

## THE RECEPTION OF THE AMERICAN LITERATURE IN REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Lucrarea de față își propune să releve din perspectivă diacronică și comparatistă receptarea literaturii americane în Republica Moldova, urmând o serie de trăsături, teme și motive comune defînitorii corelate în cadrul unui studiu sub aspect de relații directe și indirecte între o literatură străină și literatura națională.

The American literature is one of the most intriguing in the world, due to its rather early age, because the history of the American people itself consists of approximately four centuries.

In Republic of Moldova, the American Literature has been receipted at its grand value with much difficulty. One of the existing problems in the area of the reception of the World Literature in 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, which was a rare phenomenon in the educational system of post war Bassarabia.

A tendency of more profound study of English language and American literature are noticed approximately at the beginning of the eighties, nowadays English being the most studied language, as it became the universal means of communication among representatives of different countries and cultures.

However, in Moldovan Republic the American literature was not completely ignored. The proof consists in the presence of American works in the course of World Literature in the higher institutions, and in the continuously growing interest towards the translations from the original.

The reception of a literature in another cultural space – an issue that had especially preoccupied us lately – is realized, usually, 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 (the critiques);
- b) The level of information (the translations);
- c) The level of literary creation (literary works with themes common to those in the studied literature or of the respective national inspiration). In our case, it is about the works of the 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, without coinciding with the development of the language. In reality, as it will be shown later, the language of the translations “grows old” faster, by this being explained the appearance of some new translations of one and the same work [4], and so on and so forth.

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 variant, which remained a long time the most frequent intermediary in perceiving a foreign literature.

This phenomenon constituted the cause of both 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, because, being destined to the masses, they influenced not only 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 Moldavian literature, it has been discovered that on 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 in other languages, or in the imitations and critical interpretations, still becomes 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. Something was 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 the research, the most remarkable authors of the translations from English were: Aureliu Busuioc, Igor Crețu, Ion Vatamanu, Pavel Starostin, Ion Mînescu, etc.

And 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 or her mother tongue with the words of the titans of the American literature: 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” [7], translated by M. Bruhis), 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 of 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 had also contributed to the spreading of American values in Republic of Moldova, for example, the publishing houses *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 20<sup>th</sup> century till present days), etc.

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 postfaces of the published works, but also 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) had 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 and Jack London, or Mihai Cimpoi's work on Hemingway and Melville, 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 receives 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, but 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, along with the development of literature, appeared such a phenomenon as the taking over of some themes, motifs, forms and methods, etc. 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.

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 motive 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" and also in Ion Druță's "Ultima lună de toamnă", "Frunze de dor", or in Vlad Ioviță's work „Hectar de umbră pentru pustiul Sahara”, etc.

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, 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, strange to the real art and talent.

The reader can see the same intellectualized character in Aureliu Busuioac'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 Bassarabian village. His progressive thinking proved to be strange to the mediocrity of the bourgeois society.

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 won't end what he had already began to create.

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 interweaved 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 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 he also reflects upon the local, native motives, like, for example, the motive of the artist's sacrifice (as in "Meșterul Manole și Mănăstirea Argeșului").

The same theme, that of the **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.

The same fragmentalism and pacifist message can also be found in Vladimir Beșleagă's novel "Zbor frânt". But 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.

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, but 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.

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?

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.

The same method is used by Emil Gîrleanu in his collection of stories "Din lumea celor care nu cuvîntă". 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 Moldavian style of writing.

The theme of the **HUMAN CONDITION**, of the uprooted man is very close to the Mioritic spirit of our people. In many Moldavian works, such as: "Navetista și pădurea" by V. Vasilache, "Singur în fața dragostei" by A. Busuioc, "Ultima lună de toamnă" and "Toiagul păstoriei" by I. Druță, "Hectar de umbră pentru pustiul Sahara" by V. Ioviță, 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 entirely from the world he doesn't understand.

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.

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.

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"), Emilian Bucov ("Părăiaș"), Aureliu Busuioc ("Noile aventuri ale lui Natăfleată"), George Meniuc ("Caloian"), etc. Although addressed to the children, both the adventures of Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and the adventures of the characters created by the Moldavian 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, influencing it with 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 Moldavian literature.

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