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### "A writer's diary" of F.M. Dostoevsky in the Russian and German reception. On the problem definition.

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#### Abstract

The paper describes the specificity of Russian-German literary connections as a useful tool for studies of the culture transfer in the modern society. The main goal of the article is to describe the attitude to the publicist legacy of F.M. Dostoevsky in Germany in the framework of close ties between the Russian and the German cultures. The results of the study show the main trends of the Dostoevsky's reception in general and the interest to "A Writer's Diary" in particular. The article summarizes the translations of the "Diary" published by far and considers the early stage of Dostoevsky's legacy reception.

*Keywords:* Dostoevsky, "A Writer's Diary", publicism, reception;

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#### 1. Introduction

The ongoing interest of German readers, writers and researchers to the F.M. Dostoevsky's creation appeared at the turn of the XIX-XX centuries and subsequently became one of the literary constants. Directly analyzing the evolution of the literary thought in the European tradition, it can be concluded that addressing the Russian novel, in particular F.M. Dostoevsky as one of the greatest writers, was inevitable. In the German culture the 1880-90s period is acknowledged as the "border time" characterized by the crisis that led to looking for new moral reference points; a gradual transition from naturalism to modernism, the desire to harmonize the society, some attempts to rethink the existing cultural heritage and find new moral pillars. In this context, the German cultural society gets interested in the Russian cultural heritage, «where the neoromantic ideal of the "soul" finds its reality in the Russian soul» [2].

#### 2. Methodology

The principal method used to outline the Dostoevsky's publicist legacy reception in Germany is the critical analysis of the scientific materials. The paper describes the early stage of Dostoevsky's reception in Germany based on biographical essays, books dedicated to the Dostoevsky's

personality, contribution to the world literature, his philosophy and a deep psychological analysis of the national Russian character and the "Russian soul".

### 3. Discussion

Addressing the "Russian soul" as a moral phenomenon that is alien to the European cultural tradition as a timely emerged key, which is able to open a new literary space and reconcile aspiration of the soul to vigorous actions with its timidity, makes it necessary to appeal exactly to Dostoevsky as the greatest researcher of the human soul. After all, "he has nothing but a man, all is revealed only in him, all is subordinated only to him" [4]. In his literary heritage the Germans found "the myth of a new man and his birth from the womb of the Russian soul"[9, p. 96].

The classic of the Austrian literature S. Zweig in one of his biographical essays on F.M. Dostoevsky gives a full explanation of why the German culture got interested in the Russian writer: "In our era Dostoevsky was the greatest writer ever found in literature, and none has managed to open as many countries in the soul as this exuberant artist who does not know limits"[9, p. 132].

As a "psychologist of psychologists" [9, p. 133] Dostoevsky managed to show the thinnest edge of the human soul, its completeness, breadth, the complex interface of human dark and light sides, to identify key features of the philosophical and moral nature, to guide a character through a winding way of spiritual torment, self-development, self-search, mutual growth through a sequence of dramatic events, as well as word mastery appeared to be the key points having determined the influence that the Russian founder of the psychology and philosophy genre had on the German fiction.

The first German biography of F.M. Dostoevsky, released in 1889, only confirmed the fidelity of the chosen cultural vector. Nina Hoffman was the author of this monograph and it was not a coincidence. She was an Austrian writer, an interpreter from Polish, Russian and French and dedicated to charitable works. She was acquainted not only with peculiarities and traditions of the Russian culture but also with friends and family members of F.M. Dostoevsky. Nina Hoffman was the woman who translated the first passage of "A Writer's Diary", namely, the story "Bobok" that was published in 1897 in the journal «Wiener Rundschau». In her book, she claims that Dostoevsky's understanding is impossible without understanding Russia as that environment formed the writer's identity, and its connection is impossible to break. Later, S. Zweig promoted this thought in his essay. Now then, at the turn of the century, more than 15 years after death, Dostoevsky laid the groundwork for the future adoption and reflection on the values of cultural heritage.

At the beginning of the 20th century, following N. Hoffman, there were new books on Dostoevsky: «Dostoevsky. A literary portrait» by J. Muller and «Dostoevskij und wir» by K. Notzel. In these books the authors tried to explore the "Russian soul" and analyze the particularities of Russian thought.

Another important stage in the development of Dostoevsky's early reception in German culture was an attempt to understand the Russian ethics. The Austrian writer E. Luca gave it a try. He explains the difference between bourgeois Western and individual morality in the way as Dostoevsky saw it. Luca points out the depth of physiological analysis, with which Dostoevsky "dissects" the Russian criminal and explains the motivation. However, E. Luca considers that the most essential and fundamental difference of the Russian writer is that Dostoevsky does not focus on a single person, he uses the person to reach the top: the purpose of human existence and comprehension of human value.

At the beginning of the 20th century a wide range of German readers had the opportunity to feel the full seriousness and importance of Dostoevsky's literary heritage, when from 1906 to 1919 the publishing house of R. Piper publishes the first complete collection of Russian classic's works translated into German. A special interest of German readers in certain parts of Dostoevsky's writings was largely attributable to the historical context: the desire to understand the origins of the governing crisis of Russia that eventually led to the February revolution of 1917. Due to "A Writer's Diary" Dostoevsky is considered to be the "mouthpiece of people"[9, p. 76].

Dostoevsky's publicist writings, apart from his fictional works, become now an object of focused attention in modern studies of the writers work. This part of his legacy presents genuine material for exploring concrete aspects of the author's worldview, demonstrates dialectic complexity of certain questions' perception. "A Writer's Diary" attracts a special researchers' attention. It is a complicated genre piece compiled of publicist and fictional prose. The "Diary's" genre synthetism allows Dostoevsky to interpret reality from the publicist's as well as the artist's point of view.

While designing "A Writer's Diary" Dostoevsky intended to publish it in separate series (part by part), which would include fiction, journalism, autobiographic material, literary critics and political notes. The idea of creating "A Writer's Diary" appeared in the course of his emigration in the end of 1860s, but it was only realized in 1873, when Dostoevsky became the editor of the "The Citizen" newspaper and got by this means a possibility of a direct dialog with a reader. In that same year "A Writer's Diary" begins to come out as a separate weekly column [3, 9]. However Dostoevsky leaves "The Citizen" in 1874 to concentrate on the creation of his new novel "The Adolescent". In 1875 Dostoevsky returns to the idea of an autonomous journal, in which he intends to play the roles of a publisher, editor and author simultaneously. During the whole year of 1876 Dostoevsky had been working on the "Diary's" new edition, which caused a wide public interest, but failed to receive any recognition among critics and Dostoevsky's contemporaries. Dostoevsky continues to publish regular editions of "A Writer's Diary" in 1877, and it eventually becomes prominent throughout Russia. In 1878 Dostoevsky suspends the "Diary's" publishing because of the work on the novel "The Brothers Karamazov". After finishing it in 1880, the writer resumes the "Diary's" writing that proves a particular importance the work with daily life facts values for him. Just before his death Dostoevsky sends the first "Diary's" edition of 1881 to the printing office.

Nowadays, "A Writer's Diary" is an object of research for Russian and foreign scientists [5, 7, 8]. The "Diary" contains Dostoevsky's reflections about current events in Russian and European societies, his thoughts on the most acute social, political, economic and other sorts of problems. Dostoevsky in "A Writer's Diary" treats the questions of national character, socialism and Christianity, the general public and intellectuals, the role of art, youth suicides, judicial reform, spiritualism and the western influence on the Russian culture. Occasionally among the caustic notes on the burning issues of the day appeared texts formed in accordance with all the intricacies of fiction writing. The actuality of the issues and a specific art nature of the "Diary" attract critics, foreign readers and translators of Dostoevsky.

By the beginning of 1920s Dostoevsky's writings were translated into all the main European languages. Certain texts from "A Writer's Diary" were translated as well, particularly the flash fiction included in the Dostoevsky's collected works in ten volume published by the "Piper-Verlag" publishing house in 1906-1919. Elisabeth «Less» Kaerrick, eventually called the best Dostoevsky's translator, worked on this edition. Later in 1963 Piper would publish a complete variant of "A Writer's Diary" translated by E. Kaerrick.

In 1921-1923 the publishing house "Musarion" in Munich publishes "A Writer's Diary" in Alexander Eliasberg's translation.

In 2003 Michael Wegner publishes a well thought out publicist writings selection of Dostoevsky: "A Writer's Diary, 1873 and 1876-1881. Selected works". The translation from Russian was done by Günther Dalitz and Margrit Bräuer. A detailed foreword of the publisher is titled "The glitter and disaster of utopia. Insights on Dostoevsky's "A Writer's Diary". In the 20<sup>th</sup> century "A Writer's Diary" was republished by many companies, such as «Piper», «Musarionverlag», «Darmstadt Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft», «Aufbau», «Zweitausendeins».

Due to the fact that many Europeans first of all perceive Dostoevsky not as a writer, but as a thinker who attracts people with his humanistic ideas. "A Writer's Diary" as a special component of his creative legacy, which expressed the author's thought more openly and accurately, rather than the works of literature with its principle of indirect realization of the writer's idea. The "Diary" should become a subject of close interest not only for researchers, but also for readers, and therefore to bring to life new translations. The presence of only two full translations of the "Diary" testifies to the difficulties faced by translators during their work. Firstly, the translation of the "Diary" is complicated by the author's idiosyncrasy. Many contemporaries reproached Dostoevsky with tongue-tied speech, not realizing that he wrote in the words of his heroes, spoke in their language. Modern researchers talk of a complex palette of language tools used by the writer to achieve the idea. "A Writer's Diary" puts a very difficult task for the translator. The main corpus of the "Diary" is the publicist articles, which are dominated by a more direct expression of thoughts than in a belles-lettres, but the lexicon of Dostoevsky remains special, vivid and expressive: "universal humanity", "in a hundred and fifty years", "Russian snob", "wit", "reflector", "the Internationale" "feeling of humanity", "engine of humanity" "all-blessed man". In addition, in publicism, the writer refers to numerous portrayals of particular Russian phenomena, deeply specific and original, which cause the introduction to the text of a large number of realities, difficult to reproduce in translation. Even when Dostoevsky writes about large-scale European problems, he comprehends them from the point of view of the Orthodox consciousness' carrier, this complicates the nuances of the interpreting, expressed in verbal arrangement of the articles, and, therefore, significantly complicates their understanding by an interpreter.

A particular difficulty for the translator is the stylistic heterogeneity of a series of notes of the "Diary" and their intermediate position between the artistic and publicistic style. In these cases, the distinction between the particular publicist expression of thought and the use of indirect metaphorical ways of expression becomes particularly subtle. Finally, a short prose takes the special place in "A Writer's Diary". It is a unique phenomenon in terms of content and style. A rethinking of the reality by Dostoevsky develops in his imagination and then transmitted through the characters of short prose [7, p.263]. According to E.A. Akelkina, in the context of the whole "Diary" these works become an indirect generalization of everything that is said in publicism. "The semantic energy of narration is growing, the meaning of being is understood", - she stated [1, p.265]. The writer's word, due to the small size of the work, acquires a strongly marked symbolic beginning, becomes emblematic. All these features of Dostoevsky's idiosyncrasy present considerable difficulties in translating "A Writer's Diary" either into German or into other languages.

#### **4. Conclusion**

"A writer's diary" is not similar to any of Dostoevsky's works known in Russia and abroad. The scale and significance of problems, raised in the "Diary", make this work a world heritage. The

uniqueness of the "Diary" is manifested in its special genre form and the philosophical thought, expressed through a complex of expressive means, which extremely complicates the task of an interpreter. The interest of foreign researchers and readers in Dostoevsky's publicist legacy poses the question of how much the translation of "A Writer's Diary" corresponds to Dostoevsky's original plan. Is the translations reflected the writer's main idea that Russian people are chosen and their destiny is the struggle for "universal" moral and spiritual being? In this connection, it seems important to us to study the existing translations of "A Writer's Diary" and try to assess their closeness to the original.

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