

CONFLUENCES BETWEEN THE AMERICAN AND THE MOLDOVAN LITERATURES: DIACRONIC AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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Cititorii noștri au manifestat mereu un interes vădit față de literatura americană. În lucrarea de față autorul își propune să cerceteze cum este receptată această literatură străină din perspectivă diacronică, adică să releve cum s-a dezvoltat interesul față de literatura americană în Republica Moldova, începând cu simple traduceri ale operelor scriitorilor americani în ziare și reviste până la preluarea unor teme și idei din operele lor de către scriitorii moldoveni.

The American literature is one of the most intriguing in the world. In spite of its rather early age, the history of the American people itself consisting of approximately four centuries, it is an example of mixture of traditions and innovations. The “melting pot” of various nationalities has given birth to a new remarkable phenomenon – the unique American culture.

In the Republic of Moldova, the American Literature has been perceived at its grand value with much difficulty. One of the existing problems in the area of the reception of the World Literature in the Republic of Moldova is the lack of profound research in the field of American literature.

The level of realization of contacts with the American literature was proved to be a little superficial, due to the fact that, generally, the American literary works that appeared in Moldovan bookshops and libraries during five decades after World War II have been mostly translations from the Russian language. The main cause of this problem consists in insufficient knowledge of foreign languages, especially of Germanic languages, that is of English and German. The study of these subjects was a rare phenomenon in the educational system of post war Bessarabia.

A tendency of more profound study of English language and American literature is noticed at approximately the beginning of the eighties. Nowadays English has become the most studied language in our country, since it became the universal means of communication among representatives of different countries and cultures.

Consequently, the American literature wasn't completely ignored in the Moldovan Republic. The proof consists in the presence of American works in the course of World Literature in the higher institutions during the second half of the twentieth century, and in the continuously growing interest towards the translations from the original.

The reception of a literature in another cultural space is an issue that has especially preoccupied the researchers lately. It is usually realized on different levels, among which we differentiate three main levels of reception, emphasized by Paul Alexandru Georgescu, regarding the perception of Hispanic literary values and by Sergiu Pavlicenco, regarding the Germanic literary values [1]. Thus, the levels are the following:

- a) The level of interpretation – literary criticism;
- b) The level of information – the translations;
- c) The level of literary creation – literary works of foreign inspiration (in our case, the works of Moldavian writers inspired from the American literature).

The problem of the translations has been studied in the comparative literature both on the theoretical and on the practical levels, as it is seen in the works of many researchers, and in particular at: G. Monnin, V. Garcia Yerla, Yv. Chevrel, J. Lambert, J. Voisine, etc.

Yves Chevrel, for example, mentions that in the area of the comparative literature it matters not the process of the translation itself, but the reality of the text translated [2]. C. Guilleu, on the other hand, thinks that the translation is a component of the historical literary system, but its function and place depend on the relations with the other components of the system [3]. B.Reyzov presumed that only at first sight the theme of the translation and its exigencies towards the translator develops on a specific route, different from the development of the language. In reality, as it will be shown later, the language of the translations “grows old” faster, therefore being explained the appearance of some new translations of one and the same work [4].

The translations of literary works are regarded today as a way of access to the foreign literatures. But it surely doesn't mean that if the translations exist, we don't have to learn foreign languages any more. Yet, the lack of knowledge in the field of foreign languages constituted the main problem of the reception of foreign literatures in our cultural space. In the postwar period the majority of the works, with rare exceptions, were translated not directly from the original – from the American variant, but from the Russian one, which remained a long time the most frequent intermediary in perceiving a foreign literature.

This phenomenon constituted the cause of both the inferior quality of the translations and the prominent infidelity towards the original, not mentioning the artistic value of the translations, which were thoroughly edited and censored. Being destined to the masses, they not only influenced the people from the cultural point of view, but also from the social, psychological and political point of view. They had to correspond to the Soviet concept of a foreign literary work in the Bessarabian region. More than that, the selection of the authors and of the works was also left to the discretion of the translators or subordinated to some editorial plans that followed more extra literary, political objectives than cultural ones.

After a profound research in the area of the crystallizing of the American literary values in the Moldovan literature, it has been discovered that the quality of the translation that have been made since the post-war period till the present days, is quite satisfactory, although there is also place for improvement. The excessive use of the Russian language as an intermediary has gradually subtracted. As a result of the assimilation process, the literary works, suffering transformations in the translations from other languages, or in the imitations and critical interpretations, still become a dynamic factor in creating a national literature. They take part in its development as a phenomenon that acts on the same level as the products of the national creation.

Thus, the reception at the level of the translations implies numerous aspects, both literary and extra literary, without which the picture of the reception will be neither complete, nor objective.

In any case, the translations from the original never lacked entirely. Some literary works were translated from the most prominent writers. The press preferred to publish the translation of short prose, which was most of the times translated directly from English, without the interference of Russian translations.

Nevertheless, the fact that the Moldavian translations were made in a language submitted to its development to the influence of extra linguistic factors led to the reader's preference to read or study these works in Russian translations, due to the fact that these translations were superior from the artistic point of view to the Moldavian ones.

According to my research, the most remarkable authors of the translations from English were: Aureliu Busuioc, Igor Crețu, Ion Vatamanu, Pavel Starostin, Ion Mînescu, etc. Moreover, it is noticeable that after World War II the translations from American English were very rare. But with the progress of the economy and science, the responsibility towards the fidelity of translation has grown a lot. "Traducerile, mai cu seamă cele efectuate într-o bună limbă română – writes Mihai Cimpoi, – au avut o deosebită contribuție la procesul de culturalizare a basarabenilor, de deschidere spre valorile literaturii universale și la purificarea mediului lingvistic" [5]. The Moldavian reader had the possibility to get acquainted in his mother tongue with the words of such titans of the American literature as Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, Theodore Dreiser, Walt Whitman, etc.

The first translations were made for the press, through which the masses were culturally "illuminated". This way, the Moldavian reader had the possibility to learn about E. Hemingway, whose novels were translated and published for the first time in Moldova in 1959 in the daily *Tinerimea Moldovei* (the story "Nimeni nu moare niciodată", translated by S. Preigher) [6] and *Nistru* magazine ("Sătucul indienilor", translated by M. Bruhis) [7], about O. Henry (translated by A. Busuioc for *Nistru* magazine and *Moldova review*, in 1962, and respectively, in 1968). The reader learned about the famous American poets: Carl Sandburg was translated in 1967 by A. Codru for *Moldova review* and Walt Whitman was translated by Ion Vatamanu in 1969 for *Nistru* magazine and *Cultura review*, etc.

The press has contributed to the popularization of the creation of American writers and poets, which reflected into the growth of publishing volumes of novels and short stories, of sketches and poems. The drama, being more complex from the structural point of view, didn't seem to be fairly appreciated by Moldovan press and publishing houses.

Nevertheless, the Moldovan publishing houses have also contributed to the spreading of American values in the Republic of Moldova, for example, the publishing house *Cartea Moldovei* played a major role, publishing

tens of translations of American literary works throughout two decades (1958-1976), or the other publishing houses, like: *Lumina* (1974-1989), *Literatura artistică* (1977-1990), *Hyperion*, *Asociația Cartea*, *Cartier* (from the ninth decade of the 20th century till present days), etc., which also contributed to this important phenomenon.

As far as it concerns the reception of the American literature in our cultural space on the level of interpretation, we realize that a major part of the American writers' literary works published in the post-war period till the present days have had critical mentions at their address, contained in the prefaces and post faces of the published works, as well as in the Moldovan press: newspapers, magazines, reviews.

On the level of literary critique there can be defined a gradual growth in the number of specialists in the area of the development of the literary genres. If at first, in the post-war period, only some attempts of interpreting the work of the American poets and writers (essays, book reviews, biographical and critical articles) have been made, then in the present days it is observed a more frequent appearance of some compilations of critical articles and essays regarding World Literature, and particularly regarding the American literature, which proves a real improvement in the Moldovan researchers' attempts to make contact with the American literature, to study and interpret it.

The critique at the address of the American Literature was appreciated to be of great value: both the critical volumes on certain authors, such as Sadagurski's criticism on the works of Frank Norris [8] and Jack London [9], or Mihai Cimpoi's work on Hemingway and Melvill [10], etc., and the numerous critical articles and essays that have appeared in this period of time.

Nevertheless, the most favoured are the readers of nowadays, who can choose from a wide range of genres of the American literature: from Hemingway's and Dreiser's literary works, to Sandra Brown's mawkish novels, literature which is easy of access to anyone.

On the third level of reception, that of literary creation, the one who receipts the literary work is the writer who is also the one who produces other literary works. As a common reader, the writer acts the same way in the process of the lecture, but in addition to that, he gets inspired for the creation of some other work, this time with a national coloring.

It is a well-known fact that any artistic creation is the product of the author's imagination and sensibility. Nevertheless, it is also the product of his reception of some ideas taken from previous readings – both from the national literature, and from the foreign ones.

Thus, such a phenomenon as the taking over of some themes, motifs, forms and methods, etc. has appeared along with the development of literature. In the comparative literature this phenomenon was called the theory of the influence. On the level of the creative reception the accent falls not on the influence itself, but on the level of originality of the new work created under this influence [11].

The subjects of the comparative literature are the international literary relations: the existence of direct relations (the knowledge of other countries' languages and literatures) and the existence of the indirect relations (the appearance of some tangencies, or of some traces of a foreign literature – through the translations – in some other literatures).

The typological study is based on the principle of searching for resemblances in literatures, that can't be explained through the direct and the indirect relations, –these are the typological resemblances, explained by the social-economical conditions, which generated these affinities in different periods of time. The *thematology* is just an aspect of the study of typological resemblances in literatures and this aspect will be the one studied in this article.

In other words, studying the level of literary creation (literary works with themes common to those in the studied literature or of the respective national inspiration), it is to be noticed the fact that the creative reception deals with a subjective matter, it deals with the form in which some foreign literary values are reflected into the literary works of another nation. In our case, it refers to the works of the Moldavian writers inspired from the American Literature.

In the Moldovan post-war literature, the Moldovan writer imposed himself through the approach of the universal themes and especially through the use of the classical forms of the prose, belonging to such trends as the Romanticism (the motif of the rebel, of the outcast, the Bildungsroman, the following of the crystallizing of a character), the Realism (the stream of consciousness, the alternated time plans, the slide into the fantasy, into the dream), etc.

The themes that traverse the creation of the American prose writers had a considerable response in the Moldavian literature. For example, such a theme as *The development of a character under the oppression of the civilization* (a typical Bildungsroman) that is found at John Steinbeck, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, can also be noticed at our writers, such as: Ion Druță, Vlad Ioviță, Ion Burghiu, etc. It is obvious that the Moldavian writers have read something from the work of the American prose classics, but the resemblance can be caused not only by the reflection of the American values into the Moldavian literary works, but also by the similar surroundings or similar social and historical conditions. For example, the theme of the *society on the brink of urbanization* is shown both in John Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath"[12] and also in Ion Druță's "Ultima lună de toamnă", "Frunze de dor" [13], or in Vlad Ioviță's work „Hectar de umbră pentru pustiul Sahara”, etc. [14].

A widespread theme in the world literature is that of the place taken by the *Man of art* (the artist) in the society. Such famous prose writers as Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, and Theodore Dreiser paid a special attention to this theme in their works. This way, through his social-psychological novel "Martin Eden" Jack London deeply penetrates the psychology of a writer, of a man of art, but also characterizes his tragedy, resulted from the conflict with the materialist bourgeois society, foreign to the real art and talent [15].

The reader can see the same intellectualized character in Aureliu Busuioc's novel "Singur în fața dragostei". The main character Radu Negrescu, like Martin Eden, is forced to protect his concepts like a don Quijote of the Bessarabian village. His progressive thinking proved to be different from the mediocrity of the bourgeois society [16].

Another resemblance can be seen between Hemingway's "Snows of Killimanjaro" and Druță's story "Sania". Both authors describe the tumultuous process of creation, the artist not being understood not only by the society, but also by the close people, who love him, such as his wife. At Hemingway the man of art, Harry, is doomed to die because of the gangrene, but death doesn't frighten him as much as the fact that he will not end what he had already began to create [17].

On the other hand, in Druță's story "Sania" the role of the man of art belongs to moș Mihail. The poetry of the rural life is interwoven by the same thread of a dramatic conflict between a creator and the world that surrounds him. Through this story, simple at first sight but complex both from the thematic point of view (the sacrifice for the art's sake) and from the psychological point of view (the problem of the mentality of the man of art), Ion Druță doesn't only discuss the universal motives (as in Hemingway's work), but also reflects upon the local, native motives, as, for example, the motive of the *Artist's sacrifice* (as in "Meșterul Manole și Mănăstirea Argeșului") [18].

The same theme, the theme of *War* traverses the work of the famous American writer Ernest Hemingway, who belongs to the lost generation, which includes such writers as: J.Steinbeck, W.Faulkner, E.Caldwell, etc. Hemingway's novels abound in terrible, but truthful details of the armed battles, entirely lacking romanticism. Through his novels "For whom the bells toll?", "A farewell to arms!" he transmitted to the reader the shock born due to realizing the true face of the war and its results – like the moral death of people who passed through this experience.

The style, typical of Hemingway, is characterized by the character's abrupt dialogues (the fragmentalism), the unfinished thoughts – by the overtones and by the total lack of the author's comment on the things that happened [19].

The same fragmentalism and pacifist message can also be found in Vladimir Beșleagă's novel "Zbor frânt". However, the author doesn't just present battle scenes, like in Hemingway's "A farewell to arms!" , but also the dramatic result of the war – like in "Fiesta (The sun also rises)", where the main character, came from the front, faces the society's indifference towards their life, towards their tortured souls [20].

The theme of *Nature*, of nietzschian origin, about the human condition and the laws of nature in which the strongest survive, is also approached by both the American and the Moldavian writers, still with some differences characteristic to each of them. Thus, Henry Melvill's epic "Moby Dick, or the White Whale" does not only contain scientific information on whales' life, but also reflects the philosophic and the social sublayers: from the philosophical point of view, the White Whale signifies the mystery of the Universe and of the Existence, and people like Ahav, Starbeck, Flask and Ismael try to study it, they fight with the White Whale, but collide with its strength – the supreme law of the Nature: the strongest one is the one who wins. And from the social point of view, the novel's main issue is linked to the trade, and its process conveys the

principles on which are based the relations in a bourgeois society: the property is the law, the power. In the society, like in nature, only the strongest survive [21].

The same theme is the main issue in Hemingway's novel “The Old Man and the Sea”, but he doesn't write volumes to prove something that is obvious. The novel is based on the principle of the iceberg: on the surface can be seen only the essence, the synthesis of all the stories about the fishermen's life, and all the other 7/8 of the iceberg remain unseen, which means that it is important only what the author knows while creating his work, and not how much he writes.

The idea of the novel “The Old Man and the Sea” is the same as in Moby Dick: the man has to fight for his existence, like the old Santiago struggles to save his fish from the sharks. The action takes place in a very short period of time, but it contains many moralizing meanings essential to the Humanity: will the human factor – the will, the hope – be stronger than the harsh laws of nature? [22].

The Moldavian writers also try to answer this question. Ion Druță interpreted this theme from his point of view; he reversed the roles, showing how are the representatives of the wild life living in the Man's world. He deplored the fate of the dark bay horse wounded, worn out and left to die by his master, who had to follow his captain (the story “Murgul din Crimeea”), and he praised the diligence of the ant (the story “Furnica”), identifying it with a maiden, whom a spruce liked. Druță used the personification to show human characters.

The same method is used in the story “Balada celor cinci motănași”. The way the cat takes care of her kittens emphasizes a universal truth: both in nature and in human life a mother will always be a mother. The idea that only the strongest survive the harsh conditions of the surrounding world is also present in the work [23].

The same method is used by Emil Gîrleanu in his collection of stories “Din lumea celor care nu cuvântă”. The law of natural selection is shown in the story “Căprioara”, where the poor creature sacrifices herself to the wolf for her kid to survive. Whereas in the story “Nedespărțite!...” the man is the one who caused a dramatic situation: he shot a bird which was heading to the warm countries, and her „husband” was flying above her body, following his wife, as in symbol of eternal love. The lyrical note, characteristic of Gîrleanu's work, is familiar to the Moldovan style of writing [24].

The theme of the *Human condition*, of the uprooted man is very close to the Mioritic spirit of our people. In many Moldovan works, such as: “Navetista și pădurea” by V.Vasilache [25], “Singur în fața dragostei” by A.Busuioac, “Ultima lună de toamnă” and “Toiagul păstoriei” by I.Druță [26], “Hectar de umbră pentru pustiu Sahara” by V.Ioviță [27] etc. is outlined the image of the Shepherd (a Păstorului), who isn't estranged only from his sheep, but also from his calling and from his native place.

Another vision of the *uprooted man* is that of the man estranged from the reality: like Isai in Beșleagă's novel “Zbor frînt”, whose psychological trauma caused by the war estranged him from the present, and Benjamin in W.Faulkner's “The sound and the fury”, who perceives the reality through the prism of his feelings limited by his inborn deficiency (he was deaf and dumb). The love towards his sister Caddy is the only thing that connects him with the surrounding world. Introvert, suffering Caddy's drama of being seduced and left by the man she loved, Benji estranges himself entirely from the world he doesn't understand [28].

The image of Huckleberry Finn from Mark Twain's work is representative, regarding the man who is deprived of his connection with the surrounding world, with the society. Even if a lady tried to adopt and to raise the boy, for him to become a civilized person, Huck didn't fit into that social life, he rejected the laws of the well-behaviour, which were useless in the forest, the place where he felt at home, safer than in society [29].

Some obvious reminiscences of the ideas used by the famous American prose writer J.D.Salinger in his novel “The Catcher in the Rye” can be found in N.Esinencu's story “Doc”: first of all, it is the use of the same theme and idea – the problem of the teenager (Holden Caulfield in Salinger's case, and Doc in Esinencu's), who felt repulsion towards the phoney world of the adults, in which there was no place for him. Just like Holden, the Moldavian Doc felt the same strong wish to revenge, to punish the people who were close to him, but didn't understand him [30].

The theme of the *Childhood*, approached by Mark Twain in Tom Sawyer is also present in the works of such Moldavian writers as: Spiridon Vangheli (“Guguță, căpitan de corabie”, “Steaua lui Ciuboțel”, “Băiețelul din coliba albastră”) [31], Emilian Bucov (“Pîrăiaș”) [32], Aureliu Busuioac (“Noile aventuri ale lui Natăfleăț”) [33], George Meniuac (“Caloian”) [34], etc. Although addressed to children, both the adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and the adventures of the characters created by the Moldovan writers are also known and enjoyed by the adults, because they contain universal truths, seen through the naive eyes of the child.

In other words, although diverse and created in different from ours surroundings, the American literature has brought an important contribution to our prose, hence the influence through the universality of its themes and motives, which had a world-wide response.

Thus, in different periods of time, the similar historical, social, and psychological conditions led to the appearance of some similitude in the literary works of the writers of different countries, even if they have never seen each other's works. Moreover, it was shown how the same themes (the themes of War, of the Artist, of the Childhood, etc) have been taken over by our writers. On the whole, the Moldovan authors, being sensitive to the metamorphoses generated by the modern world, still preserved the national coloring of the Moldovan literature.

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