

Russian literature in Nyugat's reception

The Russian literature's reception begun with the work of Toldy Ferenc and has gone a long way until Bonkáló Sándor's *The history of the Russian literature*. I assessed the antecedents and circumstances of the Hungarian reception of the Russian literature focusing on the Nyugat's first period.

It can be determined that the first steps of reception occurred by mediation. The mediation – as we saw – happened in different ways. Firstly, the Hungarian readers familiar with the Russian language were missing, therefore we received the first informations about the Russians primarily through German or French mediation. Not only was our knowledge of the Russians determined by the mediating language, but it came from two directions. Firstly from publicistic informations, secondly from literary works.

The reception's first problems to be solved were the issues of translation, because the receivers were expecting the translators working from the original texts. It was the beginning's peculiarity that the receivers were primarily Hungarian writers, poets, literary men interested in culture and literature.

Another peculiarity of the Russian reception was that it began with the recognition of the contemporary Russian writers, therefore Turgenev became popular earlier than Pushkin and Gogol. The Russian authors raising the attention of the Hungarian readers remained in the Hungarian literature forever – firstly as contemporary authors, then as classics. Therefore Turgenev was always a point of reference in different comparisons, much like Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky later on.

The change in reception was caused by the works of Reviczky and Krúdy, to whom Russian literature was a standard to be followed, comparing the value of their works to this standard, but not copying it as an epigon. While the attention from Herzen and Turgenev moved to Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, translators working from original Russian language appeared.

At the turn of the century the perspective of the Russian reception broadened, since greater attention turned to the Russian sciences and to the Russian joint arts. Nyugat provided ground for this broadened attention. The journal provided the possibilities

of a greater acquaintance, since its editors and creators were interested in the world wide recognized Russian literature.

The Hungarian receivers' had already developed an image of the Russians at the start of Nyugat. They were familiar with Chekhov and Gorky. The Hungarian writers, poets were interested in the Russian culture in particular. Kosztolányi Dezső and Tóth Árpád involved in the Russian reception as translators. While the works of Russian authors were well recognized in the world's literature, they were reference points and standards in the Hungarian literature.

On the one hand the Nyugat wanted to meet the expectations of the well educated readers, on the other hand they provided ground for new initiatives, therefore they published about the Russian literature and culture frequently. Thanks to the mediating role of the Nyugat, the Hungarian receivers could become acquainted with Kuprin, Leonid Andreyev and their contemporary writers, as well as the prominent Russian joint artists' and their interesting news.

The Nyugat undoubtedly had a role of forming taste, but in case of the Russian literature the public formed the Nyugat in at least the same rate. Therefore the antirussian period of the world war – despite the Nyugat's purely esthetical intentions – affected perceivably the writings about the Russians.

By his editorial work, by representing pacifist views during the world war and by his approach on the world's literature, Babits created the new period of Russian reception. A critical discussion started between the two cultures' literature. The translations from original Russian texts reached the quality and esthetic criteria of literary translations. An equal attention was given to the Russian literature's current events and to the reconsideration of the classical Russian authors' works. There was a developed system for the Russian critics and essays and the Russian reception had a known past and traditions.

By 1926 even the public hastened the publishing of the history of the Russian literature in Hungary. It was then when Bonkáló Sándor finished his book marking a borderline in the Russian reception. Although he did not manage to thoroughly present the contemporary Russians, he systematized the less known beginnings of the Russian literature and gave an opportunity to continue and expand his work. It is the peculiarity of the Russian reception in Hungary that this only happens 75 years later. Bonkáló's work in literary history echoed through Nyugat.

I believe that the journal's role in the mediation and providing the possibility of mediation was even more important than its taste forming role in the Russian reception. It formed taste from the point of view of the Russian culture if we focus on the fact that it pointed the readers' attention to the Russians. However if we focus on the variety, the peculiarity that it provided ground for different opinions next to each other, layed the foundations of discussions, its role in Russian and every other reception becomes clear: the mediation which is the base of the discussion between cultures.