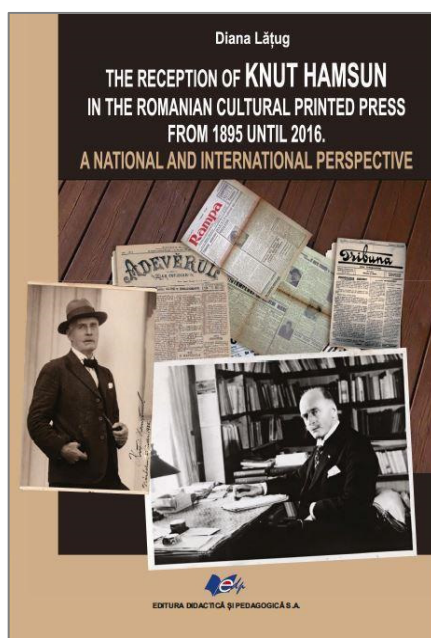


BOOKS

Diana Lățug, *The Reception of Knut Hamsun in the Romanian Cultural Printed Press from 1895 until 2016. A National and International Perspective*, București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 2020, 448 p.

Encompassing both national and international points of view, this volume is the first in-depth analysis of how Hamsun's work was received in the Romanian cultural printed press during 1895 and 2016. The author shows progressively how Hamsun's work was perceived by his countrymen and later on by readers in European core cultures (Russian, French, German and British) and by those in peripheral cultures such as Hungarian and former Yugoslavia. The most extensive part of the work makes use of no less than 283 articles to provide a rigorous analysis on how Hamsun's work was received by the Romanian cultural printed press. The volume, representing Diana Lățug's PhD thesis with the same title, was coordinated by Professor Sanda Tomescu Baciu, was publicly defended in 2017 and then published at Editura Didactică și Pedagogică in 2020.

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Cluj-Napoca, Diana Lățug (b. 1987) currently serves as an assistant professor at the aforementioned university, teaching Norwegian language and literature at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, Faculty of Letters. She has published a series of articles on Knut Hamsun's life and authorship, but especially on his reception in the Romanian cultural printed press, and has shared the results of her re-

search at various international conferences and seminars, both in Romania and in Norway.

In an attempt to widen the reception spectrum on Romanian territory, the book also presents data regarding the translations of Hamsun's work, especially the initial ones, so as to give the reader a better understanding of the contact culture. Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses are used to process the bulk of articles. The author makes various ref-

erences to Hamsun's national and international receptions in an attempt to set the Romanian press reception phenomenon in a wider context. Thus, the work contributes to the already existing international research on Knut Hamsun's reception. Furthermore, it makes comparisons between the Romanian reception and the Norwegian one, respectively the international reception in both core and peripheral European cultures.

The book is comprised of four main chapters. The first one focuses on theoretical considerations and the ways in which they relate to a reception study. The volume's key concept, theorised by Franco Moretti in *Distant Reading* (London: Verso), is the *wave of diffusion* (2013, 54-57). With this in mind, the author states that the reception of Hamsun in the Romanian cultural printed press underwent several waves of diffusion, from Norwegian via German into French or Russian and finally to Romanian. Lățug gives particular attention to the way the press received Hamsun's most well-known novels, namely *Hunger*, *Pan* and *Victoria*. Next, Lățug analyses how the winning of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1920 by Hamsun was perceived by the Norwegian cultural printed press. The author focuses on the Norwegian reception of Hamsun's three biographical events which have received worldwide attention: the celebration of his 70th birthday (1929), that of his 80th birthday (1939), and the day of his death (February 19, 1952).

The second chapter emphasizes how Hamsun's work was received in peripheral European cultures and how well informed the Romanian reception has been, as compared to that of neighbouring countries. The author concludes that the main culture mediating the reception

in both core and peripheral cultures, including the Romanian one, was the German culture.

The third chapter represents the milestone of Lățug's research by investigating Hamsun's reception in the Romanian cultural printed press and its subsequent fluctuations. The author points out that the first significant dialogues took place during the interwar age comprising 154 articles (from 1919 until 1939). During the same timeframe, readers gained access to the first translations of Hamsun's novels: *Pan*, *Hunger*, *Victoria*, and *The Growth of the Soil*. After the notorious Osietzky case, the public became familiar with the first echoes of Hamsun's controversial political views which became more visible during the 1940s. Lățug indicates that after 1945, due to the socio-political context in Romania Hamsun's work reached a point of no return in the Romanian cultural printed press which openly calls Hamsun a traitor of his homeland. Consequently, Hamsun's authorship is reduced to a minimum during the Communist era. Between 1936 and 1944 only 61 articles are published about Hamsun and his work and most of them bear negative connotations. However, between 1945 and 1947 only 11 articles on Hamsun are published, while between 1947 and 1963 there is no record of Knut Hamsun being mentioned in the Romanian cultural printed press. According to Lățug, these findings indicate the censorship Hamsun had to face in the new political context underwent by many countries. Despite the scarce publication of articles between 1963-1988, Lățug indicates that the translations were quite numerous and satisfactory. According to her, the most significant achievement regarding Knut Hamsun's reception in Communist Romania is that some of his novels

were translated directly from Norwegian into Romanian by either Valeriu Munteanu or Sanda Tomescu Baci. After the fall of the Communist regime in 1989, Hamsun's work was revived and his works began to be translated, analysed, and promoted. Last but not least, Lăţug places special emphasis on the way in which Knut Hamsun's work has been received in the Romanian cultural press in recent years (1995-2016).

Another merit of this book is that it overviews the dynamics of Romanian translations. In the 1920s Hamsun's books *Pan*, *Hunger*, *Victoria*, *Growth of the Soil*, as well as parts of *In Wonderland* were first translated for the Romanian public. By the time these novels were published in Romanian, Hamsun was already a renowned writer. During the 1960s, Hamsun's works were reprinted in Romanian. The most significant aspect is that all of those works were translated directly from Norwegian.

The final chapter compares the way Hamsun's work was received in Romania to previous receptions, namely the one in the Norwegian press and the one in the core and peripheral cultures. The author concludes that the Romanian reception, although slower paced, follows the same outline as the Norwegian reception.

Lăţug's research ends with Appendices which ease the readability of the quantitative data. Appendix XI covers articles related to Knut Hamsun (both the ones the author directly refers to in her work and the ones mentioned only in the section titled *Statistical Data*) and published in the Romanian cultural printed press between 1895-1947.

Though ample, the book is well organised and carefully documented. The research has the advantage of direct access to primary sources (articles regarding Hamsun's reception from various library archives), in both Norwegian, which the author masters, and Romanian. It thus follows closely the fundamental hypothesis according to which in the Romanian culture there was a delayed reaction to Knut Hamsun's work. The author argues that the degree of exposure and knowledge of Hamsun's work in Romania is quite low today.

Overall, Lăţug's research proves that Knut Hamsun's reception in the Romanian cultural press had not followed a smooth path. Due to its complexity, the book is a major contribution to the European Hamsun scholarship.

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