 2007: 185-187; Maras, 2006: 5-7) and/or establishing its (presumed) correlations with his oeuvre. In a more general sense, his texts are viewed as the expression of his "soul", i.e., his feelings and thoughts, especially in earlier prefaces (e.g., Dukat, 1917: XIII; Bogdanović, 1919a: 7, 15; Krišković, 1926: 23; Angjelinović, 1958: 280). Branko Gavella offers an intriguing perspective here, both denying and simultaneously affirming the importance of the author figure. While he argues that the paucity of verified data renders all autobiographical and socio-historical interpretations largely irrelevant for understanding Shakespeare's art, he nonetheless recognises the author's elusive presence in his texts, which alone can provide a true window into the figure of Shakespeare the man and the source of their enduring appeal (Gavella, 2007: 187-188).

In a more concrete vein, several prefaces focus on the various stages and forms of Shakespeare's artistic career, adhering to another narrative of progress established in the nineteenth-century Shakespeare studies (*cf.* Lupić, 2010: 171) and based on the presumed "developing line of his genius" (Torbarina, 1987: 14). Earlier comedies are thus viewed as imbued with a lighter, more cheerful tone (Bogdanović, 1919a: 7; Torbarina, 1990: 5), seen as products of his artistic apprenticeship and preparation for his later masterful achievements (e.g., Bogdanović, 1922b: 3; Paljetak, 1977a: 7-8; Maras, 2006: 8). In this context, they are accompanied by the early tragedy *Titus Andronicus* (Torbarina, 1977: 7, 10; Maras, 2006: 8), several history plays (*Henry VI* – Maras, 1979a: 6; Maras,

<sup>9</sup> Bogdanović presented similar views in several later prefaces.

2006: 7; parts of *Richard III* – Maras, 2006: 7-8; Bogdanović, 1951a: 265-266), and, at least chronologically, by the tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (Bogdanović, 1927: 4).<sup>10</sup> Following the more mature comedies (e.g., *The Merchant of Venice*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, parts of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Bogdanović, 1926: 3; Torbarina, 1970: 7; Torbarina, 1981: 7; Maras, 2006: 8-9)<sup>11</sup> and the remaining history plays (Maras, 2006: 8-9), is the stage often perceived as the apex of Shakespeare's creative career – his mature tragedies (the “big four”: *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Othello* and *Macbeth*, as well as *Anthony and Cleopatra*, *Coriolanus* and *Timon of Athens*).<sup>12</sup> They are sometimes associated with a bleaker, more pessimistic worldview, echoed in the so-called “dark comedies”/“problem plays” of the same period (*All's Well That Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, *Troilus and Cressida*; Bogdanović, 1919a: 9-10; Torbarina, 1987: 7; Torbarina, 1990: 5-6; Šoljan, 1977a: 8; Maras, 2006: 9). Finally, some introductions present Shakespeare's late plays, or romances, as the product of a period of peace and harmony, contentment, and reflection (Bogdanović, 1919a: 11; Bogdanović, 1951b: 144; Paljetak, 1987: 21-22; Beker, 1991: 6), or, conversely, of boredom and disappointment with life (Maras, 1990: 5).

The sonnets hold a unique position in the author's oeuvre, both in terms of their genre and of the attention given to their hypothetical autobiographical content, which has led to the development of a longstanding critical tradition (cf. Lupić, 2007: 157-169, 304; Delabastita, 2009: 267). In line with this tradition, several translation prefaces (those accompanying the sonnets and several general introductions) engage in autobiographical speculation.<sup>13</sup> Some authors once again emphasise the expressive dimension, which is especially valued in the

<sup>10</sup> This tragedy holds a special status, as its composition and first performance fall within Shakespeare's early period, differing from his later tragedies in both content and form. Nevertheless, it has become part of the core canon of his plays and is frequently celebrated as the “most renowned love story in the world” (cf. Torbarina, 1976: 9; Maras, 2006: 8; Paljetak, 2023a). The poem *Venus and Adonis*, an earlier text from Shakespeare's poetic oeuvre, stands as another exception, being unanimously praised in the prefaces (Dukat, 1917: XV; Angjelinović, 1958: 238; Maras, 1996b; Paljetak, 2023b).

<sup>11</sup> Bogdanović (1919a: 7-8; 1922a: 3) and Torbarina (1990: 5) do not always insist on distinguishing these comedies from the earlier ones, at least not in terms of tone.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Bogdanović, 1919a: 8-10; Bogdanović, 1919b: 9; Torbarina, 1969: 7; Torbarina, 1979: 7; Šoljan, 1970a: 7-8; Šoljan, 1987a: 5; Šoljan, 1990a: 5; Beker, 1991: 6; Engelsfeld, 1996: 8-9; Maras, 2006: 9.

<sup>13</sup> The following prefaces were consulted: Bogdanović, 1919a: 10-11; Dukat, 1917: XV; Angjelinović, 1958: 241-248; Paljetak, 2009: 199-225; Ciglar-Žanić, 1996: 99-113; Maras, 1996a; Jelušić, 2000: 178-184.

sonnets for supposedly offering the most authentic insight into Shakespeare's feelings and experiences (e. g. Dukat, 1917: XV; Angjelinović, 1958: 244; Maras, 1996b). More specific issues raised by the aforementioned critical tradition, and frequently discussed in these paratexts, include the elusive identity of the dedication's addressee and the (purported) real-life individuals concealed beneath the protagonists of the (purported) sequences or narrative fragments reconstructed in the collection (*cf.* Lupić, 2007: 212-215). The primary value of the sonnets, however, is also assumed to lie in their universality, while precise autobiographical interpretation is, to varying degrees, ultimately downplayed because of the unreliability of available data and its eventual irrelevance for the sonnets' poetic value.<sup>14</sup> This issue is the most astutely addressed from a scholarly perspective by Janja Ciglar-Žanić, who emphasises the importance of the literary conventions that shaped the sonnets and were subsequently reshaped by them in innovative ways (1996: 109-113).

Although largely based on earlier critical traditions and disputed, particularly by twentieth-century immanent approaches, autobiographical interpretations of Shakespeare's oeuvre cannot be denied their historical value. They have contributed to the creation of his authorial image, which continues to hold appeal for contemporary Croatian translators and Shakespeare scholars, and has become an indispensable part of the broader narrative of his Croatian reception.<sup>15</sup>

This narrative provides an overall representation of Shakespeare's works as presented in translation prefaces, which, while not solely focused on autobiographical or broader contextual interpretations, also address the literary features and qualities of the originals. As can be expected, some of the most popular and highly regarded texts have more translations and editions, and consequently more

<sup>14</sup> Luko Paljetak, for example, concludes emphatically: "The hypothesis has been proposed, but, let us be honest, it is by no means the most important. We should forget it and remember only the beauty of (*this*) poetry!" (Paljetak, 2009: 225). Paljetak expresses similar views in the introduction to his translation of *Love's Labour's Lost*, where he also explores the possible autobiographical (and historical) background and its connections with the sonnets (1977a: 12). Definitive autobiographical readings are strongly opposed in the afterword to the Kajkavian translation of the sonnets, possibly for the reasons discussed further below.

<sup>15</sup> A well-known twenty-first-century biography, written by leading New Historicist scholars Stephen Greenblatt – *Will in the World* (2004), is cited by Luko Paljetak in two prefaces (2023a; 2023b). Mate Maras's preface to *The Complete Works* also provides a brief biographical overview, despite the introductory claim that no specific details of Shakespeare's life are available (Maras, 2006: 5-7; for critique see Lupić, 2010: 169-170).

paratexts, with *Hamlet* (six complete translations)<sup>16</sup> and *Romeo and Juliet* (five complete translations)<sup>17</sup> occupying the top two positions. Histories are notable for the opposite reason: their popularity during the early stages of Shakespeare's reception in Croatia (i.e., the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) appears to have waned during the twentieth century. Most have only one separate printed translation, one of which lacks a preface (*Henry IV, Part 1*, translated by Milan Šenoa, 1922), while others are accompanied by relatively brief prefaces (Maras, 1978, 1979a, 1979b). The more popular history, occasionally classified as a tragedy, *Richard III*, is an exception, with three separate editions and more extensive introductions (1923, 1951 – translated and prefaced by M. Bogdanović; 1982 – translated by M. Maras, prefaced by G. Gračan).

Prefaces to several plays that had previously been less popular or less known in Croatian culture—in other words, had not been (frequently) translated and staged—are noteworthy in this context, as they could promote these texts by introducing them to potential readers. This group includes prefaces to earlier plays such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Šoljan, 1988), *Love's Labour's Lost* (Paljetak, 1977a) or *Titus Andronicus* (Torbarina, 1977), whose value is acknowledged despite their (alleged) inferiority to Shakespeare's mature plays. Some of the later undervalued and/or underrepresented texts also received due attention, including *Troilus and Cressida* (Torbarina, 1990), *Henry VIII* (Maras, 1979b), and the romances *Pericles* (L. Paljetak, 1987) and *Cymbeline* (J. Ciglar-Žanić, 1990). The renowned translator and writer Antun Šoljan played an important role in this regard, as he chose three previously untranslated or rarely translated plays (*Timon of Athens*, *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *All's Well That Ends Well*; cf. Tančik, 2021: 94-95), providing them with relatively short but insightful prefaces.

The scholarly content and informative value of all analysed translation prefaces expectedly vary, reflecting, to a certain extent, the different stages of Shakespeare

<sup>16</sup> The first published complete translation, by August Harambašić (1887), is an indirect translation based on August Schlegel's German version of *Hamlet*; this edition does not include a preface. Four translations by different authors are included in Matica hrvatska's series (Krišković, 1926; Bogdanović, 1950, 1956; Torbarina, 1979; Maras, 2006), three of which (i.e., all except Krišković's) were reprinted several times by other publishers. Vladimir Gerić's rendering of *Hamlet* is included in *Shakespeare*, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> Another indirect translation from German by the renowned writer, August Šenoa (1883; no preface and published by a different publisher) was followed by four translations of this play, also published by Matica hrvatska (translations and prefaces by M. Bogdanović, 1927, 1950; J. Torbarina, 1976; M. Maras, 2006; L. Paljetak, 2014; the first three have also been reprinted in various editions).

studies from the late nineteenth century through the twentieth century – at least in terms of their reception in Croatian scholarship. The prefaces written by Croatian English studies scholars (J. Torbarina, M. Engelsfeld, J. Ciglar-Žanić, M. Beker, I. Šoljan, L. Paljetak) are generally more informative and include references to international, particularly Anglophone, Shakespeare scholarship, although the earlier contributions by the translators Vinko Krišković and Milan Bogdanović should not be overlooked. On the other hand, a (regrettable) decline in content accuracy and reliability is detectable in Mate Maras's preface to what was intended as the pinnacle of Matica's Shakespeare project, his *Complete Works*. Although such an edition would undoubtedly merit a comprehensive and detailed introduction informed by the latest Shakespearean scholarship, this preface only provides a cursory overview based on somewhat arbitrarily selected, unfounded, and/or outdated facts and conclusions, as well as general commonplaces (see Lupić, 2010: 169-175).<sup>18</sup>

While the primary focus of all analysed prefaces is on original texts and their position and significance in Shakespeare's oeuvre, as well as in his immediate literary, cultural, and social context, they also highlight the universal dimension of his art. This dimension is most strongly emphasised in relation to *Hamlet*, whose prominent place in Croatian translation and theatre history is unsurprising, as it is the most popular of Shakespeare's texts in both print and performance on stage worldwide (Senker, 2006: 163). Accordingly, it is praised as “one of the most poignant tragedies in the world” (Torbarina, 1979: 8) and as “the most renowned and the most popular play in world literature” (Torbarina, 1979: 12), one that perfectly embodies the essence of the human (tragic) condition (Torbarina, 1979: 11-12).<sup>19</sup>

The notion of universality is sometimes adjusted through a strategy of temporal and spatial framing (Baker, 2006: 112-114), which emphasises the contemporary appeal and relevance of the translated texts. For instance, *Hamlet's* extraordinary popularity in the twentieth century is attributed to the protagonist's character, which resonates with the historical experiences of the two world wars and the predominantly sceptical worldview in twentieth-century literature (Beker, 1991: 14-15). J. Torbarina makes similar claims regarding

<sup>18</sup> A detailed analysis of all the prefaces in terms of accuracy, relevance, and up-to-date referencing would require a separate study. However, a number of insightful observations on Matica's prefaces in general can also be found in Lupić, 2010: 167-192.

<sup>19</sup> Similar claims can be found in Krišković, 1926: 49-50; Beker, 1991: 9, 14; Engelsfeld, 1996: 7, 14-15, 22; Maras, 2006: 9.

*Macbeth* (1969: 15), and contemporary resonance is further recognised in the content of Shakespeare's history plays (with reference to J. Kott; Gračan, 1982: 21-22) and *Timon of Athens* (Šoljan, 1970a: 10), as well as in the "modernity" of *Anthony and Cleopatra's* structure, which makes it especially suitable for the modern stage (Šoljan, 1987a: 7).

One form of spatio-temporal framing that might have been expected in the post-World War II Croatia is relatively rare: interpretations and appropriations of Shakespeare in line with the then dominant communist ideology. Its echoes appear only occasionally, for example, in Torbarina's remark on *Hamlet's* closeness to the common people (1979: 10-11),<sup>20</sup> or in his preface to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which highlights Shakespeare's (presumed) "progressive ideas" and social critique, and includes references to Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Torbarina, 1982).<sup>21</sup>

The general lack of strong emphasis on this type of interpretation aligns with the fact that ideological pressures did not play a crucial role in the Croatian reception of (Western) world literature during the 1950s and 1960s, a period in which it was intensely fostered. Shakespearean translation was an integral part of these efforts (Starčević, 2005: 117-126), continuing in the following decades while simultaneously building on the foundations laid by the preceding tradition. What is now nearly a two-hundred-year long reception history has thus helped integrate and appropriate Shakespeare into domestic culture and has, in turn, become an important means of cultural legitimation, as well as of positioning and affirming Croatian literature and culture on European and global levels (*cf.* also Lupić, 2007: 303-304).<sup>22</sup> The analysed translation prefaces further attest to this fact through their explicit references to and comments on the previous reception of Shakespeare, as well as his general position and significance in the Croatian context (for [re]positioning as a translation preface strategy, see Baker, 2006: 133-135).

<sup>20</sup> For a brief overview of Marxist readings of *Hamlet* see Beker, 1991: 7. The notion of Hamlet's closeness to the people need not be exclusively Marxist; it is also mentioned in V. Krišković's preface (1926: 21).

<sup>21</sup> The references include Engels's praise of this comedy, as well as Marx's quotation from *Timon of Athens* regarding the power of money (Torbarina, 1982: 9-11). Torbarina's allusion to the seventeenth-century English Revolution is similarly indicative in this context, as he views the author's social critique in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* as an expression of the "positive forces of the English bourgeoisie" that would eventually lead it to revolt against "the king and privileged aristocracy" (Torbarina, 1982: 11). This, along with the preface to *Hamlet*, also contains references to the Soviet Shakespeare scholar M. M. Morozov.

<sup>22</sup> The first translation of a text by Shakespeare, a Kajkavian fragment from *Romeo and Juliet*, was written by Ivan Krizmanić in 1836 (*cf.* Lupić and Schubert, 2016).

### 3. Shakespeare within Croatian Literature and Culture

The most commonly mentioned aspect that helps delineate the reception history of the prefaced texts and Shakespeare's entire oeuvre in Croatia is their previous translations and stagings.<sup>23</sup> Earlier scholarly reception is mentioned less frequently, but its significant role is not entirely overlooked, especially when it is evoked in another important strategy of positioning Shakespeare *vis-à-vis* Croatian culture: the exploration of similarities and differences between his oeuvre and the Croatian Early Modern literature and culture, particularly in Dubrovnik, one of its key centres. Such observations may even include the broader socio-historical context, as in J. Torbarina's discussion of *The Merchant of Venice's* Jewish character Shylock, in which he admires "the religious tolerance of the small Dubrovnik", which was more welcoming towards its Jewish community than Elizabethan England (Torbarina, 1981: 9).

Most comparisons of this kind primarily focus on literature and theatre. Some receive only a brief, yet symbolic mention, such as the parallel between the figures of Holofernes in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* and of Dotur Prokupio in the anonymous seventeenth-century comedy *Ljubovnici (Lovers)*-both related to the figure of Dottore from *commedia dell'arte* (Paljetak, 1977a: 10), or the possible common source of *The Tempest* and the seventeenth-century play *Pavlimir* by Junije Palmotić (Šoljan, 1979: 135 [referencing a study by J. Torbarina]).

Two topics of greater symbolic significance have garnered more attention and a more detailed analysis. Interestingly, these topics come from opposite ends of the canonical spectrum. The first involves the tragedy *Dalida* (c. after 1578) by the lesser-known author Savko Gučetić Bendevišević, which shares one of its textual sources-Luigi Groto's *Adriana-with Romeo and Juliet* (Torbarina, 1976: 17-28). Despite a lower assessment of *Dalida's* literary value, this comparison is used to demonstrate its undeniable "cultural-historical importance", reinforced by the fact that this play predates both Shakespeare's and Lope de Vega's dramatic retellings of "one of the most famous love stories in the world" (Torbarina, 1976: 28; also quoted in Paljetak, 2023a: 152).

<sup>23</sup> Additionally, the preface to *Richard III* includes reflections by the renowned actor Fabijan Šovagović on how he would interpret the protagonist for the stage (in Gračan, 1982: 19-21).

The second topic provides a stronger case for domestic cultural legitimation: the canonical parallel between Shakespeare and Marin Držić (1508-1567), his older counterpart from Dubrovnik and the leading Croatian dramatist of the sixteenth century, whose texts share several notable analogies with Shakespeare's, which can be attributed to their common European-and particularly Italian-sources and models. As Josip Torbarina argues, the fact that Držić preceded Shakespeare by several decades, exploiting some of the themes that would later become known as "Shakespearean", is "undoubtedly flattering" for Croatian culture (1970: 14). The Držić-Shakespeare parallel has, therefore, become a common reference in Croatian culture and scholarship, and is briefly mentioned, for instance, in a preface to *Hamlet* (Engelsfeld, 1996: 13) and to *Venus and Adonis* (Paljetak, 2023b: 142). The most striking analogy between the two authors' works involves their comedies with pastoral elements-*A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Marin Držić's *Grižula*. Torbarina elaborates on this issue in his second preface to Bogdanović's translation of Shakespeare's comedy, expanding it to include the remaining works by Držić cast in a more or less similar mould (*Tirena* and *Novela od Stanca*; briefly mentioned are *Venere i Adon* and the fragmentary *Džuho Krpeta*; Torbarina, 1970: 14-18). In addition to emphasising these texts' common strategy of juxtaposing different fictional worlds, Torbarina further explores their shared *Midsummer Night* motif, which enables him to connect Shakespeare's play to another Croatian Early Modern classic outside Dubrovnik (i.e., from Zadar), the pastoral novel *Planine* by Petar Zoranić.

A somewhat different strategy for appropriating Shakespeare for domestic affirmation is employed in the preface to the Kajkavian version of his sonnets (Jelušić, 2000; translator Željko Funda), which highlights the importance of translation in this process. In this case, translation is viewed as a potentially powerful tool in the (still ongoing) efforts to revitalise and reevaluate Kajkavian, not merely as a dialect, but as a literary language with a rich linguistic and literary tradition. This tradition can even claim credit for producing the first Croatian translation of a text by Shakespeare (see note 22) and is now also invoked in Kajkavian translations and adaptations of his plays, which have been staged for several decades. The symbolic role attributed to Shakespearean translation is reflected in the sonnets' preface title, with the untranslatable wordplay "Posel da *kaj* bude *jak*" = "Working at making *kaj* ["what", the root of the adjective "Kajkavian"] strong ["jak"]'). This could (partly) explain the preface author's

insistence on the universal and metaphysical dimensions, as well as the poetic value of the sonnets (see also note 14), as they enhance the sonnets' symbolic potential and make them easier to integrate into the domestic agenda (for a detailed analysis of this translation and its agenda see Lupić, 2007: 301-311).<sup>24</sup>

The very nature of translation prefaces makes them ideal places for foregrounding and discussing the process and aims of translation (*cf.* Batchelor, 2018: 32-34). These topics indeed appear in a substantial number of the analysed texts, which thus also help inscribe the prefaced translations into Shakespearean reception history. As is already evident in the Kajkavian preface, one of the key points of discussion is the function of translated texts. The preface to the first edition by Matica hrvatska, intended as a general introduction to its inaugural publishing series, clearly states that its main aim is the popularisation of Shakespeare among wider circles of readers. The preface author-translator M. Bogdanović-defines his general translation strategy along these lines, permitting simplifications when deemed necessary or unavoidable, and favouring plainer language (Bogdanović, 1919a: 38). While Bogdanović's prefaces mention readers as his target audience, it should be borne in mind that his translations were repeatedly and successfully performed, thereby significantly contributing to the modern reception of Shakespeare in Croatian theatre. Bogdanović frequently references all Croatian stagings of Shakespeare's texts he introduces (occasionally including his own translations), along with casting details, further demonstrating his awareness of the theatrical landscape. Two later translators-preface authors A. Šoljan and J. Torbarina-indicate that their translations serve a dual purpose: both reading and performance. In contrast, M. Maras's preface to *The Complete Works* limits the scope of his translations' reception to reading and educational purposes. While Maras does not exclude, and even hopes for, their future performances, he envisages his primary audience as literature teachers and students, to whom he aims to provide "clearer" Shakespearean texts that will not make them "recoil from the twisted verses" (Maras, 2007: 1146-1147). Although Maras distances his translations from the preceding tradition, his general aim is not substantially different from that of other translators, who similarly emphasise, in several prefaces, the need to make their translations both understandable and accessible to a modern audience.

<sup>24</sup> The preface author, Božica Jelušić (1951), is a translator, critic, and writer in both Kajkavian and standard Croatian.

Differences in the nature and function of translations are also discussed in the preface to Vladimir Gerić's renderings of Shakespeare's tragedies, which recounts a noteworthy 1960s debate between Gerić himself and Josip Torbarina (Senker, 2015: 9-13, based on Starčević, 2005: 117-162). After Torbarina's criticism of his translation of *Hamlet*, Gerić responded as a proponent of a theatrical translation-one he describes as "closer to life"-focused on performance. He opposed Torbarina's notion of a scholarly translation ("bookish" in Gerić's terms), which prioritises accuracy and fidelity to the original, without separating its poetic and theatrical dimensions.<sup>25</sup> The two authors' contrasting views did not, in fact, imply two mutually exclusive purposes. Both their works, along with their other translations, have been staged repeatedly, although those by V. Gerić appear to have been favoured more by theatre practitioners (Senker, 2015: 16). Their debate remains interesting from a theoretical viewpoint, as it harkens back to the age-long dichotomy between the concepts of "faithfulness" and "freedom" in translation. While Gerić viewed his task as an authorial recreation of the original text (Senker, 2015: 11-15), Torbarina advocated for a "transparent" translation that would in no way overshadow the "beauty of the original" (Torbarina, 1990: 36-37). Regarding poetry, Torbarina even contends that its translators are not necessarily poets themselves, as poets tend to adopt a freer approach to the source text, producing good poetry but not always a good translation.<sup>26</sup>

When the aforementioned dichotomy is reconceptualised in more functional terms, as a continuum between the poles of formal and dynamic equivalence -i.e., between strict adherence to the original and striving for the same or similar effect on the target audience (*cf.* Nida, 2000: 129-140; Pavlović, 2015: 46-49) -most Croatian translators and preface authors seem more inclined towards the latter, at least on a theoretical level. Bogdanović, for example, conceives faithfulness as an adequate transposition of Shakespeare's "thoughts", which allows for freedom in their linguistic transposition when necessary, but should convey them with equally powerful effect (1919a: 34-35). Quoting an early-twentieth-century

<sup>25</sup> Gerić's views are further explored in his text *My Shakespeare*, which appears as an afterword (Gerić, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Torbarina's general position on this issue was less rigid, and he allowed for greater poetic freedom in translation in some of his other works. According to M. Starčević, his translation of *Hamlet* attests to this, not being as markedly different from Gerić's version as one might expect. Since this conclusion is supported by brief samples from both translations, it would benefit from a more comprehensive and detailed analysis (*cf.* Starčević, 2005: 143-153).

Shakespeare translator A. Krespi, L. Paljetak similarly underscores his efforts to recreate the original impression of Shakespeare's verses in *Romeo and Juliet*, although with greater emphasis on preserving the “regularity/perfection of rhythm and language”, specific to this early Shakespeare play (Paljetak, 2023a: 171).

Most translators address more practical aspects of their translation strategies, including their choice of an appropriate equivalent for Shakespeare's verse form. These reflections provide valuable insights not only into their individual approaches but also into the history of Shakespearean translation and Croatian verse history in general. A large portion of translations employ the Croatian version of Shakespearean iambic pentameter, adhering to the tradition established in the late nineteenth century. Several authors felt it necessary to explain their use of this form, especially when it entailed some flexibility. Thus, Bogdanović increased the number of lines due to the shorter average word length in English, which would otherwise require modifying the content (Bogdanović, 1919a: 35-37; see also Engelsfeld, 1969: 32; Torbarina, 1979: 14). His treatment of verse aligns with his primary guiding principle: “Only in this way can the translation be accurate and comprehensible, easy to read, and easy to speak and understand on stage” (Bogdanović, 1919a: 36).<sup>27</sup>

Pursuing a related goal of making the translated text “worthy in itself, i.e., poetically composed, clear to read and appropriate for stage speech” (Šoljan, 1977b: 128), Šoljan devised a slightly different solution, employing the modern Croatian 11-syllable verse, with common variations in rhythm and length. This flexible form, justifiable by Shakespeare's own flexible treatment of blank verse (Šoljan, 1970b: 114), allowed him to achieve clarity and, at the same, approach (but not insist upon) Torbarina's “noble ideal of line-for-line” translation (Šoljan, 1977b: 127-128), while also preserving the original larger rhythmic units or “periods” (Šoljan, 1970a: 114).

The challenges of adequately transposing iambic pentameter into Croatian, particularly the disparity in word length that could lead to either shortening or expanding the content (in additional lines; see also Kravar 76; Engelsfeld,

<sup>27</sup> This principle, along with linguistic differences, accounts for some of Bogdanović's further departures from the original form, such as the more frequent use of enjambments and feminine endings in *Othello* (the latter being more customary in Croatian; Bogdanović, 1919a: 36-37) or the use of initial trochees in *Julius Caesar*, introduced to achieve a more natural word order and enhance the translation's clarity (Bogdanović, 1920: 29).

1989: 61-83), prompted several verse choices, with prefaces again providing a suitable place for their explanation. Torbarina, for example, justifies his use of iambic hexameter in later translations as a verse equivalent with an additional metrical foot (and often an additional final unstressed syllable, which is more natural in Croatian).<sup>28</sup> This form made it easier to adhere to his ideal of line-for-line translation, although he could not avoid a minor increase in the number of lines. L. Paljetak devised a similar, but somewhat more expansive verse form, combining 13- and 14-syllable lines with iambic intonation. It appears only in his translation of *Love's Labour's Lost*, where line-for-line translation proved necessary to maintain the specific, enclosed structure of Shakespeare's individual lines (see Paljetak, 1977b: 135-136; *Pericles* [1987] and *Romeo and Juliet* [2014] are again composed in iambic pentameter).

Torbarina's verse form was adopted in earlier translations by Mate Maras, who later introduced a free accentual verse of his own in *The Complete Works*, naming it "pentasyntagm" as it is (presumably) based on five stress-units (Maras, 2007: 1127-1128).<sup>29</sup> Such a flexible mould was designed to help Maras focus on clarity as his main goal, although he anticipated harsh criticism from some scholars, particularly those who insisted on strict metrical adherence to the original (Maras, 2007: 1147, note 22). His translations of Shakespeare have indeed been subjected to a rigorous critical analysis by I. Lupić, who has demonstrated that Maras's overall approach did not result in more understandable or more felicitous renderings of Shakespeare's verses compared to those of earlier translators, but rather in a somewhat awkward, line-for-line transposition with a questionably perceptible five-stress rhythm (2010: 193-220). In other words, his translation of *The Complete Works* has not succeeded in providing the ultimate "Croatian Shakespeare" that would supersede the entire preceding tradition, but it has nevertheless continued this tradition in its own way and can now be viewed as one of the many fragments of its multifaceted mosaic.

<sup>28</sup> This verse is introduced in *Troilus and Cressida* and described in its preface (Torbarina, 1990: 30-35); other translations include *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and the revised version of *Measure for Measure*.

<sup>29</sup> There are a few exceptions: *Henry VI*, which remained in the same verse form, and the sonnets and poems, transposed into 12-syllable lines with trochaic intonation, as Maras had used in their previous individual translations.

## 4. Conclusion

Remaining at the Genettian threshold of Croatian translations of Shakespeare, this analysis has, hopefully, demonstrated that their paratextual margins have played a crucial role in his reception history, shaping both their narratives of the author and his oeuvre, as well as their position and significance in Anglophone, European, global and Croatian cultures. Since the analysed prefaces focused on introducing Shakespeare to a Croatian audience, they primarily served an important educational function by providing information about Shakespeare's texts and their author (with varying scope and value) and by documenting and commenting on the Croatian reception of his works, as well as some of their notable similarities with the works of his Croatian contemporaries. Bearing in mind that their portrayal of Shakespeare and his oeuvre largely reflects his traditional international image as a transnational and transhistorical classic, these paratextual additions simultaneously sought to legitimise Croatian culture as part of the broader global culture and to frame Shakespeare as an adopted/domesticated classic, thereby aiming to overcome, at least symbolically, the traditional dichotomy between dominant and marginal cultures.

By exploring the multifaceted relationship between Shakespeare and Croatian culture, the analysed prefaces not only demonstrate the various ways of appropriating the "great" classic for the domestic literary and cultural agenda, but they also become inscribed in his Croatian reception history. An overview of their authors, many of whom were renowned writers, translators, and/or scholars, can testify to Shakespeare's symbolic weight. Moreover, these prefaces reflected on several relevant issues regarding Shakespearean translation and literary translation in general, such as the dichotomy between faithfulness and freedom, or formal and dynamic equivalence, the translations' purpose and target audience (reading and/or theatrical performance), the choice of an equivalent verse form, and the potential forms of domestication. In this sense, they have also paved the way for subsequent stages of Shakespeare's reception in Croatian culture and scholarship, a history that continues to unfold.

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### Résumé

Les traductions ont sans aucun doute joué un rôle important dans la réception et la canonisation croate des œuvres de William Shakespeare, ce qui est bien attesté par des recherches antérieures. Afin de compléter l'ensemble des connaissances existantes et de s'inspirer de la réflexion théorique plus récente sur l'importance des paratextes dans la traduction (en particulier K. Batchelor, 2018), l'article examine un échantillon représentatif de préfaces de traductions croates des œuvres de Shakespeare. L'accent est mis sur la perception et la représentation de l'image canonique de Shakespeare et de son œuvre en général, ainsi que sur leur signification dans le contexte littéraire et culturel croate, y compris les questions pertinentes liées à la traduction, telles que la dichotomie entre fidélité et liberté, c'est-à-dire l'équivalence formelle et dynamique, ainsi que le but des traductions et le public cible (lecture et/ou représentation théâtrale), le choix d'une forme de vers équivalente et les formes possibles de domestication.

**MOTS CLÉS :** William Shakespeare, traductions croates, paratexte, préface, canon

### Summary

Translations have undeniably played a crucial role in the Croatian reception and canonisation of William Shakespeare's works, which is well attested by previous research. To complement the existing body of knowledge and draw on recent theoretical discussions regarding the importance of paratexts in translation (e.g., K. Batchelor, 2018), this paper examines a representative sample of prefaces to Croatian translations of Shakespeare's works. The paper emphasizes the perception and representation of Shakespeare's canonical image and his oeuvre in general, as well as their significance in the Croatian literary and cultural context. It also addresses relevant translation-related issues, such as the dichotomy between faithfulness and freedom (i.e., formal vs. dynamic equivalence), the translations' purpose and target audience (reading and/or theatrical performance), the choice of an appropriate verse form, and possible forms of domestication.

**KEYWORDS:** William Shakespeare, Croatian translations, paratext, preface, canon