DE GRUYTER OPEN

Daniela Maria Marțole∗

ETHNIC BIAS IN THE RECEPTION OF ADOLPHE STERN'S TRANSLATIONS OF *HAMLET* AND *MACBETH*

Abstract

This paper focuses on the way in which cultural misrepresentations interfere with the reading of the Romanian versions of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* by Adolphe Stern, a Romanian translator of Jewish descent. The two main critical articles are authored by two renowned intellectuals from the historic principality of Moldova, A.D. Xenopol and I. Botez. Despite the fact that the critical opinions issued in the two articles are not enrooted in ethnic discrimination, the potential negativity of the criticism is fully exploited by promoters of extreme nationalism. Two are the reasons that catalyse the negative valorisation of Stern's translations: the growing xenophobic nationalism that influenced the political decisions at the end of the 19th century, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the need to create a homogenous space for all Romanians, not only geographically, but also linguistically and culturally, translated in the emergence of a linguistic nationalism. Adolphe Stern, the embodiment of the foreigner, in spite of being born within the limits of the Romanian space, produces texts the value of which is denied, to compensate for the partial loss of identity inherent to all unification processes.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Macbeth, Romanian translation, Romanian antisemitism, nationalism

The second half of the19th century witnessed a growing sense of the Romanian national character, the definition of which remained "an uninterrupted and obsessive concern of Romanian culture" (Volovici, 1991: 3). The creation of the unified Romanian state increased the concern with the preservation of national identity, accomplished by the constant positioning against the Other, materialised in the exclusion of foreigners from the political, social and cultural spheres.

When it comes to European identity, Jan Nederveen Pieterse speaks of the manifold faces of Otherness, individualised by one or more markers of difference that operate both internally and externally. Christianity, the major boundary between self and others in medieval Europe, for instance, worked, at first, as a distinctive attribute *within* Europe (Nederveen Pieterse, 2002: 17-18). The same pattern replicates, to a smaller scale, in the new Romanian state, formed by the unification of the two principalities of Wallachia and Moldova, where the Greeks and the Jews were identified with the prototype of the *internal foreigner*, although, or precisely because, they hold a dominant position in the national economy. This position was gradually filled solely by the Jews, while the Greeks, as Orthodox Christians, were more readily assimilated by the host people. Meanwhile, in an age when the dominant guiding concepts of the Romanian spirituality were Romanianism, ethnicism and Orthodoxism (Volovici, 1991), Jews, as "perpetual foreigners" (Livezeanu, 1995: 192), were denied

∗ **Daniela Maria Marțole** is currently a PhD lecturer at the Department of Foreign Studies at *Ştefan cel Mare* University of Suceava, Romania, Faculty of Letters and Communication Sciences. He teaches seminars and practical courses in the English language, lexicology, and syntax. Her research focuses on the translation of Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*, in Romanian. Other fields of interest are Translation Studies, Discourse Analysis, Cultural Studies, Victorian Literature; E-mail: danielamartole@yahoo.com

access to many aspects of Romanian life. On top of that, due to the connections of the Romanian Jewish burgeoisie with Jews from other countries, they were also perceived as *external foreigners*, involved in a sort of worldwide "conspiracy" (Volovici, 1991: 5). According to Beller and Leerssen, "Jewish upward social mobility in the nineteenth century Europe led to this particular variation on the notion of the 'Jewish plot' which in turns was linked to the growing phobia of racial degeneration in nineteenth-century racism" (Beller and Leerssen, 2007: 204).

Adolphe Stern, the son of a Jewish jeweller from Bucharest, was in the middle of the struggle for the emancipation of the Romanian Jews. He studied Law in Berlin, Leipzig and Paris, where he worked in a lawyer's office. Back in Romania, he worked as a secretary of USA Consul Benjamin Franklin Peixotto whose influence and commitment contributed to the foundation of the first Jewish political body. He was the president of The Union of Romanian Jews until 1922, when he was elected as deputy to the Romanian Parliament. Despite his legal education (he was the first Jewish lawyer in Romania) and his involvment in politics, he is known in Romanian culture for his translations of Shakespeare's plays which were an important source of controversy beginning with the last decades of the 19th century, often involving renowned Romanian personalities such as T. Maiorescu, I.L.Caragiale, A.D. Xenopol.

An important part of the translation history of the plays *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* is the media coverage of Stern's versions. No other translation had similar reverberations in the newspapers. The controversy covers a span of about fifty years, beginning in 1877, when Stern's first edition of Hamlet's translation was published, and being rekindled in 1922, when the publishing house Cultura Națională [The National Culture][1] published the second edition of Stern's translation of *Hamlet* as well as the first edition of his translation of *Macbeth*, generating a political and a mediatic scandal.

After the publication of Stern's first translation of *Hamlet,* in 1877, A.D. Xenopol finds the reason for some mistakes and inconsistencies in Stern's text in the translator's partial knowledge of the Romanian language: "…d. Stern nu prea ştie bine româneşte, ceea ce în însuşirea d-sale de străin, de oare ce a trebuit să înveţe limba română, nu este deloc extraordinar. Aşa vedem unele lucruri mici în aparenţă şi care ar putea fi interpretate chiar ca greşeli de tipar, dacă nu s-ar reproduce cu oarecare sistemă"[2] (A.D. Xenopol, 1878: 274). For A. D. Xenopol the idea of nation was identical with that of ethnicity (Balan, 2006: 236), a perfectly justifiable fact, according to some historians, as the strongest of the available links in the national construction is a certain language (Boia, 2011: 23-24). According to Hobsbawm, "what brought 'race' and 'nation' even closer was the practice of using both as virtual synonyms, generalising equally wildly about 'racial'/'national' character, as was then the fashion" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 108). In his memoires, Stern describes A.D. Xenopol's criticism as "biased ans resentful" and ethnically motivated by the selective perception of people of Jewish origin (Stern, 2001: 113). As a counterargument, he cites Maiorescu's assertions from one of his articles published in June, 1877, by *Timpul* [Time], issues nr. 129, 132, 134, which shed a more favourable light upon Stern's translations: "Nemerita alegere de cuvinte, căutarea îngrijită a acelei expresii vechi cari sunt adesea mai bune, mai curate şi mai bogate de înţeles decât neologismele franceze, cu care a căutat a le înlocui conversaţia superficială a saloanelor noastre moderne, dovedeşte o studiare aprofundată a limbii române în toate formele ei delicate"[3] (cited in Stern, 2001: 113). Maiorescu, another Romanian intellectual, was among the few supporters of the revision of the infamous Article 7 in the Romanian Constitution in 1866 which only granted civil rights to Christian Romanians.

Forty-five years later, in two articles that cover more than seventy pages, I. Botez, professor at the University of Iaşi, thoroughly analyses the two translations, underlining "the mistakes of different categories" (Botez, 1924: 50). The subtle, objective irony in the first article, "Shakespeare în

---

[1] All translations of Romanian sources, including titles of books and journals, are mine.

[2] "…Mr. Stern doesn't quite speak Romanian well but, as he is a foreigner who had to learn Romanian, this is not at all out of the ordinary. As a consequence, we notice some apparently small things that could be mistaken for misprints if they did not occur systematically"(my translation).

[3] "the appropriate choice of words, the careful usage of those old expressions that are often better, purer and semantically richer than the French neologisms, that he used to counterbalance the superficial conversations in our modern living rooms, proves a deep immersion into the study of the Romanian language, in all its delicate forms"(my translation).

Romîneşte" [Shakespeare in Romanian], published in *Viaţa Românească* [The Romanian Life] in May, 1923, combined with strong and direct attacks generates virulent reactions from both A. Stern and his supporters. The translator's answers are published in *Adevărul literar şi artistic* [The Literary and Artistic Truth], 1923, issues no. 156, 157, 158.

Other similar, supporting articles are authored by journalists of the time that are, to some extent, involved in literary and theatrical activities; Barbu Lăzăreanu (in *Adevărul literar şi artistic*, 1923, issues 140, 142), Benno Brănişteanu (in *Adevărul*, 1923, December 15th), Emil Fagure (in *Lupta*, 1923, December 30,). I. Botez retaliates with the second article, "Shakespeare tradus" [Shakespeare Translated], focusing this time on the metrical composition of the text and especially on the translator's lexical choices.

Both parties involved in the debate made use of pertinent examples and explanations to support their views, backed up, in most cases, by lexicographical sources and other normative works. Some of the linguistic elements caused contoversy because of the still unstable and less unified character of the linguistic norm in the two Romanian principalities, Moldova and Wallachia. Such is the case of Banquo's line in Act III, scene 3, "It will be rain to-night", which Stern translates *La noapte o să plouă* (64), using an informal future construction formed with an uniflected auxiliary *o* + the Present Subjunctive *să plouă*. This Subjunctive form was characteristic of the southern Romanian province and is now the established norm in Romania, while in Moldova the accepted form was *să ploaie,* still in informal use, nowadays, in some northern regions of the country. That the "dispute" among the diatopic variants for supremacy ended in the prevalence of the subdialect from Wallachia is "as natural as can be", says linguist Ion Gheţie, as are many other similar facts derived from the moving of Romania's administrative-territorial center to Bucharest, beginning with 1862. Consequently, the Moldovans found it most difficult to adjust to the new linguistic norms, as they "had the most to give up and the most to take from others" (Gheţie, 1978: 223).

It is not altogether coincidental that the harsh criticism against Stern's text was issued by Moldovan intellectuals and one needs to approach this mediatic duel from a broader perspective, focusing on two essential factors that influenced the perception of Jews in the former historical principalities: demographic distribution and linguistic change. As Livezeanu points out, "at the beginning of the 20th century, about three fourths of the Jewish population lived in the Moldavian[4] part of the Regat [Old Kingdom], and about 80 percent of Jews made their living in the commercial and artizanal economic sector" (Livezeanu, 1995: 194-195). The resentment against the internal foreigner was therefore much stronger in this part of the country. The merger of the two historical principalities in one state modified statistical numbers and Romanians had to undergo a process of ethnical "dilution" that was becoming even more pregnant with each new territory that added to the body of Greater Romania. On the other hand, despite the fact that geographical and political boundaries of the two separate principalities had been removed, psychological barriers were far more difficult to displace. In an age when "ethnicity and language became the central, increasingly the decisive or even the only criteria of potential nationhood" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 102), the slightest change in the traditional linguistic system left scars that are visible to this day, the two historical cultural centers of Iasi and Bucharest still polarising the linguistic debates. For Botez, therefore, Stern represents both the internal foreigner, threatening to the national character, and the external one, spoiling the purity of the language and giving material form, in his texts, to the detrimental Jewish influences that were constantly underlined by Romanian intellectuals, as a consequence of their growing concern with ethnic/linguistic hibridity and degeneration.

As far as Stern's vocabulary is concerned, I. Botez's objections were numerous but his comments were very often restricted to exclamation marks or exclamative sentences. The second article had a more serious tone, subtler irony and more extended comments, meant to counteract the reactions in the media that followed the publication of his first critical essay.

The lexical problems that I. Botez ennumerates might be grouped in three large categories. The first group contains a small number of semantic errors derived from the incomplete understanding of the source text. In the first chapter of the play *Macbeth*, the captain (*the soldier*, in Stern's

---

[4] Livezeanu uses the names *Moldavia* and *Moldavians* but in the rest of the article I use *Moldova* and *Moldovans* to refer to the Romanian principality and its inhabitants.

translation) makes a brief account of the battle against the Norwegian army. Stern translated his words, "Mark king of Scotlad, mark" (I.2.26)[5] by "Mark, al Scoției Rege"(Mark, the Scottish king), mistaking the imperative form of the verb for a proper noun and thus confusing the reader. Such cases were not numerous but they made powerful arguments in Botez's discourse against Stern's text.

The second category includes what we will call, only in the context of the present taxonomy, "selection errors", a rather inappropriate label, the translator's lexical choices being correct, at least in terms of meaning. The "error" that we are trying to underline, and to which I Botez made constant reference in his two articles, resides in the wrong choice of register. According to the Moldovan intellectual, A. Stern seemed to have a fascination for rare words and expressions which had obsolete, colloquial or regional meanings that were consequently understood only by people in the southern rural regions of the country and the usage of which was damaging for the precarious unity of the language. I Botez made a list of several dozen words that he considered highly inappropriate for the translation of Shakespeare's texts, such as: *taman*[6]*, barem*[7]*,șart*[8]*, bogdaproste*[9]*, a-și face mendrele*[10]*, har*[11]*, nur*[12]*, opincă*[13], most of them of Turkish and Slavic extraction, which were no longer widely circulated but were mainly restricted to limited regional areas in the south, where the Balkanic influences were more persistent and faded away at a slower pace. Some of the words were so unfamiliar to the educated elite that they were wrongly considered printing mistakes, as is the case of the verb *a poligni,* that Stern uses to translate the verb in the line "though bladed corn *be lodg'd*" (IV.1.76). In the second article, I. Botez ironically explains his own misunderstanding of Stern's lexical choice:

> Dar d. Stern e foarte *fudul* că în dicționarul lui Damé, care cuprinde și *la terminologie paysanne*, și în dicționarul lui Șăineanu, care e universal, a găsit cuvântul *polignit*, alături cu *popîlnic, popiciu, poroinic, pocriș, hulchit, podhorniță*, - și-a putut introduce pe unul dintre ele, - pe *polignit,-* în *Macbeth*: așa ca să nu-l poată recunoaște nimeni.[…] Noi l-am luat drept o greșeală de tipar. Dar fiindcă d. Stern prinde cuvintele după ureche, nu după înțeles, a rămas fermecat de resonanța lui muzicală, fără să-l înțeleagă precis. D-sa îl întrebuințează pentru toate holdele, pecînd la țară nu se întrebuințează decît pentru grîu, in și sămănături verzi. E cunoscut în unele județe, la țară, și deci foarte nimerit […] să-l consacre pe d. Stern ca bun traducător al lui Shakespeare. N'am cunoscut pînă la d. Stern cuvîntul polignit, și e *chic* că l-am aflat din *Macbeth*[14] (Botez: 1924, 65).

---

[5] The reference refers to act, scene and page number in the Penguin Popular Classics edition, Penguin Books, 1994.

[6]Adverb, from the Turkish *tamam* , "especially, exactly".

[7]Adverb, from the Serbian or Bulgarian *barem,* "at least".

[8]Noun, from the Turkish *șart* "tradition, usage, rule, convention ".

[9]Interjection, from the Bulgarian *bog da prosti* "May God forgive the dead".

[10]*Mendre*: "whims, caprices," plural noun of unknown extraction; *a-și face mendrele* (literally, "to do one's whims") - to fool around, to cut loose.

[11]Noun, from the old Slavic *chari,* "(divine) grace, talent".

[12]Noun, from the Turkish *nur,* "sex appeal".

[13]Noun, from then Bulgarian *opinka,* "peasant leather footwear fixed by the ankle with laces wound over textile ankle wraps".

[14] "But Mr. Stern is very *chesty* that in Damé's dictionary, which also contains *la terminologie paysanne*, and in Șăineanu's universal dictionary, he could find the word *polignit*, together with *popîlnic, popiciu, poroinic, pocriș, hulchit, podhorniță*[14]*,* and was able to use one of them, *polignit,* in *Macbeth*, so that no one can recognise it […]. We mistook it for a typesetter's mistake. But as Mr. Stern uses words by ear, not according to their meaning, he was enchanted by its musical resonance, without fully grasping its meaning. Mr. Stern uses it for all the crops, whereas in the countryside it is only used for wheat, flax and green fields. It is only used in the rural areas of some counties, and therefore highly appropriate […] to establish Mr Stern's reputation as one of Shakespeare's skilled translators. We have never heard the word *polignit* until Mr. Stern['s translation] and it's *chic* that we have learned it from *Macbeth*"(my translation).

The Moldovan intellectual considers that the overuse of archaisms and regional words only leads to the trivialisation of the source texts and to the faulty representation of Shakespeare's characters. He brings the argument of Stern's translation of Ophelia's lines in *Hamlet,* Act 4, scene 4:

How should I your true one know From another one? By his cockle hat and staff, And his sandal shoon. (Hamlet, IV. 4. 1059; Shakespeare, 1951)[15]	Cum vrei ca dintre toți ceilalți Pe dragul tău să-ți spui? După căciulă, după băț, Și după opinca lui. (Stern's translation, cited in Botez, 1923: 293)	How do you want me of all the others Your sweetheart to tell? By his cap and stick And his peasant shoe/opinka. (my back translation)

He criticises the attempt to lexically adapt Hamlet, "the most refined and complex intellectual of the entire gallery of Shakespeare's characters" (Botez, 1923: 293), to a Romanian folk culture as, until the moment of Stern's translation, Romanian readers had not had access to a text written in a language that was free from diatopic variation, that would adress all Romanians, irrespective of their place of residence. On the other hand, Botez's critical remarks reveal his diastratic bias, as he suggests that translations of Shakespeare's texts should break away from the traditionally rural model and focus instead on an educated elite, elevating Romanian culture in order to catch up with the major European cultures: „Deosebirea între imaginea d-lui Stern și a lui Shakespeare e exact aceia dintre un cioban cu cușmă, cu ghioagă și cu opinci și un cavaler medieval cu însemn de pelerin la pălărie, cu toiag și cu sandale.[…]Traducerea localizată a d-lui Stern desigur nu se poate explica prin nebunia Ofeliei"[16](*ibidem*). If we are to compare the lexical choices in the source text and in Stern's translation from the perspective of diachronic and diatopic variation, Botez's views sound pertinent and just. Shakespeare uses archaisms, for instance, very rarely, and only as a character delineation device, to suggest insanity or to sketch a comic character.

Botez's objections may sound rather paradoxical, as, in the process of national construction, the peasant was used as a legitimising element of the nationalist discourse, standing as a symbol of ethnical purity and perenniality. That is why "in Romanian social, ethnic, and cultural symbolism the Jew was the antipode of the peasant" (Livezeanu, 1995: 11). Nonetheless, Stern's attempt to internalise a major European cultural symbol through the language of the peasant is received with strong opposition and disapproval, and the explanation resides, once again, in demographics. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the 20th century, the largest number of Romanians lived in rural areas, as compared with the Jews, whose "communities had been predominantly urban" (*idem*, 12). Consequently, one of the stringent priorities of the Romanian intellectuals was to become more visible in the cultural and urban life of the country, hence the breach between the peasants and the educated elite that covered all life aspects, including language. As Hobsbawm remarks, "top people […] would naturally speak the standard national language in the 'educated' mode, with or without regional accent or a touch of regional vocabulary, but usually in a manner which identified them as members of their social stratum" (Hobsbawm, 2000: 114). At the end of the 19th century, Shakespeare had universal value; the Germans, for instance, had already claimed him as their national writer. Under such circumstances, a Romanian rural Shakespeare was not to be accepted.

The same motivation underlies Botez's criticism of a third category of translation problems that consists in what I will call "combination errors" and includes words the syntagmatic valences of which were exploited in a manner that is atypical for Romanian. Generally, such deviations from the linguistic norm are characteristic of the language of literary works and act as marks for the writer's individual style. As D. Crystal points out, Shakespeare is the master of original choices, using the

---

[16] "The distinction between Stern's image and Shakespeare's is that between a herdsman with his cap, his club, and his opinkas and a Medieval knight with a pewter pilgrim badge pinned to his hat, with his staff and his sandals […]. Mr. Stern's localised translation can't, of course, be explained by Ophelia's insanity"(my translation).

meaning of words and their syntagmatic relations in an unprecedented manner. In this way, says Crystal, he shows us "how to be daring with language" (Crystal, 2008: 3), how to have the courage to exploit its full potential by creatively defying the norm. According to Botez, Stern does not posess the necessary linguistic competence to venture into creative translation and his comments may find justice in the examples below.

Stern's preference for the adjective *hâd* "very ugly, hideous", which we find in unusual word combinations such as: 1. *chip hâd* (22), 2. *hâdul fapt* (32), 3. *hâdă trâmbiţă* (47), 4. *hâdă trădare* (50), 5. *noaptea asta hâdă* (51), 6. *vedere hâdă* (85), has a flattening effect upon the text and shows the limited access of the translator to the paradigm of the word. In stark contrast, the six corresponding English noun phrases contain five different adjectives from the same semantic field: 1a. *horrid image* (I.3.32), 2a. *horrid deed* (I.7.41), 3a. *hideous trumpet* (I.3.52), 4a. *treasonous malice* (I.3.54) 5a. *this sore night* (II.4.55), 6a. *horrible sight* (IV.1.79). In Romanian, therefore, Shakespeare's text is poorer and less expressive.

Some of the words included by Botez in his list are nothing but Stern's literal (otherwise correct) translations that in Romanian resulted in unusual combinations which, in spite of their linguistic audacity, are far from getting the stylistic effect of the source text: *întâmplări clocite* (46) "addle events" for *events,/ new hatch'd* to th'woeful time." (II.3.51), *somn pufos* (47) "fluffy sleep" for *downy sleep* (II.3.52), *a frige fierul* (43) "to roast your iron" for *roast your goose* (II.3.49). In the last example, for instance, the term *goose* is a slang word for a tailor's iron that had a goose-neck curve in the handle. The association with the verb *roast* is, therefore, a pun, hardly translatable in Romanian.

Many such examples derive from Stern's huge attempts at a faithful rendering into Romanian of Shakespeare's texts. A.D. Xenopol criticises, in Stern's translation, "this enslavement to the source text" (Xenopol, 1878: 274), while I. Botez speaks about "the beginner's *adlitteramist* propensity" (Botez, 1923: 278).

In spite of these "errors" or deviations from the essence of Romanian or English, Stern's translations are in many ways valuable for the history of Shakespeare's plays in Romania. The translation of *Macbeth* published in 1922 contains footnotes meant to explain some toponyms and onomastic terms of Scottish extraction or allusions to historical events that clarify character's lines, showing the translator's genuine interest in the scientific character of the translation process.

In his memoirs, Stern comments both upon his decision to translate in blank verse and on some of his lexical choices, which he considers acts of liberation from the French influence which was overwhelming at all levels of Romanian culture at the end of the 19th century:

> Trăiam în acea perioadă când influenţa literaturii franceze era atotputernică nu numai asupra fondului de gândire, dar şi chiar asupra limbei, care, depărtându-se de la obârşia sa, se împestriţa cu neologisme, încât ajunse un fel de 'volapük franco-român' cum se exprimă N. Iorga. Mai mult; chiar forma trebuia să se robească celei franceze. Şi deoarece chiar versul consfinţit de dramaturgii clasici ai Franţei era alexandrinul rimat, trebuia neapărat să-l imităm şi noi, deşi n-avem această tradiţiune, ca să ne impunem această robie a unui metru, din firea lui nedramatic. Eu păstrasem versul alb al originalului englez, pentru că l-am găsit şi de un ritm vioi şi viguros şi pentru că mi s-a părut că şi forma face parte integrantă dintr-o operă de artă, şi îi dă adevărata sa fizionomie[17] (Stern, 2001: 114).

---

[17] "We were living in that period when French literature had a great influence, not only on the systems of thought, but even on the language, that, moving astray from its origin, was so much suffused with neologisms that it had turned into a sort of "Franco-Romanian volapük", as N. Iorga puts it. More than that, even the form had to be enslaved to the French one. And because the French classic playwrights had sanctioned the rhymed alexandrine, we had to imitate them at all costs, even though we do not have this tradition, and to willingly surrender to this meter, which is, by nature, non-dramatical. I decided to keep the blank verse of the English original, as I found it had a brisk and vigorous rhythm and because I thought that form is also an integrating part of a work of art, giving it its true physiognomy" (my translation).

All this polemic, impressive in terms of duration and intensity, which should have naturally resulted in a progress in the (auto)critical assessment of translations, is unfortunately, pointless. The ethnic and religious grounds that initiated this dialogue prevent, on the one hand, the translator's objective evaluation and acceptance of external criticism with a view to improve his text and also his linguistic abilities, and, on the other hand, the objective assessment of the literary and historical value of Stern's texts, feeding the already exacerbated xenophobic tendencies.

The apparently innocent debate upon the value of some translated texts immediately found its way beyond the cultural space and was shrewdly turned into a political tool. Oişteanu speaks of stereotypical ethnical images that have little to do with social realities and are mainly discursive creations: "Asistăm, în aceste cazuri, la un interesant fenomen de feedback cultural. Stereotipuri de imagologie etnică (de genul celor amintite: evreul e inteligent, dar viclean şi pus pe fraudă) născute în spaţiul antisemitismului popular, au fost preluate de promotori ai antisemitismului politic, pentru ca ulterior - uşor reformulate – să fie reactivate, ideologizate, multiplicate prin presă şi retransmise cu o forţă înzecită în spaţiul cultural care le-a generat"[18](Oişteanu, 2001: 135). This summarises, in a few lines, the political destiny of the critical essays of both A.D. Xenopol and I. Botez, which were used, almost *ad litteram*, to illustrate the extreme nationalist views of A.C. Cuza, a right-wing Moldovan politician, one of the most vociferous and radical Romanian antisemites. In his book, *Naţionalitatea în artă* [*Nationality in art*], he claims that Jews are incapable of creating valuable forms of art. Dwelling on the fact that Adolphe Stern was brought up and educated in a Romanian environment and, therefore, he had full access to the Romanian language, Cuza asserts that the poor quality of his texts, documented by the criticism of the two intellectuals, is not the result of his personal inability, but, rather, the consequence of a racial cultural sterility, an incapacity derived from the lack of a Jewish homeland that should shelter the creative power of their nationality (Cuza, s.a.: 268). Both Xenopol's and Botez's texts acted as catalysts for the rapid spread of antisemitic ideas in the interbellic Romania, extending their authority to Cuza's text and increasing its credibility.

The reception of Stern's texts is highly influenced by the political upheavals that shaped the Romanian reality in the early 20th century. Romania was the only European state that refused to grant civil rights to Jews before Word War I (Nastasă, 2011: 26). The international community had to blackmail Romania, as "the implementation of essential national objectives was made contingent on the emancipation of the Jews" (Volovici, 1991: 6). Adolphe Stern was naturalised in 1880, after great struggle, and his work as a translator had a strong impact upon the decision of the committee. One of the members of this committee was P.P. Carp, a Moldovan politician who had authored himself two translations from Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Macbeth*, which did not benefit from appreciative reviews, either. While Stern's text was put down for the translator's ethnocentric tendencies, Carp committed the sin of foreignising the translation, using too large a number of neological words and barbarisms; a presumed foreigner decided to leave the reader in peace, and brought the author towards him, while a Romanian-born translator left the author in peace, and took the reader abroad[19]. Although criticised, Carp did not have to jusify his choices and the criticism against his tranlations was never related to his nationality or birth place. The impact of Stern's criticism was so great, that, more than sixty years later, *Dicţionarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900* (The Dictionary of Romanian Literature from its Beginnings to 1900), in an attempt to describe Stern's activity as a translator, summarises, instead, in a few lines, the entire polemic started around his texts: "Traducând din Shakespeare S. a încercat să transpună originalul cu o mare fidelitate literală, ceea ce a dus la

---

[18] "We witness, in such cases, an interesting phenomenon of cultural feedback. Stereotypes of ethnic imagology (such as the Jew is intelligent, but shrewd and deceptive), born in the space of popular antisemitism, were overtaken by promoters of political antisemitism and, subsequently, slightly altered, reactivated, ideologised, multiplied in the media and then, sent back, with tenfold force, in the cultural space that had generated them"(my translation).

[19] In his lecture "On the Different Methods of Translating", Friederich Schleiermacher describes the theories of ethnocentric and foreignising translations. Here's the full quotation: "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader toward him. Or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author toward him"(in Lefevere, 1992: 149).

neglijarea sensului de ansamblu al comunicării şi mai ales a spiritului limbii, în favoarea echivalării, mecanice însă, a cuvântului."[20] (Drăgoi, 1979: 812).

The mediatic trial of Stern's texts is just one example of the way in which the influence of famous intellectuals was used to serve hidden political agendas in the interwar period. The two Moldovan critics, A.D. Xenopol and I. Botez, only reflected in their criticism the moderate nationalist resistance that derived from the tendency to homogenise the linguistic and cultural space, active in the aftermath of both historical moments of 1859 and 1918, when the unity of Romanian territories was accomplished. Their opinions were the more valuable because, as Cuza himself remarked, they were published by *Convorbiri literare* [Literary Dialogues] and *Viaţa Românească* [The Romanian Life], newspapers that were renowned for their philosemitic policies, and the critics themselves were never known to be antisemites (Cuza, s.a.: 270). Although their objections to Stern's texts were, most of the times, scientifically justified and had little or no discriminating motivation, their political value resided in their power to arouse antisemitic stereotypes that laid dormant in the consciusness of the Romanian readers and that A.C. Cuza immediately used to his own political advantage. As Oişteanu points out, Romanian intellectuals that made use of such "mental images" don't necessarily believe in them but are aware of their impact upon simple, uneducated people: "Antisemitismul politic (activ şi conştient) a exploatat toate clişeele antisemitismului popular (pasiv şi latent)"[21] (Oişteanu, 2001: 133). The intellectual authority of the two critics extended upon the self-proclaimed defenders of Romanian spirituality in the same way in which Stern's translation mistakes were seen as representative for his entire ethnic group's lack of linguistic competence. As language was an important marker of group cohesion, deviations from its established rules were intentionally identified, for political reasons, with the betrayal of the national ideals of unity.

Works Cited

Balan, D. 2006. *Naţional, naţionalism, xenofobie şi antisemitism în societatea românească modernă* [National, Nationalism, Xenophobia and Antisemitism in Modern Romanian Society]. Iaşi: Junimea.

Beller, M., Leerssen, J. (eds.). 2007. *Imagology. The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters – A Critical Survey*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi.

Boia, L. 2011. *Două secole de mitologie naţională* [Two Centuries of National Mythology]. Bucureşti: Humanitas.

Botez, I. 1923. "Shakespeare în Romîneşte" [Shakespeare in Romanian] in *Viaţa romînească* [The Romanian Life], vol LIV, year XV, issues 4,5 and 6. Iaşi: Institutul de arte grafice şi editura „Viaţa romînească", 277-294.

Botez, I. 1924. "Shakespeare tradus" [Shakespeare translated] in *Viaţa romînească* [The Romanian Life]. volume LVII, year XVI,. Iaşi: Institutul de arte grafice şi editura „Viaţa romînească", 32-7.

Crystal, D. 2008. *Think on My Words: Exploring Shakespeare's Language*. Cambridge University Press.

Cuza, A. C.[s.a.]. *Naţionalitatea în arta. Principii, fapte, concluzii* [Nationality in Art. Principles, Facts, Conclusions]. Bucureşti: Cartea Romanească.

Drăgoi G. (ed.). 1979. *Dicţionarul literaturii române de la origini până la 1900* [The Dictionary of Romanian Literature from its Origins to 1900]. Bucureşti: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România.

Gheţie, I. 1978. *Istoria limbii române literare*. Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică.

---

[20] "Translating Shakespeare, S. tried to transpose the original text with high literal fidelity and this resulted in the neglect of the overall meaning and especially of the spirit of the language, in favour of the mechanic equivalence of the word"(my translation).

[21] "Political antisemitism (active and cognizant) exploited all the clichés of popular antisemitism (passive and latent)"(my translation).

Goldberg, T. D., Solomos, J. (eds.). 2002. *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*. Cornwall: Blackwell Publishers.

Hobsbawm, E. J. 2000. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge University Press.

Lefevere, A. (ed.). 1992. *Translating History, Culture. A Sourcebook*. London: Routledge.

Livezeanu, I. 1995. *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle. 1918-1930*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Nastasă, L. 2011. *Antisemitismul universitar în România. 1919-1939* [Universitary Antisemitism in Romania. 1919-1939]. Cluj-Napoca: Kriterion.

Nederveen Pieterse, J. 2002. "Europe and its Others". In Goldberg, Theo David, Solomos,John (eds.). 2002. *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*. Cornwall: Blackwell Publishers, 17-25.

Oişteanu, A. 2001. *Imaginea evreului în cultura română* [The Image of the Jew in the Romanian Culture]. Bucureşti: Humanitas.

Schleiermacher, F. 1813. "On the Different Methods of Translating". In Lefevere, A. 1992. *Translating History, Culture. A Sourcebook.* London: Routledge.

Shakespeare, W. 1951. *The Complete Works*. London and Glasgow: Harper Collins Publishers.

Shakespeare, W. 1922. *Opere alese*, traducere de Adolphe Stern [Selected Works, translated in Romanian by Adolphe Stern], Bucureşti: Cultura Naţională.

Stern, A. 2001. *Din viaţa unui evreu român* [From the life of a Romanian Jew], vol.1. Edited by Ţicu Goldstein. Bucureşti: Hasefer.

Volovici, L. 1991. *Nationalist Ideology and Antisemitism. The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s*. Translated from Romanian by Charles Kormos. Oxford, New York, Seul, Tokio: Pergamon Press.

Xenopol, A. D. 1878. "Hamlet Prinţul Danemarcei. Tragedie în 5 acte de W. Shakespeare tradusă de Adolf Stern. Bucureşti, 1877" [Hamlet Prince of Denmark. Tragedy in 5 Acts by W. Shakespeare translated in Romanian by Adolf Stern, Bucureşti, 1877]. In *Convorbiri literare* [Literary Dialogues], Year XI, April 1, 1877 – March 1, 1878. Iaşi: Tipografia Naţională, 273-276.

***

Convorbiri literare [Literary Dialogues], year XI, April 1, 1877 – March 1, 1878. Iaşi: Tipografia Naţională.

Viaţa romînească [The Romanian Life].1923.vol LIV, year XV, issues 4,5 and 6. Iaşi: Institutul de arte grafice şi editura „Viaţa romînească".

Viaţa romînească [The Romanian Life]. 1924. volume LVII, year XVI. Iaşi: Institutul de arte grafice şi editura „Viaţa romînească"