

rigid, essentialist explanation and use of contexts. Instead, it helps the researcher acknowledge the fluctuating nature of the context in relationship with the research object:

Such a lazy usage [of context] is replaced by an analysis of the manner in which individuals actually connect themselves to the world, the specific construction of the world and the elements of context produced by this activity in each particular case, and finally the uses arising from such construction. (ibid: 47)

The fluctuating geographical boundaries across time of the Romanian cultural space at the crossroads of Europe constantly signals how important “whereof and whence one is speaking” (ibid: 44) is. In this respect, the early history of Ibsen on the Romanian stage reveals that intercrossings are “intrinsically related to the object of research” (ibid: 39). The numerous foreign Ibsen productions, the territorial, political, linguistic and ethnic complexity of the Romanian cultural space, the intertwined factors affecting the national theatre life and the mixed interpretative approach of the Romanian Ibsenites all indicate that intercrossing is an intrinsic characteristic to this research. Awareness regarding the fluctuation of the contexts and the rejection of rigid, fixed, essentialist structures is therefore paramount in establishing what is specifically Romanian in the European Ibsen tradition.

Finally, this research uses *histoire croisée* to highlight and unwrap the “thick fabric of interweavings” (ibid: 49) in Romanian Ibsen productions until the middle of the 20th century, without falling into the trap of “relativist indecisiveness or infinite speculative relationships” (ibid: 49). Instead, it adopts the concept’s relational focus and aims to reconstruct Ibsen’s early history on the Romanian stage by showing the processes through which multiple, divergent, yet often interdependent perspectives emerged. To sum up, the concept of *histoire croisée* becomes a useful methodological tool, which enables us to acknowledge the fluidity of the numerous processes affecting the evolution of the Romanian national theatre and the early reception to Ibsen on the Romanian stage until the middle of the 20th century. The fluidity intrinsic to this concept matches the fluidity of the nation-building frames and aesthetic dimensions of Ibsen’s early reception on the Romanian stage, without ignoring the unchanged aspects of this history. Thus, instead of limiting my approach to a post-colonial, diachronic framework, the conceptual framework proposed by *histoire croisée* opens up for more nuanced answers to my research investigations.

1.2 What is Romania? Preliminary considerations

To begin with, a thorough discussion on the influence of Ibsen on the Romanian theatre practice requires that I explain the meaning of “Romania” and “Romanian” in the context of this research. Of course, this is not the first attempt to answer the apparently simple question: *What* is Romania? While the history of Romania has explicitly been the task of the Romanian researchers, foreign researchers such as Keith Hitchins and Kather-

ine Verdery engaged with it brilliantly.¹ Yet, either isolated from the world or inherently integrated within the larger historical landscape, *Romania* has been hard to define as a national, historical or cultural content. Both Romanians and foreigners have struggled to grasp the “national essence”² or the specificity of this cultural space – in other words, the Romanian-ness of Romania. The historical facts and the cultural imagery mingle in the pursuit of an invincible definition. While other countries are specifically identified with a precise landmass and a symbolic imagery rooted in a common cultural heritage, no precise categorisation can be applied to Romania. Instead, its dominant characteristic is the fluid territorial and cultural framing. From this perspective, Romania’s is a *histoire croisée* in which the changing frames were not simply the result of changing contexts and symbolic content, but generated, in turn, new contexts and symbolic contents. Concretely, the entangled history of Romania and its fluid framing is evident in the changes that affected its territory until 1945, when it achieved its final, stable form, and in its relationship with the major and minor cultures, which influenced the national culture. In the next section, I will consider these two perspectives in order to demonstrate the openness and the fluidity of the Romanian cultural space.

1.2.1 At the crossroads of history

The entire Romanian history, both before and after the establishment of the national state, is an example of intercrossed histories. Romania as a national state was practically born in 1859 with the union of Wallachia and Moldavia principalities and was the clear product of the national ideology enacted during the 19th century. Yet, its ambiguous, fluid and contrasting nature is no less visible, in spite of the national principles seeking to reunite “large aggregate communities and individual united by factors such as common descent, language, culture, history, or occupation of the same territory” (nation, n.1, n.d.). This entanglement existed long before Romania became a national state, and still exists today. Therefore, Romania as a national product is not a fixed, but rather a highly dynamic and paradoxical object.

The debate on how fluid and ambiguous the Romanian cultural space has ever been stems not only from Romania’s position on the map, but also from its political status among the other European countries throughout time (Figure 1). This ambiguity is enacted in the image of Romania located at both the crossroads and the periphery of the

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- 1 The historical facts presented in this part’s brief account on the Romanian history can be further visited and documented in Keith Hitchins’s volumes (1994; 2014). Lucian Boia’s volumes (2001a; 2001b) also keep track of the most relevant facts in the Romanian history.
 - 2 Katherine Verdery problematises the notion of “national essence” in relationship with the Romanian cultural space and explains her option for this specific “idiom”, as she calls it herself. She mentions that “the idea of a Romanian ‘national character’ played a crucial part in consolidating and institutionalizing a national ideology” (Verdery 1995: 103). However, the main debates of the Romanian intellectuals did not revolve around the “national character”, but employed “a broader notion, *specificul național*, which means, literally, the ‘nationally specific’, or the ‘national specificity’, less cumbersome rendered here as the ‘national essence’” (ibid: 103). Further on, I will also refer to the Romanian national specificity using the same denomination as Katherine Verdery, namely “national essence”.

major European civilisations, and, thus, simultaneously connected to North, South East and West. In Lucian Boia's words, "the first difficulty with Romania is deciding where it belongs on the map of Europe. In which zone are we to place it: Eastern Europe, the Balkans, Central Europe?" (2001a: 11) Katherine Verdery also suggests that "defining the nation between East and West" (1995: 110) was one of the main concerns of the Romanian intellectuals throughout history:

A Romanian scholar has observed that 'from the middle of the last century, that is, since the beginning of modern Romania, systematically every two or four decades the drama of alternatives has been unleashed. The problem posed during it was, invariably, what path of development to follow. The dispute would flare overnight and last a good while, then subside in favour of one of the camps...But then some major social-political event would unleash the confrontation again in a new phase of this unbreakable cycle.'¹⁰ One participant in that cycle remarked, 'West or East, Europe or the Balkans, urban civilization or the rural spirit? – [since 1860] the questions are still the same.'¹¹ The questions posed in this 'drama of alternatives' were central to the discussion that produced and perpetuated the Romanian national ideology. At the heart of the discussions were the debates concerning the national essence of Romanian as a people. (ibid: 110)

One might argue that such divisions are "somewhat artificial" (Boia 2001a: 12), as Lucian Boia states, but history has proven that they have not merely had a symbolic value, but are supported by and have generated facts. In this sense, the Romanian cultural space is a peripheral space marked by entanglements in light of its neighbouring the greatest European cultures around, such as the Italian (Roman), the Greek, the Russian, the German and the French. While the political context played a crucial role and determined the presence of various foreign models, it is also true that the geographical location of the Romanian territories at the crossroads of Europe enabled a constant flow of cultural influences. Romania is a geographically intertwined landscape within the European framework and Lucian Boia is right to assume that

this permanent 'frontier' situation has had two complementary and contradictory effects. On the one hand, it gave rise to a certain degree of isolation, an attenuated reception of outside models, the perpetuation of traditional structures and a mentality attached to indigenous values. On the other hand, it produced an extraordinary combination of ethnic and cultural infusions from all directions. Romania is a country which has assimilated, in different periods and in different ways from one region to another, elements as diverse as Turkish and French, Hungarian and Russian, Greek and German. It would be hard to find such a varied mixture anywhere in Europe [...]. Situated as it is at a crossing point of roads and civilizations, the Romanian space is an open space par excellence, characterized by a permanent instability and a ceaseless movement of people and values. (ibid: 11–12)

1.2.2 Territorial fluidity

Undoubtedly, the constant changes that marked Romania's territorial evolution demonstrate the country's fluid nature in an international context (Figure 2). Romania as a national state was founded in 1859 after the Crimean War (1853–1856) through the “Smaller Union”. Then, the state was consolidated in 1918 at the end of World War One through the “Greater Union”, only to lose and regain again parts of its territories in 1940 and 1944 during World War Two. However, Romania's borders have never changed after 1945 again. How did these moments enact the territorial fluidity of Romania?

In 1859, “Romania” was known, in fact, as “The United Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia”. The union of the two regions was the indirect result of the Crimean War (1853–1856). More concretely, the Russian and Ottoman Empires, who had previously treated the two principalities as politically dominated lands, offered them the *de facto* possibility to decide over their internal political matters. This partial political freedom led to nationalist initiatives such as the *ad-hoc* gatherings where people expressed their opinions on the union of Moldova and Wallachia. These initiatives were quickly followed by the union of the two principalities in 1859, when both chose Alexandru Ioan Cuza as their unique prince. This political *fait accompli* – “the Smaller Union” – generated controversies among the Western European powers, yet was finally approved at the International Conference of Paris the same year. However, the country was named “Romania” only in 1866, when the new prince, Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, promulgated the first Romanian constitution.

In 1918, the concept of Romania as a national state acquired new dimensions through the integration of new territories at the end of the World War One. The Treaty of Versailles (1919), together with other smaller peace treaties such as Trianon, Neuilly or Sèvres, reconfigured the international political landscape, leading to the birth of new national states, or the consolidation of earlier founded ones. Such an example was Romania, which integrated all the other Romanian historical regions – Transylvania, Banat, Crișana, Bessarabia and Bukovina – within its boundaries. This union is called “The Greater Union” and the “Greater Romania” was both a political reality and an “imagined community”, in Benedict Anderson's terms (2016).

Yet the union contravened the political interests of the Russian and Ottoman Empires, and of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy alike, as well as the national interests of the Hungarians who wanted to build their own national state including Transylvania. This political context meant that World War Two also marked the territorial history of Romania. In 1940, Romania definitively lost Bessarabia, Southern Dobruja (“Quadrilateral”) and the northern part of Bukovina, and temporarily lost the northern-western part of Transylvania³ until 1944.

3 “Prin raptul sovietic din 1940, România pierdea [...] Basarabia și [...] Bucovina și o populație covârșitoare de 3.700.000 locuitori, în majoritatea lor covârșitoare, români. [...] Dar pentru poporul român, calvarul abia începea: prin Dictatul de la Viena din 30 august 1940, România a fost obligată să cedeze o foarte mare parte a Transilvaniei, cuprinzând Maramureșul, Crișana și nordul acesteia, inclusiv Clujul. [...] Iată bilanțul pierderilor teritoriale ale României, în cel mai blestemat an al istoriei sale: Basarabia, Nordul Bucovinei și ținutul Herței, Sudul Dobrogei, Nord-Vestul Transilvaniei.” (Through the Soviet taking over [...] Bessarabia and [...] Bukovina in 1940, Romania lost a popula-

As far as Transylvania is concerned, its territorial status was the most challenging among all the other Romanian historical regions until 1945 (Figure 3). The main reason is its striking multicultural complexity given by the cohabitation between Germans, Hungarians and Romanians. Although the Romanians living in Transylvania were granted the same status as the other minorities during the Habsburg Empire, under the dualist Austro-Hungarian Empire between 1867 and 1918, Hungarians ruled Transylvania. They aimed for a homogenisation of the area culturally and religiously, which would have facilitated its potential future integration in the national Hungarian state. The Hungarian-Romanian battle to win Transylvania has always been subject of debate, as none of the two states has been either purely innocent or guilty throughout history.⁴ Werner and Zimmermann's theory is especially relevant here, as Transylvania is a clear example of *histoire croisée*: "In central and eastern Europe, though, there were not the same homogeneous culturally defined populations [...]. Areas like [...] Transylvania had a measure of regional consciousness, but a German, a Hungarian or a Romanian could equally claim to be a good Transylvanian." (Webb 2008: 15) However, the dispute over Transylvania was won by Romanians in the long run, as the Greater Union of 1918 and the end of World War Two prove it.

Finally, the constant territorial readjustments indicate that "Romania" as a national state and "Romanian" were not fixed, but fluid realities, at least until the middle of the 20th century.

1.2.3 Cultural influences

As Ibsen is performed in multiple languages in Romania, we need to understand the fluidity of the cultural composition of this geographical space, because it concerns both the Romania's territorial evolution and its interaction with other cultures. Here, Werner and Zimmermann's concept of *histoire croisée* can be fully applied as the Romanian cultural space is marked by numerous intercrossings, in which neither the autochthonous, nor the foreign elements assume a fixed function or shape. The relationship between the autochthonous and the foreign elements and even between the foreign elements themselves can equally display interdependence, dominance, submission, acceptance, rejection, or no influence at all, but just the mere coexistence of two different cultures.

In the following, I discuss the intercrossings related to the influence of the major foreign cultures within the Romanian cultural space. I argue that the presence of such influences and the changes affecting their dominant position was not only a matter of politics and national boundaries, but also of cultural entanglements: "culture and intellectual activity are *inherently* political, – not *underlain* by politics, but *interwoven* with it"

tion of 3,700,000 inhabitants, of whom an overwhelming number were Romanians. [...] But the tragedy was just starting for the Romanian people: the Vienna Diktat of August 30, 1940 forced Romania to cede a great part of Transylvania, including Maramureș, Crișana and its Northern part, together with the city of Cluj. [...] This is the overview of Romania's territorial losses, in the most cursed year of its history: Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and the Hertzta region, Southern Dobruja, North-Western Transylvania; my translation) (Stamate 1997: 71–74).

4 A balanced analysis of the entanglements that characterise the history of Transylvania is offered by Blomqvist, Iordachi, and Trencsényi (2013).

(Verdery 1995:106). Moreover, given the position of the Romanian cultural space both at the crossroads and at the periphery of the greater political entities ruling Europe from antiquity to modern times, there could be no single dominant influence. In fact, these influences met in the area of Europe where Romania is located.

This entangled history started in antiquity, when the local inhabitants of today's Romania were the Dacian or Gets/Getae⁵ people. During the second Roman-Dacian war (105–106 AD), the central part of Dacia overlapping the present Transylvania became part of the Roman Empire as the farthest East European territory ever conquered. In other words, the province of Dacia was not only at the periphery of the Empire, but also at its very border. The inhabitants assimilated the Latin language and the Roman institutions, and even the remaining Dacian territories overlapping the present Romanian regions of Moldavia and Wallachia were influenced by the cultural, political and economic contact with the Roman world. Later on, the reference to the Italian model and the ideal of a Romanian national state including Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania as “Romania” used Latin kinship and the coexistence within the Roman Empire as the main argument.

The position of the Romanian lands at the intersection of the dominant foreign models continued into the Middle Ages. Moldavia, Wallachia and even Transylvania were at the northern border of the Ottoman Empire. Their ambiguous status was enhanced by the fact that the three principalities were not Ottoman provinces governed by Turk pashas; they were merely under the Empire's suzerainty, which allowed them to choose their own rulers, although they paid a yearly tribute. The Turkish influence is obviously undeniable, yet I address here the Phanariote Greeks⁶ influence in light of their role as mediators of the French and Italian cultures in Moldavia and Wallachia between 1711 and 1821, when they ruled the two principalities. Despite the Phanariots' bad reputation due to the political instability that characterised the principalities under their rule, the two regions developed culturally. Their peripheral status allowed for a diminished Turkish and Greek influence, which was counterbalanced by the immersion of the French and Italian influences ironically mediated by Phanariots, as Pompiliu Eliade indicates (1982: 116–144). The main reason behind their contribution is their position as ambassadors of the Ottoman Empire, whose rulers refused to learn the languages of the “pagans”. Thus, the Phanariots – as intermediaries between the Turks and the rest of Europe – mastered French and Italian as diplomatic languages, and were acquainted with these respective cultures. As rulers of the Moldavia and Wallachia principalities, they used their knowledge of French and Italian for the cultural development of these countries situated in-between the oriental Ottoman Empire and the occidental Christian world.

At the beginning of the 19th century, when the Russian-Turkish war of 1828 ended, the Ottoman dominance of Moldavia and Wallachia was replaced by Russian. In fact, the Russian dominance in the Romanian principalities had already been anticipated by a previous war with the Turks, between 1806 and 1812, when Moldavia lost its eastern half,

5 Dacian was the Roman denomination, while Gets/Getae was the Greek denomination.

6 The Phanariot epoch was a period of political decay in the history of the Romanian principalities, which had lost the right to appoint local rulers because of several attempts to undermine the authority of the Turks through an alliance with the Russian Empire.

Bessarabia.⁷ Once the Ottoman Empire's power diminished, the Romanian lands preserved their peripheral position in the 19th century with respect to the Russian Empire, while remaining a territory crossed by both Turks and Russians.

Although the Russian influence also marked the cultural development of the Romanian principalities, the Russian officials were mostly responsible for the growing ascendance of the French element in the principalities, especially by means of manners, clothes and language (Eliade 1982: 145–160). Eventually, the newly acquired French language enabled the boyars to also come into contact with French political ideas.

The Russian political domination in the principalities was not the only transmission channel for the French model. The Greeks had also mediated the ideals of the French revolution in Moldavia and Wallachia. For instance, the 1821 revolutionary movement led by Tudor Vladimirescu, in collaboration with Alexandru Ipsilanti, the leader of the Eteria, a Greek secret society, stemmed from the national ideals promoted by the French revolution (ibid: 161–226).

Thus, at the beginning of the 19th century, the importation of the Western model of modernisation was mediated by both the Greeks and the Russians. This highlights once again Romanian culture's position at the intersection of major cultural models from both the East and the West.

When the French model became the ruling reference after the revolutionary movement of 1821 and after the adoption of the *Organic Regulations* in 1829–1830, Romanian society turned more and more towards France. This did not mean the dissipation of the tensions between Turkish, Russian and French supporters in the political field. However, the establishment of the *United Principalities of Moldova and Wallachia* in 1859, whose name was changed in 1866 into *Romania*, was clearly indebted to the West, both politically and ideologically. The major foreign influences were French and, after 1859, German.

The French influence was fundamental for the establishment of the national Romanian state in 1859 not only because of the French Revolution's principles, but also because of the very concrete support of France to the political union of the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Russia's defeat in the Turkish-Russian Crimean War (1853–1856) and the Ottoman Empire's increasingly weak position in South-Eastern Europe facilitated the union and independence of the Wallachia and Moldavia principalities. This was a method to ensure political security at the crossroads and periphery of the greatest Western and Eastern European political entities of the time.

After 1859, the German influence started to gain more and more power and even outweigh the French influence. Although these models worked within Romanian society in parallel, tensions did arise between them. This explains why Lucian Boia labelled them the “French myth” and the “German countermyth” (Boia 2001b: 160–165). While I agree with Boia's perspective on the two models as opposite, I consider his view on them as “myths” to be reductionist.⁸ Hence, I appreciate that Keith Hitchins's depiction of the

7 Today's Republic of Moldova. In the interwar period (1918–1940), Bessarabia was part of Romania.

8 The main criticism towards Lucian Boia's enquiry regards his approaching historical facts by means of historical imagery that tends to reduce the history to a mythological, essentially discursive construct. This kind of approach risks distancing itself from the historical facts, which only become an

French and German tendencies as “models of development” (Hitchins 2014: 121) is more accurate.

The German influence on the Romanian culture is particularly connected to the political context. When the Prussian Prince Karl of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen became Romania’s ruler in 1866, the newly established national state gained strength and a more secure position in the region of South-Eastern Europe marked by political instability. Besides, he was also related to the French monarch Napoleon III, which implicitly ensured the recognition of Romania as a national state in Europe, and protected the country from further intrusions and claims of the Ottomans and Russians. Yet the German influence upon the Romanian culture was not confined to the presence of a king with German roots in the country, and is also evident as the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia were the Eastern neighbours of the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Empire. In addition, the regions of Transylvania, Banat, Bukovina and Crişana where numerous Romanians lived, were situated at the Eastern border of the same Empire.

As far as Transylvania is concerned, this region must be analysed separately because of the Hungarian elites’ ownership claims in opposition to the Romanian elites’ claims that the area should be part of Romania because of the Daco-Roman legacy. However, regardless of their dispute over Transylvania, the German influence had been powerful in the area since the Middle Ages because of the Hungarian and Austrian rulers who decided to colonise the area. The Transylvanian Saxons arrived in the Sibiu (Hermannstadt) area in the 12th century, when King Géza II of Hungary wanted to defend the kingdom’s Eastern borders from attacks by foreign invaders. Later, in the 18th century, the Banat Swabians inhabiting Timişoara (Temeswar) arrived courtesy of the Austrian Emperor Charles VI. Both groups contributed not only to the development of the region, but also to a permanent German cultural influence in the Romanian cultural space. In contrast to the Hungarians, Germans remained a minority group in Transylvania, yet with a significant contribution for Romanians in the literary and theatrical fields. Nevertheless, Hungarians still exert a powerful influence on Transylvania as far as political, cultural and social institutions are concerned, highlighting the area’s unique linguistic, ethnic and cultural entanglements once again.

The dissolution of the great Empires and the establishment of the national states at the end of World War One did not mean that the foreign influences disappeared from the Romanian cultural space. The French and the German models remained the main references. Yet World War Two changed this pattern, turning Romania back to the previous ambiguous situation caused by its position in-between East and West. Beside the territorial changes, Romania’s participation in World War Two is marked by its changing sides, fighting first against the Soviet Union, then turning against Germany towards the end of the war.

To sum up, the ambiguity and the complexity of the Romania cultural space was determined by its position at the crossroads of Europe throughout history which led to a constant exposure to the influence of several Eastern and Western European cultures. Yet the Romanian society never fully assimilated any of them, either willingly or by force

artificial instrument in a fictionalised historical discourse. However, many of Boia’s statements are valid in light of the support they are offered by the historical facts.

throughout its history. Regardless of the dominant foreign influences that marked the Romanian cultural space, within it there was also a strong commitment to respect for the “national essence”. The shifting territorial design and the mixed influences that crossed the Romanian cultural space both before and after the foundation of a Romanian national state are the proof of a *histoire croisée* marked by constant fluidity. The constant tension between foreign and national values or, in other words, between Europeanism and autochthonism, is still unresolved in today’s Romania. This fluidity marked the local theatre practice and, hence, the early reception of Henrik Ibsen on the Romanian stage.

1.3 Previous research on Henrik Ibsen’s presence on the Romanian stage

Although previous research on Henrik Ibsen’s reception in Romania is not extensive, it has the utmost significance. Specialists in Romanian literature, universal and comparative literature, theatre studies and Scandinavian studies, have approached the topic, but there are still gaps that require new data to replace old material lost through inadequacies in condition or archival storage.

Previous researchers started their inquiries on Ibsen in Romania by employing a literary rather than a theatre studies approach. Their investigations are full of biographical and literary references, and previous research on Ibsen’s theatrical reception has focused on reconstructing the chronology of the performances. Although this latter research has not provided critical analysis of Ibsen performances on the Romanian stage, it is an indispensable contribution to further research in this direction. The chronological display of the Romanian Ibsen performances based on the information provided by the books and articles has provided the materials for the IbsenStage Romanian dataset. Thus, the fieldwork of previous researchers has provided the factual framework for this thesis. As the information is sometimes incomplete or incorrect, this research also has corrected minor errors in pre-existing event records, enhanced the information within these records, and added new records of stagings into the database.

There are four significant moments in the research on the Romanian reception of Ibsen that paved the way for this study: the lecture of Gheorghe Adamescu held in 1928; the book published by Ovidiu Drîmba in 1956; the book published by Ion Vartic in 1995; and the various pieces of research on the reception of Ibsen in the Romanian theatre published by Sanda Tomescu Baciu.⁹

Gheorghe Adamescu was the first researcher who investigated Ibsen’s reception in the Romanian theatre. The lecture he gave at Ibsen’s commemoration in 1928 was later

9 Other researchers also wrote brief articles on the topic occasionally, yet in this section I have only considered those whose contribution marked a turning point in Romanian Ibsen research. One of these secondary contributors is Lucian Sinigaglia (2008; 2009; 2010) whose three articles on Henrik Ibsen in Romania promise an investigation into both the literary and theatrical reception. However, the articles neither add new information, nor propose a new approach, but rather keep to the same path as the previous researchers. Moreover, recurrent inaccuracies, a lack of reliable references, and the poor quality of the critical approach make this contribution less relevant here. Another similar example is an article of Valeriu Munteanu (1977: 13–15).