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Language, Politics and Shakespeare Translation in 20th-Century Eastern and Central Europe

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This proposed panel will be devoted to the ways in which Shakespeare's texts were translated and interpreted in Eastern and Central Europe in the 20th century. The speakers will discuss how the intersection between the political climate and artistic interpretation is made manifest in translatorial decisions. The panel will engage with a range of Shakespeare translations produced in contexts as diverse as Yiddish-speaking Stalinist Russia of the 1920s, mid-20th-century Poland, the former Yugoslavia (with a particular focus on Slovenia), and post-1945 Hungary.

Panel contributions will examine topics such as translations produced under state sponsorship and the effect that this form of patronage had on the resulting texts and their reception, as well as translations produced by politically more ambiguous figures. Some of the presentations will examine a single translation or a group of translations conducted within a specific historical and political Central or Eastern European context, while others will explore the ways in which shifting political circumstances and ideological structures have shaped the trajectory of Shakespeare translations over the decades. Particular considerations within the series of talks include the representation of gender roles, social hierarchies, religion, race, cultural and ethnic identity, and disability as reflected in the translations under examination against the backdrop of the political systems from which they sprang. Presentations will include close readings of individual case studies in the light of their particular historical, political, and cultural settings. Plays to be examined include *Othello*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Tempest*, and *Hamlet*.

This panel will build on our previous engagement with Central and Eastern European Shakespeare translations from diachronic and synchronic perspectives (*Multicultural Shakespeare* vol. 16, 2017) and will contribute to the broader scholarly discussion of the history of Shakespeare reception in Eastern and Central Europe, Shakespeare and communism, the literary and dramatic histories of the respective languages (Hungarian, Polish, Slovene and other South Slavic languages, and Yiddish) and cultures, and the relationship between language and politics in the translation studies context. The panel will therefore explore what cultural stories these translations tell about nations, regions, theatre or literary establishments in a part of Europe that is often only on the periphery of both Shakespeare reception and translation discourse.