

Title: Russian Literature of the Third Wave and Hetero-Images of the English-language Literary Field

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The reception of Vassily Aksyonov's works by his English-speaking audience illustrates how hetero-images (a term coined by image studies to refer to the attitude towards another culture as opposed to one's own) inherent in a foreign literary field affect a book's critical reception and create a framework within which the émigré writer has to work to attract readers in this field.

Russian writers of the Third Wave became exposed to foreign literary fields in a way that required them to make a choice between preserving "old mental habits and semantic categories" and "joining in" (Baranczak 1990: 23). Aksyonov decided to enter the English-language literary field and thus exposed his works to its hetero-images. A clash between the culture of origin and the receiving culture accompanied this process, as did the lack of background social and cultural knowledge which significantly restricted the English-speaking reader's ability to generate meanings from Aksyonov's texts, especially those written prior to emigration. The new reader could only interpret his works by comparing them with hetero-images of Russian and Russian Soviet literature. Such reception, however, was not reserved for Aksyonov's oeuvre alone, but rather for works by all Third Wave writers translated and published in the West.

The authors who wanted to find their new reader had to bridge the semantic gap by addressing the hetero-images. Aksyonov, for instance, wrote a novel in English (*The Yolk of an Egg*) and set his émigré novels (from *In Search of Melancholy Baby* to *The New Sweet Style*) mostly or partly in America to appeal to his English-speaking audience's Cold-War understanding of Russia and the Soviet Union in a stylistic manner peculiar to contemporary Western writers.