

Małgorzata Gaszyńska-Magiera

# Traces of the Foreign

The Reception of Translations  
of Spanish American Prose  
in Poland in 1945-2005  
from the Perspective  
of Intercultural Communication



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**PETER LANG**

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Translated from Polish by  
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**PETER LANG**



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# Introduction

This book has been intended principally for Polish readers. In Poland, Latin American literature enjoyed great popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, leaving a permanent mark in our literary culture. Its presence as well as impact seemed worth examining and presenting to Polish receivers.

Till the early 1960s, translations of literary works from Latin America were sporadically published in Poland. The wave of the enormous popularity of this literature reached Poland at the end of this decade, after having triumphantly won book markets in Spain, France and the United States. The Polish boom, although being a phenomenon reflecting tendencies prevailing in Europe, revealed certain specific characteristics. What was astonishing was the scale of popularity which Latin American literature achieved in Poland and the short period during which this literature gained a strong position on the publishing market. Under the gray reality of the Polish People's Republic, this phenomenon was new and unexpected. In the opinions of numerous critics, this was, however, an expression of a certain literary fashion that was inevitably doomed to pass. "It was a firework" – stated Carlos Marrodán Casas, and like any firework, it was to be intense and last shortly.

The situation on the book market at the threshold of the 1990s, under free market conditions, seemed to confirm the opinion of the ephemerality of the fashion for Latinos: in the first half of that decade, only single titles were published in Polish. Nonetheless, the situation changed so much that at the beginning of the new millennium, the number of published titles of Spanish American prose began matching the number of titles that had appeared in the 1970s.

Various studies concerning the reception of Latin American prose in Poland were written predominantly on the wave of its biggest popularity in the 1970s. They were mainly articles published both in Polish and international papers.<sup>1</sup> The question of the reception was resumed in Master's theses and doctoral dissertations; yet, most of them were not published. A work that was completely dedicated to the reception was the volume *Percepción y recepción. Polonia – la Península Ibérica – Latinoamérica* (1994), prepared in the Department of Iberian Studies of the University of Warsaw. The most comprehensive study dedicated to the presence of Latin American literature in Poland is *La presencia de la*

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1 I mean the articles that were published in *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos* by Ryszard Kalicki, Iresna Rymwid Mickiewicz and Elżbieta Skłodowska.

*literatura latinoamericana en Polonia* by E. Milewska, I. Rymwid Mickiewicz and E. Skłodowska (1992).

Most of the aforementioned works were written in Spanish, which fulfilled the postulate made by Skłodowska (1994) that Polish scholars trained in Iberian studies should publish in this language. She stressed the importance of the availability of the Polish research concerning this field to wide audiences and its participation in international exchange of thoughts. On the one hand, it is hard not to agree with her arguments, but on the other hand, as a consequence of this procedure Polish readers who did not know Spanish had limited access to the data concerning the reception of Latin American prose. From the Polish perspective, the lack of studies, both general and specific, dedicated to this issue, was a certain gap that should have been filled. The implications for Polish culture that arose from the presence of translations of Latin American prose were not described for a long time. Yet, the knowledge concerning the ways of reading this prose, readers themselves, editors' motivation and its influence should be treated as an important part of knowledge about ourselves.

Giving the readers the volume *Emigracja. Polonia i Ameryka Łacińska* [Emigration. Polish Diaspora and Latin America], Tadeusz Paleczny (1996:9) wrote:

Undertaking the task of the scientific editor of this book I set the objective of creating a maximally homogenous and synthetic whole, which at the same time will be extensive enough to include a diagnosis of the condition of Poles' knowledge about Latin America.

This interdisciplinary study focused on a variety of issues, such as historians' conclusions regarding the earliest information about this continent that reached Poland, the presence of Latin America in Polish literature or the fate of Polish immigrants. Meanwhile, it seems that the picture of Latin America in the awareness of the Polish people was considerably transformed in the 1970s, which was really the impact of the presence of the translations of Latin American writers in bookstores. The Green Continent stopped being a region associated solely with the exoticism known from travel reportages or dramatic stories of the immigrants. In the eyes of Poles, it also became an area where high art was created. The referred study omitted the issue of the reception of Latin American literature, which, in my opinion, was a serious omission considering that one cannot exclude the fact that for a certain generation, Latin American prose became one of the important sources of knowledge about this continent.

The decline of the boom meant a decrease in the interest of Polish scholars in Latin American prose. However, this issue was resumed in works that appeared

at the threshold of the new millennium.<sup>2</sup> Then again, these works treated the reception of this literature in Poland in a marginal way.

At the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries, the question of the heritage of the boom began attracting Spanish and Western European scholars as well. The distance of time allowed them to realise how important to the development of Spanish literature Latin American prose was and how it influenced other European literatures. In Spain, the monumental volume *La llegada de los bárbaros*, ed. Joaquín Marco y Jordi Gracia (2004), was published; it included both articles analysing different aspects of the boom on the Iberian Peninsula and a series of source texts. The collection *Boom y Postboom desde el nuevo siglo: impacto y recepción* edited by López de Abiada and Morales Saravia (2005) contained texts dedicated to the variants of this phenomenon, in particular in Western European countries. In Germany, the monograph by Meg H. Brown, *The Reception of Spanish American Fiction in West Germany 1981–1991*, focused on Spanish American bestsellers in Germany, was published slightly earlier (1994). In turn, in France there appeared Laurence Malingret's *Stratégies de traduction: les Lettres hispaniques en langue française* (2002). Therefore, the study on the presence of this literature in Poland was inscribed in the broader current of studies dedicated to the significance of Latin American prose for European literatures and cultures.

In Poland, one of the most frequently repeated judgements about the boom was the opinion that critics and theorists dealing with Latin American prose did not work out any original research tools that would allow one to look at Latin American prose from the Polish perspective; they used the methods of Spanish-speaking criticism. Skłodowska (1994:154) did not understand the huge gap between the number and quality of the published translations on the one hand and on the other, the level of the commentaries of an informational-explicative character.

The literary criticism of the boom did not meet readers' expectations. On the one hand, reviews of Latin American works, generally enthusiastic, predictable

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2 These were: *Zjawy, szaleństwa i śmierć. Fantastyka i realizm magiczny w literaturze hispanoamerykańskiej* [Ghosts, Madness and Death. Fantasy and Magical Realism in Hispanic Literature] by T. Pindel (2004), *Realizm magiczny. Teoria i realizacje artystyczne* [Magical Realism. Theory and Artistic Realisations] eds. J. Biedermann, G. Gazda and I. Hübner (2007), *Przeczcucia innego porządku* [Intuitions About Another Order] by K. Mroczkowska-Brandt (2009), *Opowieści o raju utraconym: przemiany topiki Raju w hispanoamerykańskiej powieści o selwie* [Stories About the Lost Paradise: The changes of the topics of Paradise in the Latin American "selva" novel] by E. Nawrocka (2010).

and repetitive in their tones, were regularly published in various types of press. On the other hand, deepened analyses of the works and attempts of descriptions of their reception in Poland were really sparse. The studies concerning the presence of Latin American literature in Poland most frequently presented the quantitative approach, i.e. they juxtaposed the number of editions and reeditions of particular works as well as their circulations; they gave general information about authors, their works and sometimes about translators. Consequently, they answered the question what was published, when and in what quantity, but they did not attempt to interpret this material – the qualitative approach. They described the problems of reception from the chronicler's perspective, which was strongly criticised by Michał Głowiński (1998e:169), who stressed that those conducting such research could not confine themselves to juxtaposing facts and dates. Neither critics nor theorists, nor historians of literature should play the role of a chronicler. It was the question why Latin American literature enjoyed great popularity in Poland in the 1970s that seemed especially interesting, and so was the question about the heritage of the boom.

In my opinion, the most surprising thing was that in the 1970s, there were no attempts to refer to the achievements of the so-called Polish school of literary communication, which during that period was developing very dynamically and had an established brand. For example, the works by Stanisław Żółkiewski, Janusz Sławiński, Janusz Lalewicz, Kazimierz Bartoszyński or Maryla Hopfinger gave the foundations for “the most dynamic theoretical school in the history of Polish literary studies” (Burzyńska 2006:293), recognised as a “Polish speciality” in literary research (Głowiński 1998c:111). Therefore, scholars dealing with Latin American literature and its reception could have used modern and adequate tools in their analyses, and until now, we can wonder why they did not do that. Actually, this remark concerns works dedicated to the reception of literary translations from other cultural circles and is still valid. The theory of reception, dynamically developing in Europe and the United States, has still inspired numerous studies dedicated to the reception of particular works, the outputs of concrete authors or literary trends, while works of this type are very rare in Poland.

The theorists from the Polish school of literary communication first of all postulated a departure from analysing literary texts in isolation from the widely understood artistic and social context; instead, they proposed to look at literature as an integral element of the whole culture of a given place and time (Żółkiewski 1979b:V). They showed that intertextual signals were not the only factors determining the interpretation of a literary work. The interpretation also depended on signals that were external to the text and related to the situation



of communication in which a certain text, its sender and receiver were found. Hence there was the necessity of examining the literary culture as one of the most essential elements of the pragmatic context in which relationships between these elements developed.

In my opinion, despite the lapse of time the research proposals worked out by the Polish school of literary communication are as relevant today as they were then. Moreover, they seem to have a lot in common with the postulates that appeared after the so-called cultural turn. Contemporary translation studies, besides research on the process of translation and analysis of translations (i.e. *de facto* translation criticism), deal with the place of translation in the tradition of a given literature and national culture (Krysztofiak 1996). Thus literary translations appear as essential parts of national literary and cultural heritage.

Reflections on the place of translation in the target culture, conducted both from the perspective of the theory of the reception of literary work and from the perspective of translation studies, are the foundations of chapter one of my work aiming at creating a theoretical basis for the undertaken investigations.

The reception of a literary work, understood as the perception of a work and its social dimension, embraces such elements as readability, i.e. reception by readers; and further: reviewer's evaluations – functioning on the level of literary criticism, and the impact on later artists, e.g. whether and to which extent a certain work became a vivid element of literary tradition (Sierotwiński, 1986:205). This understanding of the concept lies at the foundation of further ordered analyses of the present work.

At this point, I would like to state that the subject of my research focused only on the translations of works from Latin America written in Spanish. First, I am not competent to examine the works created, for example in Portuguese. Second, this policy was adopted both in Poland (see the aforementioned *La presencia de la literatura latinoamericana en Polonia* that discusses the reception of Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking literature in separate articles) and abroad (e.g. Brown 1994). Therefore, in chapter two, I present the most important facts and concepts related to the specificity of the reception of Spanish American prose in Spain, other European countries and in Poland. Its further part is dedicated to the editing processes connected with publishing this literature during the decline of the Polish People's Republic, the martial law and the following decade as well as under free publishing market conditions.

Accordingly, chapter three extensively discusses the reception of Spanish American prose at the professional level, i.e. by literary critics. My analyses are based on the collected critical texts published in dailies and periodicals both in communist Poland and during the times of the Third Polish Republic. They aim

at distinguishing the topics that were most frequently discussed in the articles in order to reconstruct the picture of Spanish American prose that the critics tried to impose on the reading public.

The following part of my work is an attempt of describing the place of the translations of Spanish American prose in the polysystem of Polish literature. The research focus is on the contemporary studies of an encyclopaedic character dedicated to Polish literature and foreign literatures. The goal of the quantitative analysis is to determine which Latin American writers were most frequently published in Poland till 2005 and which enjoyed the greatest prestige. The qualitative analysis was conducted on the reviews of contemporary Polish prose, and its goal was to verify to which extent the literature of Latin America became a pattern for the generation of young Polish writers, whether it was a reference point for criticism, and whether the presence of this prose had any influence on the modification of its language.

Inspired by several French (Jean Paul Sartre, Robert Escarpit) and German (Hans Robert Jauss, Wolfgang Iser) authors, research on literature assumed a sociological perspective. Of special value for the research on reception is the category of the real receiver (empirical receiver) “whose reading behaviours can be examined by sociological and statistical methods as well as surveys” (Żółkiewski 1979b, XXVII). Therefore, chapter five dedicated to the reader was based on questionnaires distributed in public libraries. The survey research was to create a portrait of a Polish reader of Spanish American prose and to verify to which extent the picture of this literature created by critics was fixed in the awareness of non-professional receivers. At this point, it is worth noting that in spite of the clear trend of a sociologising character in contemporary translation studies, scholars dealing with these problems rarely focus on the real reader; reviews are regarded as the most reliable and easily obtained testimonies of reception. Conducting empirical research, I opposed this tradition in a way. I think that it is worth verifying to which extent the impressions of real readers of Spanish American prose differ from the images and opinions imposed on them by criticism.

Finally, chapter six is an attempt to answer the question whether linguistic analyses, conducted in the field of intercultural semantics, can contribute to enlarging our knowledge of the functioning of literary translations in the target culture.

My investigations concerned the years 1945–2005. The closing date is in some sense arbitrary, but an important argument for its acceptance was the fact that the bibliographical data regarding translations that appeared later and the articles that concerned them were not available when my work was written. On the

one hand, it seems obvious that the years of the boom must be the main point of this research since it was the time when the biggest number of translations of Spanish American prose was published, and at the same time there appeared most of the critical texts dedicated to this literature. Conversely, I did not want to narrow my analyses to the boom, aiming at capturing the processes taking place in the reception of this prose over the decades.

Reception is a very complex issue and concerns not only the mechanisms of the book market or readership. I think that the traces of the presence of Spanish American literature in Poland can be sought in many areas of culture without limiting ourselves to literary studies. Henryk Markiewicz (1979:11) pointed to the serious methodological difficulties that surely await “the research concerning the influence of literature on the non-literary attitudes, convictions and behaviours of readers” although he was convinced that such correlations existed. It seems that viewing the reception of literary translations from the perspective of intercultural communication can lead to interesting results. This approach will not allow one to be satisfied with commenting, less or more successfully, the presence or lack of certain names and titles on the local book market, but will make it possible to answer considerably more important questions: whether the presence of the translations of Latin American prose influenced readers’ attitudes and behaviours, and whether it changed their attitudes towards Latin America and its inhabitants.

## Notes

Bibliographical notes follow the Harvard referencing system. In chapter three and four containing the analyses of critical texts, references to these texts are placed at the bottom of the page, while the information about them is given in separate bibliographies.

The titles of the mentioned literary works are given in English if their translations into English have been published; otherwise, only the original titles are provided.



# 1 The reception of literary translations as space for intercultural encounter

## 1 The problem of literary reception

*Słownik terminów literackich* [A Dictionary of Literary Terms], edited by J. Sławiński (2008), gives two non-synonymous terms: “odbiór dzieła literackiego” [perception of literary work] and “repcja dzieła literackiego” [reception of literary work]. This differentiation is specific of the theory of literature in Poland, whereas in other countries there is usually one equivalent of these two terms: *reception of literary work* (English), *réception de l'oeuvre littéraire* (French), *Rezeption des literarischen Werkes* (German) or *recepción de una obra literaria* (Spanish). The above-mentioned dictionary defines the first term as follows:

a set of the reader's perceptive activities assumed by every literary text, conditioned by its structure, realised during reading (p. 351).

On the other hand, reception means:

reception of a literary work by the literary public and its functioning among various readers' groups (p. 464).

These definitions reflect two different approaches to the problem in question. The basic presumption of the first definition is that the author of a literary work provides for the existence of a concrete reader, imagines him in a certain way and hides information about the reader in the text and structure of the work. Consequently, we do not deal with a real reader, but with an assumed one, anticipated by the writer. The reader does not appear in the text but is only a certain theoretical construct. One can attempt to recreate the reader first of all on the basis of **internal** instructions, i.e. by analysing the work, and also by following **extratextual** hints, such as the author's comments, letters and literary conventions of the epoch.

Furthermore, this virtual receiver refers beyond the work since the author creates him for a concrete literary public, the one the author knows. Thus, the writer places his work in the existing literary circuits and expectations of various readers' circles. Consequently, he exerts a considerable influence on its primary reception. The first interpretations and evaluations of a given work mark the beginning of its functioning in the historical-literary process (Sławiński

1982:68). In Poland, the development of this issue caused the creation of the so-called poetics of reception propagated among others by Edward Balcerzan.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the term “reception” unambiguously refers to research concerning decisive indicators, which are extratextual, in the functioning of a literary work. Such factors include the social and economic situation as well as all elements that influence the circulation of a book, the number of its editions, promotion, etc. (*STL* 2008). The range of issues related to this understanding of literary reception is very broad and embraces matters of the reception of a single work or the whole output of the author, reception of a concrete literary genre and even the whole literary trend at a given place and time. Sometimes research concerns the so-called comparative reception within which the reception of a single work or the whole output of a selected author is described and compared in different countries.

The reception of literature includes many levels and aspects, among other things readership, criticism or potential impact on other authors’ works (Sierotwiński 1986:205). The reconstruction of this phenomenon is a complex process since “in most cases the fact of reception [...] is not directly available to a historian of literature, contrary to the obtainability of a literary work” (Głowiński 1998d:137). Therefore, investigating the reception of literature one must refer to diverse testimonies, including:

- utterances (literary, paraliterary, critical) in which the process of reading is thematised;
- metaliterary utterances (critical, historical-literary, theoretical), indirectly testifying to reception, revealing the ways of approaching literature;
- texts referring to other texts, such as pastiches, parodies, stylisations, etc.;
- transformations performed on a literary work, i.e. translations, paraphrases, transcriptions, etc.;
- sociological research of an empirical character.

An essential element of the context in which the phenomenon occurs is literary culture, thus its description is one of the directions of research conducted within literary reception. From this perspective, scholars focus on the **real reader**, i.e. the one whose judgements, preferences and behaviour patterns are described using empirical methods (Żółkiewski 1979:XXVII).

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3 This concept was criticised by Markiewicz (1979:9), who regarded it as utopian. He stresses that there are many ways of reception and they are performed at different levels of the work; thus, it is impossible to provide their complete and adequate description.

## 2 The concept of intercultural communication

The concept of intercultural communication is trendy, eagerly used and even misused in the contemporary humanities. It is differently defined as Grażyna Zarzycka (2000:30) states straightforwardly, “the number of definitions of this [...] term is equal to the number of research attitudes and the number of authors.” This lack of precision sometimes leads to the creation of related terms that are to show semantic nuances. In English bibliography, one can come across *cultural communication* along with *cross-cultural communication*, *international communication* and *intercultural communication*.<sup>4</sup> A similar tendency can be observed in Polish works concerning this issue.<sup>5</sup> Their meanings can be the same, fully or partially. Zarzycka (2000:35) considers the terms “cross-cultural,” “intercultural communication” and “intercultural dialogue” as synonymous.

Sometimes authors use the term *intercultural communication* without defining it; they refer to a purely intuitional understanding of the term, and thus it loses its clarity and becomes almost colloquial. Anna Duszak (1998), in her monograph *Tekst, dyskurs, komunikacja międzykulturowa* [Text, Discourse, Intercultural Communication], provides an extensive analysis of the first two terms, but does not explain the meaning of the third one, evidently assuming that it belongs to general knowledge. Therefore, intercultural communication becomes a term that is extremely broad and commonly embraces almost anything that somehow concerns different cultures.

Today “intercultural communication” is often labelled to texts that have quite recently been classified as belonging to a completely different field of the humanities. For instance, in the volume *Komunikacja międzykulturowa: perspektywy badań interdyscyplinarnych* [Inter-cultural Communication: Perspectives of Interdisciplinary Research], edited by Władysław Chłopicki (2007), one can find such articles as “Kilka uwag o dokonaności w języku polskim i francuskim” [Some remarks on the perfective aspect of verbs in Polish and French] or “Pozycja podmiotu w zdaniu pojedynczym w językach niemieckim i polskim” [The

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4 A comprehensive outline of approaches concerning the relationships between communication and culture can be found in Zarzycka’s work *Dialog międzykulturowy. Teoria oraz opis komunikowania się cudzoziemców przyswajających język polski*, [Inter-cultural Dialogue. Theory and Description of the Communication of Foreigners Learning Polish] Łódź 2000.

5 Such terms as “komunikacja poprzekulturowa,” “komunikacja pomiędzykulturowa,” “komunikacja międzynarodowa” (Mikułowski-Pomorski 2003:10), “komunikacja zewnątrz-kulturowa, wewnątrz-kulturowa” (*Słownik pojęć i tekstów kultury* 2002:148).

position of the subject in simple sentences in German and Polish], which several years ago would have been found in a work about contrastive grammar. Another text from this volume “O traktowaniu leksyki z czasów komunistycznych przez autorów najnowszych słowników języka polskiego i leksykografów niemieckich” [About treating the lexis of the communist times by authors of the latest dictionaries of the Polish language and by German lexicographers] is rather an analysis belonging to comparative lexicography. What is alarming is not the fact that proposals from various fields of the humanities are included in the framework of cultural communication, but the fact that referring to this concept does not always lead to using new methodological proposals, and thus the concept remains semantically empty.

Studies regarded as classic define intercultural communication in a broad way as the “art of understanding and being understood by the audience of another culture” (Sitaram, Cogdell 1976:26). The research has an interdisciplinary character, and the most frequently mentioned fields to which methodology we should refer embrace cultural anthropology, psychology, social psychology, sociology, linguistics and semiotics as well as knowledge concerning communication and communicating. Works of a sociological character focus on the interpersonal dimension of intercultural communication. Assuming this approach, communication directly involves members of various national or ethnic communities (Mikułowski-Pomorski 2003: 12). An essential aspect of this phenomenon is the fact that the practices of communicating as well as desires and intentions that constitute their sources must “relate to a given time, place and social expectation” (Mikułowski-Pomorski 2007:20).

Other approaches allow for such an understanding of intercultural communication according to which it does not take place directly between representatives of different cultures but through artefacts. This is the attitude assumed by the aforementioned *Słownik pojęć i tekstów kultury* (2002:148), which defines intercultural communication as one of the forms of cultural communication understood as

customs and norms that are applicable to a given culture and that govern the processes of communication within social groups; the way a given community communicates with one another (intercultural communication) and with other communities (cross-cultural communication) through what constitutes the element of the social acquis: art, religion, technology, architecture and social structure.

Accordingly, intercultural communication is understood as a certain tradition worked out by a given community that enables it to communicate with another community through various material and non-material forms that it has created.



Assuming this approach, a literary work appears to be an agent of intercultural exchange. Cultural and intercultural communication will be co-created by literary communication and other types of artistic communication: film, theatre and media. Consequently, analysing intercultural communication one should refer to knowledge gained through studying different disciplines; besides the aforementioned ones, literary studies as well as the theory and history of culture.

Those using this concept within cultural studies refer to neuro-linguistic programming (NLP). They have borrowed from NLP the concept assuming the existence of four filters responsible for orienting and modelling our own perception, interpretation and evaluation of the world. One of the filters, in addition “language,” “physiological” and “individual,” is “culture.” For Katan, cultural filters are one of the ways “in which groups organize their shared [...] perception of the world” (Katan 2009:75).

### 3 Intercultural encounter

Sociological studies state that an intercultural encounter takes place when two people brought up in different cultures meet, assuming that they do not plan to join any of these cultures (Mikułowski-Pomorski 2007:355). Consequently, we mostly deal with experiences of people who visit some country as guests, and the culture of this country is alien to them. Such an encounter is of an interpersonal dimension in which its participants exchange their judgements and experiences; such a meeting can be defined as an act of communication. In order to perform such an act, its participants should have a certain predisposition expressed through their intentions, needs or directed attitudes, response or at least looking for some context (Casmir 1978:255). This means a **mutual** will to reach agreement that should characterise the participants of the interaction, otherwise problems and conflicts may occur. The most important factor of the act of intercultural communication is considered to be intention understood as the consumption of cognitive energy both by the sender and receiver of a message, assuming that the sender uses this energy to encode its message while the receiver – to decode it (Borden 1991).

Can we then understand the area of the reception of foreign literature as a territory of intercultural encounter? With all certainty, it is not an area of interpersonal contact nor is it face to face communication. Receivers of a literary text are living people and not theoretical constructs; yet, there is no direct encounter between participants of different cultures. The encounter is realised indirectly through a product – artefact – of an alien culture. In this case, communicative intentions are not symmetrically spread. It is difficult to ascribe unambiguously

to the author of a literary work an intention to communicate with his readers being part of a different culture, one of the reasons being that the author cannot foresee whether, when and into which language his work will be translated. It is the reader that shows his cognitive effort, for example through the very fact of choosing a given book. Some scholars describe such a behaviour of the participants of the interaction as proper, but this behaviour has not been regarded as an expression of human communication. It is thought that it should be analysed as a matter of perception (Borden 1991).

Reducing the act of reading a literary work to an act of perception would make it impossible to interpret an artistic text as an intermediary in intercultural communication, and thus it would contradict the above-cited definition of this concept proposed in *Słownik pojęć i tekstów kultury*.

Assuming this course of reasoning, one should describe the attitude of the recipient of a literary text as passive. Since perception is

the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses,<sup>6</sup>

while the verb *to perceive* means

1. «become aware or conscious of something
2. «become aware of something by the use of one of the senses».

In light of the dictionary definitions, there is no room for any reader's action in an act of perception. Yet, the contemporary textual theory stresses the reader's active role in the process of reading a work. Reading is not only decoding the text and potentially experiencing its content, but requires the receiver's constant collaboration. The essential condition to understand the text is to catch its **coherence** (Mayenowa, 1993:188). This means that the knowledge of grammatical rules and rich vocabulary do not guarantee that the reader will be able to understand a given text fully. Perceiving the meanings brought by the system of a language is only the first phase. One can speak of a complete understanding only when the reader can assign to a given text

a certain fragment of reality, some *universum* of things, people, events, etc. which the text speaks about, in such a way that he can identify the elements of this *universum* (people, things, events) to which the elements of the text refer (Lalewicz, 197710).

In other words, the knowledge of language alone is not sufficient to understand a text. One should match to it proper elements of non-linguistic reality.

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6 <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/perception>, access: 24.04.2018.

A similar definition of this issue is provided in *Encyklopedia językoznawstwa ogólnego* [Encyclopaedia of General Linguistics] (1995:505):

A text is coherent when it constitutes some kind of a whole that semantically refers to the definite non-linguistic sphere of reality that can be colloquially separated as homogenous.

In both definitions, the most important criterion is the ability to relate proper elements of reality to the text. This association sometimes is done almost automatically when, for instance, the cultural context of the read text is known; however, in most cases it requires a smaller or bigger effort on the side of the reader. In order to interpret the text as an utterance concerning one topic<sup>7</sup> one needs something more than linguistic fluency: one needs a certain **knowledge of the world** that goes beyond the knowledge of grammar and lexicon.

No text is complete from the point of the information it contains: as a rule, the author does not put in all of the information necessary to understand the text. The author does this because he assumes that the receiver whom he anticipates possesses certain knowledge, general and detailed, connected with concrete problems, and thus there is no need to refer to it in an explicit way. While reading we use this knowledge, less or more consciously completing “information gaps” that the sender has left in the text. Cultural differences resulting from age, education, social background, separating the sender of the text and its receiver, can cause that the text will not be understood since the reader will not be able to refer to a range of knowledge that is necessary to decode the text. This is a problem especially for the reader of a translation as he comes from a different cultural circle. His knowledge is based on a different programme of education; he refers to a different tradition and experiences. Thus, many a time the reader lacks foundations that would allow him to properly decode the text created in a different language despite reading the translation in his language.

Therefore, coherence is not a feature of the text resulting only from its linguistic construction. In order to perceive the text as coherent we also need certain non-linguistic knowledge. Neither is coherence an immanent feature given exclusively by the author and realised through certain exponents (Mayenowa

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7 Defining the conditions a text should meet to be regarded as coherent, Mayenowa (1993a) points to the need of fulfilling the conditions of three ‘unities’: the text must possess one, possible to identify, author, must be addressed to one receiver and must tell about one topic or constitute reasoning that proves one thesis.

1993). Whether a text is perceived as coherent depends equally on the receiver and on the attitude that he assumes towards the text. The reader must first of all assume as certain that the sender creates the text as a semantic whole, subject to some concrete idea, and then he tries to interpret it accordingly. Consequently, he must know the fundamental rules of the mechanisms cementing the text and have some understanding of the socio-cultural sphere. Thanks to that the reader and author will be able to communicate within a certain common horizon of knowledge.

If the receiver's linguistic competence and knowledge are not sufficient to decode all or at least the most important meanings of the text, he must make an effort to complete his knowledge. Otherwise, he will read the text as incoherent, i.e. as a set of sentences that are not related to one another. Therefore, to a large extent coherence results from the receiver's activities expressed in his will to understand the text and undertaking a series of actions to make that happen. This attitude is shared by the contemporary theory of literature that stresses that the reader's role does not come down to decoding the message passively, but consists in acting actively; hence one can speak of the act of reading (Lalewicz 1975:102).

Accordingly, reading a literary text can hardly be regarded only as an act of perception since it is something more – it is an action requiring additional, considerable energy and sometimes is risk-bearing. The risk is connected with the fact that in spite of the effort undertaken in reading it can happen that a given literary work will not be fully comprehensible or will not meet our expectations, e.g. the aesthetic ones.

In the case of literary texts that have been translated into foreign languages, the readers' efforts are, in my opinion, nothing other than attempts of moving towards the source culture. For example, assuming that readers' linguistic competence is that of native speakers, they should have no problems in decoding a given text. Yet, they may have problems with identifying the elements of the linguistic reality about which the work speaks. An average Pole knows about certain areas that are close to his culture, but he does not usually know a lot about exotic cultures. However, his knowledge about the non-linguistic reality described in a work rarely equals the author's knowledge. Thus, readers must undertake some actions aiming at sharing, at least to a certain extent, the horizon of their and the author's knowledge. These activities may involve their intellects or imagination, activate the forgotten data gathered before or may consciously seek necessary data in all kinds of sources. In my opinion, the effort of moving towards a different culture is the first step to encountering this culture and its users. The encounter may not be only a personal contact; the Polish dictionary *MSJP* (1989:768) includes

the expression *to meet* meaning “to anticipate one’s activities, to treat one’s aspirations in a friendly manner.”<sup>8</sup>

In fact, this friendly anticipation, expressed in various kinds of activities, is, from my point of view, a condition of intercultural communication that is realised through literary translations. It is a kind of invitation to face the unknown and an expression of opening up to a different culture.

If we recognise translation as a form of intercultural communication, the text should be treated as an important element of the meaning, but not the only one. The way it will be understood is co-determined by other factors – hidden, silent or unconscious – which we can call ‘cultural’ as far as they are shared by community members. The product of a translator’s work is a new text constructed in accordance with the model of the world of the target culture read through its proper perceptive filters. Hence, there is the need to negotiate between the participants of the initial and target culture<sup>9</sup> – the translation of a work of art constitutes the space in which two cultures must necessarily meet.

#### 4 The space of intercultural encounter

Space along with time belong to the most fundamental spheres of human experience. They are “the framework in which all reality is concerned” (Cassirer 1944:62), without which we cannot understand any real thing.

Human existence is of a spatial character. Spatial orientation is necessary both to realise acts of perception and to conduct effective activities. Since a human subject cannot function outside of space: “being is synonymous with being situated” (Merleau-Ponty 2005:194). The human must constitute a certain fundamental spatial level that will become his point of reference. This is where the process of the appropriation of the world by the human body begins; in other words, establishing the domination of the body over the world.

Space is a primary concept, so primary that it cannot be identified.<sup>10</sup> The human can describe only its different fragments, areas, kinds, but cannot

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8 English dictionaries give similar meanings.

9 More in Katan’s article “Translation as Intercultural Communication,” in: *The Routledge Companion to Translation Studies*, ed. Munday, Routledge, London and New York 2009, pp. 74–92.

10 According to Merleau-Ponty, it is impossible to understand the essence of space, “We must not wonder why being is orientated, why existence is spatial, why [...] our body is not geared to the world in all its positions, and why its co-existence with the world magnetizes experience and induces a direction in it.” (2005, pp. 293–294).

understand this concept in a pure state. Thus, we can speak, for example, of a physical, geometrical space, but cannot speak of space *tout court*.

Ernst Cassirer (1944: 63–64) differentiated three basic categories of space. The first one is **organic space**, i.e. three-dimensional, available to cognition through the senses, being part of the lowest layer of experience, common to the world of the living creatures, both humans and animals. In turn, **perceptual space** is available to animals of a higher order. It is not identical with the organic space although it is related to all kinds of sensorial experience: optical, tactile, acoustic and kinesthetic that co-operate in its constructing. What is exclusively accessible to humans is the **abstract space**, also called **symbolic**, which, according to Cassirer, the human can construct first of all thanks to his ability to generalise. It is connected with the specific type of memory that does not only depend on “saving” pictures of some events or impressions but makes their “rebirth” possible (Cassirer 1944:74). The rebirth happens through ordering, reorganising and synthesising the collected data.

Accordingly, translation would be realised in the symbolic space. If we follow the cognitivists’ assumption (Tabakowska 1995:24) that the human constructs it on the model of three-dimensional space, available through sensorial experience, we can make an analogy between human activities in both of these spaces. If the human aims at all cost to subordinate the physical space, he probably tries to gain power over some part of the symbolic space as well. Consequently, translation would be an attempt to appropriate, to control new, so far unknown, areas of this space. Since thanks to translation we have the chance to name what has been unnamed in the native language. Naming is an integral element of cognition,<sup>11</sup> hence translation opens the possibility of getting to know what has not been part of our experience, what has been hidden to us.

According to Jacques Derrida, the act of translation is dramatically suspended between the exceptionality – the uniqueness of a literary work which by itself makes it untranslatable – and its cry for being translated. The uniqueness of a work is inseparably related to the fact that it has been created in a concrete language, and on the other hand, the possibility of translation is inscribed in its very structure (Markowski 1997:310). Since there is no “pure” language, cut off from contacts with other languages. No language can isolate itself from other languages; it must open itself to another language (Markowski 1997:310). Therefore, the original text is not a closed perfectness, fullness, which the

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11 “Creating a concept and name, we create as if a phenomenon of a world that having no name in a way does not exist, is not perceived and distinguished from the continuum” (Grzegorzycykowa 1995:15).

translator, with a worse or better result, tries to transmit through structures of another language. The original is “*a priori* indebted in translation,” while translation is its complement, “creative (productive) writing that the original demands” (Markowski 1997:314). What unites them is “the community of the language that two different languages discover” (Markowski 1997:315). Assuming this approach, translation becomes an act of opening oneself to another language; remaining in the space of one language means capitulation, stopping the search for some way to understand this language. Thus, translation can be understood as a “metaphor of a journey towards the other” (Borkowska 2006:15).

Further, translation would contribute to creating an “in-between space,” which Martin Buber (1993:128) regarded as the primary category of human reality. Since only in man’s world there is a certain specific relationship between individuals, characteristic of this world and constitutive for human being. “In-between” is the place where this relationship takes place, a real place and medium of a person-to-person action (p. 128), soothing that is almost elusive, difficult to define, something that is constituted each time when there is an authentic, non-scripted encounter between people. In order to have such an encounter, it is necessary to create a certain common space, at the same time lying beyond the individual space of each participant of the encounter. A conversation or lesson is an event whose basic sense is revealed neither in any of the participants nor in each of them simultaneously, but in the dimension that is available to them, a dimension situated **between** them. An extremely important role in creating this common space is played by language as the fundamental tool of interpersonal communication. Thus, translation, in particular literary translation, contributes to creating such a common space between representatives of different cultures, date-to-date using different languages. Thanks to translation, encounters between people are made possible, encounters that otherwise would be impossible because of a barrier – the lack of a common language. As noted by Hans-Georg Gadamer (1966:65), “whoever speaks a language that no one else understands does not speak.”

## 5 Literary communication

The contemporary paradigm of the study of literature breaks the positivist paradigm according to which there were two opposing methods of examining a literary work: external and internal. The first assumed focusing on the work as such without considering the influence of any external factors. The other focused on the analysis of relationships between a literary work and such factors as historical and social conditions of the epoch when it was composed or facts from the author’s life (Głowiński 1998a:8).

The theory of literary communication obliges us to see a literary work from a different perspective. On the one hand, we cannot negate that it is an idiopathic, completely autonomous creation, but on the other hand, we cannot separate it from the context in which it was created. Both features are inseparably linked and constitute the essence of a literary work. Its exceptionality and uniqueness are a function of 'its historical nature and social anchorage' (Głowiński 1998a:13). Thus, the most important features of a literary text can be captured only when it is examined as an element of a certain social situation of communication.

One of the consequences of such an approach was the origin of the theory of reception of a literary work that developed from an apparently banal statement that a literary work is created to be read. Describing a communicative situation, of which a literary work is part, none of its elements, including the reader, can be omitted. Since communication is not performed during producing a written message, i.e. a literary work, but in the process of its decoding – while reading it (Lalewicz 1975:100).

Every act of communication assumes the presence of the sender and receiver, their interaction within this process as well as the possibility that they can exchange their roles. In the text of literary work itself, one can discover essential information about the participants of such an arrangement on different levels of communication, both inter- and extratextual. Such information is of a double character: **themed and implied** (Okopień-Sławińska 1971:113). The themed information results directly from the meanings of words and sentences that construct a given message; thus it has an explicit character. It can concern anything, both on the level of the depicted world and the real world. Since there are no limitations related to the content of the message being part of a literary work. It can concern topics that are directly associated with a given situation of communication or issues that are not linked with it.

Moreover, every message carries some communication about the sender which is not expressed directly. This information is implied, related to the structure of the message. The way in which the sender uses a language code characterises him as a user of a language belonging to a concrete social group, betrays his status, education, background and even personality. In an indirect way, it also reveals the sender's worldview since it unveils his attitude towards various kinds of

norms revealed in the linguistic construction of the utterance, [...] showing not only the relationship between the utterance and linguistic system, but also with the so-called secondary modelling systems: literary, religious, etc., expressed by speech, but added above the linguistic system (Okopień-Sławińska 1971:114).

According to Aleksandra Okopień-Sławińska (1971:125), the scheme of the roles in literary communication is as follows (tab. 1):



**Tab. 1:** Scheme of the roles in literary communication.

Levels of communication	intratextual	Senders	Receivers
		speaking protagonist chief narrator (lyrical I)	protagonist addressee of the narration (addressee of the lyrical monologue)
	extratextual	speaker in a literary work sender of the work (responsible for rules, agent of creative activities) author	addressee of the work receiver of the work (ideal reader) concrete reader

A characteristic of this communication scheme is asymmetry. Each participant plays a certain role that has been defined *a priori* and cannot be exchanged (Głowiński 1998b:28).

At this point, I would like to look at the extratextual elements of literary communication. The agent of creative activities is the only external sender concerning the text which the literary work indicates and which can be defined to some extent, referring to this text. The rules governing the utterance are the basis for this indication. They themselves prove that someone “has chosen them from the repertoire of constructive possibilities and actualised them in speech” (Okopień-Sławińska 1971:120). The fact that the rules are actualised means that over the utterance there is the sender who is responsible for the rules, defined on the one hand by the language system, and on the other – by literary tradition. The sender is not identical with the author but rather with some kind of the author’s role.

As for the receiver, on the same level of literary communication the ideal reader corresponds to the agent of creative activities. Such a reader should desire to discover the meanings of the work given by the author in the process of creation. This type of reception takes place, for example, when one aims at reconstructing the historical meaning of the work. However, it is not the only possible reception. The actual reception of a literary work, although to some extent directed by interpretative hints enclosed in it, is unpredictable to a large extent and subject to many different factors. Okopień-Sławińska (1971:124) defines it as “pure potentiality.” This is seen as the most important constitutive feature of a literary work: the fact that it is subject to various interpretations and can function in extremely diverse contexts which many a time fundamentally differ from the context of its creation, constitutes its strength and universality

(Głowiński 1998c:117). Since a work of art departs from the original reception and can function beyond the primary, foreseen by the author, set of references (Sławiński 1982:72).

The highest level of literary communication is occupied by the real author and concrete reader. The fact that the reader's role was noticed and that he was recognised as a full member of the process of literary communication inspired serious redefinitions in the field of the contemporary theory of literature.

According to Sławiński's definition (1982:79), the reader is "someone whose life among other events includes reading works of literature." Additionally, reading should not be accidental, but should be repeated and should form an essential part of the reader's activities.

The reader commences using literary works with a certain amount of knowledge and skills. He knows the binding literary conventions and reading standards. To some extent, he has been shaped by his own reading experiences (Sławiński 1982: 69). Consequently, he has a large amount of freedom to choose interpretative keys to the work. The work can reveal an almost unlimited number of meanings that have not necessarily been intended by the author (Okopień-Sławińska 1971:124).

Such a reader is very rarely described as an individual; he is most frequently seen as a representative of a certain community, e.g. society or social class, but not only that. Looking from the perspective of the theory of reception, the reader is interesting first of all as a typical carrier of behaviour patterns characteristic of some clearly defined group (Lalewicz 1982:13). This community is a factor that fosters and orders the world of texts, which is a collection of works that is partly systematised and partly chaotic. It consists of: firstly, canonical works of the past; secondly, other old works being on the margin of the main current; thirdly, texts that aggressively fight for a place closer to the centre of the system and fourthly, those works that remain in the sphere of vision, postulates and expectations<sup>12</sup> (Sławiński 1982:81). It is readers that decide to which group texts will be included and which will be their hierarchy, which will be perceived as classic and which ones will be marginalised.

Although the reader is sometimes called "a silent receiver" (Đurišin 1973:156), he plays an important role in shaping literary tastes, conventions and norms. It is seen as "the most important indicator of reception and criterion of demand"

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12 At this point, we are dealing with a certain picture of ideal texts that can be found in programme texts and literary criticism.

(p. 156). Thus, his behaviour patterns and choices to a serious extent influence policies of publishing houses.

The reader as an active participant of an act of literary communication and partner of the author, taking decisions, making choices, is rarely the object of interest of theorists of translation. He is most often seen as a passive receiver of the product of a work done by a translator who tries to discover his tastes and preferences and adjust his translation strategies. According to Anton Popovič (1971:206), an active receiver of translation is only the one who knows the language and culture of the original, and thanks to that he can follow and evaluate the process of translation.

As aforementioned (see subchapter 3), the real author and reader must use the same code and refer to the common horizon of knowledge. If this condition were not fulfilled, it would be impossible to understand the work. When we deal with a literary translation, the relationship between the author and reader assumes an additional dimension since the author of the original and the reader of the translation belong to other, many a time, very different cultures. From the receiver's perspective, the author is "the other," "foreigner," speaking about a world that we do not know or know only to a limited extent, and referring to experiences that may seem odd or incomprehensible. According to Antoine Berman (1985), the essence of translation is the experience of the foreign (*épreuve de l'étranger*). Struggling to enable the reader to experience the foreign of the translated work establishes a specific relation between *one's own kind* and *the foreign*. Then there is a chance to create some space between the author and reader in which they can meet, and consequently, there is an attempt to understand the foreign. However, such an encounter carries a potential threat: "the other" or "the foreign" are words that have a clearly pejorative connotation in Polish; they are used interchangeably with such words as "the second," "an intruder" or even "an enemy." The opposition *one's own kind* – *foreign* has been expressed in many cultures as the opposition *humans* – *non-humans*; *humans* – *animals*, or in a smoothed version as *humans* – *barbarians*. "The foreign" also means *the non-speaking* as opposed to *one's own* – i.e. the one that can speak.<sup>13</sup>

Through translation, the other, i.e. the one that does not speak, has received the ability to speak, the possibility to speak to us in our own language. On account of that, one can recognise a human in the one that was seen as a non-human. This is the first condition to create between participants of literary communication "the

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13 A large analysis of this issue can be found in Benedyktowicz's *Portrety obcego* [Portraits of the Stranger] Kraków 2000, pp. 121–160.

**Tab. 2:** Scheme of the roles in literary communication in translation.

	<b>Senders</b>	<b>Receivers</b>
<b>extratextual</b>	speaking protagonist chief narrator (lyrical I)	protagonist addressee of the narration (addressee of the lyrical monologue)
	speaker in a literary work	addressee of the work
<b>intratextual</b>	sender of the work (responsible for rules, agent of creative activities) + the agent of translation activities author (real) + translator (real)	receiver of the work (ideal reader) real reader (real receiver of a translation)

in-between space” in which – according to Martin Buber – the relationship that is difficult to capture but is the essence of our humanity, has a chance to appear.

## 6 The translator and his role in literary communication

The translator and his activities belong for obvious reasons to the main issues of the theory of translation.<sup>14</sup> As my work focuses on the problem of reception, I am more interested in the reader than the translator and the strategies he uses. Yet, speaking about translation one cannot omit this topic while considering the process of literary communication because the translator’s role is a key one. An attempt to describe the translator’s place and role in the process of communication has been undertaken by Anna Legeżyńska (1999:11–19). Having noted that in the case of translation, the personal relationships in the process of communication are more complicated than in the original work she slightly modified the model proposed by Okopień-Sławińska (tab. 2)

In this approach, the changes concern the senders in the extratextual level of communication. The sender’s apparatus has been enlarged: the agent of creative activities occurs with the agent of translation activities, and the real author – along with the real translator. According to this scheme, the translator can be located unambiguously on the senders’ side. This does not reveal his specific role

14 There are numerous works dedicated to this issue, both theoretical ones and those focused on the works of concrete translators. Among the former, *The Translator’s Turn* (1991) is worth mentioning, and on the Polish market – *Tłumacz i jego kompetencje autorskie* [Translator and His Author’s Competences] by Legeżyńska (1999). A very interesting work analysing the methods of the translator’s work is Levine’s *The Subversive Scribe: Translating Latin American Fiction*.

in the process of literary communication. However, the translator is at the same time the reader of the original work and author of the translation, and consequently, he plays a double role: of the receiver and sender. Additionally, we can ascribe the translator the function of the reviewer of the original work, the role he or she performs, for example, while choosing some work to be translated. The translator is also a researcher since working on a translation often requires activities that characterise such a role. The translator must frequently use various sources, for example, to decode the author's intentions, to get to know the epoch or understand the meanings of specialist terms (*MEP* 2000:240).

Obviously, Legeżyńska is aware of the translator's numerous roles, but her scheme does not reflect them. She takes it for granted that 'the translator desires to create an illusion of the reception of the original work' (1999:13). Her conviction is that it is a sufficient argument allowing her to place the translator as a sender. Indeed, this can be the basic aim of translator's strategies, but I think that attributing similar intentions to all translators is a too far-fetched generalisation.

In my opinion, the translator's role falls **between** the author of the original work and the reader of the translation. Therefore, the translator is 'in no man's land' contributing to create space between the source culture and the target culture. In ideal conditions, the translator should not support either side but should try to assume the role of a mediator between them.

This task is extremely difficult; in a common perception, the translator is rarely seen as a mediator of cultural exchange, but rather as an advocate of one of the cultures, which is reflected in metaphorical terms concerning the translator, collected by Elżbieta Skibińska (2008:11–13). One of the most popular terms: *traduttore – traditore* explicitly shows the translator as a traitor of the source culture. Another image of the translator being a pirate is a vision of a usurper who seizes the work of a different culture, replaces the original language with his native one and, introduces it, properly arranged, into his own culture. The translator as a cannibal appropriates a given text and in a way swallows it to make it his own, taking over its values. So he behaves as a cannibal who ate some parts of the enemies' bodies to assume their qualities. Skibińska (2008:11–13) also coined her own metaphor of the translator – a cook: "his role is to adapt dishes from a distant world for his guests, dishes that are strange; to use new, unknown and brought especially for this occasion, ingredients in his dishes [...], and also – if it cannot be made otherwise – replaces the ingredients with local products that – used in a new recipe – reveal hidden tastes [...]." Therefore, the translator's task is to prepare a digestible dish – acceptable – for the reader of the translation, the one who, although it suggests certain new elements, will not become an excessive challenge for his present consumer's habits.

The requirements posed to the translator are usually very high, and the list of competences he or she should have – long. The list includes first of all linguistic competence, i.e. fluent knowledge of the original language and the language of the translation; many a time it is said that it should be a fluency similar to the level of the native user of the language. Then the translator should have encyclopaedic competence, i.e. appropriate knowledge, socio-cultural competence and also – rhetorical-pragmatic competence (*MEP* 2000:241).

Information about the translator that can be found in the target text is rarely of a themed character. If it appears, it is most frequently in the notes, commentaries and various kinds of glosses to the main text, in which the translator explains the motives of his choices or shows the untranslatability of some fragment (Legeżyńska 1999:21). Yet, the text of the translation generally shows implied information about the translator. Translation studies call it “**traces**.” The information is made visible first of all in the confrontation of the source text and the target text. Sometimes the information is left unconsciously, i.e. its appearance is not related to the translator’s intentions. Such traces are most often mistakes resulting from the translator’s insufficient competence. Traces that are left consciously result from the translator’s decisions taken in the name of variously understood translation strategies (*MEP* 2000:227).

Recently translation studies have predominantly investigated the translator as being inscribed in the text, looking for his traces or reconstructing his strategies. Some theorists of translation (Pym 2004) sought to create “the sociology of translation,” i.e. initiating research on real translators who live and work in concrete societies and are rooted in concrete cultures. The question about a translator’s identity and type of relationships with partners of communication assumes a special meaning when we see the translator as a mediator between cultures. Since it becomes interesting to discover the identity of those who conduct mediation, to expose the network of connections and influences, network whose element is the translator, and to see the social effects of his activities.

## 7 Literary life

The discussed model of literary communication does not clearly show that the relationship between the author and reader is of an indirect character. Yet, the sender-receiver arrangement in literature is very complicated.<sup>15</sup> Between the

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15 A large overview of research stands concerning this issue can be found in Dmitruk’s *Literatura – społeczeństwo – przestrzeń* [Literature – Society – Space] (1980).

author and reader there are a number of intermediaries that can have a considerable impact of the final shape of the work.

A literary work, as any other phenomenon of culture, combines substantive and semiotic functions (Żółkiewski 1979b:XVI).<sup>16</sup> Every text of culture uses a certain system of signs. A literary work is characterised by the code which it uses: it is its natural language. Its semiotic functions are related to the fact that it becomes part of a common repertoire of artistic forms and contents of a given community, introducing specific meanings to it. The material functions result from the physical aspect of a given work, i.e. the fact that the receiver obtains them, for example in the form of a book. They are realised among other things through editorial paratexts which constitute one of the factors of transforming a literary work into a market product.

When investigating a literary work one cannot omit all those activities that serve to actualise the material functions. They embrace manufacturing operations as well activities related to market mediation and social control. They usually have an institutionalised character (Żółkiewski 1979b:XXI), meaning the activities of teams determined by a common aim and established in time (Dmitruk 1974:309). Their interaction is not limited to a physical shape in which a work reaches receivers, but can modify its semantic functions to an important extent (Żółkiewski 1979b:XI).

Such phenomena include research on **literary life**. *STL* (2008:640) defines this term as

all social phenomena constituting in a given time and environment the creative background and conditions, the circulation and distribution as well as the reception of literary works; it embraces all institutions that constitute the framework of activities and mutual relationships of those interested in literature: writers, reviewers, readers, publishers and patrons.

The term “literary life” is sometimes exchangeable with the term “literary culture.” Yet, they are not identical. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, I want to quote Sławiński’s definition of the latter (1974:65–66). By **literary culture** he understands a system ensuring the participants of the process of literary communication “mutual adequacy of sending and receiving codes” thanks to which

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16 *Słownik pojęć i tekstów kultury* (2002: 307) defines it in a slightly different way. It does not focus on the functions but on the material and spiritual dimension of texts of culture, ‘the material dimension is concrete objects, e.g., a book, painting, recorded film tape, musical notes; the spiritual dimension means the ability of a material object to be a carrier of ideas, to shape attitudes and influence emotions.’

they are able to communicate through their works. Assuming this approach, literary culture is an orientation system embracing:

- **knowledge** about literary accomplishments, enabling us to recognise given works as exemplary or significant;
- **taste**, preferences for certain types of message;
- **literary competence**, knowledge of rules resulting from readers' experiences, allowing them to produce or understand new works.

On the other side, literary life embraces activities of groups and institutions connected in various ways with the circulation of literary works and knowledge about them. Processes in this area are of a dynamic character. Since literary facts<sup>17</sup> constantly circulate, are copied, transmitted and borrowed (Straszewska 1976:445). The dynamics of literary life is also revealed in receivers' positive and negative reactions. This phenomenon is called "**literary movement.**"

Literary life appears in societies that have reached a certain level of cultural development, level on which literary texts have stopped being communicated to receivers directly through authors. Therefore, we can speak of this phenomenon from the moment when intermediaries between them appear (Maciejewski 1982:125).

Research on literary life can be conducted from the historical perspective, i.e. considering all aspects of this phenomenon, searching for its characteristics in a given period and area, or considering its selected aspects, focusing on some elements (Straszewska 1976:444).

The intermediaries between the artist and reader can be divided into the following groups:<sup>18</sup>

- institutions dealing with preserving literary works and technical aspects of their transmission: publishing houses (editing and printing), the press and electronic media (radio and television). Today we should add the Internet, which Maciejewski did not mention for obvious reasons. These institutions

17 A literary fact is "any literary message available for reception" (Straszewska 1976:444).

18 I am following J. Maciejewski's division proposed in his article "Publiczność literacka a instytucje i mechanizmy życia kulturowego" [Literary public vs. institutions and mechanisms of cultural life], in: *Publiczność literacka* [Literary Public] eds. S. Żółkiewski and M. Hopfinger (1982). Maciejewski himself states that the typology may not embrace all institutions being intermediaries between writers and readers. However, I think the typology helps order the problems of literary life to a great extent.



- fulfil **intermediary-regulatory functions**, i.e. they do not only preserve, copy and transmit works to receivers or other intermediaries, but also select them;
- institutions distributing (dealing with distribution and propagating) literature, such as bookstores, libraries and readers' clubs. They also include meetings with authors, recitation events, etc. Similarly, they fulfil the intermediary-regulatory functions;
  - patronage, embracing single artists, group or branch of art, offering material support. It aims at creating a work and making it public. Institutions or individuals acting as patrons do not only fulfil the intermediary-regulatory functions, but also the **hierarchizing** ones: they try to create their hierarchies of literary preferences and impose them on the receivers;
  - institutions of social control, assuming the forms of formal and informal censorship. Informal censorship occurs when a writer yields to social pressure and does not deal with certain themes, while formal censorship is a special organ established by the authorities of a given country, controlling its publishing market. During the period of the Polish People's Republic, the censor was the Central Office for the Control of the Press, Publications and Performances. Institutionalised censorship undertakes preventive actions, i.e. controls texts that are to be published, and repressive actions, e.g. activities leading to withdrawing published books or periodicals from circulation. Basically, censorship fulfils a regulatory function.
  - Opinion-making institutions, i.e. literary criticism, literary meetings and cafes, discussion book clubs, etc. Considering the present reality, this group should include Internet forums dedicated to a given book or author as well as publishers' initiatives aiming at encouraging readers to publish their opinions and reviews on their websites. Beside the intermediary-regulatory functions they also perform the hierarchizing function;
  - Associations aiming at defending artists' interests, such as Pen Clubs or the Polish Union of Writers. This role is also undertaken by agencies representing writers.

The aforementioned institutions have originated to serve the most important participants of the act of literary communication, i.e. artists and readers. Their first, most important task is to deliver literary works to receivers. However, with time this role has changed. Some of these institutions, e.g. publishing houses and patrons, try to become independent, usurping the right to influence both the works and their reception (Maciejewski 1982:132).

A similar issue has been taken up by the contemporary theory of literary translation, having the goal of describing the impact of the intermediaries of

literary communication on translation strategies and the final shape of a translation. Nowadays, in translation studies one can speak of the roles played by “agencies” and “agents” in the process of rendering translations.<sup>19</sup>

## 8 Literary public

The act of reading a book is first of all a personal contact with a literary work, entering into a certain intimate relationship with the work. It is also “a kind of performance played for others” thanks to which the reader can join the community of all readers (Sławiński 1982:79). In order to describe this community, it is necessary to go beyond the text of a literary work as it does not provide sufficient data for an adequate description of the community (Żółkiewski 1982:60).

In studies dealing with the reception of literature, besides the term “public” one can find a number of similar terms: receivers, readers, audience; some authors use them interchangeably, while others try to differentiate their meanings.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, in Polish specialist literature the term “literary public” is ambiguous: various authors understand it in slightly different ways.

The broadest meaning ascribed to this term includes both readers and all those who are active in creating and receiving literary works (Sławiński 1974a:61). These two groups differ by the type of relationships shared by their participants with the diffusive apparatus, which is literature in the sociological approach. Consequently, the authors are those who operate this apparatus, while the readers are all those who use it (Żółkiewski 1982:61). So the senders are not only artists in the narrow sense of this word, but all those who through their activities can influence the final physical shape and content of literary works (Żółkiewski 1982:60). Thus, the sending apparatus embraces those who are connected with publishing activities – editing and printing, those in charge of distribution, patronage – both institutional and individual – as well as various forms of censorship (Maciejewski 1982:127–128).

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19 See *Sociocultural Aspects of Translating and Interpreting*, ed. Pym, Shlesinger and Jettmarova, John Benjamins, Amsterdam and Philadelphia 2006, and Simeoni’s “Translating and studying translation: The view from the agent,” in: *Meta*, 1995, no. 3, pp. 445–460.

20 These issues are analysed by Lalewicz in his article “Pojęcie publiczności i problem więzi społecznych” [The concept of public and the problem of social bonds] and by Dmitruk in the study “Wprowadzenie do teorii publiczności literackiej” [Introduction to the Theory of Literary Public]. Both texts can be found in the volume *Publiczność literacka*, eds. Żółkiewski and Hopfinger (1982).

The slightly narrow meaning of the term “literary public” includes three basic groups: authors, reviewers and readers. They form a community that is distinguished in the society by their active participation in the creation and reception of literary works (Sławiński 1974a:61). The link between them constitutes a *universum* of expectations concerning the duties of literature (Sławiński 1974a:64). Both the writer and the reader are aware of the obligatory literary standards and norms of reception. The author, adjusting to them or going beyond them, abides by a certain agreement or breaks it. In both cases, however, he refers to the system of values known to him and his receivers. Referring to this system, the reader can evaluate literary works and create their hierarchies. Thus, a constitutive feature of the literary public does not mean a passive reception of the work, but “a reception received by some evaluation in the form of an opinion” (Maciejewski 1982:124).<sup>21</sup> Since the literary public makes a bilateral arrangement of sender–receiver: authors create values, being at the same time recipients of evaluations, while readers are recipients of these values, and at the same time they carry out evaluations. This arrangement also embraces critics as intermediaries between authors and readers, who professionally pass literary judgements and can influence the way of the reception of a work and writers’ behaviour patterns.

Ankudowicz (1982:108) stresses that three groups: artists, intermediaries and readers, constituting the literary public thus understood, form a very heterogeneous community, which poses serious methodological problems for scholars. Therefore, it is justifiable to separate these groups and analyse them independently. In order to avoid any misunderstandings concerning the used terminology, Ankudowicz proposes the term **reading public** to describe a group of readers to which the meaning of “literary public” is sometimes narrowed (see e.g. Lalewicz 1982). “Reading public” refers to a community within literary communication that is characterised by a receptive approach to texts (Ankudowicz 1982:108). Becoming a member of the reading public is conditioned by potential readiness for reception. Accordingly, the reader needs to show not only an intention to start reading a work but must have suitable skills that will make that possible. The term “public” also assumes a community situated in a concrete framework of time (1982:109).

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21 According to Sławiński (1982: 80), the exchange of opinions is not necessary to speak about a community defined as “literary public.” Since it is sufficient that this community “creates potential conditions to such communicative initiatives.”

The reading public can be described in a distributive or integrative point of view (Lalewicz 1982:11). The former understands it as a collection of individuals: individual receivers. This does not alter the fact that what is sought for in the behaviour of the individuals creating this collection is chiefly repeatable characteristics. While describing such a group, one needs to consider its size and possible sub-divisions referring to age, gender, education, social status, etc. The public consists in readers being members of the same society who can be recognised as a community on the basis of important sociological features. One of the criteria can be the reference to a certain system of communication, i.e. medium or a network of distribution. Accordingly, we can speak of readers of the press or readers of books. The other important criteria are those resulting from the adherence of receivers to social groups: class, professional, local, etc. Consequently, we can distinguish, for instance a rural audience, an educated audience, and so on.

The integrative approach to the literary public focuses on a community of opinions, receptive attitudes and behaviour patterns of a given group. It perceives such a community as a certain whole and examines its collective behaviour. The reading public is by its nature a dispersed community. Subsequently, questions about the mechanisms that integrate it are important. The adherence of a certain group to some social class and professional or religious community is not a sufficient reason for becoming an integrated audience. Since the literary public functions in various social circulations at the same time. Moreover, literature constitutes a heterogeneous material and does not communicate any concrete, specific contents on the basis of which one can define its receivers (as it is the case of the scientific audience, from which one can separate, for example, the audience of mathematics; Żółkiewski 1982:64). Therefore, a description of the literary public as a community coming from a certain social group, able to show its specific cultural equipment and access to literary patterns as well as referring to a common system of values, is not satisfactory. The condition leading to the transformation of a dispersed community of readers into an audience is the existence of relationships thanks to which the act of reading as well as experiences and evaluations that result from it can become the subject of communication between members of this group. At the same time, one should remember that reading a literary work and sharing the after-reading impressions do not belong to the most important elements of a person's activities. "Thus, the relationships uniting people as readers create a community of opinions and behaviour patterns only on a specific level of social life, generally, a secondary one and more or less distant from the level of the fundamental activities, for example in social life or ludic activities" (Lalewicz 1982:18).

The distributive approach is used in research on readership, mass communication, propaganda and others, applying sociological methods. Observing individuals' behaviour patterns leads to drawing conclusions concerning the whole group. Using the integrative approach leads to drawing conclusions concerning the mechanisms of the collective behaviour of a given group of readers.

## 9 The horizon of expectations

This concept was introduced to the theory of literature by Hans Robert Jauss (1970). Though aware of the doubts and controversies that the term evokes among theorists of literature,<sup>22</sup> I still refer to it at this point since it has become one of the key terms used in research concerning literary reception.

For Jauss (1970:11), one of the essential goals was to create a tool that would be adequate to describe the reception and influence of a literary work and which at the same time would allow him to avoid psychologism that could threaten such an analysis. This condition would have been fulfilled by the term "horizon of expectations," understood as a system of references available to readers that could be made objective. Since a literary work does not appear in some vacuum, but in a certain context defined by an earlier tradition; it is inscribed in the existing and known literary canons or challenges them. The text itself, through the author's hints, creates a horizon of expectations, preparing the addressees for a predicted way of reception (p. 12). Their disposition towards the reception assumed by the author can also be reconstructed on the basis of extratextual factors: the known norms or the poetics of the genre, references to other literary works and by confronting the text with the readers' experiences.

A new work can explicitly 'stand out' from the prevailing norms and habits of the public, thus contributing to changing the reader's horizon of expectations. Jauss calls the difference between the old horizon of expectations and the changes caused by the appearance of a new work the "aesthetic distance," which can be described observing the reactions of the reading public and analysing critical texts. The smaller the distance, the less innovative the work is since it does not pose any new challenges to the receivers, which allows us to regard it as purely playful art (Jauss 1970:15).

The horizon of expectations is a function of the reader's knowledge, but it is not exclusively the knowledge resulting from his literary competence (Handke

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22 See for example the criticism of Jauss' conception in Markiewicz's "Odbiór i odbiorca w badaniach literackich. Perspektywy i trudności" [Reception and the receiver in literary research. Perspectives and difficulties] (*Ruch Literacki*, issue 1 (112), 1979, pp. 1–15).

1982:20). Since literary works also refer to other fields of knowledge as well as to the receivers' experiences. Their impact is not limited to literature and its reception. Like any works of art, they are meant to influence non-literary attitudes and behaviour patterns. This is their social function.

Moreover, Jauss (1978:258) mentions the sociological dimension of the horizon of expectations and even introduces another term "**horizon of social expectations**," wishing to stress that aesthetic norms are closely related to the needs and aspirations of concrete groups and classes.

Developing this theory has led to the conclusion that both the reader's horizon of expectations, foreseen by the author, and the reader's choices are not of a purely subjective character, but are, at least to a certain extent defined by various practices of social life. In this perspective, the shaping of the horizon of expectations is essentially influenced by various institutions of literary life, such as bookstores, libraries, school education, advertisements and mass media.

## 10 The cultural turn in research on literary translation

The publication of the collected work *Translation, History and Culture* edited by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere in 1990 is regarded as a turning point in research on translation (Munday 2001:127). In their introduction, they state that the previous translation studies stopped at the level of the text. They regard comparing the source and target text, which in their opinion was the focus of the previous analyses of translations, as painstaking, and at the same time insufficient because their cultural background was generally omitted (Bassnett, Lefevere 1990:11). Therefore, one should overcome this way of thinking about translation and place emphasis on the relationships between translation and culture, on the impact of cultural factors on translation and the limitations that some cultural system can impose on translation activities. Bassnett and Lefevere postulate to investigate translation in a broader background, considering the context in which it appears as well as the historical background and institutions that can have influenced it in any way. One should look at translation, and generally at literature, through the prism of anthologies, histories, criticism and adaptation as well as institutions participating in its production.

This moment marks a turn towards the sociology of translation. "Sociological approach hangs in the air" commented Anthony Pym (2004), analysing the translation works created at the beginning of the century. At the same time, he remarked that the sociological approach was nothing new in translation studies. He gave the example of the classic work of Maurice Pergnier *Les fondements sociolinguistiques de la traduction* (1980). Yet, there is a substantial difference

between this work and contemporary studies: for Pergnier, at the centre of interest was the text, while the sociolinguistic methodology gave tools for its analysis. At present, the emphasis is laid on the impact of external factors on the text.<sup>23</sup>

From among the American studies, the biggest recognition and impact were earned by the works of Lawrence Venuti (1992, 1995, 1998). This author demands the inclusion of the sociocultural context in research concerning literary translation. However, his views differ from the ones of his predecessors since he stresses that one cannot concentrate on the receiving culture since the background of the source culture is equally important: its beliefs, values, ideologies used by various social groups and various groups of interests. Venuti also points to the necessity of considering all people and institutions involved in the process of translation production. In his opinion, such elements co-creating literary life as publishing houses, editors, the whole apparatus of promotion and advertising, authors' agents exert an important influence on the final shape of every translation.<sup>24</sup>

In his works, Venuti realises the postulate of "sociology of translation." He describes the translator as a worker of humble income, looking for new contracts who is many a time a victim of heartless publishers who are greedy for profits. The position of the translator in the network of elements entangled in the production of translation is usually weak. Venuti proves that the publishing policy and the pressure exerted by cultural institutions and literary authorities are directly reflected in the translator's choices and strategies. As a result, the translators most frequently become invisible, sometimes in the strict sense of the word since their names are often omitted by editors and/or reviewers. The translators' invisibility also results from their strategies: the pressure of various factors involved in the

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23 In the cited text, Pym poses a series of questions: are we allowed to identify the cultural aspect with the sociological aspect in translation studies? Where is the borderline between them? What should be the direction of such research: from the sociological conditions to cultural patterns or the other way round – from cultural factors to conclusions concerning the social conditions of a translation? Today it is difficult to give explicit answers to these questions and to show prevailing tendencies since the present publications on translation studies are characterised by a multitude of approaches and methodologies. In Pym's opinion, the cultural factors are qualitative, while the sociological ones are recognised as quantitative data.

24 One can clearly see that in many points Venuti's theory shows some convergence with the conceptions worked out by the Polish school of the theory of literary communication and the aesthetics of reception in general, although Venuti does not refer to works regarded as classic.

production of translation causes that yielding to this pressure the translators many a time seek to eliminate all ‘otherness’ from the target text. As a rule, the participants of the audience of the literary target culture who are oriented ethnocentrically demand, more or less openly, that a translation should be read as if it was written in the language of this culture. As a result, it undergoes *domestication*, i.e. domination through the target culture. The process is to adjust translations to literary canons obliging in this culture, which influences the choice of works made by translators or editors. The pressure of the target culture<sup>25</sup> causes the translator to follow considerably more seldom the logic of the *foreignization* of translation. This strategy requires preserving in the target text values that are not present in the target culture, or strictly speaking, values that this culture does not tolerate. Consequently, the translated text preserves certain features of otherness both at the linguistic and cultural level, and thus it is more difficult to understand and requires the reader to put in more effort and show co-operation. Yet, the text introduces new values to the target culture.

The demand to apply the sociological approach to literary translation is also put forward very emphatically in translation works inspired by Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of the literary field. Bourdieu (1995:141) defines a literary field as an autonomous *universum* to a large extent, but not completely – despite its distinctiveness it is not free from certain dependence: from the economic and political field. Literary works are characterised by a specific duality of nature. They are at the same time symbolic goods and wares having defined market values. Thus, two opposite logics clash in the literary field. On the one hand, it is the logic of the market, i.e. artistic or literary industry, which “confer priority on distribution, on immediate and temporary success, measured for example by the print run, and which are content to adjust themselves to the pre-existing demand of a clientèle” (Bourdieu 1995:142), that is, the logic that follows the tastes and requirements of potential consumers. On the other hand, the literary field is governed by “the anti-economic” economy of pure art that is selfless in the material sense, focused on accumulating the symbolic capital.

Translation should be considered from the perspective of the world literary field in which contradictory tendencies clash: globalisation and forms of resistance towards it (Heilbron, Sapiro 2002:3). One of the research objectives is to describe the context in which the process of translation happens and the influence

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25 Venuti’s observations refer to American and British culture. Nevertheless, many of them occur true in other cultural contexts.



of this context on the activities of people and institutions related to its production. This context is understood in a very broad way as **international space**.

The sociological approach has led to redefine the concept of literary translation since so far it has been above all the subject of interest of the broadly understood philological sciences. In research on translation the methodology worked out within the theory of literature as well as various fields of linguistics has been used.<sup>26</sup> However, even in linguistics there has been no single, satisfactory definition of translation: “the way of understanding this term is strictly connected with particular theories and schools” (*MEP* 2000:12). Generally speaking, one can assume that on the one hand, translation is ‘a process, activities and operations performed on texts,’ and on the other hand, “the result of translation operations, i.e. translator’s activities” (p. 12.). Such an approach silently assumes the equality of the analysed items: neither the source text nor the target text is described *a priori* as “better” or “worse,”<sup>27</sup> similarly, one does not evaluate the source and the target culture. But considerations concerning literary translation conducted in the field of cultural theory of literature refer to the sociolinguistic conception of the power of a language. This concept does not undermine the equality of languages from the point of view of their structures, but stresses the meaning of extralinguistic factors when the texts produced by users of a concrete language are evaluated. The power of a language can be defined as a value “that causes that the carriers of this language are ready to dedicate a certain amount of time and economic means to its promotion, while foreigners that do not know this language are ready to devote a certain amount of time and means to get to know it, encouraged to take these efforts by the influence of the language and the culture related to it” (Miodunka 1990:45).<sup>28</sup> From this perspective, languages are not equal; some enjoy great prestige, which is very strongly connected with

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26 Jakobson’s article *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation* (1956) is commonly regarded as a turning point in introducing translation studies in linguistics. In Poland, one sometimes forgets that Klemensiewicz’s paper “Przekład jako zagadnienie językoznawstwa” [Translation as a problem of linguistics] (published in the volume *O sztuce tłumaczenia* [About the Art of Translation] ed. M. Rusinek), defining translation as “a kind of realisation of the relationship between two languages, precisely, two linguistic and stylistic systems,” appeared a year earlier (p. 85).

27 For many scholars, structuralists, but not only them (see for example the works by Sapir and Whorf), all languages are equally good, constant and attractive since all languages are tools of social communication (Miodunka 1990:39).

28 The power inherited in a language depends on the number of those who use it as their mother tongue, the size and number of groups speaking a given language in the world, mobility of the carriers of a given language, ideological factors, cultural values

evaluating the culture created by their users, others are valued less highly – and so is the culture of their users. In Bourdieu's conception of **symbolic violence**, language is an element of cultural exchange whose basis is the conflict of interests and fight for symbolic power.

In light of this theory, translation is defined as an “unequal linguistic exchange” conducted in a highly-hierarchized world (Casanova 2002:7). Since there are entities having a different status in the world literary field. They are governed by certain hierarchies, both literary and linguistic. In order to describe these hierarchies, it is necessary to define the size of the linguistic-literary capital of particular languages, which is not a derivative of the number of native users of this language, but the number of “literary polyglots” who know and use it as well as the number of translators who render literary texts from and into this language. This is the basis on which the opposition between dominant languages (*langues dominantes*) and dominated languages (*langues dominées*) is distinguished. The former embraces languages enjoying high prestige, from which a big number of texts recognised as universal cultural heritage have been created, in other words, those languages that are supported by a considerable literary capital. In turn, there are languages “dominated” for various reasons: languages that have reached the status of national languages recently or languages of countries with large populations and highly developed culture as well as have been unknown for a long time, “unseen” in big cultural centres (for example, Chinese or Japanese), or languages of small countries whose literature, because of a small number of translations, have not been recognised on the international literary market.

The structural inequality of the global literary field makes us define translation in the categories of power relations between languages. Countries whose languages are dominant set conditions; it also concerns many aspects of producing a literary translation. It is seen as an effect of mutual relations between four factors: source language, target language, author and translator. In order to describe them adequately, one should consider the position and meaning of both languages as well as define the place of the author and translator in the global literary field. In light of this theory, they are understood as theoretical constructs fulfilling certain discourse functions. Their position is set by ideology (Althusser), authority (Foucault) or social structure (Bourdieu): “the author and

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conditioning the influence of a language, the economic level of a given country and its political situation (Miodunka 1990:43). The power results from the influence of several of these factors simultaneously, assuming that the hierarchies according to which the languages are ordered can be different.

reader are called to perform their roles not through their private interests, but through the ideologies ruling in them and ways of cultural arrangement: gender and adherence to a social and ethnic class” (Markowski 2006:539). Examining translation, one should also remember of the role of intermediaries in literary communication, participating in the creation of a translation.

The circulation of a literary translation depends on three fundamental factors: political contacts between countries, international book market and cultural exchange. Thus, translation appears to result from the influence of various network relationships (Heilbron & Sapiro, 2002:5).

According to Johan Heilbron and Gisèle Sapiro (2002:5), the fundamental function of translation is to be an instrument of mediation and exchange. It may also fulfil political and economic functions as well as constitute a mode of legitimization of both authors and translators. Translating into a language exerting strong power can become an element that builds up the authors’ prestige in their homelands.<sup>29</sup> In other words, their position in their local literary field changes. The reverse direction of translating, i.e. from the world languages to the dominated ones, results in accumulating the literary capital by the target culture.

Investigating the development of translation studies after the so-called cultural turn, one can easily see that the role of research on the text, or more precisely, the role of comparative analysis of the source and target texts, is gradually decreasing. What has recently been the essence of literary translation studies, their fundamental meaning, basic source of knowledge about translators, their choices and strategies, becomes one of the elements of this research, which is not necessarily the most important one. Contemporary theory of translation focuses on factors that are beyond the text, i.e. the context, background and process of producing a translation. Consequently, translation studies opt to:

- interview translators so that to have access to first-hand information about their strategies and ways of taking concrete decisions,
- interview publishers, editors and literary agents in order to get to know the factors governing their choices of works to be translated,
- collect all kinds of figures concerning translations,
- analyse the contracts signed by translators,
- describe the final product of translation – in the material sense, i.e. the cover, title page, whether it contains an introduction or preface, etc.,
- analyse critical texts (Munday 2001:156).

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29 The French studies use the term *consécration*.

The aforementioned theoretical proposals can, in my opinion, become only inspirations for research on literary reception in Poland. However, it is not now possible to accept this way of research conduct and methodology, especially the one worked out in France. Since the description of the phenomenon of translation, understood as a complicated sociological process, requires a specialist statistical apparatus (Poupaud 2008:38) and access to international databases of publishing houses, libraries and networks of bookstores. So far Polish scholars have had no such possibilities.<sup>30</sup>

## 11 Summary

Literary culture and life do not constitute a separate, completely autonomous system, but are part of the broadly understood culture of a given society. Similarly, being a reader is only one of the possible roles of a given person, and in fact, not the most important one. An empirical reader, the one postulated by the theory of reception, is nevertheless a theoretical term. Such a reader does not factually exist because no one is only a reader, but at the same time he plays various social roles. If so, it is justifiable to assume that reading experiences do not influence only the reading awareness of an individual but can be transferred to other spheres of the individual's activities and sensitivity, and on the contrary, experiences resulting from playing different social roles can exert influence on readers' choices and reception of a work. Thus, motifs for reading and choosing texts can be diverse and do not unavoidably result from the necessity of meeting aesthetical needs. A motif can be a desire to follow some literary fashion or to build one's own image of an intellectual, someone who can boast wide reading. In other words, reading literary works can be a means of building up one's prestige.<sup>31</sup> Finally, reading literary works can result from a desire to acquire knowledge as readers can see literature as a source of knowledge. As for literary translation, it is related to the intention to know the Other, which includes some effort and risk

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30 So far Polish publishing houses have not wanted to make available for scientific purposes even their internal reviews, while the information about circulations, number of editions and reprints is treated as a trade secret.

31 However, Markiewicz thinks that the role of literature is no longer essential. In an interview for *Tygodnik Powszechny* (14/2009, p. 22), he states that earlier an intelligent person understood that it was proper to know who Kuncewiczowa was and to read *Cudzoziemka* [The Stranger] as all people spoke about it. Today it is no longer necessary, and the lack of knowledge of, for instance Pilch's or Stasiuk's works, does not compromise anyone.

consciously taken by readers. They usually realise that encountering the Other means the necessity of facing unknown things and problems, probably partly or completely incomprehensible. The will to understand such questions is always connected with an increased expenditure of cognitive energy, bigger than in the case of reading works written in one's native language. It requires going out to meet the Other, i.e. leaving one's safe space, space in which you meet only your locals, and attempting to create the "in-between space," indispensable if you want to meet the Other and initiate dialogue with him. In order to do that, one needs a translation because through it, the silent Other speaks to us in an understandable language.

Yet, translation is commonly seen as something "worse." "Everyone knows how the translation makes what is said in the foreign language sound flat," as Gadamer claimed authoritatively (1966:68), reflecting the conviction that translation cannot transmit all the meanings of the source text. He added, "The translation, as it were, has no space. It lacks that third dimension from which the original (i.e., what is said in the original) is built up in its range of meaning" (p. 68). Thus, Gadamer suggests that a translation will never equal the original. A similar approach can be found in professional studies concerning translation, first of all those that describe translation by reference to the original text. For example, Stanisław Barańczak (1992) entitled his collection of essays *Ocalone w tłumaczeniu* [Saved in Translation], as if assuming that during this process something must be lost. The theme of "saving" various values of the original in translation returns several times in his preface to this volume. Similarly, Jean-René Ladmiral (1979:18) described the translator's work as a "choice of lesser evil." Another outstanding example is the conception of Popovič (1975), who used the term "translation loss." This loss was to be an unavoidable consequence of the power relations between the language of the translation and the language of the original. In his opinion, if the language of the original is more powerful than the language of the translation, the translation most frequently preserves some characteristics of the syntax of the former and the realities of the source culture, which can lead to the fact that the text of the translation occurs to be incomprehensible for the receiver. Otherwise, i.e. when the culture of the original is stronger, the reader of the translation most probably receives a text written in a fluent language, without any features of foreignness, both cultural and systemic, and thus devoid of elements that are specific for the source culture. When the power of both languages is similar, the translation loss appears partly in the linguistic structure of the translation, and partly on the level of the realities. If we accept such a point of view, the translation loss is unavoidable because it is a function of the cultural distance between the translation and the original.

The text of a translation is rarely seen as a value in itself, created at the junction of two languages and two cultures, but as a new and autonomous one. This vision of translation is excellently reflected by the metaphor of translation as a point where the roads of two cultures cross (Bravo Utera 2004:213). It stresses that translation neither belongs to the source culture nor the target culture. This was the understanding of translation opted by Zenon Klemensiewicz (1956:85): in his approach, translation is a linguistic structure “which constitutes a means of exchange, a means of mutual transmission and absorption of the cultural heritage by different nations.” Only such a perception of translation does not put the source and target culture in a privileged position. It allows us to see translation as what happens between them and what at the same time unites them. This is beautifully expressed by a metaphor of Gadamer who modified his attitude towards translation after years. In the text published in 1993, he called the translator’s work a water crossing from one bank to the other, from one land to the other, from one text to another text. He perceived translation as a medium of building mutual understanding between the participants of the source and target culture; the translator’s text co-creates a route of our whole reading and understanding. It has its own substance, composed of sense and sound. It is like a bridge that can be entered from both sides, a bridge between banks in one country. This is the road of constant flow of communication (Gadamer 1993). This understanding of translation allows us to see in it a factor constructing some space of dialogue with the Other. Creating such space gives hope to meet the Other. A true encounter usually leaves some traces, more or less tangible, in its participants. This book is an attempt to find such traces.

## 2 The fate of Hispanic American prose on the Polish publishing market

### 1 Sources and methodology

This chapter is dedicated to discussing quantitative data concerning the presence of translations of Hispanic American prose on the Polish publishing market and editors' strategies related to this literature after WWII. My research focused on several bibliographical sources. First of all, I reached for Rymwid-Mickiewicz and Skłodowska's study *La recepción del libro hispanoamericano en Polonia (1945–90)*.<sup>32</sup> So far it has been the most complete work dedicated to the issue I have been interested in. The publication has a bibliography of Hispanic American books published in Poland. However, it is not free from gaps and inaccuracies. Moreover, I have used *Rocznik Literacki* [Literary Yearbook], embracing translations of foreign literary works into Polish, which stopped being issued in 1991. The last volume of this yearbook includes books published in 1984. The next work that I have consulted is *Polska Bibliografia Literacka* [Polish Literary Bibliography], which appeared in the traditional version till 1988, whereas the data of the years 1989–1998 are available in an electronic version.<sup>33</sup> I have also used *Index Translationum*,<sup>34</sup> which is a great data base about translations, collected and made available electronically by UNESCO. Another valuable source has been the catalogue of the Polish National Library.

There are numerous discrepancies between the data that can be found in these sources. Comparing them, I have tried to gather facts related to the presence of Latin American literature in Poland as completely as possible, but I cannot guarantee that the presented lists are fully reliable. Consequently, they should be treated as approximate.<sup>35</sup>

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32 It is the first part of the aforementioned book *La presencia de la literatura latinoamericana en Polonia* (CESLA, Warszawa 1994) by Milewska, Rymwid-Mickiewicz and Skłodowska. Its second part is dedicated to the reception of the Portuguese-language literature of Latin America.

33 <http://pbl.ibl.poznan.pl/>; access: 12.03.2009.

34 [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=7810&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=7810&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html); access: 12.03.2009.

35 I did not succeed in obtaining help of the publishing houses. Their websites focus on *ad hoc* promotional activities and do not give any information about their earlier achievements. An exception is the website of the Rebis Publishing House in Poznań that gives lists of books published as series, but the lists are not updated. My attempts

It is most difficult to acquire reliable information concerning works published after 1989. In the early 1990s, a number of local publishing houses were founded, and as a rule they did not fulfil the requirement to send the so-called mandatory copies to national libraries. Thus, their publications appear neither in the library catalogues nor in any other lists.<sup>36</sup> Although since 1996 we have had a new law concerning mandatory deposits, a dispute over their number has not been settled in the publishers' circles yet.<sup>37</sup>

In the aforementioned study dedicated to the reception of Hispanic American literature in Poland, Rymwid-Mickiewicz and Skłodowska (1994:3) focus on the post-war period since earlier there were very few Polish translations of books coming from Latin America; consequently, they were not known in our country. The authors state that in the 1920s, there were only single and rather randomly chosen volumes of that prose.<sup>38</sup> The stay of Tadeusz Peiper in Madrid in 1915–1920 led to the publication of several poems by the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro and by Jorge Luis Borges in the magazine *Nowa Sztuka* [New Art]. Rymwid-Mickiewicz and Skłodowska differentiated five stages of the reception of Iberoamerican literature after World War II, assuming as fundamental the criterion of the number of published titles in a given period. The first stage, from 1945 till 1955, was described as a period of poor editorial activities. In fact, such activities began in 1949 when the fragment “Let the Woodcutter Awaken” (“Que despierte el leñador”) of the poem *Canto general* by Pablo Neruda, translated by Lech Andrzej Pijanowski, appeared. Then a total of fourteen other titles were published. The second stage – stagnation – lasted from 1956 till 1964 and was characterised by a small number (seven) of published renderings. The next stage, between 1965 and 1972, was a period of moderate activities; altogether

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to make contacts with editors have failed. My requests for data concerning complete lists of editorial series have not been noticed or as in the case of Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy and Wydawnictwo Literackie, I have been informed that the editors did not collect such data.

- 36 Baczyński, “Jak szukać książek,” in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 3.01.1996, p. 11. The problem is also mentioned by Skibińska (2008:79).
- 37 [http://www.ksiazka.net.pl/index.php?id=28&no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=1947&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=12&cHash=cb49c2974b](http://www.ksiazka.net.pl/index.php?id=28&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1947&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=12&cHash=cb49c2974b); access: 15.03.2009.
- 38 These are: anthology of stories, a novel ascribed to the indigenista works, *La venganza del cóndor* by Ventura García Calderón, and two novels by the Argentine Hugo Wast. These books proved not to have stood the test of time and are not mentioned in the textbooks concerning the history of Latin America literature.



46 translations appeared in Poland, which gave an average of six titles per year. The fourth stage was a time of intensive activities from 1973 till 1980. During that time, up to 20 titles were published annually. The last stage was again called “stagnation” since the number of published books from the area of Latin America decreased to five a year.

The data collected in *La presencia de la literatura latinoamericana en Polonia* are very valuable. Nevertheless, the quantitative criterion assumed by Rymwid-Mickiewicz and Skłodowska seem insufficient to describe the phenomenon, namely the presence of Spanish American literature in post-war Poland. Firstly, the authors did not deal with the literary value of the originals and the quality of the translations. Secondly, in their research which concerned the reception of literature, they considered only books, omitting any potential press publications. Thirdly, they did not examine the context of reception. In result, their proposed division is too fragmented and does not reflect the essence of the phenomenon.

In my opinion, from the perspective of time the history of the reception of Spanish American literature in Poland is divided into four distinct periods: the first one from 1945 (if we recognise the end of World War II as a cultural caesura) till the beginning of the boom; the second one – the time of the boom; the third one – from the end of the boom till 1989, designating the beginning of political and economic transformations, including freeing the book market; and the fourth one – from 1989 until today.<sup>39</sup> I am aware that within these stages certain phenomena are not uniform and that important differences can be noticed. The same objection can be posed to the division presented by Rymwid-Mickiewicz and Skłodowska. Nevertheless, my division reflects the reception of Spanish American literature as a kind of cultural phenomenon that has its own dynamics and explicit culmination. I do realise that if my proposal is accepted it will be difficult to set precise cut-off dates of the stages – it is easier to do that referring only to the quantitative data.

The boom is the central concept of my division concerning the history of the reception of Spanish American literature in Poland. Therefore, it is necessary to provide an explanation of what the boom was from the point of view of Polish readers, and in which aspects this vision differs from the definitions accepted in

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39 Similar dynamics can be observed in the history of translations of Latin American prose in other European countries: France, England, Germany (see Munday, “The translation of Spanish American Literature: An inevitable cultural distortion?” in: *Livivs*, 1996, no. 8, pp. 155–164).

Western literature devoted to this issue. I will also try to establish, though only approximately, the cut-off dates of the Polish boom.

## 2 Boom in Spain, boom in Europe, boom in Poland

It is commonly recognised that the event that began the phenomenon called 'Latin American Boom' was the publication of the novel of the young Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa, *The Time of the Hero* (*La ciudad y los perros*)<sup>40</sup> by Seix Barral, a Barcelona-based publishing house, in 1963. Most specialists also assume that the boom, described first of all as a publishing phenomenon,<sup>41</sup> lasted for about 10 years (Ferrer Solà & Sanclemente, 2004; Pohl, 2005). Similar opinions can be found in Polish studies.<sup>42</sup>

It is less frequently remembered that single works of young novelists from Latin America were published earlier in Spain by Seix Barral. These were the novel *Eloy* (1960) by the Chilean Carlos Droguett, *Los extraordinarios* (1961) by the Mexican Ana Mairena or *Gestures* (*Gestos*) (1963) by the Cuban Severo Sarduy. Moreover, books published in South America, not necessarily in the writers' homelands, appeared in the Spanish Peninsula. For instance, within the series "Colección Popular," edited by Fondo de Cultura Económica de México aiming at popularising its local culture, there were *The Burning Plain and Other Stories* (*El llano en llamas*, 1959) and *Pedro Páramo* (1964) by Juan Rulfo, *The Death of Artemio Cruz* (*La muerte de Artemio Cruz* 1962) by Carlos Fuentes, *La creación* by Agustín Yañez (1959). Yet, the Argentinian publisher Losada published among other things the novel *Son of Man* (*Hijo de hombre*, 1961) by the Paraguayan Augusto Roa Bastos and *A Kind of Mulatto* (*Mulata de tal*, 1963) by the Guatemalan Miguel Ángel Asturias, which contradicts the repeated thesis that Spanish American writers did not have any chance to be known on their continent if they had not been earlier recognised in Spain.

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40 The original titles are given in brackets. If some work has not been translated into English, I have given only the original title.

41 Steenmeijer (2002:144) focused on the ambiguity of the term "boom," which is used both in reference to the sphere of the production of Latin American literature and its reception.

42 "The boom embraces writers that became acclaimed in Spain, laureates of Premio Biblioteca Breve granted by Seix Barral in Barcelona or the annual Premio de Crítica" (Kühn 1975: 277). The same author evaluates this phenomenon as harmful since it distorts the picture of literature to which it refers, eliminating from it the names of really outstanding writers who did not manage to enter the magical circle (Kühn 1984:11).

In the Iberian Peninsula, although these works were known by a relatively small group of critics, they understood the importance of these works for Hispanic literature. At that time, Spanish literature experienced a deep crisis resulting among other things from the country's isolation caused by General Franco's policy after the civil war. On the one hand, the immigration of numerous writers brought about the loss of inter-generational bonds between writers. On the other hand, writers living in the Iberian Peninsula had a considerably limited access to new artistic currents developing abroad. The doctrine of Social Realism was meant to be a literary response to the Fascist dictatorship, but the Realism did not succeed to be artistically satisfying. Moreover, the stigmatisation of the moral poverty of the system and the exploitation of workers and peasants did not reach proper addressees: this idea was not attractive for real readers – generally members of the middle class. In turn, its addressees, mostly workers, neither bought nor read modern novels. Thus, the appearance of pioneering Hispanic prose from outside was treated as a fresh and desirable trend.

*The Time of the Hero* was the first novel from South America that aroused the interest of critics and whose publication, preceded by winning the prestigious Premio Biblioteca Breve, turned out to be a commercial success. It opened the Spanish book market to other Spanish American writers. Barcelona became the most important centre promoting the new prose; the city was hailed as the capital of the boom. The greatest stars of the boom, including Vargas Llosa and García Márquez, moved to Barcelona. Carmen Balcells<sup>43</sup> began her activities there, creating an agency representing writers from Latin America. Thanks to her many of them reached material stabilisation allowing them to focus only on literary activities. Naturally, there were tensions: on the one hand, one could observe an enthusiastic approach of editors and readers, and on the other hand – reservation or even reluctance of the official Spanish criticism stigmatising its alleged “existential nihilism” and leftist belief (Ferrer Solà & Sanclément, 2004:93–106). Some right-wing critics however noticed with satisfaction the departure from the Social Realism, while progressive critics positively reacted to the explicit involvement of Latin American writers on behalf of the socialist ideals. This attitude was expressed by support or even enthusiasm for the Cuban revolution

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43 In Poland, one can more frequently read about Carmen Balcells in popular magazines rather than in scientific periodicals. See, for example, the article by Lipczak “Nigdy z klientami” [Never with clients], *Wysokie Obcasy* 5.10.2008, at: <http://www.wysokieobcasy.pl/wysokie-obcasy/1,96856,5755536.html>; access: 12.03.2009.

that integrated their circles for several years.<sup>44</sup> Critics representing both political options generally saw the novelty and artistic values of the young Spanish American prose.

It was the Barcelonan publishers that decided which books would reach mass readers, not only in Spain but also in Latin America. First in the capital of Catalonia, a kind of sanctification of authors took place; after their success in the Iberian Peninsula their works appeared on the European markets and then triumphed in Latin American countries. It was also there that a kind of 'homogenisation of the product' occurred: the works were promoted as "Spanish American literature," leading to the blurring of readers' awareness that they were connected with the traditions of particular national literatures<sup>45</sup> (Gras Miravet & Sánchez López 2004:120).

We should also remember the role of Paris in promoting Latin American literature. In the 1960s, the capital of France was still perceived as a cultural centre, and the judgements passed by French critics fundamentally influenced the fate of writers and their works. The high evaluation of authors coming from Latin America determined their success in Europe and then in the United States. Undoubtedly, the role played by two Latin American publishing centres: Mexico and Buenos Aires, where the works that encountered opposition from the censors appeared, was significant (op. cit., p. 127). The uniqueness of the boom was that in a relatively short time Latin American literature achieved recognition as works of world literature (Steenmeijer 2002:145).

The culmination of the boom was the publication of Garcia Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (*Cien años de soledad*) by the Argentinian publishing house Sudamericana in 1967. The novel achieved immediate success both among

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44 Latin American writers had a different attitude towards the so-called case of Padilla, the Cuban poet arrested with his wife for his dissident "contra-revolution" views in 1971 and forced to the self-criticism of his works. He was defended by many eminent writers, including Simone de Beauvoir, Margarite Duras, Carlos Fuentes, Juan Goytisolo, Alberto Moravia, Octavio Paz, Juan Rulfo, Jean-Paul Sartre and Susan Sontag, who had been enthusiasts of the Cuban revolution earlier.

45 On the other hand, it is worth remembering that the writers were united by a common language and that for many critics that fact was more important than their nationality. An essential feature of their works was the renewal of the Spanish language and discovering new possibilities in it. The Spanish poet and critic Félix Grande wrote that for a writer the language was more important than his or her homeland, and that he did not feel the need to be seen against the background of Latin American writers; it was enough for him to state that they were his companions (Gras Miravet & Sánchez López 2004:133).

critics and readers. In Spain, it was published by Edhasa a year later, initiating the reception of Iberoamerican prose on a mass scale.<sup>46</sup> Then numerous new titles, which were generally in high demand, appeared on the market. The expectations of literary audiences were high. The acclaimed authors were required to produce bestsellers regularly, works that would fulfil some precisely defined criteria, such as political involvement with high artistic values associated with linguistic experiments and elements of fantasy.

After several years, the market must have been saturated, and in the early 1970s, some critics predicted a decline of the boom. Vargas Llosa's novel *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* (*Pantaleón y las visitadoras*), published in 1973, brought disappointment: the Peruvian writer made readers get accustomed to the fact that his works dealt with serious problems and dazzle them with formal experiments. That is why the novel, written in a light satirical mode, failed to meet readers' expectations. The same happened with his novel *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (*La tía Julia y el escribidor*, 1977), which was received as an extremely commercial work, without any bigger artistic ambition.<sup>47</sup>

And then there was... normality. Spanish American literature was not seen as exotic in Spain any longer. Awarding a writer coming from Latin America was not sensational. Works of Latin American authors entered the canon of literature created in Spanish, which was proved by the fact that the Royal Spanish Academy included quotations from the works of Borges, Cortázar, García Márquez and Alejo Carpentier in its manual *Esbozo de una nueva gramática de la lengua española* (1973).

In other European countries, editors' interests in Latin American prose could be seen more or less in the mid-1960s. Their activities increased considerably in the early 1970s to reach an apogee in 1977 (Rymwid-Mickiewicz 1995:239).

The range of the reception of the new Latin American prose in a given country depended to a large extent on the existence of cultural and literal relationships with Latin America. For instance, in France, the interest in the contemporary creativity of Latin American writers preceded the boom. It began in 1950 with the publication of Asturias' novel *Mr. President* (*El señor Presidente*) that was favourably received by the critics. In 1952, the Gallimard publishing house

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46 The commercial success of the novel was global: till March 1983, i.e. within 15 years, 12 million copies in 30 language versions were sold (Munday 1996:156).

47 See the review of Javier Alfaya in *Triunfo*, no. 768 (1977); reprinted in the volume *La llegada de los bárbaros* eds. J. Marcia and J. Gracia, Edhasa, Barcelona 2004, pp. 1073–1075.

inaugurated the series “La Croix du Sud,” dedicated only to Latin American prose. Several works published within this cycle were re-editions, e.g. *La sombra del caudillo* by the Mexican Martin Luis Guzmán. This novel appeared in 1929, its French translation – in 1931, and within the series – in 1959. The same happened with Ricardo Güiraldes’ novel *Don Segundo Sombra* (original edition in 1926), whose rendering into French was produced in 1932, and then it was published within the Gallimard series. An explicit increase in interest in Latin American literature was noted in France in the 1970s, and works of such writers as Vargas Llosa, García Márquez and Borges made a commercial success. At the beginning of the 21st century, more new authors appeared, and French readers began appreciating authors outside the trend of the magical realism (Malingret 2002:185).

If we choose the criterion of quantity, the countries that showed the greatest interest in Latin American literature were France, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. On the average, in 1960–1979, there were between 5.7 and 8.6 books of Latin American authors published annually. Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Holland, Bulgaria and Romania formed a group of countries for which this indicator was clearly smaller (2.7 – 3.5 books). The numbers were even lower in the remaining European countries (Rymwid-Mickiewicz 1995:243).

The criteria assumed by Rymwid-Mickiewicz are misleading. It is true that in German-speaking countries the new Latin American prose appeared early: in 1964 – the translation of *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, in 1966 – the debut novel by Cortázar *The Winners* (*Los premios*) and *The Time of the Hero* by Vargas Llosa. However, the next novel of the Peruvian writer, *The Green House* (*La Casa Verde*), appeared in 1968 only in 8,000 copies and was reprinted after several years (Brown 1994:64). The most famous novel by García Márquez appeared in German as late as in 1970. It was favourably received and positively reviewed about 50 times in German magazines, but did not arouse the reader’s enthusiasm. *One Hundred Years of Solitude* waited for its second German edition until 1979 (Brown 1994:57). The turning point was the Nobel Prize in Literature for García Márquez in 1982. From then on, Latin American prose began reaching masses (Munday 1996:158). In the decade of 1981–1991, twelve books of four Spanish American novelists: García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Isabel Allende and the Mexican authoress Angeles Mastretta were placed on the bestseller’s list by *Spiegel/Buchreport* (Brown 1994:65). Other earlier books written by Spanish American authors were sold in Germany and systematically reviewed. German readers received reliable information about the writers, their works and contexts of their origin (Morales Saravia 2005:268).

According to the criteria proposed by Rymwid-Mickiewicz, Poland, with the average number of published books of Latin American authors 8.2 per year, belonged to the group of countries with the highest indicator of the reception of Latin American prose in the 1960s and the 1970s. It is assumed that the Polish boom for Latin American literature began in 1968 with the publication of Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (*Rayuela*), famously translated by Zofia Chądzyńska. Its symbolic end is most frequently considered to be the year of his death – 1984 (Majcherek 1984:120). The first date does not evoke many doubts, but the other seems debatable. In my opinion, the boom in Poland ended earlier – in 1981, i.e. with the introduction of martial law. This historical and political turn was also a cultural caesura.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the Polish boom was also 10 years later than the Spanish one; fashion for Latin American literature developed when the boom was wading in Spain. On the other hand, the Polish boom was slightly moved in time as compared with other European countries, which could not necessarily have been caused by the editors' tardiness, but rather long, sometimes lasting for several years, cycle of publishing books in the conditions prevailing in the Polish People's Republic. This period was characterised among other things by the special position of Cortázar and the editorial policy, i.e. publishing – under the pressure of readers' expectations – books of authors belonging to different generations. Consequently, the average Polish reader did not distinguish between literary generations and associated the boom not with the relatively small number of writers who had their debuts in Spain in the early 1960s, but with Latin American literature in general. As Marrodán wrote (1979:8):

Poland is perhaps the only country, outside the Spanish and Portuguese area, in which, within a short period, so many translations of this prose appeared, remembering that bestsellers were not single works but the whole Latin American prose proposed by the editors.

### 3 Spanish literature in Poland after World War II

The situation of Spanish literature in post-war Poland was completely different. First of all, Spain was seen not only as an old political power, but as a country boasting a long and rich literary tradition, a country where numerous works permanently belonging to the European heritage were created.

The position of Spanish literature in Poland has never been so strong as French, German, English or Russian literature. Nonetheless, throughout the

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48 I am going to return to these issues in the next part of this chapter.

centuries a number of works, mainly those regarded as classics, were translated into Polish. In the 16th and 17th centuries, there were translations of books having a pedagogical and political character. Moreover, the writings of the mystics, among whom several were outstanding writers, aroused much interest in Poland where their Latin, Italian and Polish renderings were available. In the 19th century, as a consequence of the Romantic fascination with Spanish classics in Germany and France, one could also see in the Polish lands an interest in the most important writers of the Golden Ages, such as Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Furthermore, during the inter-war period of 20 years, the novels of Spanish authors, including Miguel de Unamuno, Vicente Blasco Ibañez, Pío Baroja and Azorín, were popular with Polish readers (*Literatura polska. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny* 1984:357).

The knowledge of Spanish literature considerably increased after World War II.<sup>49</sup> The esteemed classics were not forgotten but at the same time a number of contemporary works were available to Polish readers, e.g. *The Young Assassins* (*Juegos de manos*) by Juan Goytisolo (1959, tr. Maria Sten), *Nada* (*Nada*) by Carmen Laforet (1962, tr. Kalina Wojciechowska) or *Si te dicen que caí* by Juan Marsé (1978, tr. Teresa Marzyńska). In Poland, there were translations of works written by the most eminent post-war novelists: Miguel Delibes<sup>50</sup> and the winner of the Nobel Prize 1989, Camil José Cela.<sup>51</sup> Two novels: *Time of Silence* (*Tiempo de silencio*) by Luis Martín Santos (1978, tr. Florian Śmieja) and *A Meditation* (*Una meditación*) by Juan Benet (1983, tr. Zofia Chądzyńska and Halina Czarnocka), considered to be a breakthrough in the history of modern Spanish literature, breaking with the paradigm of Social Realism, were published although with a certain delay. Summing up, the Polish editors avoided falling into the trap of Social Realism prevailing in the Iberian Peninsula. As astonishing as it might seem, the artistically poor prose marked by the Spanish Social Realism was not actually published in Poland. Yet, those authors whose views

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49 See a detailed discussion of this issue in Sawicki "La ilustre desconocida. Traducciones polacas de la literatura española," in: *Estudios Hispánicos II, Actas del Segundo Simposio de Hispanistas Polacos celebrado en Wrocław y Karpacz del 24 al 27 de septiembre de 1990*, Wrocław 1992.

50 *Five Hours with Mario* (*Cinco horas con Mario*, 1980, tr. Reszelewski), *The Rats*, (*Las ratas*) (1983 tr. Kühn), *The Holy Innocents* (*Los santos inocentes*) (1988, tr. Komarnicka).

51 *The Hive* (*La colmena*, 1960, tr. Wojciechowska); *The Family of Pascual Duarte* (*La familia de Pascual Duarte*, 1963, tr. Szleyen); *Mazurek dla dwóch nieboszczyków* (*Mazurka for Two Dead Men*, 1990, tr. Komarnicka).



could be recognised as close to the officially proclaimed position were published in Poland. That is why, from among the Spanish poets the works of Federico García Lorca and Rafael Alberti were mainly published in journals and as books predominantly in the first post-war years. Then the works of Juan Ramón Jiménez, the nestor of Spanish poetry living abroad, appeared, especially after he had received the Nobel Prize in 1956.

The death of General Franco in 1975 began a period of political and social transformations in Spain, resulting in establishing a democratic order. This date is also an important cultural caesura. The output of those writers whose debuts fell in the 1970s is described as “new prose.” Both the critics and readers received it with favour. The regaining of readers was considered as the biggest success of modern Spanish prose. It was estimated that towards the end of the 20th century, works of ca. 300 novelists were published in Spain. Naturally, the artistic level of their works varied but there were many genuine talents, such as Jesús Ferrero, Javier Marías, Julio Llamazares and Alejandro Gándara, who also found recognition abroad. Translations of the most interesting works of Spanish authors, who debuted in the last quarter of the 20th century, were produced in many European countries.<sup>52</sup>

Polish editors focused on English fiction. Contemporary Spanish novels were published sporadically and without any plan or strategy. Translations were relatively few, their number and choice did not reflect the phenomena that were most important to contemporary literature. Polish readers had the chance to get to know several novels by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán<sup>53</sup> and Eduardo Mendoza,<sup>54</sup> who, as the only representatives of the local hardboiled fiction that the Spanish editors promoted in the late 1970s, have a lasting place in the history of Spanish literature. Of great popularity in Poland were the novels by Arturo

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52 For example, Llamazares' works have been translated into French, English, Dutch, Swedish, Greek, Portuguese, German, Norwegian; Marías' novels have been translated into French, English, Dutch, Portuguese, German, Slovenian, Hungarian, Czech, Serbian, Italian, Turkish, Lithuanian, Estonian and Croatian.

53 For example, *Murder in the Central Committee* (*Asesinato en el Comité Central*, tr. Wasitowa, 1998), *The Buenos Aires Quintet* (*Quinteto de Buenos Aires* tr. Rycerz, 2001), *The Prize* (*El premio*, tr. Elbanowski, 2002), *Southern Seas* (*Los mares del Sur*, tr. Raczkiewicz, 2004).

54 For example, *The Truth about the Savolta Case*, (*La verdad sobre el caso Savolta*, tr. Chądzyńska, 1980), *A Light Comedy* (*Una comedia ligera*, tr. Wasitowa, 2000), *The Olive Labyrinth* (*El laberinto de las aceitunas*, tr. Chrobak, 2004).

Pérez-Reverte.<sup>55</sup> There appeared translations of Llamazares,<sup>56</sup> Marías,<sup>57</sup> Álvaro Pombo<sup>58</sup> and Antonio Muñoz Molina.<sup>59</sup> During the trend of feminism, we could not miss translations of prose written by women; hence the presence of the following books published in Poland: *Cómo ser una mujer y no morir en el intento* by Carmen Rico-Godoy (tr. Ewa Morycińska-Dzius, 2005), *La única libertad* by Marina Mayoral (tr. Barbara Jaroszek, 2005) and *Muertos de papel* by Alicia Giménez-Bartlett (tr. Filip Łobodziński, 2003). Yet, the Polish editors of that time seemed to behave inconsistently: for example, works by Jesús Ferrero or Alejandro Gándara, which were highly evaluated by the critics and achieved a commercial success, were not translated into Polish.

Summarising, after World War II, the editorial offer concerning Spanish literature, especially contemporary writers, was evidently enlarged, which however did not mean that the offer was deliberate and could be a reliable source of knowledge on literary trends in the Spanish literature of the second half of the 20th century.

#### 4 Latin American literature in the pre-boom period

The process of publishing, distributing and selling books in the time of the Polish People's Republic can hardly be called a publishing market since it had little to do with what we understand under this term. Central planning and managing effected almost all spheres of culture and did not omit editorial activities because books were recognised as an essential element of the state's propaganda policy. The ideologized activities of the publishing houses led to making plans that envisaged the publication of an appropriate number of titles in a given time, the publication of concrete authors' works, the establishment of an *a priori* circulation and distribution of a certain amount of paper. In communist Poland, there was a determined, relatively small, number of publishing houses, supported and

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55 Including *The Club Dumas* (*El Club Dumas*, tr. Łobodziński, 1998), *The Fencing Master* (*El maestro de esgrima* tr. Łobodziński, 2000), *The Seville Communion* (*La piel del tambor*, tr. Karasek, 2000), *The Nautical Chart* (*La carta esférica*, tr. Karasek, 2001).

56 *The Yellow Rain* (*La lluvia amarilla* 2004), *Escenas de cine mudo* (2005), *El río del olvido* (2007, all tr. Płachta).

57 *The Man of Feeling* (*El hombre sentimental*, tr. Zaleska, 2002), *Tomorrow in the Battle Think on Me* (*Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí*, tr. Marrodán Casas, 2003).

58 *La cuadratura del círculo* (tr. Szafrńska-Brandt, 2001), *Donde las mujeres* (tr. Dzisiewska, 2001).

59 *Prince of Shadows* (*Beltenebros* 1998), *El jinete polaco* (2003, both tr. Charchalis), *In Her Absence* (*En ausencia de Blanca*, tr. Potok-Nycz, 2003).

controlled by the state, specialising in producing books in accordance with the imposed profile, following the rules of central planning. As Skibińska (2008:86) observes, the editors' driving force allowing authors and their works to exist in the literary field was to a large extent limited by the communist authorities that interfered in that field to multiply their political capital. Decisions concerning the selection of foreign texts to be translated into Polish, whether they would be published or not, were also conditioned by these criteria. The last word regarding a concrete work belonged to censorship. These conditions considerably defined the publishing policy towards Latin American literature.

It is hard to contradict the statement that for Polish readers the boom for Latin American literature was "an explosion of nothingness," the appearance of prose from an area seen as a "continent without novelists" (Rymwid-Mickiewicz, Skłodowska 1994:5). However, it would be an overstatement to say that before the boom Latin American literature was completely absent in Poland. At this point, I want to add some words about the editions of poetry since it is important for the picture of the reception of this literature within the first fifteen post-war years.

In the post-war period until the late 1960s, the editors' interest in Latin America was indeed scarce in Poland. Till 1967, only 36 books written by authors coming from this continent were published, which was averagely 1.5 title per year. They included poetry and prose. Yet, in some years (1960–1962) no books coming from this continent were published.

Non-literal criteria most frequently decided whether a given book would be published or not. The author of one of the few novels published in Polish during that time, *Neuve lunas sobre Neuquen* (tr. Zofia Szleyen, 1950), was the Uruguayan Enrique Amorim, a communist party activist. The same happened with *Huaspungo* (tr. Tadeusz Jakubowicz, 1950) by the Ecuadoran author Jorge Icaza. Two books by Carlos Luis Fallas: the novel *Mamita Yunai* (tr. Szleyen, 1953) and selected stories (tr. Helena Bychowska and Zawadowski, 1955), a writer from Costa Rica, who aimed at exposing social inequality, were also published. The "designated" writers from Latin America were Pablo Neruda and Jorge Amado during almost the whole period of the Polish People's Republic.<sup>60</sup> In

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60 I do not intend to deal with the publications of his works in Poland since the Portuguese-language literature of South America is not the subject of my book. Yet, I want to mention the first Polish translations of his works: *Cacau* (tr. Holyńska), *Vida de Luis Carlos Prestes, O Cavaleiro da Esperança* (tr. Gruda and Holyńska), *The Violent Land (Terras do Sem Fim)*, tr. Wrzoskova – all published in 1949, *A Albania é uma festa, Seara Vermelha, Jubiabá* – 1950, *Sea of Death (Mar Morto)*, *The Golden Harvest*

that time, four editions of Neruda's poetry appeared in Poland. They included the aforementioned fragment of the poem "Let the Woodcutter Awaken" translated by Pijanowski (1949),<sup>61</sup> its full text appeared two years later (1951), *Allí murió la muerte* translated by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz (1953), and *Canto general* (1954), translated into Polish by four poets: Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, the initiator and *spiritus movens* of the publishing endeavour, Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński, Janusz Strasburger and Lech Pijanowski.

Without questioning the literary values of Neruda's or Amado's works, we need to say that publishing their creative output primarily resulted from their leftist beliefs and political activities. Reviews of their works stressed this aspect of their works. For example, in 1948, *Nowa Literatura* published an article about Amado entitled "W służbie jutra" [At the service of tomorrow] by Tadeusz Sarnecki (1947:2), while *Kuźnica* described a political campaign against Neruda in M. Margal's text (1948:7). In 1949, in *Odrodzenie* (No. 46, p. 8) there appeared the poet's speech delivered during the Peace Congress in Mexico. In 1950, *Tygodnik Literacki* (No. 42, p. 2) published a fragment of the Chilean poet's speech during the 32nd Anniversary of the October Revolution held in Leningrad. The title of the text was "Stalin's and Lenin's ideas lighten the only way of mankind." In 1951, *Nowa Kultura* (No. 15, p.1) published Neruda's text *Chwała ludowi Barcelony* [Glory to the people of Barcelona]. One can multiply titles of press texts written in a similar mood, but those already mentioned show that Neruda was presented mainly as a political activist, while his creative output remained in the background. This can also be seen in the selection of his poems published in the Polish press: his ideological poems were evidently preferred, for instance "Song to Stalingrad" ("Canto de amor a Stalingrado," *Kuźnica* 1948, No. 20, p. 5, tr. Kazimierz Andrzej Jaworski). The translations of his poetry are commonly regarded as being of low quality. However, it is worth remembering

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(*São Jorge dos Ilhéus*) – 1951, all tr. Gruda and Holyńska). Moreover, in 1953 there were reprints of *The Violent Land* and *The Golden Harvest* within the series "Biblioteka Laureatów Nagrody Stalinowskiej za Utrwalanie Pokoju między Narodami" [Library of the Laureates of Stalin's Prize for Preserving Peace Among Nations].

61 The booklet was edited by the Central Council of Trade Unions within the series "Biblioteczka Świetlicowa" [Little Library of Childcare Daycentre] with an obvious aim to reach masses. The interesting fact is that a theatre performance based on the book was staged jointly by Maria Jarema and Tadeusz Kantor as the instructor of a day-care recitative centre related to the Trade Unions Regional Culture Centre (Wojewódzki Dom Kultury Związków Zawodowych) in Kraków; at <http://www.cricoteka.com.pl/pl/main.php?d=teatr&kat=40&id=104&str=4> (16.02.2009)

that Neruda's poems were also translated by outstanding Polish poets: Czesław Miłosz rendered "Almería" for *Głos Szczeciński* (1949, No. 92, p. 4) and for *Odrodzenie* (1949, No. 28, p. 3) – "Song to Stalingrad." *Dziennik Literacki* (1949), on the front page of its 19th issue, placed "Song for Bolívar" ("Un canto para Bolívar") translated by Wisława Szymborska. The translator of "To my Party" ("A mi partido") was Konstanty Ildefons Gałczyński (*Echo Tygodnia*, 1953, No. 16, p. 1). A fragment of the translation of "China" was published by Julian Tuwim in 1953 in *Wieś* (No. 32, p. 5). Disregarding the ideological dimension of these poems, their artistic value was treated as a challenge for poets who tried their hand in translation.

Studies concerning the reception of Spanish American literature in Poland note the sparse activities of publishing houses and small number of translations in the period preceding the boom. They paid little attention to press publications. Yet, from the early 1960s the activities of the press stopped being limited to translating Neruda and Amado. In 1960, in several issues of the popular weekly *ItD* there appeared the first translations of Borges' short stories, signed by Stanisław Zembrzuski.<sup>62</sup> A year later, in *Twórczość* (No. 10, pp. 19–30), one could read three of his works: "The House of Asterion," "Averroes's Search" and "Death and the Compass" translated by Chądzyńska.

The press focused on the literature of three Latin American countries: Argentina, Mexico and Cuba. Translations of writers coming from these countries were most frequently published.

As far as the works of Argentinian writers are concerned, translations of the prose of Borges<sup>63</sup> and Cortázar<sup>64</sup> were chiefly published in Polish periodicals

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62 These were: "The Form of the Sword" (*La forma de la espada*, no. 5, p. 13), "Emma Zunz" (No. 11, p. 13), "The Dead Man" (*El muerto*, no. 4, pp. 8–9).

63 "The Secret Miracle" (*El milagro secreto*, *ItD* 1962/9, p. 11, tr. Zembrzuski), "The Library of Babel" (*La biblioteca de Babel*, *Przekrój* 1963/934, pp. 5–7, tr. Welczar). In 1966, *Poezja* (No. 12, pp. 65–73) published eight short stories by Borges, translated by different authors. In the fourth issue of *Twórczość* (1966), there appeared other six works translated by Sobol-Jurczykowski (pp. 49–55). In 1967, different periodicals published three pieces of prose, tr. Chądzyńska: "The Two Kings and the Two Labyrinths" (*Los dos reyes y los dos laberintos*), "The Wait" (*La espera*), both in *Zwierciadło*, (no. 50, p. 5), "The Zahir" (*Życie Literackie*, no. 48, p. 7) and three texts translated by Waśkiewicz: "History of the Echoes of a Name" (*Historia de los ecos de un nombre*), "Vindication of Bouvard and Pécuchet" (*Vindicación de Bouvard et Pécuchet*), both in *Twórczość*, no. 7, pp. 78–81) and "Ragnarök" (*ibid.*, pp. 84–85).

64 "End of the Game" (*Final del juego*), *Zwierciadło* 1964/44, pp. 5–6, tr. Wachlowska; "Axolotl," *Świat* 1966/8, pp. 12–13, tr. Chądzyńska; "The Night Face Up" (*La noche*

in the discussed period. Works of other authors appeared rather sporadically: beside one short story by Horacio Quiroga<sup>65</sup> single poems of various poets were published.

From among Mexican novelists, only Rulfo<sup>66</sup> and José Revueltas<sup>67</sup> found recognition with Polish press editors.

In the 1960s, that is, from the victory of the Cuban revolution and seizure of power by Fidel Castro, one could see a considerably bigger number of translations of Cuban literature. The Polish press published many Cuban poems, the biggest number of Nicolas Guillén's works. In 1962, the weekly *Świat* (No. 8, p. 20) published an interview with Eduardo Manet, a Cuban writer who lived in Europe for many years, but after the victorious revolution returned to Cuba and worked there till 1968, and his short story "El huésped" translated by Ewa Fiszer. In 1964, *Zwierciadło* (No. 8, pp. 5–6) published Guillermo Cabrera Infante's short story "En el gran Ecbó" (tr. Irena Wachlowska). In 1965, fragments of the prose of such authors as Edmundo Desnoes,<sup>68</sup> Octavio Getino<sup>69</sup> and Otero Lisandro<sup>70</sup> were published in various periodicals. In 1967, numerous translations of poems appeared, while almost none of prose. The translations published in periodicals were usually accompanied by notes about the authors, containing basic biographic and bibliographic information.

At the same time, there were articles about the literary and cultural life in Mexico and Cuba, aiming at showing phenomena that had been unknown to Polish readers.

The first article dedicated to Mexican literature was published in *Nowa Kultura* (1961, No. 27, p. 10). It was a reprint from *New York Times Review*.

*boca arriba*), *Zwierciadło* 1966/12, pp. 5,9, tr. Chądzyńska; "House Taken Over" (*Casa tomada*), *Zwierciadło* 1967/48, p. 5, tr. Chądzyńska.

65 "El solitario," *Świat*, 1966/12, p. 12, tr. J. Kühn.

66 "No Dogs Bark" (*No oyes ladrar los perros*), *Argumenty* 1961/2, p. 8, tr. M. Sten; "Tell Them Not to Kill Me" (*Diles que no me maten*), *Przegląd Kulturalny* 1961/50, p. 7, tr. H. Czajka; "Talpa," *Wiatraki* – literary edition of *Życie i Myśl* 1961/14, pp. 1–3, tr. Z. Wasitowa.

67 *Życie Literackie* 1962/31, p. 7, *Kontynenty* 1964/2, p. 11, tr. M. Sten, *Nowa Wieś* 1965/16, p. 10.

68 A fragment of the novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (in: *Wiatraki* – literary edition of *Życie i Myśli* 1965/1, pp. 1–3, tr. M. Gero).

69 *Argumenty* 1965/18, p. 11.

70 *Świat* 1965/23, p. 11.

The same year, Stenowa published a text entitled “Literacka geografia Meksyku” [Literary geography of Mexico] in *Argumenty* (1961, No. 24, pp. 6–7). She also prepared “Literacki bilans Meksyku” [Literary balance sheet of Mexico] for *Nowa Kultura* (1963/7, p. 8). In 1967, *Życie i Myśl* (No. 4/5, pp. 133–138) published a large article by Jadwiga Karbowska entitled “Meksykański renesans” [Mexican renaissance].

The Polish press diligently followed the literary life of communist Cuba. As early as in 1960, *Trybuna Ludu* (No. 324, p. 2) placed “Manifest pisarzy i artystów kubańskich” [A manifesto of Cuban writers and artists], while *Życie Literackie* (No. 29, p. 11) – “Przed zjazdem pisarzy kubańskich” [Before the congress of Cuban writers]. In 1963, there appeared translations of two articles about contemporary Cuban literature: by César Leante (*Współczesność*, No. 2, p. 4) and José Antonio Portuondo (*Kultura*, No. 16, p. 2). In 1966, Polish authors wrote about this subject: Jerzy Kasprzycki published “Czytelnicy – i pisarze” [Readers – and writers] in *Życie Warszawy* (No. 236, p. 3) and Alojzy Pałasz published an article about contemporary Cuban poetry in *Poezja* (No. 12, pp. 105–106). Furthermore, the press followed the history of the literary award “Casa de las Américas,” which enjoyed high prestige after it had been established.<sup>71</sup>

As for the literature of the remaining Latin American countries, only single poems could be found in the Polish press. The prose of authors from these countries were not published at all, with one exception: in 1967, after Asturias had received the Nobel Prize, *Kultura* (No. 50, p. 5) published a translated fragment of his novel *Mr. President* (tr. Szleyen).

The analysis of the Polish press allows us to state that although the interest in Spanish American prose was not great in the 1960s, in fact it was limited to a few countries. The publications of translations and informative articles did not result from some elaborate strategy, but rather activities of individuals, such as Maria Sten, who never got tired with popularising the knowledge of Mexican literature and culture, translating works herself and writing about them. Another strong factor was – as in the case of Cuban literature – the assumed community of common views and political ideas. What appeared in the Polish press did not reflect in any way the complexity of the phenomenon that was Latin American literature in the middle of the last century.

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71 “Casa de las Américas” is a cultural institution created in Cuba just after the victorious revolution in 1959. It aims at deepening cultural relations between Latin American countries. It has granted literary awards since 1960 in five basic categories: poetry, short story, novel, drama and essay. Since 1970, more categories have been added.

Nevertheless, as compared with the earlier period one can evidently observe a certain increase in interest in Spanish American literature in the Polish press from the mid-1960s. It coincided with a breakthrough in the publishing policy conducted by several important Polish publishing houses. They published a number of important positions of Spanish American prose and in their choice the political criterion ceased to be decisive. Here I have in mind *The Lost Steps* (*Los pasos perdidos*) by Alejo Carpentier (the Czytelnik Publishing House, 1963), *The Tunnel* (*El túnel*) by Ernest Sábato (PIW, 1963), the novel *Doña Bárbara* by the Venezuelan Rómulo Gallegos ("Książka i Wiedza," 1964) or *Writers of Passage* (*Así en la paz como en la guerra*) by Cabrera Infante (PIW, 1965). In 1965, PAX published *Gestures* by Sarduy, the novel which Seix Barral had published in Barcelona only two years earlier and which was seen as one of the indications of the boom. The year 1966 brought the publication of three important novels: *Explosion in a Cathedral* (*El siglo de las luces*) by Carpentier (Czytelnik), *Pedro Páramo* by Rulfo (Książka i Wiedza) and *On Heroes and Tombs* (*Sobre héroes y tumbas*) by Sábato (PIW).

## 5 The context of reception

Translated texts function in a changed context. This statement seems banal but the fact that texts do not transfer contexts of their origin often causes misunderstandings at the moment of their reception in the field of the target culture (Bourdieu 2002:3). Receivers do not generally know the cultural and economic background of a given work, which usually does not allow them to understand the author's intentions hidden in the text. At the same time, the text is thrown into a new, alien context: in the field of cultural production which is ruled by norms and systems of values different from the source culture and in which the relations of power are differently shaped. The change of context usually causes that meanings are modified since context is one of the factors influencing the reception of a work. Sometimes it can produce positive results, for example, when the critics' authority does not go beyond the borders of a given country, the reflection on a literary work in another country can be free of prejudice, and consequently, it can be characterised by some freshness of perspective and independence of judgements.

Considering the reception of Latin American literature in Poland in the second half of the 20th century, its popularity in Western Europe and enthusiastic reception by the critics, especially those in Paris, must have influenced the editors' decisions to publish the first translations of works from this region, and then – the reviewers to write favourable opinions. In other words, the



international fame of the boom prepared the ground for a positive reception of Latin American prose in Poland.<sup>72</sup>

Looking at the issue from the reader's perspective turns my attention to the enormous need for information, generally speaking, about other countries in Poland during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Most Poles were stuck behind the Iron Curtain, travelling was for many an unattainable dream, both for economic and political reasons: difficulty with getting passports and visas. Therefore, popular scientific geography-oriented magazines were very popular with readers in Poland. There were invaluable sources of first-hand knowledge about inaccessible, many a time, distant corners of the world. One of such magazines, which has been published since 1948 by the Polish Geographical Society, was *Poznaj Świat* [Get to know the world]. It was available in the numerous kiosks of the communist media concern "Ruch." From 1964, another monthly *Kontynenty* [Continents], focusing on the so-called Third World countries, was published. During the period of the Polish People's Republic, it was distinguished by a large format and attractive design: articles and reports from various exotic parts of the globe were illustrated with coloured photos. The magazine survived the historical turmoil and stopped appearing only in 1989.<sup>73</sup> At the end of every issue, *Kontynenty*, beside informative texts, had some translation of poetry or fragment of prose of an author coming from the region to which the magazine was dedicated. During the first year of its publication, the magazine placed translations of Latin American literature: issue 7 included fragments of the classic Argentinian poem from the circle of the so-called Gaucho literature entitled *Martín Fierro* translated by J. Radzyńska, and in issue 11 – translations of the Cuban poets Roberto Fernández Retamar and Nicolás Guillén, made by Szleyen. The magazine continued this tradition to its last edition. It published both Polish versions of less known writers<sup>74</sup> and the most popular ones: Borges<sup>75</sup> and

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72 It can be seen in critical texts whose authors referred to the opinions of Western critics (which will be discussed in the next chapter) and in paratexts. Editors of front cover texts stress that a given work has been translated into many languages and positively evaluated in Western Europe.

73 At this point, it is worth noting that the Polish edition of *National Geographic* has appeared only since 1999.

74 For instance, the prose by the Cuban writer Calvert Casey (*Kontynenty* 1965/11, pp. 10–11, tr. B. Babad), the Mexican writer Sergio Pitol (*Kontynenty* 1966/7, pp. 9–11, tr. Z. Szleyen), short stories by the Peruvian writer Francisco García Calderón (*Kontynenty*, 1967/10, pp. 10–11, tr. A. Broken), the Argentinian Manuel Rojas (*Kontynenty*, 1968/4, pp. 10–12, tr. J. Zych).

75 "The End," ("El fin," *Kontynenty*, 1971/10, p. 42, tr. Wojciechowska).

Rulfo.<sup>76</sup> As a rule, the translation was accompanied by a note about the author. In *Kontynenty* one could also find articles concerning Latin American literature, e.g. “Powieść meksykańska” [Mexican novel] by Sergio Pitol (*Kontynenty*, 1964/9, p. 9) or fragments of Carpentier’s recollections (1966/1, pp. 8–11).

Both monthlies, *Poznaj Świat* and *Kontynenty*, fostered interest in Latin America. *Kontynenty* promoted its literature as well.

Demand for knowledge of other countries was also met by travel books. Especially popular travel books were published for forty years from 1956 by “Iskry” as a series “Naokoło Świata” [Around the World], characterised by dust jackets with broadly-coloured flaps in their lower parts. They were called “reporter’s windows to the world throughout the whole epoch” (Poprawa 2009:26). Another feature of the series was thoroughly selected authors. The first book of this series was *The Ascent of Everest* by John Hunt, then works by Thor Heyerdal, Roald Amundsen, Karen Blixen, Ernest Hemingway or Melchior Wańkowicz. They described exotic travels as well as reports from Western European countries.<sup>77</sup> The books were printed in several dozen thousand copies, and some were reprinted. The series included reports concerning expeditions to Latin American countries.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, we might risk putting forward the thesis that the translations of Latin American prose published in an increasingly bigger number of copies in Poland did not fulfil only literary or aesthetic expectations. When the chance to have personal experience of the exotic was minimal and access to reliable information limited, a considerable circle of readers treated the translations as additional, or perhaps even main, sources of knowledge about this continent. This could also account for the fact that the number of translations of Latin American poetry or drama was very small at that time. Their cognitive values were much smaller from the point of view of an average reader.

Summarising, the reception of Latin American literature in Poland was influenced both by external factors, i.e. literary hierarchies set up by Western Europe, and internal factors, the level of readers’ knowledge about the region where this literature originated and the expectations resulting from that. It

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76 “They Give Us the Land” (“Nos han dado la tierra,” *Kontynenty*, 1968/11, p. 9, tr. Zych).

77 E.g., *Lambrettą przez Italię* [Around Italy on a Lambretta] by Stanisław Jagielski (1958).

78 An example can be *Karnawał na wulkanie* [Carnival on a Vulcano] by Olgierd Budrewicz, a report from touring Latin America, published in 1971 and reprinted in 1980 in 30,000 copies.

confirmed Bourdieu's thesis (2002:3) that the source and target field influenced the interpretation and way of functioning of translations of literary works.

## 6 Polish boom in numbers

In Poland, the year 1968 is commonly assumed to be the beginning of the boom; in that year, the Czytelnik Publishing House published *Hopscotch* by Cortázar, translated by Chądzyńska. As already mentioned, it was not the first brilliant novel written by a contemporary Latin American author that was published in Poland. However, none of the novels published earlier was a bestseller. The novels by Carpentier and Rulfo aroused critics' interests but were not popular with readers. It was the work by the Argentinian writer that evoked their enthusiasm and switched their attention to literature from the continent, which had not been seen as a region where valuable books were written.

That year three important books appeared: *The Kingdom of This World* (*El reino de este Mundo*) by Carpentier, *The Death of Artemio Cruz* by Fuentes (both translated by Wojciechowska) and *La tierra que les di* by the Chilean writer and feminist Mercedes Valdivieso (tr. Mikołaj Bieszczadowski). Furthermore, there was an anthology of Argentinian prose edited by Kazimierz Piekarec. He translated all the works included in this anthology.

The data show that till 1972 the editors' activities concerning Spanish American prose remained on a similar level, an average of six titles a year. However, more books were written by outstanding contemporary authors who had already gained popularity in Spain and other European countries. For instance, 1969 saw the publication of Cortázar's short stories *All Fires the Fire* (*Todos los fuegos el fuego*, tr. Chądzyńska), 1970 – *The Mirror of Lida Sal: Tales Based on Mayan Myths and Guatemalan Legends* (*El espejo de Lida Sal* by Asturias, tr. Aleksandra Ołędzka-Frybesowa), Revueltas' short stories *To Sleep on the Ground* (*Dormir en tierra*, tr. Krystyna Rodowska) and *In Evil Hour* (*La mala hora*), the first Polish translation of García Márquez, tr. Jan Zych. In 1971, five titles appeared, including *The Burning Plain and Other Stories* by Rulfo (tr. Zych), *Big Mama's Funeral* (*Los Funerales de la Mamá Grande*) by García Márquez (tr. Chądzyńska) and, nine years after the debut in Barcelona, *The Time of the Hero* by Vargas Llosa. In 1972, Polish readers received translations of two volumes of Borges' short stories: *Ficciones* (tr. Piekarec) and *The Aleph and Other Stories* (*El Aleph*, tr. Chądzyńska and Andrzej Sobol-Jurczykowski), *Where the Air Is Clear* (*La región más transparente*) by Fuentes (tr. Marzyńska) and *Son of Man* by Augusto Roa Bastos (tr. Zygmunt Wojski).

The year 1973 seems to be a turning point as far as the number of published books by Latin American writers is concerned. There were 14 titles. Then the number increased to reach 20 titles in 1974. The biggest activities of Polish editors, concerning the publications of Latin American prose, fell on the late 1970s. Twenty-five titles appeared in 1976 and twenty-three in 1977. At this point, it is worth remembering that in 1955–1967 the total number of published titles was twenty-five. If we compare these data with the number of translations from English-speaking literature in Poland during that period, we have: in 1977 forty-two titles of North American literature and fifty-six from British literature. Yet, one should consider that these data include reprints of classic works (e.g. by Joseph Conrad, Charles Dickens, William Shakespeare) as well as books for the youth (e.g. novels by Jack London, Mark Twain and James Curwood). On the other hand, there were mostly first editions of Spanish American literature; in 1977, there were second editions of *Opowiadania* [Short Stories] by Cortázar and *On Heros and Tombs* by Sábato, and third edition of *Son of Man* by Roa Bastos.

The circulations were very big in that period; in the case of eminent authors they amounted to several dozen thousand copies. The most important works were published even in one hundred thousand copies. It also happened that works of low artistic value was published in big circulations, for example the novel *Tomorrow I'll Say, Enough!* (*Mañana digo basta*) (tr. Wojciechowska) by the Argentinian writer and translator of French literature Silvina Bullrich, was published in 60,000 copies in 1978.

Despite these facts, critics predicted a swift closure of the boom in the late 1970s. They showed that an increasing number of books having little intellectual and artistic value was part of the editors' offer (Marrodán 1978:477–482). Indeed, readers had reasons for being disillusioned, which was a consequence of the publishing policy. It focused on publishing works of the important writers not according to the chronology of their creation, but according to their most popular and best books, which must have created high expectations. Like in Spain towards the end of the 1960s, Polish readers constantly demanded such masterpieces as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

The numbers confirm the gradual decrease in the editors' interest in Spanish American prose in Poland in the late 1970s. The number of new titles on the market fell to sixteen in 1978. It continued at a similar level in the next years: in 1979 – twelve, in 1980 – sixteen, in 1981 – nine, in 1982 – seventeen, and in 1983 – ten. On the other hand, the selection of works to be published was much more thorough. Collections of poems and essays started appearing. The current works of the best writers were also published. For example, in 1980 there

was *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (*El otoño del patriarca*) by García Márquez, in 1981 – *Terra Nostra* by Fuentes, in 1982 – *The Harp and the Shadow* (*El harpa y la sombra*) by Carpentier. The circulations amounted to 10,000 – 20,000 copies concerning the published prose, and from 5,000 to 10,000 copies as far as poetry and literary criticism were concerned.

The Polish boom then gradually, but inevitably faded. In some opinions, the boom expired in the early 1980s. As I have already mentioned, the cut-off date was 1984, the year of Cortázar's death since in our country this writer as no one else was associated with the boom and enjoyed great popularity or even adoration of readers, comparable to the delight evoked by pop stars (Komorowski 1977:129). In my opinion, the factor that sealed the end of the boom was the introduction of martial law in December 1981. Using Bourdieu's categories, one can say that this event fundamentally changed the relations of power in the Polish literary field and caused some essential modifications.

According to the conception of Bourdieu (1995), the literary field constitutes a part of the field of power and is subordinate to it. The field of power is a space where entities and institutions having capital necessary to dominate in various fields, first of all in economy and culture, are placed. Those possessing all kinds of power wage fight in order to preserve or transform the symbolic and economic capital within the framework of the field.

Soon after the proclamation of martial law, the authorities, in the most literal way, i.e. officers of various levels acting on behalf of the newly created Military Council of National Salvation began brutally interfering in the literary field. Their aim was to dominate the field in order to maximise political benefits. One of their activities was to suspend the publication of all magazines, both literary and cultural. Some of them were reopened after a certain time (sometimes only after several months), but some were closed for good. Consequently, the national weeklies *Literatura* and *Kultura*, being obligatory readings for all those who regarded themselves as intelligentsia, disappeared. Moreover, the opinion-giving circles, often grouped around these periodicals, were scattered. The disintegration of artistic circles was also caused by the internment and arrest of people involved in the opposition. Many artists and journalists chose to immigrate, which resulted from their own decisions or the pressure of the ruling power. Thus, the authorities whose opinions were to be considered and who formed artistic hierarchies disappeared from the scene.

Till 1981, Spanish American prose was regularly discussed and reviewed in literary and cultural periodicals. There had also been presentations of new books before they were translated into Polish. Additionally, in many other popular magazines, especially weeklies, the newly published titles were noted and

discussed. One such weekly was *Czas* [Time], appearing in Gdańsk, which was closed in 1981. The disappearance of these papers from the cultural map of Poland meant destroying the tradition of thinking and writing about Spanish American literature that had been worked out for twenty years.

## 7 Publishing policy towards Spanish American prose during the boom

Examining the strategies<sup>79</sup> of publishing houses is an important element of the research on the reception of literary translations. The text of a literary work does not appear as 'pure' but as 'packed' by its editor. The packed elements are the cover, the sort of printing paper used as well as the editorial and aesthetic level of the final product. Another crucial element of the editor's strategy is a decision to place a given work within some series, which usually means that the work is directed to concrete receivers. Bourdieu (2002:5) calls all these schemes "giving a new trademark." The prestige of a publishing house and concrete series influence the way a work is seen – the same book whose author is not renowned, published by a prestigious publishing house and by another one that publishes popular literature of rather pure quality, will most probably reach various groups of receivers, and there will be various attitudes towards it. In the case of the first editor, readers will expect literature of high quality, while in the case of the other editor – rather simple entertainment.

It is also important whether a published book has peritexts, i.e., information about the author, introduction or preface, notes, commentaries on the fourth page of the cover or the flaps. All these editorial activities anticipate the receiver of the translation and thus co-create the context of the reception of the translation. They are a kind of manipulation that in extreme cases can lead to deform the original message (Bourdieu 2002:5).

Till 1963, most translations of Latin American prose were edited by the Czytelnik Publishing House. Single books were published by the Książka i Wiedza Publishing House, the People's Publishing Cooperative (Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza), the PAX Publishing House and the National Publishing Institute (Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy – PIW). Then PIW's activities in publishing Latin American prose became more visible. Such activities were also undertaken by "Iskry." Till 1971, translations of the literature in question were produced only

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79 Strategies mean concrete activities of publishing houses in order to realise certain overall plans and intentions concerning publishing or a certain type of literature.

by Warsaw-based editors. As far as the number of titles was concerned, Czytelnik remained a leader. In 1971, the Kraków-based Literary Press (Wydawnictwo Literackie – WL) came into play.

### 7.1 The Czytelnik Publishing Cooperative

The first book belonging to the imposing achievements of Latin American prose that appeared in Poland was *The Lost Steps* by Carpentier. The Czytelnik Publishing House edited it in the “Nike” series in 1963. Within this series, the same year witnessed the publications of *The Blood of Others* (*Le Sang des autres*) by Simone de Beauvoir, *Middle Age of Mrs Eliot* by Angus Wilson, *The Day of the Locust* and *Miss Lonelyhearts* by Nathanael West, *Babylon Revisited* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Family of Pascual Duarte* by Camilo José Cela, *The Nonexistent Knight* (*Il cavaliere inesistente*) by Italo Calvino and *Three Women* (*Drei Frauen*) by Robert Musil.

That series has appeared since 1961. Till 2005, it included 312 titles.<sup>80</sup> The best period for the series was the mid-1970s, with up to 12 titles a year. The published books are characterised by a pocket format and hard cover. For the first several years the cloth covers had coloured dust jackets with a drawing of the Nike of Samothrace. In the 1980s, the cover was changed to a cream-coloured glossy one. The symbol of the series was still the sculpture of the Greek goddess of victory.

Within the first year of the series, six books were published: *Freedom in December* (*Sur ce rivage...*) by Vercors, *The Hungry Stones and Other Stories* by Rabindranath Tagore, *Contempt* (*Il disprezzo*) by Alberto Moravia, *Romantics* by Konstanty Paustowski, *Wayward Bus* by John Steinbeck and *Gioconda Smile* by Aldous Huxley. This choice of titles showed the ambitious plans of the publishing house to include books of important, world renowned authors in the “Nike” series. In the following years, works of Heinrich Böll, Thomas Mann, Roger Vailland, William Golding, Erich Maria Remarque and other authors were published.

The small format suggested that the Czytelnik Publishing House wanted to reach a large number of readers since such books could be read while travelling or commuting to work. Their hard covers and sown pages testified to their multiple use, and that they were worth preserving. At present, the old books store: Antykwariat-MIT.pl promotes the “Nike” series:

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80 Data of the National Library.

Small is beautiful, the mystery of this series is not only its pocket format (books can be placed in a bag or handbag), but the authors and titles of world literature, often unpublished by any publisher. The charm of these little books and the possibility to have easy access to the author encourage many readers and collectors to begin their adventure with the “Nike” series. It is characterised by a hard cover, often a cloth cover, and sown pages, not glued as it often happens today. Every new book is presented with the idea to initiate new literary fascinations or to cultivate the present ones.

The excellent works within the “Nike” series included the following Latin American authors: *Born Guilty (Hijo de ladrón)* by Manuel Rojas (tr. Chądzyńska, 1965), *Explosion in a Cathedral* by Carpentier (tr. Wojciechowska, 1966), *All Fires the Fire* by Cortázar (tr. Chądzyńska, 1969), *The Death of Artemio Cruz* by Fuentes (tr. Wojciechowska, 1968), *Big Mama’s Funeral* by García Márquez (tr. Z. Chądzyńska, 1971), *The Aleph* by Borges (tr. Chądzyńska and Sobol-Jurczykowski, 1972), *Setenta veces siete* by Dalmiro Sáenza (tr. Chądzyńska, 1972), *Cantar de ciegos* by Fuentes (tr. Wojciechowska, 1973), *The Green House* by Vargas Llosa (tr. Marrodán Casas, 1974), *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother (La increíble y triste historia de la cándida Eréndira y su abuela desalmada)* by García Márquez (tr. Marrodán Casas, 1975), *The War of Time (Guerra del tiempo)* by Carpentier (tr. Wojciechowska 1975), *The Winners (Los premios)* by Cortázar (tr. Chądzyńska, 1976), *Octaedro*<sup>81</sup> by Cortázar (tr. Chądzyńska, 1977), *Leaf Storm (La hojarasca)* by García Márquez (tr. Marrodán Casas, 1977), *Cuentos completos* by Juan Carlos Onetti (tr. Rajmund Kalicki and Edward Stachura, 1978), *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by García Márquez (tr. Marrodán Casas, 1980) and *Reasons of State (El recurso del método)* by Carpentier (tr. Wojciechowska, 1980).

Summing up, during the boom one or two Spanish American works were published within the “Nike” series a year. The number is small but it should be admitted that the editors of the series did their best to publish works of writers enjoying great popularity with readers and prestige with critics.

When the books within the “Nike” series had dust jackets, there was laconic information about the author and/or work. It was the only form to present potential receivers the content of the book. The texts published in the series were not accompanied by any prefaces or afterwords. Then when the design of the series was changed, the dust jackets, and along with them biographical notes, disappeared. This form of presenting the work and author was not replaced by

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81 All the stories from this book were translated into English by Gregory Rabassa and published as part of the collection *A Change of Light and Other Stories* in 1980.



any other form. The editors must have concluded that the trademark of this series was a sufficient warranty of the high quality of prose.

The Czytelnik Publishing House, issuing *The Lost Steps* for the first time in Poland presented the author who had not been known in Poland on the folded flap of the jacket in the following way:

Alejo Carpentier (born in Havana in 1904) is one of the most eminent figures in the present-day Latin America and belongs to most renowned and frequently translated writers in this continent.

An identical sentence began the note about the Cuban writer placed in the book *Explosion in a Cathedral* published within this series three years later. Both notes included information about the musical education of Carpentier and the functions he had played in Cuba, as well as the titles of his most important works.

Submitting the first edition of Fuentes' work to the Polish readers, the editors of the "Czytelnik" Publishing House wrote on the jacket that he was one of the masters of contemporary Spanish American prose. The titles of his books were presented, stressing that the novel *The Death of Artemio Cruz* was translated into many languages. Moreover, the editor added the sensational information that his last novel *A Change of Skin* (*Cambio de piel*) published in Spain and honoured with the Seix Barral Award was confiscated by the censor. Then the informational strategy could be slightly modified since at least some Latin American writers were known to Polish readers. On the occasion of the first publication of García Marquez's prose in Poland (1971), in the laconic note on the jacket his name was listed with other known authors:

Gabriel Garcia Marquez,<sup>82</sup> a Columbian writer, besides the Cuban Alejo Carpentier, the Argentine Julio Cortázar and the Mexican Carlos Fuentes, represents the highest achievements of contemporary Latin American literature.

Yet, it was added that he was an extremely interesting writer whose works were translated into many languages, and who was esteemed on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, the promotional strategy referred to the readers' knowledge and popularity which a few Latin American writers had already gained in Poland, and stressing that like in the case of other authors his prose was known in numerous countries.

The editor considered that for Polish readers the words of Cortázar would be a sufficient recommendation for the first publication of Borges' collection of short stories:

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82 The writer's name was placed in this form – without the accents – on the flap of the jacket.

In my country, Argentina, when someone speaks about great international literature, the name of Jorge Luis Borges appears on every mouth. [...] Borges, a man of incomparable intellectual rigors, has raised the level of literary requirements so high that today everyone who wants to be regarded as a real writer must reach this level.

*The Green House* was the fourth book by Vargas Llosa published in Poland. The Peruvian writer was known to Polish readers, and that is why it was possible to refer to his earlier works in the note placed on the folded flap of the dust jacket. Moreover, his literary prizes were mentioned, and it was noted that the plot of the work was “almost sensational.”

In my opinion, the aforementioned quotations are sufficient to discern what the character of the notes that accompanied the prose published within the “Nike” series was. Beside basic information and ritual reference to readers’ snobism by stressing that a given book had been translated into many languages and was known worldwide, the value judgements were very general. Fuentes’ literary output was described “The author shows the rural revolution of the year 1910 in some artistic visions, focusing on its significance and consequences.” One can learn about *The Green House* that “it presents the complicated fate of the heroes at different levels of time and reality” and that “it forms a whole of great artistic and cognitive value.” *Big Mama’s Funeral* by García Márquez “is a sample of the creativity of this extremely interesting writer.” Such notes made it difficult to realise what the real artistic value of a given book was and which elements made it different from other works.

The Czytelnik Publishing House included Spanish American prose in its other series called “Biblioteka Klasyki Polskiej i Obcej” [Library of Polish and Foreign Classics], which appeared in the years 1970–1983. It had a total of 275 titles. The series was distinguished by a thorough design. The books had cloth hard covers and included short afterwords. Within this cycle there appeared works, Polish and foreign, old and new, belonging to three literary genres. They embraced *Poems* by Alexander Pushkin (1979), *Wiersze, poematy i dramaty* [Poems, Narrative Poems and Dramas] by Zygmunt Krasiński (1980), *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë (1976), *Steppenwolf* by Hermann Hesse (1977), *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert (1976) as well as two books written by Latin American writers: *The Lost Steps* by Carpentier (1973) and *Short Stories* by Borges (1978). Including these works to the prestigious series, along with masterpieces of Polish and world literature, was a clear indicator for readers that Carpentier and Borges were not avant-garde writers whose fame could quickly fade, but that their works had timeless value. Unfortunately, the editor did not have any ideas on how to present Carpentier’s prose. The first part of the anonymous afterword was the text that had already been published – on the folded flap of the edition of the

same novel within the “Nike” series. Its second part was a summary of the content. The afterword to Borges’ *Short Stories* was much better. Its author, Rajmund Kalicki, discussed Borges’ prose in the background of contemporary Spanish American literature and showed the most essential features of his literary output.

## 7.2 The National Publishing Institute – PIW

The publishing strategy adopted by PIW was similar to the one used by the Czytelnik Publishing House: Spanish American prose was included in the existing series: “Współczesna Proza Światowa” [Contemporary World Prose] and “Biblioteka Jednorożca” [The Library of the Unicorn].

“Współczesna Proza Światowa” has appeared since 1968. It is one of the most popular series presenting contemporary fiction. PIW aims at publishing works of representatives of new literary trends, acclaimed debutants and most famous authors in the world. It boasts publishing the first Polish translations of such authors as Italo Calvino, Umberto Eco, Joseph Heller, Gabriel García Márquez, Vladimir Nabokov, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Susan Sontag, John Updike, Kurt Vonnegut, John Maxwell Coetzee, Günter Grass or Tarjei Vesaas. The series also embraced works of less popular authors, for example *4447* by the Hungarian writer Anna Jókai (1972) or *The Architect of Ruins (Der Ruinenbaumeister)* by the Austrian novelist Herbert Rosendorfer (1972).

Books edited in this series have the same format, hard covers and dust jackets. The author of the design, used for the first ten years of the series, was Jerzy Jaworowski, a graduate of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, who was a famous book designer and author of posters in the 1960s and 1970s. On the front cover there were various, often non-real motives, mostly black, in the coloured background. The editor placed a short, no longer than one column, informative note on the even numbered page next to the title page. The notes were similar to the ones included in the “Nike” series, and so they had basic biographical data, titles of the author’s most important works and information about literary awards. Sometimes it was noted that the author’s views followed the official line of the state propaganda, e.g. the writers from the German Federal Republic.<sup>83</sup>

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83 For instance, the note about the novel *Treibhaus* by Wolfgang Koeppen, “The book uncompromisingly reveals the backstage of the governing parties in Bonn and many elements stuck in the ideology of BRD as a dangerous heritage of Hitlerism.” In the case of Martin Waiser the editor ensured, “However, he won the greatest popularity by the novels that fiercely attacked social morality and customs of the bourgeois circles of the German Federal Republic.”

In the late 1970s, the books published in the series received elegant glossy jackets with a coloured graphic motif on the first page. The author of the new design was the known artist, co-founder of the Polish poster school, Waldemar Świerzy. The notes were moved to the folded flaps. On the left flap, there was information about the writer and on the right about the work. The character of the notes was not fundamentally changed.

The first Spanish American book in the series was the novel of the Venezuelan Miguel Otero Silva entitled *Dead Houses* (*Casas Muertas*, tr. Wasitowa, 1969). Till 1981, PIW published a total of 17 volumes of Spanish American prose in the “Współczesna Proza Światowa” cycle. The number of the titles was smaller – twelve since there were two reprints of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Conversation in the Cathedral* (*Conversación en la Catedral*) and one reprint of *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*.

“Współczesna Proza Światowa” included two books by García Márquez: *In Evil Hour* (tr. Zych, 1970) and the aforementioned *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (tr. Grażyna Grudzińska and Wojciechowska, 1974), *Ficciones* by Borges (tr. Piekarec, Sobol-Jurczykowski, Wojciechowska, Zembrzuski, 1972), *Conversation in the Cathedral* (tr. Wasitowa, 1973) and *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* (tr. Marrodán Casas, 1976) by Vargas Llosa, three books of the representative of the Peruvian indigenism, José María Arguedas, *Deep Rivers* (*Los ríos profundos*, tr. Helena Czajka, 1973), *Amor mundo y todos los cuentos* (tr. Andrzej Nowak, 1979) and *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* (*El Zorro de Arriba y el Zorro de Abajo*, tr. Wasitowa, 1980), *The Obscene Bird of Night* (*El obsceno pájaro de la noche*) by Donoso (tr. Chądzyńska, 1975), *Holy Place* (*Zona sagrada*) by Fuentes (tr. Marzyńska, 1977). The last Spanish American title in the series was *Retrato hablado* by the Mexican Luis Spota (tr. Hanna Igalson, 1980), which appeared in the end-stage phase of the boom.

The information about the writers from Latin America placed in the series was quite laconic. For example, we could learn that Borges studied in Switzerland, Spain and England, that he collaborated with literary magazines in Buenos Aires (the titles were not given), that he was a member of the Argentinian Literary Academy, the director of the National Library in Argentina and a professor at the University of Buenos Aires as well as that he received a series of prestigious literary awards. Similar information about Vargas Llosa was given on the flap attached to *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*: he studied in Peru and Bolivia, wrote a doctoral dissertation in Madrid, lived in various European cities and won several important awards. As for Arguedas, the note gave sufficient information about his studies (“From 1931 he studied in Lima at the Faculty of Literature at the University of San Marcos, then he dedicated himself to anthropological

studies.”) The editor did not forget to mention that the writer held high state and scientific positions, but did not specify what they were. Naturally, there was information about his numerous literary awards.

The notes about the works, placed on the right flap, were much more interesting. They were attempts to present the book briefly and encouragingly. In the case of *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*, the editor warned the reader that this novel by Vargas Llosa differed from his earlier books. However, he stressed the pioneering elements and masterful skills of the author, which was always regarded as a feature of the future Nobel Prize winner. Moreover, he showed that the book “was something more than a satire in its masterful form.” It was a kind of promise given to more ambitious readers of the “Współczesna Proza Światowa” series that the novel of the Peruvian writer would fulfil their expectations – encounter with a book whose reading would not be only pure entertainment. On the other hand, the editors of the series wrote about *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* that the author “showed the whole ethnic complexity of Peru and transformations in this society connected with the intensive industrial development.”

PIW decided to include several Spanish American books in the “Biblioteka Jednorożca” series, which appeared in 1959–1993<sup>84</sup> and had a total of 126 volumes. Both poetry (*Białe kwiaty* [White Flowers] by Cyprian Kamil Norwid, 1974) and prose written by Polish and foreign authors in different epochs were published. As a rule, the series did not include the most famous works of a given author. They were usually relatively short works, sometimes one volume embraced two or three novellas. For instance, in *The Lawyer of Glass* (*El licenciado Vidriera*) there were two out of the eight “exemplary novels” by Cervantes.

The books of “Biblioteka Jednorożca” were edited in a small format. They had hard, cardboard, single coloured covers, but the colours of particular volumes were different. A small geometrised image of the unicorn was placed on the cover. Sometimes the editor placed a short note at the end of the book, as in the case of *Taglio del bosco* by the Italian writer Carl Cassoli (1973) or *La otra muerte del Gato* by the Cuban Onelio Jorge Cardoso. Some editions had afterwords, while some did not have any informative notes. An example of the latter is *The Birch Grove* by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz. The editor of the series must have thought that this work did not need any recommendation. Of interest is the fact that the series of contemporary prose is one of not many series which was illustrated with attractive graphics.

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84 After 1985, there were only two works published in the series.

Within “Biblioteka Jednoróżca” five titles of Spanish American prose were published: *La otra muerte del Gato* by Cardoso (tr. Jan Aleksandrowicz, 1970), *To Sleep on the Ground* by Revueltas (tr. Rodowska, 1970), *The Mirror of Lida Sal* by Asturias (tr. Olędzka-Frybesowa, 1970), *The Cubs (Los cachorros)* by Vargas Llosa (tr. Marrodán Casas, 1973) and *Los perros hambrientos* by Ciro Alegría (tr. Wasitowa, 1979). The editor placed a kind of afterword entitled “From the translator” at the end of three published works. Rodowska’s text concerning the collection of Revueltas’ short stories seems too exalted, and so its readers could not gain any reliable information from it.<sup>85</sup> In her afterword to Asturias’ work, Olędzka-Frybesowa stressed social motives of his output, at the same time mentioning that it was not tendentious literature with a thesis or a voice of some concrete political option. According to the Polish translator, charm fused with the present in the writing of the Guatemalan author in a natural and authentic way. In turn, Marrodán Casas interpreted *The Cubs* as a kind of “lens” which brings together the most fundamental features of Vargas Llosa’s writing.

The analysis of the PIW editors’ activities concerning Spanish American prose in the period preceding the boom and during the boom leads to a conclusion that the fundamental criterion used to select a work for translation and publication was its artistic value and the author’s acclaim. Within the PIW series, the best books of the most acclaimed Latin American writers were almost exclusively published. The publications of less known authors were very few, and only the publication of *La otra muerte del Gato* could be counted as a publishing mistake. It might not have been a mistake but a conscious decision. Political reasons might have outweighed: the publishing house considered to be appropriate to place within the series at least one book by a less known author who was an exemplary prosaist of communist Cuba.

### 7.3 Literary Press

The Kraków-based Literary Press (Krakowskie Wydawnictwo Literackie – WL) assumed a completely different strategy towards Spanish American prose than the Warsaw-based editors. WL decided to dedicate a separate series to this prose. It was inaugurated in 1971 under the name “Proza Iberoamerykańska” [Latin American Prose]. I intend to discuss it in an exceptional way going beyond the

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85 From the afterword of Rodowska, “The mysticism of death, so strongly stressed in Revueltas’ works, is a common property of the writers coming from Latin American countries, where in the shadow of the Conquistadors’ cross their Indian ancestors still seem to cut out their victims’ hearts with obsidian knives”.

time framework of the boom since the series has been the only Polish cycle dedicated entirely to Latin American prose.

The series appeared for 18 years till 1989. Altogether ca. 126 titles were published within the series.<sup>86</sup> During the first years of the series, it was not assumed that it would include so many volumes. In fact, within the first two years only two titles were published a year. Then the number gradually increased. In 1973, eight titles were published, and in the next year – ten. The record years were 1975–1977, when between 14 and 16 titles were published per year. In 1978, “Proza Iberoamerykańska” saw a decrease to 10 titles. In the next years, the number was even smaller: in 1979 – five titles, in the next year – six, and in 1981 – only two, which could have resulted from a publishing collapse as a consequence of martial law. In 1982, eight titles were published, but then one could see that the editors’ possibilities and aspirations came to an end: till 1989 not more than four titles a year were published within “Proza Iberoamerykańska.”

The presented data clearly show that the series “lived” to the rhythm of the boom. The series was initiated along with the wave of interest in Latin American literature at its beginning, which testifies to the excellent discernment of the WL director concerning the market situation. The best years of the series, when several dozen titles appeared per year, fell on the apogee of interest in Latin American prose. Then the series was gradually closed due to the decline of the boom in Poland. Single titles, published in the 1980s, were of a distinctly epigonic character; the editors of the series tried to draw buyers by publishing works of great authors: Roa Bastos, Fuentes, Donoso, García Márquez, José Lezama Lima and Vargas Llosa. They also published the last little collections of Cortázar’s short stories and reprinted *Hopscotch*. Yet, the series did not survive after the political and economic transformations.

Various kinds of works were edited in “Proza Iberoamerykańska.” It included both works of the most acclaimed writers and those who were unknown outside their countries, contemporary and living writers as well as the 19th century classics. From this perspective, the beginning of the cycle turned out symptomatic: in 1971, two collections of short stories inaugurated the series; they were very unequal as far as their artistic values were concerned. The author of the first collection entitled *The Burning Plain and Other Stories* was Juan Rulfo, one of

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86 This number should be treated as approximate. It was very difficult to establish the number of the published titles. The lists available on-line are incomplete and the catalogue of the National Library did not have all the titles. Even Wydawnictwo Literackie was not able to provide reliable information about the subject!

the most eminent Mexican writers of the 20th century whose works – humble in numbers – were translated into many languages and remained in the focus of critics and scholars. The other collection was *El hombre de la rosa* by the Chilean Manuel Rojas, who was acclaimed only in his country.

As far as the greatest stars of the boom are concerned, the series included eight books by Cortázar: *Hopscotch*, 1974, *Opowiadania zebrane* [Collected Short Stories], 1975, *Last Round*, 1979, *A Manual for Manuel (Libro de Manuel)* 1980, *Alguien que anda por ahí*, 1981, *A Certain Lucas (Un tal Lucas)* 1982, *We Love Glenda So Much and Other Tales (Queremos tanto a Glenda)* 1983, *Unreasonable Hours (Deshoras)*, 1989, all translated by Chądzyńska. The reprint of *Hopscotch* in 1985 in 50,000 copies was the only case of repeating the titles within the discussed series. The published books were: two collections of Borges' short stories *Doctor Brodie's Report (El informe de Brodie)*, 1975 and *The Book of Sand (El libro de arena)* 1980, both tr. Chądzyńska), two books by Carpentier: *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1975) and *The Kingdom of This World* (1976, both tr. Wojciechowska), five works by Fuentes (*Aura* 1974, tr. Wojciechowska, *The Good Conscience (Las buenas conciencias)*, 1975, tr. Marzyńska, three volumes of the saga *Terra Nostra*, 1980, tr. Maria Kaniowa, *Distant Relations (Una familia lejana)*, 1983, *Burnt Water (Agua quemada)*, 1984, both tr. Maria Kaniowa), six books by Garcia Márquez: *No One Writes to the Colonel (El coronel no tiene quien le escriba)*, 1973, 1985, tr. Beata Babad), *In Evil Hour* 1975, tr. Zych, *Eyes of the Blue Dog (Ojos de perro azul)*, 1976, tr. Chądzyńska), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1977, tr. Grudzińska and Chądzyńska), *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor (Relato de un naufrago)*, 1980, tr. Kalicki), all novels by Sábato (*On Heroes and Tombs*, 1977, tr. Czajka, *The Angel of Darkness [Abaddón el Exterminador]*, 1978, tr. Czajka and *The Tunnel (El túnel)*, 1976, tr. Józef Keksztas), three works by Vargas Llosa: *The Leaders (Los jefes)*, 1976, tr. Nowak), *The Time of the Hero* (1978, tr. Marrodán Casas), *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1983, tr. Rycerz) as well as *The Obscene Bird of Night* (1978, tr. Chądzyńska) and *Hell Has No Limits (El lugar sin límites)* by Donoso (1988, tr. Rycerz).

WL did not publish most of the aforementioned works as first editions. Only their re-editions were published in the series; the exception was the works of Fuentes and Asturias which were not popular in Poland. However, the editor obviously cared that those who collected the series in their home libraries had works that were most strongly associated with the boom.

The editors of "Proza Iberoamerykańska" tried to meet the readers' demands, but at the same time, they knew that the publishing copyrights of the stars of the boom were reserved for the Warsaw-based publishing houses. This was probably one of the reasons why WL decided to reach for less known authors.



The editor of the series Maria Kaniowa explained the controversial decisions saying that WL intended to show Polish readers a broad panorama of literature of all Latin American countries. Publishing contemporary bestsellers, beside the slightly outdated classics, presenting works belonging to various trends of Latin American prose, e.g., novels about the land, about politics, violence, were to show the complexity of the literature of this continent and its many problems. For “Proza Iberoamerykańska” was to fulfil mainly a cognitive function (Kaniowa 1978:238) and at the same time, was to become an exemplification of a textbook of the history of Latin American literature (Marrodán Casas 1978b:235). This strategy was not approved even by critics:

Literary scholars read what they need, in Spanish and Portuguese, while ordinary customers of bookstores and libraries have no separate “places in the heads” for Ecuador or Bolivia and can distinguish between a novel and encyclopaedia, statistical yearbook and monograph. They look for single, good books; they would like people to be guided rather by an index than by a map [...].<sup>87</sup>

Kaniowa (p. 58) also stressed that being faithful to the socialist model of culture obliged us to get to know the tradition of the Third World nations. This declaration explained the reasons why “Proza Iberoamerykańska” included ideologically “correct” works and also those of low literary values.

Thus, a combination of various factors led to the inclusion in the series *El secuestro del general*, 1975, by the Ecuadorian Demetrio Aguilera Malta, a novel that was not regarded as one of his most outstanding achievements, and *Yawar fiesta* by Arguedas, representing the indigenous current of Peruvian literature, which was rather at the edge of the main trend of the boom. As for the older prose, the following book was published *Cecilia Valdés or the Hill of the Angel* (*Cecilia Valdés o la Loma del Ángel*, 1976) by the 19th century representative of Cuban realism Cirilo Villaverde. Although the significance of this novel for the history of Cuban literature is obvious, from the perspective of the Polish reader the novel is simply an oldie, naïve romance that differed from many European works of that epoch only by its exotic decorations. The Polish reader was not interested in another published work, namely *Las honradas* (1978), a novel of manners written at the beginning of the 20th century by the Cuban Miguel de Carrión.

Some volumes of the series should be treated as publishing mistakes. They embraced translations of the so-called committed literature, i.e. *Pisagua: la semilla en la arena* by Volodia Teitelboim (1977), the Chilean writer who during

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87 Tarska, *Nowe Książki*, 1976, no. 11, pp. 12–13.

his immigration in Moscow fought against the dictatorship of Pinochet, or two novels *Cuando la sangre se parece al fuego* (1977) and *La última mujer y el próximo combate* (1978) by the representative of Cuban Socialist Realism Manuel Cofiño. However, we should note and appreciate the daring actions of WL, for example the publication of Lezama Lima's works (*Paradiso*, 1979, *Oppiano Licario*, 1982, *Cangrejos, golondrinas*, 1986), prose that was extraordinary, highly acclaimed and at the same time difficult to understand, requiring the reader's involvement and literary skills.

The series also included five anthologies: *Piętnaście opowiadań iberoamerykańskich* [Fifteen Latin American Short Stories] (1976), *Opowiadania brazylijskie* [Brazilian Short Stories] (1977), *Liść wiatru: antologia opowiadań Ameryki Środkowej* [A Leaf of Wind: Anthology of Latin America's Short Stories] (1982), *Nowe opowiadania brazylijskie* [New Brazilian Short Stories] (1982) and *Każdego lata: nowe opowiadania argentyńskie* [Every Summer: New Argentinian Short Stories] (1988).<sup>88</sup>

"Proza Iberoamerykańska" turned out to be controversial. After a number of years looking at the editors of the series one cannot be astonished by Jerzy Kühn's opinion (1978:14), who thought that the greatest achievement of the series was to break the magic circle of the boom – the repetition of the names of the same authors in the publishers' plans. In turn, Karbowska (1980:5) issued a very negative opinion about the mixture of epochs, styles and levels within the series, calling the WL initiative "a coloured series of duds."

After the six-year appearance of the series, Marrodán Casas and Jerzy Mazur (1977) showed enthusiastic attitudes towards it. They ascribed WL an intention

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88 The editors of the series did not forget about Latin American prose written in Portuguese. Within "Proza Iberoamerykańska" a total of 18 translations from this language were published, including the works of the 19th century Brazilian classic Machado de Assis (*Memórias póstumas de Brás Cubas – The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas*, 1974, *Relíquias de casa velha*, 1975, *Quincas Borba*, 1977), Amado's novel *Tereza Batista cansada de guerra* (*Tereza Batista: Home from the Wars*, 1989), Aluisio Azevedo's naturalistic novel *O Cortiço* (*The Slum* 1976). It is worth mentioning contemporary novels: *O fundador* by Nélide Piñon, winner of many awards given in Brazil and other Hispanic countries, as well as the novel *Maíra* by Darcy Ribeiro, a Brazilian intellectualist, anthropologist and ethnologist, who also had literary skills. All of that does not change the fact that in Poland the boom was commonly associated only with literature created in Spanish. Despite the editors' efforts none of the Portuguese-speaking writers attracted the Polish reader so much as García Márquez or Cortázar. One had to wait for the success of Paulo Coelho's prose and interest in Brazilian literature that followed his success till the mid-1990s.

that was completely unrealistic, namely that WL aimed at showing the Polish reader the basic canon of Latin American prose, embracing both classic and contemporary works. They interpreted the diversity of published works as the multiplicity of the editors' points of view. On the one hand, they were to show the whole region, and on the other – the literature of particular countries. This would explain why the series, beside known and acclaimed works, published such short stories as *Abrir y cerrar los ojos* by Cardoso, the prosaist that was so much acclaimed in his homeland Cuba that he was given the title of the National Prosaist (*Cuentista Nacional*). Yet, he won no fame outside his country.

Today, from the perspective of time, a question can be raised why the editors of the series did not consider either, or perhaps above all, the perspective of the Polish reader? The WL strategy, which was complicated and focused on unattainable goals, must have been unclear to the Polish reader. Consequently, the readers did not distinguish the literary generations of Latin American prose, and for them the concept of the boom became much broader than in other countries. It was commonly related to Latin American literature in general and not with a rather narrow group of writers whose works were published and launched in Barcelona by Seix Barral in 1963–1973. It was the WL policy that to a large extent contributed to the fact that the boom in Poland did not embrace selected works but Latin American prose seen as a whole.

Sometimes it was indicated that the WL series took after the French series “La Croix du Sud” edited by Gallimard, directed by Roger Caillois (Komorowski 1979:13). Some direct inspirations were naturally very probable, but one cannot speak of any imitation. The differences between these series are numerous, the most obvious being their numbers: the French series had 41 titles,<sup>89</sup> while “Proza Iberoamerykańska” – almost three times more. The French series was launched in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and thus it already included some authors associated with the boom, namely Cortázar, Borges, Vargas Llosa and Carpentier. Yet, what prevailed were the names of the so-called contemporary classics, e.g. Ciro Alegria, Rómulo Gallegos, Ricardo Güiraldes and Jorge Amado. The editor could have intended to present a panorama of contemporary Latin American prose, which could be testified by the fact that in the series works of most authors

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89 Data from [www.gallimard.fr/gallimard-cgi/Appli\\_catal/rech\\_collection.pl](http://www.gallimard.fr/gallimard-cgi/Appli_catal/rech_collection.pl). (25.02.2009). Malingret (2002:46) mentions ca. 60 titles, without giving the source of this number. In the early 1970s, Gallimard tried to renew the series under the name of “La Nouvelle Croix du Sud,” but it was unsuccessful. Within three years, eleven titles were published (<http://www.gallimard.fr/>, access: 18.12.2009).

were represented by one title, sporadically by two titles of one author. The editor did not attempt to realise contradictory aims, which seems to have characterised those who were responsible for the publication of the Polish series.

Translators collaborating with WL in the 1970s and 1980s can be divided into two distinct groups. The first one included those who belonged to the best translators of Hispanic literature into Polish (sometimes they were the best translators of literature in general): Zofia Chądzyńska, Kalina Wojciechowska and Teresa Marzyńska. However, their translations of works from the series were new editions of the titles that had already been published by the Warsaw-based publishing houses. WL never ordered a new translation of some book that had been published by another publishing house.

The other group of the translators were those working for WL. We should mention Andrzej Nowak who was connected with the series from its very beginning and who might have been the most versatile translator, boasting of excellent renderings of poetry, Jadwiga Konieczna-Twardzikowa, Jan Zych, Beata Babad or Danuta Rycerz. There were also other translators who debuted in WL (e.g. Leszek Kutra and Anna Grodzicka), but their later works proved to be rather insignificant.<sup>90</sup> WL boasted that within the several years of the publication of the series it gave the chance of a debut to a dozen translators (Kaniowa 1978:237).

The subsequent titles of the WL series had postscripts. Their authors were mainly specialists in Latin American literatures and cultures, working for WL: Adam Komorowski, Jerzy Kühn, Rajmund Kalicki, Joanna Petry-Mroczkowska, Anna Jasińska, Grażyna Grudzińska and Henryk Czubała.<sup>91</sup>

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90 A detailed list of renderings made by particular translators within “Proza Iberoamerykańska” is given by Ziarkowska in her article “Objaśnianie odległej współczesności. Informacje o nowym świecie w przypisach tłumaczy serii „Proza Iberoamerykańska” [Explaining distant present times. Information about the new world in the notes of the translators of the “Proza Iberoamerykańska series,” in: *Przypisy tłumacza* [Translator’s Notes] ed. E. Skibińska, Księgarnia Akademicka, Wrocław-Kraków 2009. According to her calculation, the biggest number of translations were made by Chądzyńska (21) and Nowak (19). Others made between one and four renderings.

91 Almost all of them have made translations of literary works: Kühn translated *Crónicas de Bustos Domecq* (*Chronicles of Bustos Domecq*) by Borges, Kalicki *Introducción a los vasos órficos* by Lezama Lima and *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* by García Márquez, Petry-Mroczkowska *Legends of Guatemala* (*Leyendas de Guatemala*) by Asturias and *El diosero* by Francisco Rojas Gonzáles, Jasińska *The Dream of Heroes* (*El sueño de los héroes*) by Bioy Casares, Grudzińska was a co-author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The editor of the series grumbled about the quality of collaboration with specialists in

The afterword had a similar scheme. It included a short biography of the writer, a discussion of his or her literary output and many a time, his or her political activities since the relationships between literature and politics in Latin America were often emphasised. Moreover, the artistic and social context was depicted, sometimes very extensively. Today this part of the afterword evokes the impression that the authors wanted to hastily fulfil the gaps in the knowledge of Latin America and its literature, resulting from the unavailability of other reliable sources, offering the Polish reader a crash course in cultural studies. However, the postscripts did not enjoy the readers' recognition. "In the atmosphere of 'mystical unity' with Latin American prose the mediators are treated as if imposters following only commercial and advertisement motives" – derisively commented Marrodán Casas (1979:8). In my opinion, the reasons for this aversion were much more prosaic: the readers might have been struck by the obvious didacticism of these texts, unconcealed desire to deliver information that was unnecessary to experiencing the commented works. Their greatest sin was that they did not try to give the Polish reader another interpretative key than the sociological and historically literary one. Furthermore, these texts did not allow readers to form opinions about the real artistic value of the given book. In every case the authors of the afterword made it clear that the reader dealt with a masterpiece or an important and excellent work. Indeed, it is hard to accept that the editor believed in his or her own words writing in the folded flap of *Pisagua: la semilla en la arena*: "written with a colourful, vivid language. It depicts authentic people and their real, dramatic problems." Actually, the characters of this novel were described very schematically, and their dialogues were dull and blurry. Nowak, the author of the afterword, felt obliged to explain what the drama of the heroes was and why Teitelboim used such a drastic term as "concentration camp" for a temporary forced place of settlement, "from the perspective of the parliamentary canons of Chile's tradition it was a completely novelty and shock for the public opinion." Petry-Mroczkowska tried to convince potential readers of the Mexican novel *Un tal José Salomé*, "But Artur Azuela's book [...] is not only a picture of the sufferings and misfortune of Mexican peasants. José Salomé experiences moments of happiness and clearly emphasises them to the listener of his story. This fact makes him a man of flesh and blood, and not only a paper representative of the exploited from the 19th and 20th century critical

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Latin American literature, claiming that she had to wait months for the ordered afterwards (Kaniowa 1978:243).

literature.” The Polish readers must unavoidably have associated these works with Social Realism. They could hardly identify themselves with the heroes of *Pisagua: la semilla en la arena*, sentenced to temporary dislocation, or with the story of a Mexican lumberman experiencing metaphysical exultations at clearing the forest.

The editors’ didactic goals were also fulfilled in the footnotes, which occurred in all books within the series. There were translators’ footnotes explaining some of their decisions and confessing their failures. Moreover, many footnotes contain remarks about those regions of Latin America that the editors regarded as being unknown to the Polish reader. Therefore, the footnotes belonged to the strategy of showing readers a different world and reducing the cultural distance.<sup>92</sup>

As for the material dimension of “Proza Iberoamerykańska,” the books were definitely distinguished by the appearance on the shelves in the bookstores. Their single coloured, sometimes, bright, covers, almost each having a different colour, attracted buyers’ attention. There was a large, black motif, clearly referring to the pre-Columbian art, on the front cover. The author of the design was Andrzej Wysocki, a renowned artist. The books did not have any dust jackets but their soft covers had folded flaps. These panels were used to print a fragment of the afterword or longer or shorter information about the author and his/her work. These notes were not so brief as the ones made by the Warsaw editors, but still did not follow the biographical-bibliographical scheme. The editors did not try to provide summaries of the books (blurbs), but rather capture their message. This was the case of the note printed on the flap of the WL edition of the juvenile collection of Vargas Llosa’s short stories *The Leaders*:

[...] the prevailing motif is violence, understood rather as a psychological and not social phenomenon. Only conscious power, leadership, domination, untouched personal honour or honour of your closest ones can fully satisfy a male – and if there is something that will shake the essential *status quo*, one should fight against it at once. The game is great since it is a game for life, and the heroes of Vargas Llosa’s stories know the price of life since they are convinced that disgrace can be avoided only by death: killing others or dying yourself. That is why they kill or go to uneven fight to feel that they are real males – *machos*.

It is worth adding that the text printed on the flap was not a fragment of the afterword.

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92 This issue was intensively analysed by Ziarkowska in the quoted study.

The editor of the note to the Polish translation of *A Plan for Escape* (*Plan de evasión*) by Adolf Bioy Casares listed a number of questions that its readers faced:

What do those Castel's experiments conducted on people tell us: his "transformations?" Is that a metaphor of human existence on the Earth that "really" has nothing in common with our images of the world we live in? Are we dealing with a fantastic illustration of the thesis that "life is a dream?" Or should we look for [...] a thesis concerning the "multi-layered" or "multi-degred" creation and various co-existing realities?

In the 1980s, when WL and other publishing houses were affected by shortages of printing materials, the books of "Proza Iberoamerykańska" were printed on increasingly worse grey paper. Then the editors gave up using the folded flaps and moved the notes to the page next to the front one.

The readers of the series were attacked with peritexts appearing almost everywhere: postscripts, footnotes, notes on the flaps or inside the book. Wydawnictwo Literackie must have fulfilled its mission consistently to promote Latin American literature and to promote knowledge about this literature and continent.

In the mid-1970s, this mission was supported by another series, which was not dedicated to fiction but non-fiction – literature of fact. It had a much better design: hard cover with a white dust jacket on which a photo or reprint of some piece of art was put. At the end of the books, one could find photos illustrating their contents. It is extremely difficult to find out how many titles were published within this cycle because it did not have any name. Consequently, we cannot find the books in on-line catalogues. For example, we can mention the following titles: *The Aztecs; People of the Sun* (*El pueblo del sol*) by Alfonso Caso (tr. Sten, 1974), *The Aztec Image of Self and Society: An Introduction to Nahua Culture* (*Los antiguos Mexicanos a través de sus crónicas y cantares*) by Miguel León-Portilla (tr. Sten, 1976), *Juan Pérez Jolote* by Ricardo Pozas (tr. Raisa Cárdenas and Roman Samsel, 1977).

Moreover, Wydawnictwo Literackie edited several important books concerning Latin American prose within the series dedicated to literary essays. They are: *The Boom in Spanish American Literature: A Personal History* (*Historia personal del "boom"*) by Donoso (tr. Komarnicka, 1977), *Ameryka Łacińska w swojej literaturze* [Latin America in its Literature] (a collection of texts written by different authors; different translators, 1979), *Introducción a los vasos órficos* by Lezama Lima (tr. Kalicki, 1977), *Tientos y diferencias* by Carpentier, (tr. Petry-Mroczkowska 1982), *Calibán* (*Caliban and Other Essays*) by Roberto Fernández Retamar (tr. Czarnocka, 1983), *Don Quixote: Or, The Critique of Reading* (*Cervantes o la crítica de la lectura*) by Fuentes (tr. Petry-Mroczkowska, 1981) and *El escritor y sus fantasmas* by Sábato (tr. Kalicki, 1988).

## 7.4 Summary

The strategies of introducing Spanish American prose to the Polish market realised by the Warsaw-based “Czytelnik” Publishing House and PIW as well as by the Kraków-based Wydawnictwo Literackie were considerably different. Both Warsaw institutions decided to include the works of contemporary Latin American novelists to the existing series presenting contemporary prose. “Nike” edited by the Czytelnik Publishing House and “Współczesna Proza Światowa” edited by PIW had already enjoyed prestige and gathered circles of readers before they started publishing their first Latin American translations. Thus, the Warsaw publishing houses, by placing their Polish translations of the works by García Márquez and Borges among the works of such writers as Ernest Hemingway, Erich Maria Remarque, Heinrich Böll (“Nike”) or William Faulkner, Yury Trifonov and Iris Murdoch (“Współczesna Proza Światowa”) directed their offer to learned readers, those who did not look for entertainment but aesthetic experiences and reflections on serious problems. Such receivers had to be open to literary novelties. Furthermore, the Warsaw editors did believe that good prose would defend itself and limited their peritexts to a minimum. In total, the Czytelnik Publishing House and PIW attributed contemporary Spanish American prose a label of high level literature, worth of interest, comparable to the literature created by writers coming from countries that were traditionally seen as centres of culture.

Wydawnictwo Literackie chose a different strategy. They started publishing books of Latin American authors eight years later after the first editions of the writers associated with the boom appeared in Poland. Thus, the WL editors had data allowing them to see their market potential. In order to promote Latin American prose, they did not try to use the existing series but decided to initiate a new one, dedicated exclusively to this literature. Consequently, they took some risk that is always connected with attempts to introduce a new brand.

From a perspective of time, it seems that the policy of Wydawnictwo Literackie proved to be more effective than the strategies of the Warsaw publishing houses. The “Proza Iberoamerykańska” series was associated with the boom. It was recognised as one of the most important and successful undertakings of the Kraków publishing house, and until now has remained its trademark (Strzałka 2003:1). Many a time the series was praised for what it did not accomplish: the on-line bookstore “Liber” recommending the reprint of *Hopscotch* suggests that it was WL that started a fashion for Latin American literature.<sup>93</sup> The study *Rynek*

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93 See: [http://www.liber.pl/sklep/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=29886](http://www.liber.pl/sklep/product_info.php?products_id=29886), 5.03.2009.



*książki w Polsce* [Book Market in Poland], which generally provides reliable data, gives the following information, “Wydawnictwo Literackie also introduced the books of Latin American writers to the Polish market” (Gołębiewski 2002). Sometimes one forgets that it was PIW and Czytelnik that published contemporary Latin American prose since at that time the WL series did not exist, and the series cannot be merited with launching the works of most authors from this continent.

The WLs risk related to creating a new brand was evidently worth taking. Publishing “Proza Iberoamerykańska” allowed the Kraków publishing house to increase its symbolic capital and probably its economic capital as well (although one cannot confirm the latter since the series appeared in the period of socialist economy realised in the Polish People’s Republic).

## **8 Years of stagnation: 1981–1989**

The years 1981–1989 form a period closed between two key events for modern Poland’s history: the proclamation of martial law and the sessions of the “round table” leading to the transformation of the political system. Both events had a fundamental influence on the shape of the literary field.

The 1980s were a period of a gradual degradation of the socialist economy. The year 1989 definitively marked the end of a state controlled economy. From that moment, we can speak of a free book market.

The economic collapse lasting throughout the martial law and years that followed it must have had an impact on cultural life. For editors, it was a time of struggling with hardships: drastic limitations concerning paper allowance, lack of finances for fees and, in case of translations, for author’s copyrights, almost absurd censors’ suspicion... One could hardly speak of a publishing policy since the only strategy adopted by the editors was a strategy of survival. They stopped investing in printing machines, thus the process of printing was long due to the old equipment. Only titles promoted by the state thanks to the so-called quick printing path appeared within a short time (Gołębiewski 2005:233). Consequently, the number of published titles and copies decreased every year. Publishing houses tried to include in their plans the most valuable titles, which would guarantee promising income. The situation did not improve after three new organisations were called into being during the time of martial law (Porozumienie Wydawców [Alliance of Publishers], Zrzeszenie Księgarstwa [Association of Bookselling] and Zrzeszenie Państwowych Przedsiębiorstw Przemysłu Poligraficznego [Association of State Printing and Publishing Companies]), aiming at providing help to overcome difficulties on the publishing market (p. 233).

**Tab. 3:** The number of translations of Spanish American prose published in 1982–1989 by particular publishing houses.

Year	WL			PIW		Czytelnik		total
	Latin American prose	Collection of Cuban literature	Outside the series	Contemporary world prose	Outside the series	Nike	Outside the series	
1982	8				1	1		10
1983	8						1	9
1984	3			2			1	6
1985	3	2			1			6
1986	3	1	2				1	7
1987	1		1		1			3
1988	2						1	3
1989	3						1	4
<b>total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>48</b>

During the described period, the number of translations of Spanish American prose decreased drastically. Within eight years, the number of published titles equalled the number of those published in 1976–1977, the peak of the boom. Tab. 3 illustrates the data.

Spanish American prose was published by three institutions: PIW, Czytelnik and Wydawnictwo Literackie. However, all of them modified their strategies concerning this prose. Earlier most works of Latin American novelists were edited within some series, and editions outside of the series were sporadic, the proportion began to change in the discussed period. PIW included only two novels: *This Sunday* (*Este domingo*) by Donoso (tr. Anna Grodzicka-Trudgett) in 1984 and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (*El beso de la mujer araña*) by Manuel Puig (tr. Wasitowa) to the series “Współczesna Proza Światowa.” Moreover, PIW decided to publish separately three other books: the collection of Borges’ short stories *A Universal History of Infamy* (*Historia universal de la infamia*) (tr. Sobol-Jurczykowski, Zembrzuski, 1982), the novel of the Columbian José Eustaquio Rivera, *The Vortex* (*La vorágine*, 1924, tr. Czarnocka, 1985) and *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (*Crónica de una muerte anunciada*) by García Márquez (tr. Marrodán Casas, 1987).

The Czytelnik Publishing House, within its “Nike” series, published only one book: *The Harp and the Shadow* by Carpentier (tr. Wojciechowska, Janina Carlson, 1982). The remaining five titles appeared outside any series. They were: *The Book of Imaginary Beings* (*El libro de los seres imaginarios*) by Borges (tr. Chądzyńska,

1983), the novel *La salamandra* by the rather unknown Venezuelan Pedro Berroeta (tr. Wanda Tinojero, Samsel, 1984), *La contracorriente* by Guillermo Atías, a Chilean writer living in Paris (tr. Czajka, 1986), the third edition of *The Lost Steps* by Carpentier (1988) and *La vida exagerada de Martín Romaña* by Alfredo Bryce-Echenique (tr. Wasitowa, 1989). The Czytelnik Publishing House must have looked for new names. Decisions concerning the publication of Berroeta's and Atías' novels were not accurate. It was difficult to image that Polish readers, used to receive high level literature of the stars of the boom, could become interested in a prose of clearly lower level, even during the period of short supplies of translations of Spanish American literature. An interesting and popular writer was Bryce-Echenique, but we cannot understand why his novel was edited outside "Nike." Neither do we understand the decision to publish the prose of Borges and Carpentier outside the series.

In the discussed period, Wydawnictwo Literackie published the biggest number of Spanish American works, mainly thanks to the fact that till 1989 the publisher continued the "Proza Iberoamerykańska" series, within which 31 volumes appeared. However, it took a risky decision to initiate a new series called "Kolekcja Literatury Kubańskiej" in those hard years. The reasons for the decision to exclude Cuban prose from the highly prestigious series remain unclear. The editors could have foreseen that in Poland the brand of Cuban literature was not catchy enough to publish it as a new collection that would achieve a great success. The fate of the new cycle, including poetry, showed that the decision was wrong. The series was continued till 1989 and embraced only four titles, out of which the two most important, i.e., the volume with two Carpentier's works: *The Kingdom of This World* and *Explosion in a Cathedral*, as well as *Paradiso* by Lezama Lima, were re-editions. The series also embraced *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War (Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria)* by Ernesto "Che" Guevara<sup>94</sup> (tr. Ernesto Porcel Ortega, 1989) and *Wiersze [Poems]* by José Martí (tr. Zofia Szleyen, 1985).

## 9 Spanish American prose on the free publishing market

The year 1989 marked the beginning of political, economic and social transformations in Poland. Under their influence the cultural field, and literary field as its part, began to undergo a fundamental transformation, and consequently, capitalist rules began to play an important role on the market. The

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94 The decision to include this book to the collection of Cuban literature seems controversial.

cultural field gradually became similar to that described by Bourdieu. The book market became a free market almost overnight.

The early 1990s were a time when those publishing houses established in the Polish People's Republic tried to face the new situation in which the economic factor conditioned their activities. The huge socialist institutions found it difficult to adjust to the new conditions since they did not know how to manage without the state protective umbrella ensuring supplies of paper, money for employees and infrastructure, etc. Those institutions, such as PIW, Czytelnik and WL, failed to use their symbolic capital accumulated for years through developing the image of prestigious and trustworthy institutions and creating various publishing series as their brands. At the same time, new publishing houses were established, having a smaller or bigger economic capital. Yet, in the early 1990s, their activities were still not intense. Yet, the old editors did not manage to maintain their privileged positions on the market after the transformations had begun although the new publishing houses had to create their own images and seek ways to win readers. For example, due to some wrong decisions taken by PIW in the early 1990s, the institution lost copyrights to re-edit many of their translations, including the works of Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, Günter Grass and James Joyce as well as the works of Latin American authors: Cortázar and García Márquez (Gołębiewski 2003:385). On the contrary, the new editors undertook their activities in a vibrant or even aggressive way. Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie [Warsaw Literary Press], established in 1991, being part of the Muza S.A. capital group belonging to Włodzimierz Czarzasty's media, bought the copyrights to publish the other works of many Hispanic writers: García Márquez, Isabel Allende, Cortázar and Pérez-Reverte (Gołębiewski 2003:231, vol. 1). For some time, "Muza" did not introduce new titles to the market, focusing on re-editing the works that had been published by PIW or WL, being confronted with accusations that it benefitted from someone else's achievements.<sup>95</sup>

The early 1990s triggered entrepreneurship, and founding a publishing company was quite easy. In Poland, a number of small companies were established. They published new works of writers: Manuela Gretkowska, Izabela Filipiak and Tomek Tryzna (Czapliński 2007:22) who are now renowned in Poland. With time, it occurred that free market favoured the development of big companies as well as the creation and strengthening of the hierarchies between

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95 Czarzasty refuted these accusations, "It is true that we bought copyrights to the titles that had belonged to other publishers. However, I think that it was our success. The old potentates failed because they did not understand in time the transformations happening in Poland" ([http://niniwa2.cba.pl/ksiazka\\_na\\_wolnosci.htm](http://niniwa2.cba.pl/ksiazka_na_wolnosci.htm), 20.11.2009).

them. Small publishers are generally unable to face competition, and thus they can be active only on local markets. Towards the end of the 1990s, two thirds of the income on selling books went to 19 publishing companies (Czapliński 2007:23), i.e., those who could not only produce books but also pay very high costs of their distribution and advertisement:

In the Polish People's Republic, it was enough to print books – the rest was cared for by the almost unlimited demand. In new Poland, printing books means nothing – the ability to create demand decides about everything (Czapliński 2007:26).

Huge publishing houses reach receivers through advertisements in high circulation press and on the radio, through posters as well as big wholesalers and chain bookstores. This kind of market favours what is known. Readers, especially those living in cities, received “standardised publishing offer: famous names, advertised titles and popular series” (Czapliński 2007:25).

Free market made editors undertake activities that were factually unknown and not applied during the times of real socialism. At present, the artistic value of a book becomes less significant being covered by its economic potential, i.e. the profit it can bring. Consequently, promotion plays an increasingly bigger role, and one can hardly see a success of some book that has not been supported by a promotional campaign (Gołębiewski 2004:30, vol. 1), which many a time happened during the times of the Polish People's Republic when demand on good literature significantly exceeded supply. Today advertising exerts an increasing influence on book sales. Promotional campaigns are of a different character and momentum. Their elements are meetings with authors and editors, articles in high circulation periodicals and press advertisements. Regarding translations, visits of writers are frequent forms of promotion. Editors finance the travelling costs of the writers and organise meetings with them. The cost of such a visit is between 30,000 and 100,000 zloty (Gołębiewski 2004:28, vol. 1). Thus, we have hosted Vargas Llosa and Fuentes. Naturally, Latin American writers visited us during the period of the Polish People's Republic but their visits were related to political events. For example, Julio Cortázar came to Poland in 1979 in order to participate in the International Forum of Solidarity with Chilean Culture, which was organised in Toruń.

In the 1990s, literary translations, mostly from English, constituted a considerable source of publishers' income, but at the threshold of the new century, one could notice a significant interest in modern Polish literature. Polish prose and poetry achieved visible success. It turned out that it was easier to promote a Polish writer, which could be seen in the readers' reactions towards literary awards. “Looking at the level of the sales of awarded books, Polish readers value the “Nike” Prize more than the Nobel Prize in Literature,” noted Gołębiewski (2002:32).

The fate of Spanish American prose in Poland in the discussed period varied significantly (see Tab. 5). Analysing the statistical data, one can have the impression that in the early 1990s, the editors completely lost interest in this prose. In 1990, no book from this region was published, in 1991 – two, in 1992 – three, while in 1993 – eight. From that year, the number of Spanish American works gradually increased and maintained a similar level till 2000: in 1995–2000, there appeared between ten and fifteen titles per year. Then one could see another breakthrough: since 2001 over twenty books have been published annually, which is a similar number to the one during the boom in Poland in the mid-1970s. However, there is one important difference. During the boom the prevailing form was the first edition and thanks to the WL policy readers got to know new authors, while the data of the years 1990–2005 show that what prevailed was re-editions.

Till 2001, the published books embraced almost exclusively works of renowned Latin American writers. The exceptions were the novels by Isabel Allende (the first Polish translation of her book was published by “Muza” in 1996; it was *The House of the Spirits* [*La casa de los espíritus*], tr. Zbigniew Marcin Kowalewski) and novels by Laura Esquivel (her first novel translated into Polish was *Like Water for Chocolate* [*Como agua para chocolate*], tr. Komarnicka, PIW, 1993). Then new names started gradually appearing.

Within those fifteen years (1990–2005), there appeared works of eleven Latin American writers whose books had already been published in the period of the Polish People’s Republic. The biggest stars of the boom, both dead and living, prevailed on the market. As for the latter, both their latest and early works, known to Polish readers, were published. These writers were García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Cortázar. The editors also favoured Borges and Fuentes. Works of other writers were published sporadically. The astonishing fact is that neither Carpentier, whose works were published four times in the discussed period, nor Sábato (only one re-edition), found recognition with the editors although both were extremely popular in Poland during the boom. A detailed overview is presented in Tab. 4.

Only the Chilean writer Isabel Allende, whose works were published in Poland 25 times during the discussed period, can compete with the writers associated with the boom and boasting of the biggest number of editions. Some popularity was attributed to other writers: the Chilean winner of many prizes Luis Sepúlveda and the Mexican Laura Esquivel, who won fame by the aforementioned novel *Like Water for Chocolate*, which was published as a serial and then filmed successfully.

In the new century, editors have often taken bold decisions to promote new Latin American authors. Works of 22 unknown writers, apart from the ones mentioned above, have appeared in Poland. In most cases, only one work of a given

**Tab. 4:** Summary of the editions of authors who were known in Poland before 1990 (some books were published more than once) in 1990–2005.

No.	Writer	Number of editions
1.	Gabriel García Márquez	50
2.	Mario Vargas Llosa	40
3.	Julio Cortázar	20
4.	Jorge Luis Borges	17
5.	Carlos Fuentes	13
6.	Alejo Carpentier	4
7.	José Donoso	2
8.	José Lezama Lima	1
9.	Alfredo Bryce-Echenique	1
10.	Ernesto Sábato	1
11.	Manuel Puig	1
	<b>total</b>	<b>150</b>

writer has been published. Nowadays it is difficult to predict which writers will remain on the market for a longer time. The editors' strategy concerning Spanish American prose contradicts the general tendency on the Polish book market where one can observe a decrease in the publications of new titles from 2000; in 2003 and 2004, new editions constituted just over 50 % of the book production. Promoting an unknown writer takes on serious risk because Polish readers belong to the group of conservative recipients (Gołębiewski 2002:52). Detailed data are presented in the Tab. 6.

The following writers had single editions of their works translated into Polish: the Haitian Micheline Dusseck, the Mexicans – Guadalupe Loaza, Jorge Volpi, Pedro Guillermo Martínez and Ignacio Padilla, the Cubans – Jesús Díaz, Juan Gutiérrez, Reinaldo Arenas, Eliseo Alberto, Mayra Montero and Ena Lucía Portela, the Argentinians Pedro Mairal and Carlos María Domínguez, the Chilean Francisco Coloane, the Columbians Santiago Gamboa and Alvaro Mutís as well as the Bolivian Manfredo Kempf Suarez. One can easily gain the impression that this list of names is fairly accidental. The policy of re-editing the prose of the writers of the older generation and of publishing their new works seemed obvious, and the editors and readers' preferences were stable, but one cannot see any evident strategy concerning the new names. The strategy probably aimed at sounding out the market. However, it is worth noting that there were many Polish translations of Latin American female writers, which was a novelty since during the boom and just after it the works of male writers prevailed.

Tab. 5: The number of editions of Spanish American prose published by particular companies in 1990–2005.

Publisher year	WL	PIW	Czytelnik	Muza	Rebis	Noir sur Blanc	Prószynski i S-ka	Zysk i S-ka	De Agostini	Altaya Świat Książki, Libros (Bertelsmann)	Mediasat	other	total
1990													
1991		2											2
1992	1	2											3
1993	2			4	1					1		1	9
1994			1	5	1								7
1995				10	1								11
1996				8	1								9
1997			1	7	2					1		1	12
1998	1			6	5		1			1		1	15
1999				9		1	5						15
2000				11			1			1		1	14
2001	1			14	1		1	2	2	1		1	23
2002				11	3	3		5	2	3		2	29
2003				10	2	3	3	2		1		0	21
2004				11	1	1	1	2		6		3	27
2005				9		1				3		6	19
<b>total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>216</b>



**Tab. 6:** Summary of the editions of writers who were unknown in Poland before 1990 (some books appeared more than once in this period) published in 1990–2005.

No.	Writer	Number of editions
1.	Isabel Allende	26
2.	Luis Sepúlveda	6
3.	Laura Esquivel	4
4.	Antonio Skármeta	2
5.	Zoé Valdés	2
6.	Federico Andahazi	3
7.	Marcela Serrano	2
8.	Carmen de Posadas	2
9.	Tomás Eloy Martínez	2
10.	others with one edition	17
	<b>total:</b>	<b>66</b>

Which publishing strategies concerning Spanish American prose are being realised nowadays? In 2003, there were 18,000 registered book publishers in Poland, out of them 2,500 were active, i.e. published at least two books a year (Gołębiewski 2003:19). Naturally, not all of them publish fiction, for some publishers, literature is on the margin of their activities. Only a small number of them – 27 had at least one title of Spanish American prose in their offer, the reason being that this literature was not in focus of the given publisher or they feared the risk of promoting a new name. Publishing works of renowned Latin American authors is unfeasible for most publishers since the most important editors of literary translations have most frequently ensured that they have exclusive copyrights for the acclaimed writers' works, purchasing the copyrights in advance. Such a foresighted policy was adopted by the Warsaw-based publishing company "Muza," which published 117 editions of Spanish American prose in 1993–2005 and which was an absolute leader on the Polish market. Their re-introduction of Latin American writers has turned out to be one of their greatest successes.

### 9.1 "Muza" Publishing House

"Muza" (a joint stock company) has been active on the publishing market since 1991. In 1991–2006, it published 3,627 titles, including 2,216 first editions, with a total of over 20 million copies.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.muza.com.pl/?page=wydawnictwo>; access 20.10.2009.

The Board of “Muza” decided to build a positive image of the company by publishing fiction. It managed to persuade a group of specialists in literature and book market experts to join its Programme Council. They included Andrzej Wasilewski (director of PIW in the 1970s and 1980s), Andrzej Drawicz (translator and specialist in Russian literature), Jerzy Lisowski (specialist in French literature and editor-in-chief of the monthly “Twórczość”), Krystyna Goldbergowa (specialist in reportage, working for many years in the “Iskra” Publishing House and then in PIW, editor of the series “Naokoło Świata”), Carlos Marrodán Casas (translator and specialist in Latin American literature), Maciej Sadowski (graphic designer, author of book covers for “Muza”).<sup>97</sup> With time fiction became one of the most essential parts of the publisher’s production, and in the first decade of the 21st century, was over one third of its offer.

“Muza” has consistently carried out its policy of purchasing copyrights of the most eminent contemporary writers. Although it reduced its production of books to 40 % at the turn of the century, it decided to have a 100 % increase in purchasing copyrights (Gołębiewski 2002:186).

“Muza” has placed Spanish American prose in various series. In 1993, it released two series dedicated to contemporary prose: “Biblioteka Bestsellerów” [Library of Bestsellers] and “Galeria” [Gallery], and in 1995 – “Vademecum Interesującej Prozy” [Vademecum of Interesting Prose]. These three cycles included Spanish American works, which constituted 29 out of 112 titles of “Biblioteka Bestsellerów” (i.e. almost 26 %), the standard series of this publisher in 1993–2004, being one of the most valuable cycles of fiction. The series embraced works of such authors as Irvin Shaw, Mikhail Bulgakov, Herbert George Wells, John Steinbeck, Stefan Zweig, Ernest Hemingway, Charles Dickens, Simone de Beauvoir and Alberto Moravia. The title of the series may be misleading since it did not include “fashionable” books, sold in record number of copies for a relatively short time and then quickly forgotten, which is usually associated with the term “bestseller,” but works that can be counted to the 19th and 20th century classics.

In the first year of the series, four titles of Spanish American prose appeared: *The Aleph and Other Stories* (*El Aleph. Ficciones*) by Borges, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by García Márquez, *A Manual for Manuel* by Cortázar, *In Praise of the Stepmother* (*El elogio de la madrastra*) by Vargas Llosa. In the next year (1994): *Explosion in a Cathedral* by Carpentier, *Hopscotch* and *Completed Short Stories* by Cortázar, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (*El amor en los tiempos del cólera*) by García Márquez, *The Green House* by Vargas Llosa; in 1995: *Strange*

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97 Burzyński, Cichy 1997; [http://niniwa2.cba.pl/ksiazka\\_na\\_wolnosci.htm](http://niniwa2.cba.pl/ksiazka_na_wolnosci.htm), 15.11.2009.

*Pilgrims (Doce cuentos peregrinos)* and *In Evil Hour* as well as the re-editions of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* and *Love in the Time of Cholera* by García Márquez, and – the re-edition of *Hopscotch*; in 1996 – *The Lost Steps* by Carpentier, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*<sup>98</sup> and the re-edition of *Strange Pilgrims* by García Márquez as well as re-editions of his *Love in the Time of Cholera*, *A Manual for Manuel* and *Completed Short Stories* by Cortázar; in 1997 – *The Time of the Hero* by Vargas Llosa and *The Winners* by Cortázar; in 1998 – *The General in His Labyrinth (El general en su laberinto)* by García Márquez and *Conversation in the Cathedral* by Vargas Llosa; in 1999 – *Historias de cronopios y de famas (Cronopios and Famas)* by Cortázar and *The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto (Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto)* by Vargas Llosa; in 2000 – *The Kingdom of This World* by Carpentier and *Paradise* by Lezama Lima; in 2001 – re-editions of *The Winners* by Cortázar; in 2003 – the re-edition of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

This list is a good illustration of the policy of “Muza,” i.e., publishing both old and the latest books of the most popular authors and re-editing books that are most desired by readers within the same series. The editors of “Biblioteka Bestsellerów” were interested in six Latin American writers whose books were exploited until the market was saturated.

“Biblioteka Bestsellerów” was a series addressed to richer buyers. Books had hard cloth covers, with glossy coloured dust jackets. On the front cover, designed by Maciej Sadowski, there was a coloured photo beneath the name of the author and the title in the coloured background. The books did not have any forewords and afterwords, which should not be surprising: most authors were well known and their works did not need any recommendation. There was short information about the work on the left flap of the cover.

The other flap was obviously to fulfil a promotional function since it contained a photo of the next work to be published within the series. The editor placed information about the author as a short encyclopaedic entry on the back cover.<sup>99</sup>

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98 Czarzasty recalls how “Muza” managed to purchase the copyright of this novel, “I learnt quickly that one can publish not what you like but what you managed to gain. The selection of titles often depended not on brain storm, but work and accident. *The Autumn of the Patriarch* was published firstly since it was the only free title by Márquez. We had to wait two years to publish *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when the agreement between the agent and PIW expired. We queued for the copyright and phoned the agent every week. I do not know why PIW did not publish the book earlier.” (Baczyński, Cichy 1997, at [http://niniwa2.cba.pl/ksiazka\\_na\\_wolnosci.htm](http://niniwa2.cba.pl/ksiazka_na_wolnosci.htm), 15.11.2009.)

99 For example, “Mario Vargas Llosa (1936), a Peruvian writer, winner of many Spanish and Latin American prizes in literature (“Rómulo Gallegos,” “Miguel de Cervantes”

In 1993, “Muza” initiated another series called “Galeria.” Although the books of the series had brochure cover designs, they attracted attention by their coloured graphic layout.

The series included three books by Cortázar: *Hopscotch* (1998), two volumes of *Completed Short Stories* (1999) and *A Manual for Manuel* (2001), *Love in the Time of Cholera* by García Márquez and works by Isabel Allende: *The House of the Spirits* (1998, 2005), *Paula* (1998), *Of Love and Shadows* (*De amor y de sombra*, 1999), *The Infinite Plan* (*El plan infinito*, 1999), *Eva Luna* (2000), *The Stories of Eva Luna* (*Cuentos de Eva Luna*, 2000), *Daughter of Fortune* (*Hija de la fortuna*, 2005) and *Portrait in Sepia* (*Retrato en sepia*, 2005). “Galeria” included 14 volumes of Spanish American prose within 108 works published till 2005, which is almost 13 %. The books published in this series embraced: *The first forty-nine stories* by Hemingway (1998), Maria Puzo’s novels about the mafia (*The Godfather* published twice, in 1998 and 2000), *Out of Africa* by Karen Blixen (2000), *The Fencing Master* (*El maestro de esgrima*) by Arturo Pérez-Reverte (2003). Summaries of content and the main themes were placed on the covers.

In another series edited by “Muza” called “Vademecum Interesujących Prozy,” which appeared in 1995–1999 and included 39 works, there were ten Latin American titles, i.e. ¼ of the cycle. This series, like the former, included both re-editions of works known to Polish readers and several new editions. They were books written by five Hispanic authors: Isabel Allende, Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortázar, Alvaro Mutis and Manuel Puig.<sup>100</sup> Their books were published along with such novels as *Henry and June: from the unexpurgated diary of Anaïs Nin* by Anaïs Nin (1997), *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King* by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1996), the prose of Heinrich Böll, Iris Murdoch and Amos Oz. The series had hard, glossy covers without any dust jackets. On the fourth page of the cover, there were summaries of the books and laconic notes about the authors.

The data show that “Muza” included Latin American writers in different, concurrently issued series. Both authors and particular works were repeated. These

and “Premio Planeta”); author of great novels: *The Green House*, *Conversation in the Cathedral*, *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*.”

100 *The House of the Spirits* (1996) and *Eva Luna* (1997) by Allende, *Of Love and Other Demons* (*Del amor y otros demonios*, 1996), *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (1997), *Short Stories* (1998), *Leaf Storm* (1997) and *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* (1999) by García Márquez, 62. *Modelo para armar* (62: *A Model Kit*) by Cortázar (1999), *Ilona Comes with the Rain* (*Ilona llega con la lluvia*) by Mutis (1999) and *Kiss of the Spider Woman* by Puig (1999).

three cycles had a similar profile and embraced broadly understood contemporary prose of renowned writers. Thus they were addressed to those having similar interests but different material statuses. The most expensive books belonged to “Biblioteka Bestsellerów” for collectors of high level literature who could afford spending more than 40 zloty for a book. The “Galeria” series was cheaper; one could buy a book for ca. 20–30 zloty. The VIP series was between them.

In all of these three series, particular volumes were accompanied by short editors’ notes placed on the flaps or the back covers. The notes were not always clichéd summaries; many a time they were ambitious attempts to present the most important message of the given work. The note concerning *Love in the Time of Cholera* included the following, “differently from the other novels by Gabriel García Márquez, it is written with great tenderness, humour and compassion; it is his only work in which love is stronger than loneliness, fate and death.” According to the editor’s note, the power and uniqueness of Carpentier’s *The Lost Steps* was that “the contrast between modernity and life in complete wilderness, lyrical descriptions of landscapes inspiring us with the power of imagination, sentences that dazzles with extraordinary splendour, and above all, a journey in time transferring the reader to the ages before the creation of the world.” The editor of the information about *In Praise of the Stepmother* by Vargas Llosa shouted, “Horrible, amoral novel! Everything in the novel is deception – commencing from reproductions, used to realise goals that were not at all used to make the content more beautiful [...] to the scoffing tone of the author of *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*.”

These commentaries were repeated in various series, which testifies to the fact that the editor directed them to recipients with similar reading competences and similar tastes. For example, the edition of *Hopscotch* within “Biblioteka Bestsellerów” was accompanied by an identical note as in “Galeria.” At first, the special constructive principle of this novel: the author’s invitation to co-create the novel, was mentioned. Then the author of the note referred to the popularity of the book in the 1970s and encouraged contemporary readers to confront their experiences after reading the novel with those of the former readers, “Will contemporary readers be still able to communicate in Gliglish (glíglico)? Will they be moved to tears reading Maga’s letter to Rocamadour? In order to know that, you should pick up a copy of this novel.” A similar note accompanied the edition of Allende’s novel *Eva Luna* in “Galeria” and VIP. The note read:

*Eva Luna* is a story of a girl born on her mother’s deathbed. Before Eva finds real love, becomes a woman and popular writer, she will take us to her tale of the thousand and one night, in which reality is mixed with the miraculous, love triumphs over hatred, the joy of life conquers misery and humility.

We get to know the fate of Eva as well as her extraordinary mother, minder, closest friends, prostitute with a soft heart, transvestite with an artist' soul; we follow the fates of men she met in her life – Arab merchant and a boy from an Austrian town, leader of a group of street urchins, and then of partizans fighting against the junta as well as fates of numerous extraordinary figures. The genius of the novel leads us from one adventure to another, plays tricks and leaves us in the conviction that his power is absolute: the impossible becomes the needy, the hopeless finds a happy end, the story reaches its end, but in fact does not end...

The largest-scale undertaking of “Muza” concerning Spanish American prose was to launch the series called “Salsa. Książki dla Muzykalnych” [Salsa. Books for the Musical]. It was dedicated to Hispanic literature; so it included works from Latin America and Spain.

“Salsa” appeared in 2003–2009 and had 54 titles.<sup>101</sup> Thus the editor did not repeat any book within this cycle. Out of 54 books over half (30) belonged to Spanish American prose.

The editors of “Salsa” carried out a strategy that was similar to the one implemented in the other series. On the one hand, new books were included, their authors being completely or almost unknown in Poland, for example the Portorican Mayra Montero or the Spanish Marina Mayoral, or being popular and thus requiring no recommendation. Consequently, within “Salsa” there were the re-editions of *Love in the Time of Cholera* by García Márquez, published for the first time in 1996 in the VIP series, *Strange Pilgrims* by the same author (the first Polish edition in “Biblioteka Bestsellerów,” 1995) and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the novel that was included in almost every series of “Muza” dedicated to contemporary literature. *Hopscotch, Completed Short Stories* and *Last Round (Último round)* by Cortázar and several books by Allende were re-edited. The first Polish edition of *The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto* by Vargas Llosa (2004) was added to “Salsa.” In recent years, “Muza” made available to Polish readers the following works of some unknown Latin American writers who were not associated with the boom: the Columbian Fernando Vallejo (*Los días azules*, 2006; *Our Lady of the Assassins – La Virgen de los sicarios*, 2007, *Mi hermano el alcalde*, 2007, tr. M. Szafrńska-Brandt), the Chilean Roberto Bolaño (*By Night in Chile – Nocturno de Chile*, 2006, tr. Anna Topczewska, *Distant Star – Estrella distante*, tr. Marrodán Casas, 2006, *Monsieur Pain*, 2007, tr. Topczewska) and the

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101 Data from the main catalogue of the National Library ([http://alpha.bn.org.pl/search~S4\\*pol?/tsalsa/tsalsa/1%2C3%2C48%2CB/exact&FF=tsalsa&1%2C46%2C](http://alpha.bn.org.pl/search~S4*pol?/tsalsa/tsalsa/1%2C3%2C48%2CB/exact&FF=tsalsa&1%2C46%2C)) and the information from the webpage of “Muza” (<http://www.muzaklub.com/index.php?k31,literatura-piekna-salsa,12.11.2009>).

Cuban Eliseo Alberto (*Caracol Beach*, 2001, *La fábula de José*, 2003, both translated by Maciej Ziętara, *Esther en alguna parte*, 2006, tr. Bogumiła Wyrzykowska, *Eternidad por fin comienza un lunes*, 2008, tr. Jaroszuk).

The covers of the books published within “Salsa” clearly referred to the WL series called “Proza Iberoamerykańska.” The designer Maryna Wiśniewska had no scruples in copying the idea of the designer of the Kraków cycle: there was a distinctive motive in one coloured background referring to the Pre-Columbian art. The soft cover had flaps for the editor’s note. Although the backgrounds of the covers were brighter and the central motive was not necessarily black as in “Proza Iberoamerykańska,” the whole seemed to suggest that readers dealt with a continuation of that cult series. Yet, the editorial level and the quality of the paper used were far from the imposed minimalism of the Polish People’s Republic.

The editors of “Muza,” contrary to those of WL, gave up the didactical notes supporting the volumes of “Salsa,” the reason being that the knowledge about Latin America and contemporary Hispanic literature was much more commonly spread at the beginning of the new century than in the 1970s. Thus, there were no elaborated postscripts. The editor’s texts were placed on the flaps or the back covers. On the left flap, there was information about the author, features of his or her output, and there was a list of his or her most important works.<sup>102</sup> These notes were longer than the ones placed on the covers of “Biblioteka Bestsellerów.” The right flap, like in other series of “Muza,” was dedicated to promoting the series, i.e. mentioning its recent and future titles. On the fourth page of the cover, the editor gave a kind of summary that did not betray the puenta, but first of all described the unfolding of the plot in order to stimulate the reader’s curiosity. For example, we can read on the cover of *Distant Star* by Bolaño:

The book talks about a mysterious poet of the Chilean Nazi avant-garde. This self-thought erudite appears in poetry workshops at the university in Concepción some day

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102 For example, “Mario Vargas Llosa (born in 1936); a Peruvian writer, journalist, thinker, politician, specialist in Spanish literature. He has lived abroad for many years (Paris, London, Barcelona), published novels, critical essays, journalistic sketches and articles. His literary output is rooted in Latin American reality, saturated with political and social contents. It shows the world of power, corruption, violence, misery, religious passions and human emotions. Llosa has won many prestigious awards; he was nominated for the Nobel Prize. His most popular novels include: *The Green House*, *Conversation in the Cathedral*, *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*, *The Leaders*, *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, *The War of the End of the World* and *In Praise of the Stepmother*.”

in the early 1970s; his name is Ruiz-Tagle; he comes from nowhere and at once wins other poets' recognition and women's admiration. The author of the disturbing poems turns out to be an army pilot called Carlos Wieder, who writes Bible verses in the sky and celebrates death as an act of creation.

What followed was a number of terms positively evaluating the book: "novel like a bad dream from which one regretfully wakes up," "on the border of a high-quality detective story" or "is an extraordinary work." Moreover, referring to the acclaimed Latin American writers should evoke positive attitudes of the reader, "It is a work [...] one would wish to say 'magical,' proving the existence of other Latin American literary stars than Gabriel García Márquez or Julio Cortázar." We can read on the cover of Susana Fortes's novel *El amante albanés* that it has "a profound, timeless dimension." *Esther en alguna parte* by Albert Eliseo was, according to the editor's note, "a spectacle in the form of intelligent absurdity," a story "told with tenderness and humour, discussing very important matters: friendship, forgiveness, weakness." Those techniques were used to encourage people to buy books or only to read them.

## 9.2 Other publishing houses

The position of "Muza" in publishing Spanish American prose in Poland was overwhelming. The other publishers could offer from one to several titles. One of them was the Poznań-based Dom Wydawniczy Rebis ["Rebis" Publishing House], established in 1990. Initially, its founders focused on fiction, mainly on fantasy and horror. Then they gradually enlarged their offers and at the threshold of the 21st century, fiction constituted 50 % of their production (Gołębiewski 2002:224). Like other institutions, "Rebis" publishes prose in long series. In 1992, Jonathan Carrol's novel *A Child across the Sky* inaugurated a series called "Z Salamandrą" [With Salamander].<sup>103</sup> The cycle embracing translations of contemporary prose won popularity thanks to a thorough selection of titles and low prices. Compromising solutions were necessary: readers received very good and acclaimed prose, but printed as books with soft covers on low quality paper. The editor's text was placed on the fourth page of the cover, the text was usually in the form of a summary of the book and a short fragment (one sentence) of

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103 G.L. Kamiński writes in the middle of 2001, "So far, 128 first editions in 413 circulations have been published, the average circulation being ca. 19,000 copies. Over two million copies have been published." ([http://www.ksiazka.net.pl/?id=archiwum09&uid=485, 8.11.2009](http://www.ksiazka.net.pl/?id=archiwum09&uid=485,8.11.2009)). In 2006, the "Z Salamandrą" series had 240 titles printed in four million copies.



a favourable review from the renowned newspaper, e.g. *New York Times*. The catalogue of the National Library has 482 entries in the series from the years 1992–2009. Bestsellers were re-edited several times. Beside the works written by Faulkner, Golding, Remarque, Vonnegut, Oz, José Saramago and Salman Rushdi, there were seven novels by Vargas Llosa, including the re-editions of *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (1997), *The War of the End of the World (La guerra del fin del Mundo)*, 1998) and *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* (1996, 1998, 2002) as well as the first editions of *The Storyteller (El hablador)*, 1997, 1998), *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta (Historia de Mayta)*, 2001), *Who Killed Palomino Molero? (¿Quién mato a Palomino Molero?)*, 1995, 1998) and *Death in the Andes (Lituma en los Andes)*, 1998, 2000). The more prestigious series called “Mistrzowie Literatury” [Masters of Literature] published from 1995 included two new novels of the Peruvian writer: *The Feast of the Goat (La fiesta del Chivo)*, 2002, re-edited in 2003) and *The Way to Paradise (El Paraíso en la otra esquina)*, 2003, re-edited in 2004), both translated by Danuta Rycerz.

Out of Latin American writers “Rebis” published only Vargas Llosa’s works, while the Prószyński i S-ka Publishing House is the Polish editor of Borges’ books. The latter published *The Book of Sand* (1998, 1999, 2007), *Ficciones* (2003), *Universal History of Infamy* (1998, 1999, 2006) and *Doctor Brodie’s Report* (2006).

Looking at the publishers that were interested in Spanish American prose, we should turn our attention to Oficyna Literacka Noir sur Blanc [Noir sur Blanc Publishing House]. It publishes only fiction and has been probably conducting the most ambitious policy concerning this literature on the Polish market. It launches about 40 new titles per year, most of them being books that have not been translated into Polish before. It also re-edits from ten to fifteen books per year (Gołębiowski 2002:333). It publishes “provocative” authors: Henry Miller, Blaise Cendrars and Charles Bukowski. It has exclusive copyrights to Sławomir Mrożek’s prose.

Although “Noir sur Blanc” published only ten titles of Spanish American prose till 2005, their selection clearly showed the editors’ care for quality. The published books included five books by Luis Sepúlveda (*Diario de un killer sentimental*, *The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly*, both in 2002, tr. Maria Raczkiewicz, *Patagonia Express* 2003, tr. Adam Elbanowski, *Mundo del fin del mundo*, 2003, tr. Dorota Walasek-Elbanowska, *Desencuentros*, 2005, tr. D. and E. Elbanowscy), two intriguing books by the Cuban authoress Zoé Valdés (*I Gave You All I Had – Te di la vida entera*, 1999, tr. Ziętara, *Milagro en Miami* 2004, tr. Maria Raczkiewicz-Śledziewska), two by Francisco Coloane (the first one, 2003, contains short stories from three volumes: *Cabo de Horno*, *Cabo de Penas*, *Tierra del Fuego*, tr. Elbanowski and Joanna Skórnicka, as well as *El*

*camino de la ballena*, 2000, tr. Walasek-Elbanowska) and one by Bryce-Echenique (*Tarzan's Tonsillitis – La amigdalitis de Tarzán*, 2003, tr. Walasek-Elbanowska).

The Poznań-based company “Zysk i S-ka” publishes mainly fiction, which constitutes 75 % of its production. Contemporary prose appears in the “Kameleon” series [Cameleon], which amounts to 343 titles till 2005. The series included five out of six titles of Spanish American prose, published by “Zysk i S-ka”: *Like Water for Chocolate* by Esquivel (1999, tr. Komarnicka), *The Merciful Women (Las piadosas)*, 2001) and *El príncipe* (2004) by Federico Andahazi, and *Swift as Desire (Tan veloz como el deseo)* by Esquivel (2002) as well as *Dirty Havana Trilogy (Trilogía sucia de La Habana)* by Pedro Juan Gutiérrez (2004), all translated by Piotr Fornelski. Moreover, Zysk published *The Law of Love (La ley del amor)* by Esquivel (2003, tr. Maria Boryska).

In 2001–2003, over a dozen titles of Spanish American prose appeared within Bertelsmann Media, including “Libros” and “Świat Książki.” The latter stopped acting as a publishing house and concentrated on conducting reader’s clubs. It promotes more valuable literature than for example *Harlequin* or *Reader’s Digest*, trying to reach those who do not usually buy books (Gołębiewski 2002:108). Bertelsmann published translations of Fuentes’ works: *En esto creo*, 2003, *The Eagle’s Throne (La silla del águila)*, 2004, both tr. Wasitowa, *The Years with Laura Díaz (Los años con Laura Díaz)*, 2004, tr. Komarnicka, *Nuestra Señora de la Soledad* by Marcela Serrano, 2002, tr. Komarnicka, and within the “Arcydziała Literatary Światowej” series – *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (2004).

What testifies to the difficulty of acquiring copyrights to attractive Spanish American works in Poland at the threshold of the 21st century is the fact that “Amber,” an important publisher of fiction, boasting of the biggest number of bestsellers, published only one book from this region, *El vuelo de la reina* by the Argentine Tomas Eloy Martínez (2005, tr. Pindel). It was part of “Złota Seria,” promoted as “the library of good books” for lovers of interesting and valuable literature.

It is conspicuous that the most important editors of Spanish American literature in the period of the Polish People’s Republic, which contributed to the Polish boom, actually stopped publishing this literature. In 1990–2005, Wydawnictwo Literackie, PIW and Czytelnik published only a total of eleven titles!

In 1992, WL published outside its series Fuentes’ novel *The Old Gringo (Gringo viejo)*, tr. Danuta Rycerz. In the late 1990s, it decided to take a risky step launching the ambitious “Seria Literatary Iberyjskiej i Iberoamerykańskiej” [Series of Spanish and Latin American Literature], embracing both modern and old works. The editor’s obvious merit was to make available for Polish readers “false” *Don Quixote* by Alonso Fernández de Avellaneda (1997, tr. Fornelski).

Unfortunately, the cycle lasted only two years and had seven titles. There were works of Spanish American prose: two volumes of sketches by Octavio Paz (both in 1997, tr. Fornelski), and Fuentes' novel *Diana: The Goddess Who Hunts Alone* (*Diana o la cazadora solitaria*, 1998, tr. Krystyna Libura). Moreover, in 2001 the Kraków-based publishing house re-edited *Birthday* (*Cumpleaños*) by Fuentes, tr. Kaniowa.

In the early 1990s, PIW tried to continue the policy adopted before the transformations. In 1991, it published the juvenile novel *Final Exam* (*El examen*, tr. Chądzyńska) by Cortázar, unknown in Poland, and re-edited *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* and *Conversation in the Cathedral* by Vargas Llosa, in 1992. It also published a new novel of the author *The War of the End of the World* (tr. Marrodán Casas) and re-edition of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and in 1993, a new novel by Garcia Márquez *The General in His Labyrinth* (tr. Wasitowa). All of these books, with the exception of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, appeared in the “Współczesna Proza Światowa” series. Then PIW lost the copyrights to edit Latin American writers in favour of “Muza.”

In 1994, in its “Nike” series, the Czytelnik Publishing House published *The Hydra Head* (*La cabeza de la hidra*) by Fuentes (tr. Wasitowa), and three years later – *La consagración de la primavera* by Carpentier (tr. Carlson).

## 10 Summary

The picture of Spanish American literature on the Polish book market after World War II depended on non-literal factors – economic and political – to a large extent. The literature appeared in the publishers' plans and readers' awareness relatively late, later than in other non-Hispanic countries. In fact, it happened in the 1970s since the selection of works printed in the press and as non-serial publications in the first postwar decades produced a one-sided and rather unattractive picture of Spanish American literature – strongly ideologised, biased and communist. The period of the boom changed the vision radically. It turned out that the prose of this continent was miscellaneous. It did not only attract readers with its exotics and otherness but also dazzled with innovative formal solutions.

Literary agents exerted strong influence on the readers' way of perceiving this literature. The Warsaw-based publishing houses which were the first to edit Latin American books did their best to earn this literature a good reputation: high-quality prose withstanding the comparison with the best contemporary writers of Europe and the United States. They used similar strategies: inclusion of these works to the existing prestigious series. Thanks to Wydawnictwo Literackie, the literature of Latin America itself became a recognisable brand: in the period of

the boom, it was published in “Proza Iberoamerykańska,” while in the 21st century it was “Muza” that published it in its “Salsa” series.

After the boom, Spanish American prose did not disappear from Poland’s literary life. The 1980s and the early 1990s were difficult years for this literature, but everything seems to indicate that the difficulties were caused only by non-literary factors. Observing the policy of the biggest Polish editors of fiction allows me to state that the older books of some limited group of Latin American writers are regularly re-edited, whereas the new ones are published on an ongoing basis. In the period of the Third Polish Republic, the publication of Hispanic prose has become the domain of one publisher – the Warsaw-based “Muza.” However, other publishers see the economic potential of contemporary Hispanic Latin America, which is testified by their attempts to promote completely new names.

### 3 Spanish American prose evaluated by Polish critics

#### 1 Literary criticism vs. translation criticism

Critical texts dedicated to literary translations can be ascribed to two separate disciplines: literary criticism and translation criticism. The former deals with the current literary production and is characterised by the fact that it does not only describe works, but also “assumes a direct impact on the development of literature, the formation of new styles, actions and aesthetic ideals” (*STL*, 2008:264). Translation criticism, also commenting on contemporary works, very frequently refers to literary heritage since it deals with new translations of old works. Moreover, the natural context of the activities of translation criticism, which often compares different renderings, is a series of translation facts, the old and current ones (Balcerzan 1999:25).<sup>104</sup>

In studies concerning the Polish language and literature, reflections on the place and role of criticism among literary research have a long tradition. In classic textbooks, it was regarded as one of the three disciplines of literary studies, beside the theory of literature and the history of literature (Głowiński et al. 1962:5). Similarly, in the compendium of literature, Markiewicz (1980:12) distinguishes three fundamental divisions: historic knowledge of literature, theoretical knowledge of literature and meta-knowledge of literature. Currently, literature studies, along with the history of literature and the theory of literature, embrace methodology, while literary criticism can be included on the condition that it deals with contemporary literature (*STL* 2008:337).

Analysing the relations between the history of literature and literary criticism, and in particular, the usefulness of critical texts to historians of literature, Sławiński (1974c:15) enumerates five possible ways of their use:

1. as a testimony of reception at a certain time and environment;
2. as an expression of norms defining decisions taken by authors of works created in given social and historical circumstances;
3. as messages about the ideals of the literature desired by the literary audience of that place and time;

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<sup>104</sup> Ritz (1999:41) observes an interesting regularity: in Poland, translation critics chiefly deal with poetry, while it is usually linguists who examine translations of prose.

4. as information concerning the condition of literary life in the given epoch;
5. as elements of the timeless body of knowledge of literature.

Let us then discuss to which degree these aspects of the analysis of critical texts can become essential from the perspective of research on the reception of literary translations.

A literary work is firstly addressed to non-professional readers.<sup>105</sup> A critic is a reader, although a specific one since he has competences that other readers do not generally have. Furthermore, a critic has different – better – conditions to maintain contacts with literature.<sup>106</sup> This does not change the fact that critics' texts can be considered as characteristic of a certain group of receivers. Critics make comments on their behalf, verbalise and record convictions and evaluations which "ordinary" readers usually find no occasions to express. Critical texts used to be almost the only available – since produced in a written form – acts of receptions of works. So they can be treated as traces left by readers who are actually difficult to identify and describe (Wunberg 1986:257). For those who investigate receptions of translations, they are invaluable sources on the basis of which one can attempt to reconstruct readers' expectations towards concrete works or writers as well as critics' attitudes and their evaluations made from the perspective of the norm of the target culture.

At the same time, critical texts contain information about concrete expressions of literary life and its organisation in a given epoch, such as activities of publishing houses, the functioning of the book market, the existence of literary groups, readers' circles, etc. Critical texts themselves can be interpreted as testimonies to tendencies present in the literary life of some concrete place and time.

Critics are also advocates for writers, and one of their tasks is to inform readers about the assumptions of works, and authors' ideas. Thus, a critical message also "represents the space of broadcasting" (Sławiński 1974c:16). This role is especially important while discussing translations of foreign literature since translated works refer to the world of values and literary norms which readers know

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105 "Addressing it directly to criticism is hard to be regarded as typical, and thus decreased social circulation of works in a self-sufficient circle of producers and experts – as natural" (Handke 1977:96).

106 Płachecki (1982:172) stresses differences between the experience of an elite reading, being part of a professional critic, and the common experience of a reader, "You usually read one book at a time. In order to read many, you need time and money. Literally. Such a reading requires constant, professional contact with the literary production [...]."

to a smaller or bigger extent. Consequently, they can occur to be difficult and incomprehensible for them. Critics commenting on translated works not only explain the writers' intentions but also show readers the essential elements of foreign cultural systems that constitute the origins of works. Therefore, analyses of critical texts can contribute to reconstructing the state of knowledge about writers' cultural circles at a given moment in history.

On the other hand, it seems that from the perspective of research on reception, the dimension of critical texts, understood as a record of certain "aspirations, longings, wishes" (Sławiński 1974c:18) formulated for an ideal work and postulated by a given circle of receivers, is less interesting. Similarly, a researcher of reception will not deal with the timeless elements of these texts, being part of the objective, beyond-historical dimension, knowledge of some work, author, epoch, etc.

Numerous works have been dedicated to reflections on distinguishing the roles and tasks of literary scholars and critics.<sup>107</sup> Their places in the process of exploring and interpreting literature were recognised as complementary for many years. Scholars were to be characterised by scientific attitudes, while critics' activities were understood as being based on intuition to a greater extent. However, one should remember that the figurativeness and colloquialism that characterised the style of the older criticism might have resulted from the lack of a proper terminological apparatus (Głowiński 1984:76). Both attitudes were regarded as indispensable in order to explain all the senses of a literary work (Dutka 2000:6).

The 20th century introduced specialisations: on the one hand, we have historians of literature who enjoy prestige, and on the other, craftsmen who cultivate their professions and who "having dealt with literary issues, analyse particular works for ad hoc uses, rejecting any scientific preferences" (Dutka 2000:16).

Literary criticism can be seen as "an authority managing the growth and activation of literary tradition, [...] participating in the internal history of literature" (Płachecki 1982:167). One of its important tasks is to regulate the production, distribution and consumption of books. It also exerts an important influence on the type and course of contacts between receivers and literary works.

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107 These issues are widely discussed by Dutka in *Literatura – badacz i krytyk. Wybrane role partnerów interakcji poznawczej* [Literature – Scholar and Critic. Selected roles of partners of cognitive interactions], Wyższa Szkoła Pedagogiczna im. T. Kotarbińskiego, Zielona Góra 2000.

Critics belong to the literary public and as such are active participants in the process of literary communication. They enter the space between authors and readers as mediators, explaining new literary phenomena to the latter. They provide writers with specific feedback on how their works can be received and interpreted. Critics try to act bi-directionally:

They respond to the authors' lack of knowledge and uncertainty concerning the fate of their literary activities by providing their own understanding and evaluations of works. On the other hand, they juxtapose the readers' lack of knowledge and uncertainty with their explanations and evaluations of the authors' works (Sławiński 1974b:177).

Translations play a similar role in literary communication. However, their function is not only to enlarge readers' competence and make accessible works which they might not get to know because of a language barrier, but also to change their perceptive habits, widening their intellectual horizons and creating new paths for the local literature. Translation critics, like critics of literature, participate in these processes. They present literary forms to readers and explain the author's intentions. The difference between these two kinds of critics is that translation critics stand between receivers and translators, not between receivers and writers. They enter into polemic with translators and not with the authors of the originals. Writers are not the addressees of their texts as it happens with literary criticism. If translation critics address writers, they address local artists whose attention to new, unknown possibilities they might want to draw.

Dutka (2000:227–236) lists the following roles of contemporary critics of literature:

- witnesses of their epochs. Critics immediately recognise the meanings in a literary work which are essential at a given place and time, and thus their texts and potential polemics become important testimonies of the attitudes and views of a concrete period of time.
- “experts.” Critics co-create and organise the whole system of literary production. They justify their existence arguing that without having proper knowledge and an adequate terminological apparatus it is impossible to understand a literary work. Thus, they try to impose their ways of interpretation and visions of literature on other participants of literary communication. Consequently, critics, especially those who enjoy substantial authority, many a time define the horizon of non-professional readers' expectations (Handke 1977:98).
- participants of a “spectacle.” Co-players in a game “in which various artistic texts clash with one another, trying to impose their visions of the world on



the receivers” (Kowalewicz 1977:30). In a public spectacle, they behave as if they transmit readers’ opinions, following the similar principle as actors lending their voices to playwrights. However, it is a game of appearances since readers are not really able to influence to a considerable extent the evaluations expressed by critics.

- interpreters. They reveal and show hidden values and meanings of works just like those who perform dramas and musical pieces, revealing various nuances of works through their own innovative interpretations;
- stars. Contemporary literary critics tend to expose their own selves, setting aside the commented work and its author. What is more important is their specific way of analysis and interpretation that is transformed into a kind of self-promotion.

The roles of a translation critic in the great spectacle, which is literary communication, can be described in a similar way. Yet, there are essential differences between literary criticism, traditionally understood, and translation criticism. One of the most fundamental differences is that literary criticism is limited to the area of one culture – the local culture. Even if a work is a product of some foreign culture, literary critics usually evaluate it from the perspective of the norms of the local culture as if the work was an element of its system. On the other hand, translation criticism operates at the meeting point of “two cultures, two languages, two kinds of sensibility: collective and individual, as well as various forms of their expression” (Tokarz 1999:53). Any dissimilarity from the original is a constitutive feature of translation, hence one of the substantial characteristics of translation criticism should be to make readers aware of this difference, and consequently, to signal otherness, which is inevitably part of a literary text created in a different cultural circle (Balcerzan 1999:32). Translation criticism faces very high requirements: “it should investigate the texts of the original works and their translations considering their multilevel nature, polysystematic nature of their components, concentrating on reconstructing all of the senses of the original” (Bednarczyk 1999:76). Therefore, translation critics should know not only their own culture but also show the knowledge of the cultural conditions of the original text. In the case of critical texts analysing local literary works, one can assume the identity of the critic and reader’s competence based on one language and cultural heritage, but the knowledge of the translation critic is much broader than the knowledge of the reader who does not generally operate with a similar freedom in the space of two cultural systems (Balcerzan 1998d:151). Because of that, literary criticism is to a large extent subject to receivers’ control, while the probability of the verification of translation critics’ mistakes is relatively small.

Translation critics are interested in **two** texts: the source text and the target text.<sup>108</sup> They investigate what happens between them and how the process of translation is conducted and determined. Moreover, they often evaluate its final effects. Therefore, they deal with the process of translation and the product of the translator's work. Hence, Bednarczyk (1999:79) proposes a division into the model of descriptive criticism and model of evaluating criticism. In the first model, the critics' task is to investigate discrepancies between particular elements of texts and to present the influence of the changes introduced by the translator on the remaining factors of the target text and the meaning of the whole text. If critics assume the second model, their task is to evaluate the translator's decisions and choices as well as their final product.<sup>109</sup>

Evaluating is therefore part of both literary criticism and translation criticism. Yet, the object of evaluation is different. Literary criticism focuses on the work itself as the product of the writer's creative activity, while translation criticism evaluates the translator's work and its final result, seldom dealing with the quality of the original work.

Another important difference between the activities of literary critics and translation critics is that the local literary work is a single utterance: "the essence of a single original work is its uniqueness" (Balcerzan 1998b:17).<sup>110</sup> Translation is not the only reading of the given work, but only one of its possible readings. The same work can be translated many times; thus, literary translation is characterised by repetitiveness and existing in a series. Accordingly, translation critics usurp the right to correct translated texts and submit their own versions, which Balcerzan (1998a:34) calls "the corrective function." A similar action of interference cannot be undertaken in the case of the original work, which is treated as an integral whole, not subject to any corrections done by anyone from the outside.<sup>111</sup>

108 According to Soliński (1987:77), the fact that translation critics deal with at least two acts of communication, i.e. the original and its translation (there can be more elements in the case of a translation series) is a fundamental factor distinguishing between literary criticism and translation criticism.

109 Bednarczyk particularly appreciates the model of descriptive criticism, claiming that critics, not being obliged to formulate evaluative opinions, can ensure greater objectivity.

110 If there exist several author's versions of the same work, usually one is assumed to be canonical.

111 Balcerzan (1998a:35) writes, "Critics limit their role to interpreting and evaluating what there exists, [...] reserve for themselves the proud privilege of corrective inability in accordance with the principle: *I know that the translation is bad, but I do not have*

## 2 The review of the translated text

*STL* (2008:464) defines “a review” in a very general way: “an explanation of a literary text, theatrical spectacle, concert, exhibition, scientific work, etc., published in the press or through other mass media.” It is one of the most typical genres of literary criticism, but it assumes various forms depending on which medium it has been intended for. Book reviews published in cultural or literary periodicals are usually longer, linguistically and stylistically elaborated, but above all, written with specialist tools since as a rule their authors are experts in literature. Reviews placed in dailies and weeklies are shorter, marked with rush resulting from the quick mode of publication. If they were written in more comfortable conditions, they would assume more thorough forms. Yet, knowing about the pressure of time that does not allow longer reflections while writing, reviews can be juxtaposed with readers’ common practices and as such, they are valuable sources of research on reception (Płachecki 1982:173). Sławiński (1974b:173) does not hesitate to call journalists’ reviews “primitive critical messages,” which however does not discourage him from conducting detailed analyses of such texts written for dailies. In his opinion, such reviews should be placed at the lowest level of critical activities, and their prevailing function is advertising.<sup>112</sup>

Press reviews of translated literary works are written by critics who do not know the original works; most frequently, they do not know the language of the original. I do not intend to condemn this state of affairs since one cannot really require from reviewers who regularly collaborate with a certain periodical to know the original language of each book they analyse. Neither are they required to know the original works nor to compare them thoroughly with their

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*to know what to do to improve it.”* In his opinion, this state of affairs results only from social reasons, is a consequence of an unwritten communication pact that makes us regard a local literary work inviolable. Writers do not usually challenge others to compete with them since they consider their works as unique even if they see some drawbacks in them. On the other hand, many a time translators explicitly challenge other translators, both the professional or non-professional ones (Balcerzan 1998c:112).

112 However, the randomness of reviewers working for popular and daily press is not a rule, e.g. the editors of the popular afternoon paper *Echo Krakowa* published in the period of the Polish People’s Republic always cared for collaborating with experts in literature. The reviewers who regularly commented on new editions in this paper included Jerzy Pilch and Tadeusz Nyczek.

renderings; in the case of longer literary texts, such a procedure is simply impossible.<sup>113</sup> However, this inevitable situation causes definite consequences: translated texts are treated as if they were written in Polish.<sup>114</sup> Reviewers, publishing both in popular and specialist press, usually take it for granted that the originals were created in foreign languages and do not bother about the scale and range of translators' interferences. They assume that translations are perfectly transparent, blaming translators for every mistake and ascribing them every advantage even if their comments concern choices of concrete lexical units or grammatical structures.<sup>115</sup>

The state of affairs is not specifically Polish; it occurs all over the world. Obviously, the translator's task is to render in the target language what has been written in the original, and the effect of the translator's work seldom becomes the subject of critical reflections unless the rendering is offensively full of linguistic mistakes or clumsy wording. Blame should be put partly on the editors of literary periodicals since they do not make reviewers pay attention to the quality of translation (Christ 1982:18).

In the Polish reviews of Spanish American prose, one can hardly see the reviewers' awareness that they deal with renderings. If there is some commentary concerning the translator's work, its author openly admits not knowing the original version:

Cortázar's novellas have been translated very well, and it seems that the translator rendered faithfully not only all the surprises in the avant-garde structure of the novellas (since these are what you can always do), but also the melodic structure, the expressive waviness of Cortázar's prose. Naturally, I claim that only on the basis of my intuition,

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113 Reviewers of translations often face such requirements (see e.g. Christ 1982:21), which in my opinion are utopian.

114 "It is notoriously written about translations as non-translations," notes Balcerzan (1999:31).

115 Reviewers in other countries act in a similar way. Munday (1998:140) cites a fragment of a review concerning a translation of one of García Márquez's short stories, published in *The New York Review of Books*, whose author in detail analyses the style of the Columbian writer. This critic uses a quotation from the English version which he regards as a perfect exemplification of Márquez's way of narration. However, the quoted sentence is 50 % shorter than the long complex original sentence... Other critics follow a similar procedure: they stress the uniqueness of Márquez's style, using examples from the English translations. Munday's conclusions are as follows: in the background of English criticism what is analysed is not Márquez's style but what is regarded to be the "Márquezian" style. What is forgotten is that the target language and translator's idiolect are filters through which the original is out of necessity passed.

having no chance whatsoever to compare the translation with the original (about Chądzyńska's translation of Cortázar's *All Fires the Fire*).<sup>116</sup>

One can hardly avoid suspicions while dealing with such phrases as “dampen a handkerchief to the limits” [empapando el pañuelo a un punto increíble] or clauses “the seed of the fight was won from place to place” [Un conato de cinchada fue ganado de punta a punta] in the Polish translation. It is difficult to suppose that the Spanish idioms could be satisfied with literary renderings instead of having their Polish equivalents. Nevertheless, one can submit an objection to many passages even not knowing the original (about the rendering of Cortázar's *Cronopios and Famas*).<sup>117</sup>

Generally, critics showed whether a given translation was easy to read:

[...] the effort put in this work became completely undetectable (about Wojciechowska's translation of Carpentier's *The Lost Steps*).<sup>118</sup>

Zofia Chądzyńska's rendering is readable – which is proven best by the parts coloured with light humour placed not so much in the situation but in the words used there (about the translation of Cortázar's novel *62: A Model Kit*).<sup>119</sup>

The translation of Vargas Llosa's novel *The Green House*, done by Marródan, is defined as “efficient.”<sup>120</sup>

The quoted fragments show that reviewers, not knowing the original, highly valued transparent renderings in which the translators' work is unnoticeable, translations that do not surprise readers with any forms that they are not used to finding. In their opinions, the best renderings are those in which contents and meanings are transferred through the structures of the target language in such a way that readers do not have the impression that they are dealing with a text that has been written in a foreign language.<sup>121</sup> This is a kind of translation that Venuti calls “domesticated.”

This attitude of reviewers contributes to consolidating the effects of refraction, i.e. activity leading to “the adaptation of a work of literature to a different audience, with the intention of influencing the way in which that audience reads

116 Florczak, *Nowe Książki* 1969, no.11, p. 738.

117 Kwieciński, *Głos Robotniczy* 1973, no. 152, p. 5.

118 Jaremko-Pytowska, *Nowe Książki* 1964, no. 3, pp. 104–105.

119 Bukowska, *Kultura* 1974, no. 20, p. 3.

120 Karbowska, *Literatura* 1975, no. 30, p. 13.

121 Similarly, the English-speaking literary public appreciate a high degree of readability of a text and on its behalf readers are ready to sacrifice a series of values of the original, such as the individual style of the writer or the foreignness of the realities. For example, it can happen that in the renderings of Latin American prose into English the exotic fruit are changed into those that Americans eat daily (Maier 1990:20).

the work” (Lefevere 2000:226). This adaptation concerns mainly conscious, i.e. not resulting from insufficient language competence, changes introduced by translators to ensure that their translated works win readers. The primary goal is to adjust the original to readers’ needs and canons of the target culture. Since only in this modified form, the work can exist in a new context and truly influence a foreign literary culture.<sup>122</sup>

Refractions can also happen on the level of criticism when reviewers “reading a rendering as a non-rendering” anchor the image of the translated work for which the translator is responsible in the native culture. They base their own interpretations of the work on this version, constructing them, as a rule thoughtlessly, on refractions resulting from translation strategies. They themselves are responsible for creating refractions by forcing interpretations that contradict authors’ intentions but support the prevailing trends of the literary life of the native culture.<sup>123</sup>

Reviews of translated literary works reveal characteristics of both critical texts concerning native literature and translation criticism. According to Sławiński (1974b:175), various critical texts share indicators of four functions: cognitive-evaluative, postulative, operative and metacritical. They all occur simultaneously, but are not equivalent; their hierarchy and mutual relations can be different depending on the type of the critical utterance.

The **cognitive-evaluative** function is realised in a critical text through assessing a literary work and its author. It is carried out in such activities as

identifying the work in the background of some convention, assigning a given text to a literary genre, describing the rules of poetics used in the work, introducing an opposition between the work and tradition, interpreting a work by its authors’ biography, presenting a work as an equivalent of subconscious “complexes” of its author, reducing the content or shape of a work to concrete ideological or philosophical attitudes, interpreting a work (or literary output) by referring to the dynamics of social movements (Sławiński 1974b:186).

These activities are especially important while reviewing a foreign work that is defined by a different literary and cultural tradition. Receivers can find it difficult to discover the place of a rendering among other pieces of world literature,

122 “A work gains exposure and achieves influence mainly through misunderstandings and misconceptions,” claims Lefevere (2000:234).

123 Refractions are also revealed in activities aiming at creating literary hierarchies, e.g. making a list of set reading in school programmes or creating anthologies. It is from them that we learn which writer is “more important” or which of his works are most “typical.”

to discover its novelty or on the contrary – to discern how it is adjusted to the canons of the source literature. Reviewers should play the role of a guide for receivers, presenting the work and its author in the background of his or her native culture as well as explaining literary and non-literary factors influencing the form of the work.

The element of evaluation appears both in critical texts referring to native literature and in translation criticism. Evaluative activities conducted on a literary text aim at juxtaposing it with the system of values constituting a source of criteria that are necessary to issue judgements or to compare it with other works known to the receivers. In reviews concerning literary translations, critical reflections on a work as a product of a foreign cultural circle are undertaken from the perspective of norms and values that are prevailing in the critic's native culture.

A literary critic actively participates in the literary life of his place and time, co-creates them, trying to influence them by formulating postulates concerning the shape of literature. The addressees of the postulate are other participants of the process of literary communication – native artists. It is to them that a reviewer of a translated text can turn to show patterns created in a foreign cultural circle as factors that could potentially enrich the repertoires of native literature. This is the way the **postulative function** of literary criticism is realised.

The **operative function** is revealed when we see the critic as a member of the process of literary communication, joining the arrangement made by the writer, the work and its receiver. Critics dealing with native literature enters the space between the author and his or her work and between the work and its reader. On the other hand, translation critics enter between the translator, the translated text and its reader. In both cases, a critical utterance plays the role of a sieve in the communication channel that selects information intended for the receiver and passes it to the receiver. The critic makes this selection by choosing a work to be reviewed and suggesting its interpretation. Thus, the critic introduces the work into the social circle influencing the shape of literary life.

**Metacritical function** can be seen when a given utterance reveals self-thematic threads, i.e. commentaries or judgements concerning critical activities. At this point, we are dealing with criticism that describes itself, its methods, tasks as well as explains its attitude towards critical tradition and gets involved in a dispute with it. This function can be fulfilled both in texts referring to native literature and in translation criticism.

Realising the roles which a critical utterance can assume is a pre-condition for conducting analyses of reviews of literary translations from the perspective of research on reception. It allows us to distinguish various layers of meaning

in a given text, determine their hierarchy, separate the most essential elements and indicate the addressees. Yet, there is the question about the research procedure towards critical texts that refer to translations considering their number and variety. The interesting proposal of the description of a critical utterance presented by Głowiński (1984) can be applied to the analysis of a single, well-prepared text, but his proposal seems less useful in reference to reviews written under the pressure of time.

Both the quantitative and qualitative aspect is important in research on reception. Munday (2001:157) points to the possibility of synchronic analyses, i.e. considering reviews of one edition of a concrete work, and diachronic analyses, i.e. taking into account reviews of the literary output of a given author in a defined period of time or reviews published in a chosen periodical. He also signals the possibility of using certain elements of both attitudes, i.e. describing the review of a given work in the background of critical texts referring to the whole output of its author. At a later stage, after careful reading of the collected reviews, one should separate between those that repeat remarks and evaluations and those that are original, leading to deeper reflections. Thanks to that, one can show the prevailing critics' convictions about a given work or writer and separate texts that could be more intriguing, expressing individual critical evaluations and setting new interpretative trends.

### 3 Critics about Spanish American prose in 1945–1967

In the Polish press during the pre-boom period, there was not a significant number of critical texts dedicated to Spanish American prose, which was a direct consequence of the little interest of editors in that region. If some texts about authors from that continent appeared, they focused on the authors' political activities, which I have mentioned in the previous chapter. The authors' involvement in defending the ideals of socialism or communism was stressed. One could also read about the repressions that the authors many a time experienced because of their attitudes. Their artistic achievements were rarely mentioned, and when they were, the comments were of an ideological character.

One of the few reviews that was published in *Nowa Kultura*<sup>124</sup> during those times concerned the novel *Nueve lunas sobre Neuquén* by Enrique Amorim (1950). The critic, using the initials "bd," mentioned the participation of the Argentinian writer in the Intellectuals' Congress in Wrocław, ensuring the

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124 bd, *Nowa Kultura* 1951, no. 34, p. 11.



readers that “after his departure the writer spread the truth about the creative, peaceful efforts of the Polish nation on the other side of the world.” The critic indicated that the book “focused on the fight of Argentinian workers against the terror and violence of the reactionary government,” and using characteristic rhetoric of that time he added:

The novel takes place in 1944–46, when the Argentinian reaction, instigated by residents and agents of foreign fascism, suppressed all progressive movements by the cruellest methods in Argentina, persecuting the communist party with a particular severity [...]. Amorim illustratively depicts this system of suppression against the communist fighters used by the Argentinian authorities, and their steadfast attitudes [...].

The work was condemned for its lack of disapproval of the former and present politics of the United States:

It hardly ever mentions the North American materialism that endangers the Argentinian nation and all those nations that love peace by posing threats which are as concrete as those born by the European fascism.

Yet, the ideological rightness of the book did not make the reviewer miss its formal drawbacks. The critic singled out “a rather poor plot, certain textual lengthiness and sketchiness of the depiction of some figures and conflicts.”

The tone of critical texts changed considerably in the 1960s. It was related to the distinguishable changes of the publishing policy towards Spanish American prose. Consequently, Polish readers were able for the first time to get to know books that were gradually winning European markets. However, the ideological perspective did not disappear completely from the reviews. When PIW published the first Polish translation of Sábato’s work *The Tunnel* in 1963, there were opinions that one should get to know the author’s works first of all for his leftist views.<sup>125</sup>

The Polish critics’ reactions to this book were generally positive. The title of one of the reviews showed the work as an “Argentinian bestseller.” Krzysztof Mętrak defined this work as “an excellent study of psychopathy,”<sup>126</sup> while Henryk Bereza assured readers that:

Ernesto Sábato would have kept his place in world literature even if he had remained an author of this single small novel.<sup>127</sup>

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125 Chociłowski, *Trybuna Mazowiecka* 1963, no. 123, p. 4.

126 Mętrak, *Współczesność* 1963, no. 123, p. 4.

127 Bereza, *Nowe Książki* 1963, no. 16, pp. 807–809.

The similarities between the works of the Argentinian writer and the French existentialists, first of all Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, were shown.<sup>128</sup> Critics described the feelings of a contemporary man, stripped of any illusions, chasing some unreal "real love,"<sup>129</sup> love devoid of jealousy,<sup>130</sup> verging on madness, as the fundamental theme of *The Tunnel*.<sup>131</sup>

In 1967, Sábato's most important novel *On Heroes and Tombs* was published in Poland. Anna Tarska, who was charmed by the "magic of the exotic," did not hesitate to call the book a masterpiece.<sup>132</sup> Other reviews were also positive. The critic for *Odra* focused on the multi-level panorama of modern Argentina: visual, sociological, cultural and psychological strata.<sup>133</sup> Reviewers' attention was captured by the part of the novel entitled "*Report on the Blind*" (*Informe sobre ciegos*). Styczeń associated it with the prose of E. A. Poe, while Tomasz Burek described it as

a sarcastic, cynical, offensive, furious and extremely eloquent attack on the principle of common sense in social life, psychology and literature.<sup>134</sup>

The novel was mainly seen as a pre-discussion about contemporary literature and the realisation of the original Argentinian writer's concept of a literary work.

In the 1960s, there were several translations of Mexican literature in Poland. In *Trybuna Ludu*, Zofia Kwiecińska wrote an article that had a meaningful title "The heirs of Montezuma and Cortez," warning the readers that this prose

is very difficult for the Polish reader through its "otherness," its attitude towards the world and philosophy of life that are slightly exotic for us.<sup>135</sup>

Discussing the selection of Mexican short stories published by Iskry in 1965, both Kwiecińska and the reviewer for *Odgłosy*<sup>136</sup> saw the Mexican attitude towards death as different from the one of the European attitude: death appeared as "a living being who one can talk to as equals"<sup>137</sup> and which "is treated without any pathos and completely emotionless."<sup>138</sup> The specificity of Mexican literature

128 Chociłowski, *ibid.*, Mętrak, *ibid.*

129 Pestka, *Pomorze* 1963, no. 17, p. 4.

130 Chociłowski, *ibid.*

131 Bereza, *ibid.*

132 Tarska, *Echo Krakowa* 1967, no. 123, p. 4.

133 Styczeń, *Odra* 1967, no. 7/8, pp. 88–89.

134 Burek, *Twórczość* 1968, no. 1, pp. 102–111.

135 Kwiecińska, *Trybuna Ludu*, 1967, no. 116, p. 8.

136 B. M., *Odgłosy* 1965, no. 47, p. 7.

137 Kwiecińska, *ibid.*

138 B. M., *ibid.*

was to depend on showing the co-existence of two layers: everyday, real life and “magic circle of beliefs filled with gods and shadows of the dead.”<sup>139</sup>

The translations of Mexican prose published in Poland in the late 1960s, before the beginning of the boom, included the novel *Pedro Páramo* by Rulfo. Only a few critics noticed this edition, and their reviews stressed a sense of certain helplessness towards this new phenomenon in Polish literary culture. It was revealed in using generalisations that could refer to almost any book. For example, the reviewer for *Tygodnik Demokratyczny* regarded *Pedro Páramo* as an interesting novel that

mentions serious and most recent matters in a mature and profound way [...]. It is deeply humanistic, and showing the tragedy of an individual and society, it tells us a lot about the mechanism of interpersonal relationships.<sup>140</sup>

On the other hand, in a review published in *Nowe Książki* there was the term “magical realism,” which the author wrote in inverted commas. It was defined as a technique that will abolish the division between reality and unreality, possibility and impossibility, existence and non-existence, past and present, sleep and waking. For various forms of life and consciousness, the writer preserves the same forms of artistic expression, the same language, the same stylisation, the same range of vocabulary.<sup>141</sup> Helena Zaworska emphasised that the Indians depicted by Rulfo did not fit the stereotypes prevailing in literature and films, whereas they could seem familiar to those who read works on cultural anthropology by James George Frazer or Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Before the beginning of the boom, two important works by Carpentier: *The Lost Steps* (1963) and *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1967) were published in Poland. Both evoked vivid interests of the critics. The works were reviewed in specialist papers, such as *Nowe Książki* or *Miesięcznik Literacki* and in *Kierunki* and even in *Trybuna Ludu*. These books were discussed by the experts in Latin American culture and literature, for instance Zofia Jaremko-Pytowska and Jadwiga Karbowska, and eminent literary critics who did not specialise in this field, e.g. Marta Wyka, Zofia Starowieyska-Morstinowa and Artur Międzyrzeczki.

*The Lost Steps* was interpreted first of all as a 20th century prolongation of the Arcadian myth,<sup>142</sup> anti-civilisation myth whose essence was not an escape from the present but an attempt to return to the pre-beginnings of speech, emotions

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139 Ibid.

140 Rohoziński, *Tygodnik Demokratyczny* 1966, no. 48, p. 8.

141 Zaworska, *Nowe Książki*, 1966, no. 19, pp. 1182–1183.

142 Międzyrzeczki, *Świat* 1964, no. 16, pp. 12–13.

and art.<sup>143</sup> The critics saw a motif of the confrontation of two civilisational formations,<sup>144</sup> i.e. the clash between the hypocrisy and exhibitionism of contemporary culture and clear rules, and discretion, characterised by a style of life in accordance with the laws of nature.<sup>145</sup> The musical aspect of Carpentier's prose was also mentioned. The description was recognised as the major constitutive element of the composition of this novel.

*Explosion in a Cathedral* had two very detailed analyses. The author of one of them, Adam Klimowicz, stressed the attempt to revive the form of historical novel. The work was to be connected with the 19th century classic prose by its attempt to extend the limits of descriptive possibilities of prose and powerful epic constructions. The detailed reconstruction of the epoch did not prevent the writer from practising modern historical thinking revealed in:

directing attention and sensibility to the whole complexity of relationships between individuals and society, and the consequences for both parties.<sup>146</sup>

In turn, according to Marta Wyka, Carpentier's reflections on the individual being entangled in the collective adventure led to antitheses which resulted directly from the organisation of the material of the novel. This is the essence of literary baroque, i.e. a world in which contrast is a fundamental law of existence.<sup>147</sup> Both reviewers' attention was attracted to the main hero of the novel, Victor Hugues. According to Klimowicz, he was a typical figure, a revolutionist who having forgotten about his juvenile ideals assumed the attitude of cynicism and conformism. For Wyka, he was a schematic figure called to undermine the alleged conventionality of the novel.

In the case of Carpentier's works, there were attempts of ideological interpretations: according to Alicja Lisiecka, the escape from the present as the main motif of *The Lost Steps* should not mean withdrawal in time since it rather meant looking ahead, which, in the reviewer's opinion, could turn out to mean the support of the revolution. This followed Wiktor Sadkowski's demand to inscribe *Explosion in a Cathedral* in the context of the current events in Cuba because in this novel

one should seek explanations for the ideological conceptions of Carpentier who became one of the leading cultural activists of liberated, revolutionary Cuba.<sup>148</sup>

143 Lisiecka, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1964, no. 3, p. 6.

144 Jaremko-Pytowska, *Nowe Książki* 1964, no. 3, pp. 104–105.

145 Starowieyska-Morstinowa, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1963, no. 51/52, p. 9.

146 Klimowicz, *Nowe Książki* 1966, no. 18, pp. 114–115.

147 Wyka, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1966, no. 4, pp. 120–122.

148 Sadkowski, *Trybuna Ludu* 1966, no. 251, p. 5.

Moreover, Sadkowski drew attention to the informative layer of the novel that was important to the European reader who seldom had the occasion to come across the Caribbean history and culture.

The aforementioned reviews included threads that would be developed in critical texts concerning Spanish American prose created during the boom, such as the interpretation referring to the political context of the origin of the work, emphasising the exotic as well as anthropological and cognitive values, and referring to the mottoes of magical realism. However, one should stress that the reviews written before the boom were free from the tone of exaltation that was so characteristic of the later critical texts. The first Polish edition of Carpentier's novels drew attention of several reviewers who belonged to the elite of Polish literary criticism. They did not treat the novels as "a literature of special care" that should be analysed remembering the alleged cultural backwardness or "otherness" of South America. Despite the lack of any allowances, the works were highly praised. Yet, neither Wyka nor Międzyrzecki, nor Woźniakowski, nor Starowieyska-Morstinowa commented on Spanish American prose in the later period even though among the several hundred titles published in Poland there was a number of unquestionable masterpieces.

## 4 Critics about Spanish American prose during the boom (1968–1981)

### 4.1 Preliminary remarks

This section is dedicated only to critical texts discussing the translations of Spanish American works that had originated during the boom. The research material is very large, and hence there is a need to order it. I have decided to follow the thematic key because my aim is to reconstruct the picture of Spanish American literature included in these articles. A similar procedure was adopted by Meg H. Brown (1994) when she analysed the reviews of twelve books of Spanish American authors that appeared on the lists of bestsellers in *Spiegel/Buchreport* in 1981–1991.<sup>149</sup> Her work was a very important inspiration for me while planning my scholarly investigations and ordering the gathered material.

Reading the reviews allowed me to distinguish four fundamental thematic fields that characterised them. In the period of the boom, the critics did their best to realise the cognitive-evaluative function, i.e. present the writers and

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149 *The Reception of Spanish American Fiction in West Germany 1981–1991. A Study of Best Sellers*, Max Niemeyer Verlag Tübingen 1994.

origins of the discussed books as well as the place of Spanish American literature among other national literatures. Their attention was captured by the exoticism of this prose, in particular its form: using the technique of the so-called magical realism. The critics stressed the social and political aspects of the works. They often noticed the repeated reflections on the essence of Latin American identity.

Another subchapter has been devoted to the reception of Cortázar, i.e. the author who was most strongly associated with the boom in Poland and whose status in the Polish literary culture of the 1970s could not be compared with any other writer.

## 4.2 The corpus

The analysed corpus includes all kinds of critical-literary texts concerning Spanish American prose that were published in the Polish press in 1968–1981. Since the bibliographic sources are incomplete, it is difficult to define the exact number of the sources. Elbanowski (1980:296) estimates that in 1968–1978, there were over 350 sources, not indicating which sources he took into account (perhaps he based his calculations on his own collections?). I managed to compile about 300 articles, which is certainly not an exhaustive corpus, but fulfils the condition to be a representative one. Texts concerning Spanish American literature include repeated threads, motifs, interpretative attitudes, sometimes even formulations, which allowed me to assume that further analysing several dozen articles would not fundamentally influence my conclusions about the attitudes of Polish criticism towards this prose.

Three groups of texts can be distinguished: reviews of particular books, articles dedicated to the works of a concrete writer and more widespread publications concerning selected issues of Spanish American prose. My analysis of the contents of the periodicals confirms the reflections of Elbanowski (1980), the author of the only study that has reconstructed the picture of Spanish American prose in Polish literary criticism so far: during the boom, there did not appear many articles of a cross-sectional character; reviews were the prevailing forms. Some authors enjoyed the critics' keen interest. The most frequently reviewed works were those by Cortázar, Borges, Vargas Llosa, García Marquéz, Carpentier and Fuentes. It is not surprising because during the boom, their works were predominantly published in Poland. Most of their works had at least several reviews both in specialist periodicals (e.g. *Literatura*, *Nowe Książki*, *Miesięcznik Literacki* and *Twórczość*) and the so-called coloured ones directed to various receivers (*Czas*, *Dookoła Świata*, *Ita*, *Kobieta i Życie* and *Radar*), or even in the dailies (*Życie Warszawy*, *Echo Krakowa* and *Trybuna Ludu*). As for the less known writers, the

total number of published reviews was between one and five, and they appeared almost exclusively in magazines dedicated to literature. Considering that in 1968–1978 over a hundred titles of Spanish American prose were published in Poland and assuming the number of reviews given by Elbanowski, one can easily calculate that one book was reviewed on average 3.5 times.

Despite the extremely intensive activities of the critics, which could be seen in the press, only one book dedicated almost entirely to the literature and art of Latin America was published during the boom.<sup>150</sup> It was *Bunt i gwałt* [Revolt and Violence] by Samsel (1978), including essays and sketches as well as interviews with some writers (e.g. with Fuentes and Vargas Llosa).

Among the authors included in the corpus there are several experts in Latin American culture and literature, such as Karbowska, Kalicki, Komorowski and Kühn. For some of them, the texts were connected with their own experiences, many a time with their long-term stays in some country on this continent. There is also a quite big group that could not boast of any specialist education nor had occasions to live on the Green Continent, but being clearly fascinated with this literature, they more or less systematically wrote reviews of the translations published in Poland. These embraced Alojzy Pałasz, a theatre scholar and translator of Italian literature, the critics Andrzej Werner and Henryk Bereza, the writers Bohdan Czeszko and Krzysztof Rutkowski, and the anthropologist Leszek Kolankiewicz. This circle included only a few experts in Spanish literature, but one should remember that the first alumni of Spanish philology left the University of Warsaw in the mid-1970s and the Jagiellonian University – in the late 1970s, the remaining universities did not offer this study programme. The reviewers of Spanish American prose embraced Spanish scholars associated with the University of Warsaw: Grażyna Grudzińska, Elżbieta Skłodowska and Jerzy Mazur. All those critics carefully followed the Polish editors' proposals and quite regularly wrote commentaries for the press. Some of them, e.g. Komorowski, have continued these activities until today. The corpus also includes texts by critics who dealt with Spanish American prose only sporadically.

Hence the collected articles are necessarily very different. Some referred to outstanding works, other focused on decisively weaker books. Some seemed to be well-thought-out and thoroughly constructed, while some were evidently written in a hurry. There were texts written by eminent critics, whereas some texts were written by incompetent ones. However, all of them, regardless

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150 A few articles concern Spanish literature.

of their quality, constitute important testimonies of reception. All of them are connected as they describe the works or phenomena of Spanish American literature.

In the aforementioned article, Elbanowski (1980:300) opposed the “overall” approach towards the literatures of Latin America, claiming rightly that their cultural and national distinctiveness was thus blurred. It is hard not to agree with him when he shows that the features recognised as typical of Spanish American literature

comprise only a general model of the novel of the continent within which there are many variants, many different concretisations of the linguistic layer, many subject matters and ideas which determine the separateness of particular works.

Elbanowski used the same reasons to utter critical remarks about the attempts to reconstruct the picture of society in Spanish American prose as a homogeneous phenomenon. However, he himself acted similarly: in his article, he did not discuss separately texts concerning Argentinian, Mexican or other literature, but generally wrote about the picture of Spanish American literature in Polish literary criticism. Consequently, he validated this research procedure.<sup>151</sup> It was justified by the fact that in the late 1960s, the prose of Latin America was perceived in Poland in that way – as a certain whole with distinct characteristics. It does not mean that this was always the case: till 1963, *Rocznik Literacki* discussed the literatures of particular countries of the Green Continent separately. For instance, the 1963 volume includes separate entries dedicated to Argentinian and Cuban works, while the volume concerning 1965 had the article entitled “Iberian and Iberoamerican literatures.” The following volume had a similar content. Since 1967, the works of Latin American writers have been analysed under the common entry “Iberoamerican literatures,” which is further divided into particular national literatures; Spanish literature has been commented on separately. These cases illustrate well the change in perceiving Spanish American literature in Poland: firstly, as a collection of national literatures and then as a certain whole. The change could have been made under the influence of the prevailing trends in Western European criticism where a common label was given to the works of Latin American writers from the beginning of the boom (see Chapter I).

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<sup>151</sup> Scholars dealing with the reception of Latin American prose in other European countries have acted in a similar way. Malingret (2002) deals with the translations of Latin American prose into French. Brown (1994) describes the fate of Latin American works that were placed on the list of bestsellers on the market of West Germany.



### 4.3 Julio Cortázar

Julio Cortázar was a writer who was most strongly related to the Polish boom for Spanish American prose. The publication of *Hopscotch* in 1968 gave rise to this phenomenon, while the writer's death, according to some publicists, marked its symbolic end (Majcherek 1984:120). As already mentioned, the publication of *The Time of the Hero* by Vargas Llosa in 1963 is commonly regarded as the beginning of the boom in the Western countries. However, Donald L. Shaw (1981:99), referring only to literary criteria, considers *Hopscotch* as the first novel of the boom.

Cortázar's position in Poland was a feature that distinguished the Polish boom from the variants of this phenomenon in other European countries. Outside Poland, the lists of the works that were most frequently published in 1960–1979 began with *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by García Márquez. The next place in this ranking was occupied by *Mr. President* by Asturias, followed by books by Borges, Fuentes, Vargas Llosa and Manuel Scorza (Rymwid-Mickiewicz 1995:246). Neither *Hopscotch* nor any other works by Cortázar could be found on the European lists of bestsellers during the boom. For example, in West Germany, the translations of the Argentinian writer's books were published with a considerable delay: the first anthology of his short stories *Der Verfolger. Erzählungen (El perseguidor)* appeared in 1978, and *Hopscotch* – only in 1981, i.e. 18 years after the first edition of the original (Morales Saravia 2005:307).

The publication of the Polish rendering of *Hopscotch* was accidental to a certain extent. Chądzyńska came across this novel during her return trip on the ship from Argentina, which she had decided to leave definitively two years after her husband's death. She was so much fascinated with the book that she resolved to translate it although she had had no experience in this field. During her short stay in Paris, she managed to obtain the writer's telephone number and asked him to give permission for a translation into Polish. When Cortázar learnt that Chądzyńska had not dealt with translating he posed one condition: first to translate into Polish his collection of short stories *The Secret Weapons (Las armas secretas)*. She did not only fulfil his wish but also convinced the editors of PIW to publish both books of the writer who had not been known in Poland before.<sup>152</sup>

The publication of *The Secret Weapons* passed almost unnoticed by the literary public. The only comprehensive review was produced for *Nowe Książki* by Werner, who showed that the heroes of Cortázar's short stories obsessively

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152 One the basis of Chądzyńska's memoirs *Nie wszystko o moim życiu* [Not Everything about My Life] Łódź 2003.

desired to go beyond the boundaries of their existence, looking for some confirmation of their uniqueness in the world that they created themselves.<sup>153</sup> Yet, the success of the novel was unexpected. “The success of *Hopscotch* went far beyond my expectations” – recollected Chądzyńska.<sup>154</sup> Several thousand books were sold out quickly, and even today the copies of the first edition cannot be found in libraries – it is difficult to find out whether lovers of Cortázar’s prose did not return the borrowed copies or whether they were withdrawn from the library collection due to their destruction. *Hopscotch* was also noticed by critics. In 1969, some reviews of the novel appeared in periodicals of a literary (*Twórczość*, *Nowe Książki*) and cultural (*Życie i Myśl*) character, in the ephemeral student magazine *Orientacja*, and even in the daily *Echo Krakowa*.

Some reviews reveal the evidence of critics’ helplessness towards this pioneering work. “An ambitious and courageous work,” “a chronicle of an extraordinary spiritual adventure,” “a difficult and controversial book” – Grudzińska wrote about the novel employing generalisations.<sup>155</sup> Likewise, Michał Moszkowicz’s review did not contain any concrete elements and attempts of its evaluation although his title was accurate: “The reader is the hero of the novel.”<sup>156</sup> For a few critics, the novel signalled that its author exceeded the borders of normality in a popular sense of the term, which was expressed in the titles: “Cortázar’s madness”<sup>157</sup> or “The deck of cards in the madman’s hand.”<sup>158</sup> In order to bring the literary work closer to Polish readers, work that was so different from the literature they had encountered, the critics attempted to place it in some familiar context. Consequently, they called *Hopscotch* “a true anti-novel.”<sup>159</sup> Some reviewer for *Twórczość* who was clearly fascinated by the book analysed the narrative techniques used in the work and discussed their functions. He stressed the motif of game which obsessively appeared in the book. He focused on the specific, sometimes coloured with malice, sense of Cortázar’s humour, which caused that all declarations, messages and ideals were taken in ironic brackets.<sup>160</sup> Only the critic for *Życie i Myśl*<sup>161</sup> did not fall under the spell of the novel, claiming that

153 Werner, *Nowe Książki* 1967, no. 18, pp. 1097–1099.

154 “Magie i realizmy. Dyskusja o przekładach.” *Literatura* 1976, no. 4, p. 4.

155 Grudzińska, *Nowe Książki* 1972, no. 1969, pp. 736–737.

156 Moszkowicz, *Orientacja* 1969, XI, p. 52.

157 Tarska, *Echo Krakowa* 1969, no. 33, p. 4.

158 Werner, *Twórczość* 1969, no. 6, pp. 109–117.

159 Werner, *ibid.*, p. 117, Tarska, *ibid.*

160 Werner, *ibid.*

161 Kulwieć, *Życie i Myśl* 1969, no. 3, pp. 76–80.

*Hopscotch* had committed the sin of knowing everything, writing about nothing, false originality revealed in the double numbering of pages, apparent philosophical depth, and he summed up, “Julio Cortázar is an ‘alchemist’ of literature who seems to think that gold can be made from ordinary sand.”<sup>162</sup>

Today a question can be posed: what made *Hopscotch* a sparkle that created a fashion for Latin American prose in Poland? From the perspective of time, the novel does not have any features that were commonly recognised as typical of Spanish American literature. Its plot is not located in some exotic scenery; it contains neither phenomena that are contrary to rational cognition nor politics that interferes brutally in the heroes’ private lives, nor the cruelty of naturalistic descriptions. The protagonists of the first part of the novel live in Paris and, besides the main lovers, they are not even Hispanic. The background of the love affair between Horacio Oliveira and La Maga is the streets and corners of France’s capital, described in a suggestive style.

In the 1960s, the French culture was quite well known in Poland and highly appreciated thanks to the country’s partial openness to the Western world that happened after the “thaw” of 1956. Paris in the eyes of the Polish people living behind the Iron Curtain remained the unattainable, often idealised, capital of culture.

For many years, Paris was a city-myth for me, known from literature and stories of those who were lucky to live in it (generally before the war), but distant and unattainable

recollects Michał Głowiński.<sup>163</sup>

The French songs performed by Charles Aznavour, Yves Montand, Juliette Greco and Edith Piaf were very popular. If feasible, since foreign films were shown in Poland a few years after their premieres, the development of the French cinematography was followed by Polish audiences. The movies of the classics and masters of the New Wave, François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol and Eric Rohmer, were highly evaluated by the critics and were enthusiastically received by the audience. “Two masterpieces” – was the evaluation of “Purple Noon” directed by René Clément and “Breathless” by Godard written by August Grodzicki, who saw them in France several years before the Polish premiere.<sup>164</sup>

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162 Kulwieć, *ibid.*, p. 79.

163 “Francja: trochę wspomnień i refleksji,” in: Głowiński M., *Skrzydła i pięta* [Wings and the Heel], Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2004, pp. 219–230.

164 Grodzicki, *Film* 1960, no. 20, pp. 12–13, at <http://www.filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php/rec/2749/0/1960-1970,2.03.2009>.

Directly after the thaw that caused among other things a radical retreat from social realism, one could observe “a rapid increase in the number of translations of French novels” (Skibińska 2008:94). Taking into account the total number of translations, at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, literary renderings from French occupied the third position after translations from English and Russian. Beside classic works, there were contemporary books, whereas political criteria stopped being decisive in the selection of texts to be translated: names of the party members and followers of the French Communist Party disappeared from the editors’ plans (Skibińska 2008:99). The published books included works by Alain Robbe-Grillet, Nathalie Sarraute, Marguerite Duras, Michel Butor, Marguerite Yourcenar and the representatives of existentialism: Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. The influence of the last writers was stressed by Głowiński:

[...] they achieved great success with the Polish literary audience [...]. Their works were read with burning cheeks; they were something more than literature; their novels, essays and dramas answered the present questions of the Polish intelligentsia. They have directly influenced the attitudes and ways of thinking [...]. One could say that during the mid-1950s and early 1960s, existentialism became a common worldview with a colossal range of impact in Poland. It had a profound meaning for the intellectual biography of the generation to which I belong and for my own biography, too. One could be a *sans le savoir* existentialist since one could be at the same time a Catholic or a Marxist, a follower of Neo-Positivism in scientific research or an enthusiast of any other doctrine. Existentialism [...] was revealed not only in clothes (preference for black turtle-necks<sup>165</sup>) and also in listening to the songs of Juliette Greco on the radio. One spoke Sartre and Camus to some extent. It was them who defined our mental horizon.<sup>166</sup>

France was known to Poles through the works of her culture:

We drove our little Fiat to Paris which we knew from the films of René Clair and which fascinated us – streets, cafes, underground stations; all of them had the same names as in films and books; they looked the same  
– Wojciech Albiński spoke about his first journey to the West.<sup>167</sup>

Full of formal experiments, *Hopscotch* brought new tricks for Polish readers. At the same time, the mood of the Parisian part of the novel resembled the mood of

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165 “The existentialists’ black turtle-necks” appeared also in the stories about their youth told by my parents and their friends.

166 Głowiński, op. cit., pp. 220–221.

167 “Proszę powiedzieć, gdzie leżą zwłoki,” Katarzyna Bielasińska talks to Wojciech Albiński, *Duży Format*, 24.11.2008.

some French films and novels of the 1960s. La Maga walked along the streets that were known from the pictures created by the New Wave. The impression of otherness evoked by pioneering techniques was to some extent neutralised by the fact that the plot took place in a scenery that was close to Polish readers. Thus, *Hopscotch* fulfilled their expectations concerning a novel about Paris – a mythical city. As for its form, the novel constituted a complete novelty: its open invitation to readers to co-create a book was something that certainly went beyond the horizon of the Polish receivers' expectations in the late 1960s.

If we pose questions about the reasons for this surprising success of the novel of the Argentinian writer in our country, we can put forward a hypothesis that the knowledge and popularity of the French literature and films of those days made the reception of *Hopscotch* in Poland easier in some way. The mood created by Cortázar was close to the one which Polish receivers could get to know, for example, from the pages of the existentialists' works. Moreover, some Polish critics stressed the similarities between *Hopscotch* and Sartre's works.<sup>168</sup> Therefore, it seemed that Cortázar won popularity in Poland not because his prose could have appeared as exotic, but on the contrary, because it spoke about a reality that was known and – though allegedly – close to readers. The works by Carpentier and Sábato that had been published earlier did not manage to overcome the barrier of foreignness. These authors won popularity only when the boom triggered by the publication of *Hopscotch* continued, and the horizon of the readers' expectations was modified.

A decade later, in Polish literary culture, *Hopscotch* played a role that was similar to the role of the French existentialists' in the 1960s. In Janusz Majcherek's recollections,<sup>169</sup> the novel evoked emotions that resembled those referred to by Głowiński when he wrote about the influence of the works by Camus and Sartre:

One may say without making any mistake that Cortázar was a generation writer. Anyone whose youth, earlier or later, fell on the 1970s will certainly agree with me. I remember the mid-1970s, when the second edition of *Hopscotch* appeared; I began attending grammar school. One day my teacher of Polish, belonging to those teachers who tried to keep pace with all novelties, brought a thick, green book and confessed that she had begun reading it, and the book had turned out to be more difficult than *Ulysses*. The book had nothing in common with the classic majesty of *Ulysses*. It became a part of life, one could not part with it, people talked only about it and used its wording; it dominated our imagination completely.

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168 Tarska, op. cit., Kulwieć, op. cit.

169 Majcherek, *Dialog* 1984, no. 5, pp. 116–121.

During the boom in Poland, the following books by Cortázar were published: *The Secret Weapons* in 1967 (1959), *Hopscotch* in 1968 (1963), *All Fires the Fire* in 1969 (1966), *Collected Short Stories*<sup>170</sup> in 1973, *Cronopios and Famas* in 1973 (1962), *62: A Model Kit* in 1974 (1968), *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds (La vuelta al día en ochenta mundos)* in 1976, *The Winners* in 1976 (1961), *Octaedro* in 1977 (1974), *Last Round* in 1979 (1969), *Fantomas contra los vampiros multinacionales* in 1979, *A Manual for Manuel* in 1980 (1979) and *Alguien que anda por ahí* in 1981 (1977).<sup>171</sup>

An important event for the Polish reception of Cortázar was the publication of *Cronopios and Famas* (1973). All of the critics marvelled at the specific sense of humour with which the book was saturated. For some the book was first of all the author's escape to a spontaneous, uninterrupted game.<sup>172</sup> Others found serious tones in it: the review placed in *Nowe Książki* suggested that Cortázar's work should make readers aware of the sense of daily, routine activities that can turn out to be a source of metaphysical experiences.<sup>173</sup> Following this thought, Olędzka-Frybesowa juxtaposed *Cronopios and Famas* with paintings of the Dutch masters.<sup>174</sup> She also saw in it an opposition against the pragmatically-oriented morality. In her opinion, Cortázar's jokes masked the most important matters:

On the pretext of game, it hides experiences and evaluations, a universal (if not consciously expressed, it was even more honest) writer's creed.<sup>175</sup>

In extreme cases, reviewers found social criticism in the work of the Argentinian writer. Sadkowski called it a satire on the terrible townfolk.<sup>176</sup> The reviewer for *Trybuna Ludu* saw in the author of *Cronopios and Famas* a penetrating observer and critic of the social reality of his country.<sup>177</sup>

From the moment of the publication of *Cronopios and Famas*, most critics shared readers' enthusiasm. Reviews of his books were published in various

170 The Polish translation was based on the edition published in 1976, containing the short stories written in 1951–1969; their order was arranged by Cortázar himself.

171 The dates of the first original editions were given in brackets.

172 Sprusiński, *Perspektywy* 1973, no. 25, p. 29, Pałasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 37, p. 9, Kwieciński, *Głos Robotniczy* 1973, no. 152, p. 5.

173 Bugajski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 12, pp. 11–12.

174 Olędzka-Frybesowa, *Teksty* 1975, no. 3, pp. 102–115.

175 Olędzka-Frybesowa, *ibid.*, p. 109.

176 Sadkowski, *Nowa Szkoła* 1973, no. 9, pp. 60–61.

177 Tremer, *Trybuna Ludu*, 1973, no. 216, p. 6.

types of press, both in literary periodicals, such as *Literatura* and *Miesięcznik Literacki*, and social-political papers (*Polityka*, *Czas*, *Perspektywy*), coloured weeklies (*Radar*, *Razem*), dailies (*Trybuna Ludu*, *Głos Robotniczy*), and even sporadically, in specialist papers (*Nowy Medyk*, *Politechnik*). However, the tone and arguments put forward by reviewers most frequently repeated what had been said about *Hopscotch*. So they wrote that the topics of his writings were very diverse.<sup>178</sup> They regarded the attempts to cross the limits of reality and search for a world that human senses could not fathom as the main theme of his output.<sup>179</sup> The critics also focused on the formal aspect of his works, on his experimenting with novel techniques. The mastery of his writing technique was also stressed. Komorowski described Cortázar's work:<sup>180</sup>

it is enough to lock the hero in a hotel room and let him discover that in this room there is a locked drawer, the rest of the text will be written automatically.

The critics were impressed by Cortázar's multitude of narrative forms.<sup>181</sup> They all agreed that the writer expected readers' active attitudes, their readiness to co-create his literary works.<sup>182</sup>

Despite the fact that Cortázar's prose was already present in Poland, some critics found it difficult to interpret it. An example can be the review *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds*, published in *Poglądy*, in which the author used a series of citations from the book, but was unable to articulate his own opinion.<sup>183</sup> The review concerning the second edition of *Hopscotch* written by Maciej Zalewski was characterised by mumbling rhetoric. "He was terrified by the consequence of being more than less of a human being," the reviewer wrote about the main hero, adding that he could not forget "old keys-patterns," and "the key to reality is to look for some key to it."<sup>184</sup> Thus, one cannot be surprised reading Kühn's opinion that what was written about Cortázar was "with sense and without any sense, apart from accurate opinions and clichés" [...].<sup>185</sup>

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178 Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś* 1977, no. 14, p. 9, Pilch, *Echo Krakowa* 1979, no. 247, p. 4.

179 Bugajski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 2, pp. 11–12; Bukowska 1974, no. 20, p. 3; Wróblewski, *Dookoła Świata*, 1975, no. 13, p. 17.

180 Komorowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1977, no. 3, p. 129.

181 Kwiatkowski, *ibid.*

182 Henzel, *Sigma* 1973/74, no. 7, p. 25; Bugajski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1980, no. 12, pp. 137–138, Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 26, p. 16.

183 Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś* 1977, no. 14, p. 9.

184 Zalewski, *Nowy Wyrzaz* 1977, no. 1, pp. 83–88.

185 Kühn, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 24, p. 19.

The presence and meaning of erotic threads were stressed first of all in the reviews of *A Manual for Manuel*. Ewa Borkowska defined it as an erotic-moral blasphemy, being harmonised with the political rapacity of the writer.<sup>186</sup> For Skłodowska, it was an act of affirmation of an erotic desire, a manifest demanding freedom from all bonds of taboo.<sup>187</sup> It may seem surprising that most critics omitted the approval of terrorist activities that was clearly articulated in this novel. Those who discerned it looked for some kind of justification, following the maxim “the end justifies the means.” According to Ireneusz Felicjańczuk, the *guerrilla* contested a certain state of affairs in the name of permanent ethical values, while *A Manual for Manuel* “was to show that one should not identify ethics and law, approving tortures and murders in the name of temporary objectives.”<sup>188</sup> Only Borkowska wrote straightforwardly that interpreting terrorism as a noble utopia was risky.<sup>189</sup>

The most interesting critical texts concerned *Collected Short Stories*. Leszek Bugajski<sup>190</sup> and Adam Elbanowski<sup>191</sup> concluded that the non-chronological author’s order of the short stories was the key to interpret the book. The stories arranged in particular parts were connected by the fact that “another reality” was revealed in them in a different way, from a sense of being unable to go beyond the barrier of the rational works in “Ritos,” through blurring the border between reality and the world of imagination in “Juegos,” to experiencing “another” reality in “Pasajes.”

Summarising, the Polish critics concentrated on the formal features of Cortázar’s writing, the love stories and his attentiveness towards the existence of a world that could not be known through the senses and not accessible to the intellect. Generally, they omitted the political aspects of his prose and his clearly declared leftist views. Maria Bojarska, reviewing *Last Round*, put it straight that she was irritated by the intrusively given political message of the book.<sup>192</sup> Therefore, the reception of the Argentinian writer’s prose in Poland was completely different from the one in Latin America where Cortázar was seen as

186 Borkowska, *Czas* 1980, no. 30, p. 21.

187 Skłodowska, Borkowska.

188 Felicjańczuk, *Literatura* 1980, no. 21, p. 12.

189 Borkowska, *ibid.*

190 Bugajski, *Nowy Wyrzaz* 1977, no. 1, pp. 89–98.

191 Elbanowski, *Literatura na Świecie* 1975, no. 2, pp. 107–126.

192 Bojarska, *Nowe Książki* 1980, no. 2, pp. 79–80.



the author of one novel – *Hopscotch*, and above all, as a polemist and political activist.<sup>193</sup>

The reviews of Cortázar's books were full of positive, sometimes even enthusiastic, evaluations. The tone of some reviews showed exaltation to a great extent. The writer was described as “probably the greatest and surely most fashionable writer of Latin America,”<sup>194</sup> an outstanding author<sup>195</sup> and “a great Argentinian.”<sup>196</sup> The critics ensured readers that beside several other contemporary Latin American writers, Cortázar won a permanent place in the history of the 20th century literature.<sup>197</sup> His literary output was juxtaposed with the works of the greatest writers: Jean-Paul Sartre,<sup>198</sup> Franz Kafka,<sup>199</sup> Thomas Mann and Robert Musil.<sup>200</sup> He was praised for his successful formal experiments, ironical distance and original sense of humour. The critics concluded:

Cortázar's writing – to a great extent – is a sign and embodiment of the social transformations of the continent, the Hispanics' culture-creative power that is being awakened.<sup>201</sup>

Negative opinions were much smaller in number and generally concerned Cortázar's later works. Some reviewers regarded his novel *62: A Model Kit* as ectypal and epigonic. They showed that good scenes and ideas were found next to empty, specious moments that were psychologically improbable.<sup>202</sup> They accused the writer of producing artistic “ready-to wear clothes”:

Using the demand for Robbe-Grillet, Butors and Godards, like a skilful trader the author sold his book that was fashionably cut, attractively wrapped, not forgetting to advertise its “literary wall unit” properly.<sup>203</sup>

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193 Komorowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1980, no. 5, pp. 132–133. Komorowski reminded readers that *Last Round* was translated only into Polish and published in 40,000 copies, a circulation bigger than the Spanish original.

194 Bojarska, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 6, pp. 64–65.

195 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1987, no. 7/8, pp. 94–95.

196 Bauman, *Razem* 1977, no. 7, p. 33; Kraus, *Nowy Medyk* 1977, no. 5, p. 11.

197 Przygońska, *Merkuriusz* 1974, no. 1, p. 14.

198 Tarska, *Echo Krakowa* 1969, no. 33, p. 4.

199 Urbański, *Kultura* 1976, no. 41, p. 13; Umiński, *Kierunki* 1976, no. 50, p. 10.

200 Niecikowski, *Literatura na Świecie* 1973, no. 2, pp. 114–147.

201 Bauman, *ibid.*

202 Tremer, *Trybuna Ludu* 1974, no. 237, p. 8.

203 Pałasz, *Literatura* 1975, no. 21, p. 2.

They demanded to “revalue Cortázar,” seeing him as “typical fashionable writer who gives things invented by others in a perfectly made form.”<sup>204</sup> Without mincing his words, the reviewer for *Kultura* called *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds* a projection of a moral primitive. In his opinion, the author created pseudo-anthropology characterised by “all things at the service of illiteracy.”<sup>205</sup> Andrzej Hamerliński was irritated by the lack of indicators of cultural differences in Cortázar’s works. He thought that they could have been found in the writings of a novelist coming from any Western European country. He regarded Cortázar as an eminent but not pioneering writer.<sup>206</sup> Cortázar’s works did not convince Jerzy Pilch who called him “a secondary” author. In his review of *Last Round*, he showed that the model of total literature, combining different forms, styles and genres in one work, stopped proving to be right. Although the writer managed to show the chaos of reality, he did not meet the needs for clear values.<sup>207</sup>

As it can be seen, Cortázar’s works evoked extreme emotions. They made some reviewers fall into a state of probably excessive exaltation. It should be added, however, that the texts filled with negative evaluation were not free from emotions and malice. Reliable analyses of the Argentinian writer’s works, for example, the extensive article about *Hopscotch* written by Jerzy Niecikowski and published in *Literatura na Świecie*,<sup>208</sup> were exceptions.

#### 4.4 The ways of realising the cognitive-evaluative function in critical texts concerning Spanish American prose

##### 4.4.1 Critics as guides of culture

As I have mentioned in chapter two, in Poland the average level of knowledge about South America and its culture was low because of the lack of access to sources concerning this continent and because direct contacts with Latin America, not mentioning the administrative difficulties, required financial means that were beyond most Polish citizens’ capacities. The critics who tried to analyse books of Latin American writers in the late 1960s and the early 1970s were aware of that situation. They also knew that for Polish readers, Spanish American literature was a new phenomenon. Readers knew neither the names of contemporary writers nor representatives of the earlier generations. They were

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204 Gąsiorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1976, no. 19, pp. 10–11.

205 Wajs, *Kultura* 1977, no. 9, p. 5.

206 Hamerliński, *Książki dla Ciebie* 1972, no. 6, pp. 6–10.

207 Pilch, *Echo Krakowa* 1979, no. 247, p. 4.

208 Niecikowski, *Literatura na Świecie* 1973, no. 2, pp. 114–147.

not familiar with the schools, trends and literary traditions. They had almost no references to the culture developed by inhabitants of Latin America. One can assume that this continent was not associated with the so-called high culture. Its picture, preserved on the pages of the suggestive reportages of Arkady Fiedler, which was close for many Poles, depicted the Hispanics as friendly, but rather simple and naïve people, not to say primitive ones. “Latin American literature reveals the continent about which we know less than about the surface of the Moon,” wrote the reviewer for *Echo Krakowa*.<sup>209</sup>

Some critics noted that from the perspective of the Polish reader, the literature of Latin America carried some essential cognitive values. The reviewer for *Kultura* showed that the novel *Dead Houses* by Otero Silva presented a 30-year history of Venezuela, a country which Poles did not know at all.<sup>210</sup> In turn, the critics mentioning the values of the novel *Son of Man* by Roa Bastos wrote that it depicted the realities of Paraguay during Stroessner’s dictatorship.<sup>211</sup>

The critics who tried to discuss the works of Latin American writers in the Polish press faced the task of showing the new literary phenomenon and depicting the cultural background in which it developed. Most critics treated it seriously and tried to show the context of the origin of the Latin American works to Polish readers. A good example of that was the beginning of the review of the collection of short stories *The Man and the Rose (El hombre de la rosa)* by Manuel Rojas introducing the reader to the most important problems of the history of Latin America literature:

Regaining freedom by Latin American countries, independence from Spain or Portugal did not mean a complete break with the Iberian Peninsula. For many citizens of the new countries, the Iberian Peninsula was a spiritual homeland, as though – homeland of the whole continent. [...] When and how did the literature of particular Latin American countries stop being dependent on Spanish literature, when did Argentinian, Chilean and Columbian literature begin?<sup>212</sup>

Some reviewers thought it necessary to show the characteristics of the literature of a concrete country. Commenting on the edition of the first Polish translation of the novel by the Uruguayan Mario Benedetti, Komorowski explained:

The literature of Uruguay has been known in our country to a very small extent. [...] There have been many reasons for the lack of interest in this literary area. The first one

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209 Tarska, *Echo Krakowa* 1968, no. 229, p. 4.

210 Żórawski, *Kultura* 1970, no. 11 p. 9.

211 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 9, pp. 39–41.

212 Marrodán, *Nowe Książki* 1971, no. 23, pp. 1585–1586.

has undoubtedly been the limited character of the publishing market in this country. Because of that, the especially privileged form has always been short stories which being published in Sunday editions or in the known weekly *La Marcha* could reach a wider audience although the audience was limited to one country and to a single reception. Even such writers as Juan Carlos Onetti or Benedetti are above all authors of short stories. Another reason for the relatively low interest in Uruguayan literature is undoubtedly the fact that among Latin American countries Uruguay [...] has been a country where European literature and culture has had the deepest roots. Hence Uruguayan literature, completely not exotic for European readers, has not evoked such interests as Mexican or Argentinian literature.<sup>213</sup>

In some cases, the subject matter of a work required the reviewer to show the historical background of the depicted events. It was suggested by the titles of the reviews of the Mexican novels created in the first half of the 20th century, "Mexican post-revolution triptych,"<sup>214</sup> "In the cobs of the revolution,"<sup>215</sup> "Novel of the Mexican revolution."<sup>216</sup> The reviews referred to the facts that inspired the origin of these works, i.e. the revolution of 1910 and its results:

On the first days of February 1917, after seven years of fratricidal fights, one of the most progressive and democratic constitutions in the world was voted in Mexico. The previous constitution of 1857, placing the individual over the society, maintained the individualistic spirit, while in 1917, the scheme was reversed, placing the society over the individual. However, the collective spirit of this constitution was little beneficial for the Mexican nation.<sup>217</sup>

*Życie Literackie*, in order to fill the gaps in the Polish readers' knowledge about the Mexican revolution and its literary images, published a large article written by Joanna Petry entitled "A novel of the Mexican revolution."<sup>218</sup> The reviewers also focused on the meaning of the works for the culture of the whole of Latin America:

Reaching certain European patterns "the novel of the Mexican revolution" together with *gaucho* literature created in Argentina were the first symptoms of the cultural independence of the "green continent."<sup>219</sup>

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213 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1975, no. 1, pp. 22–23.

214 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 15, pp. 19–20.

215 Nyczek, *Echo Krakowa* 1973, no. 242, p. 4.

216 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 23, pp. 16–17.

217 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 15, p. 16.

218 Petry, *Życie Literackie* 1975, no. 39, p. 14.

219 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 23, pp. 16–17.

They also pointed to the literary trends related to these works. Reviewing *Ciro Alegria's* novel *Broad and Alien is the World* (*El mundo es ancho y ajeno*), Komorowski explained the characteristics of the trend called indigenism:

A way to get to know the specificity of the Latin American reality was a trend in the literature of those countries called “indigenismo,” which according to the ambiguity of the term itself caused us to turn attention to the Indian nature and tribal character.<sup>220</sup>

In turn, Ryszard Olczak described the intellectual background of the author of the reviewed book *The Invention of Morel* (*La invención de Morel*) by Bioy Casares:

[...] The Argentinian Adolfo Bioy Casares belongs to the literary group “Sur” the same as Borges – rejecting the trend of Argentinian literature that is socially involved [...] but it looks for the aesthetic, intellectual and metaphysical aspects.<sup>221</sup>

Sometimes the critics turned the reader’s attention to the circumstances of the origin of a given work, as in the case of the review of the famous *Legends of Guatemala* by the Nobel Prize winner Miguel Angel Asturias, whose author reminded the reader that the writer had become interested in the pre-Columbian past of his country during his stay in Paris, where in the library of the Sorbonne he came across the sacred books of the Indians: *Popol Vuh* and *Chilám Balám*.<sup>222</sup>

A quite common practice was to present a less or more detailed biography of a given writer and to list his most important books. Such detailed information about the author can be found in the review of *Paradiso* by Lezama Lima:

José Lezama Lima – a Cuban – was born in Havana in 1910 and died there in 1976. From his early childhood, he suffered from asthma, and his illness was one of the reasons why Lima hardly ever left Havana.<sup>223</sup>

This biography was written on more than two pages of *Nowe Książki*. Yet, biographical information included in reviews were usually more synthetic.<sup>224</sup> Only those literary periodicals that had more space for book discussions could publish large reviews containing more data about a given writer, his or her work and the

220 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1975, no. 8, pp. 25–26.

221 Olczak, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1975, no. 10, pp. 133–136.

222 Godlewski, *Literatura* 1980, no. 19, p. 12.

223 Bernat, *Nowe Książki* 1979, no. 23, p. 19.

224 See for example (P), *Kultura* 1979, no. 28, p. 4, Tarska *Echo Krakowa* 1976, no. 11, pp. 12–13, Mroziński, *Literatura* 1976, no. 2, p. 5.

context of its origin. At the same time, editors of such periodicals invited competent critics to collaborate with them.

Reviewers, knowing that they had deeper knowledge about Spanish American literature and culture than an average Polish reader, sometimes showed their superiority by demonstrating a conviction that the lack of knowledge about the origin of a given work and its background made it impossible for readers to understand it:

Since only the knowledge of the meanders and paradoxes of the spiritual and material culture of a nation, transmitted through an artistic synthesis, can allow us to have an authentic contact with the signs used by the literary structures,

Rodowska<sup>225</sup> concluded reviewing *Cantar de ciegos* by Fuentes, while another critic undersigned as “yo,” doubting the competences of Polish critics, cried out in *Twórczość*:

Can you at all write anything real about Argentinian literature not having read *Radiografía de la pampa* by E. Martínez Estrada or the collection of sketches *De Sarmiento a Cortázar* by D. Viñas?<sup>226</sup>

Komorowski expressed similar fears:

We still have an open question to which extent it is possible to interpret Borges without knowing *Martín Fierro*, Marquéz without *La Voragine*, Fuentes' novels without knowing Azuela or Guzmán.<sup>227</sup>

We can agree with the assumption that the history of Spanish American literature was not commonly known, but the fear that the lack of sufficient knowledge created barriers that Polish readers could not overcome seems exaggerated. Since we know that the universality of certain experiences and values causes that a literary work can be appreciated in a different context of its reception. Such an opinion seemed to be accepted by Komorowski several years later:

Latin American literature is for us so interesting first of all because it presents adventures of values that we can recognise as ours.<sup>228</sup>

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225 Rodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 12, p. 9.

226 yo, *Twórczość* 1977, no. 12, pp. 161–162.

227 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 23, p. 17.

228 Komorowski, *Życie Literackie* 1979 no. 37, p. 13.

#### 4.4.2 *The form*

The realisation of the cognitive-evaluative function in critical texts should also be revealed in attempts to ascribe a work to a concrete literary genre, to show it in the background of tradition and point to its pioneering elements. In other words, one of the critic's tasks is to look at a literary work from the formal aspect.

Reviewing Spanish American prose, critics focused on the construction of a given work as well as various means and techniques used in it. It seems that even those critics who had no specialist knowledge about Spanish American literature, admitted that they were able to analyse the texts in a more or less profoundly formal way. They must have assumed that the knowledge of the theoretical-literary apparatus was enough to describe any work, even one created in a distant cultural region.<sup>229</sup>

Looking at the numerous reviews of the boom, one can see the authors' uncertainty caused obviously by their encounters with this new literary phenomenon. Some critics confessed that they could not find any key to interpret a work.

Writing about *Son of Man* you follow the principle "I can manage – I cannot manage," as Witkacy used to say. Should we say openly that it is a masterpiece? Such an evaluation should be justified. And how can I justify it when I am still in the middle of the world created by the writer? Perhaps I can quote him? But which fragments? None is representative of the whole book. Thus, why should I write a review at all? Because the book is a masterpiece. Consequently, the circle is closed. But in the end, I may not manage...<sup>230</sup>

the reviewer for *Kultura* admitted frankly. Another reviewer for *Nowy Wyrz* confessed that she could not understand Borges' prose.<sup>231</sup> However, a more frequent practice to mask one's incompetence or fear of expressing one's own opinion was to hide oneself behind the authority of some undefined "criticism." For instance, Grudzińska wrote about *El apando* by José Revueltas that it was "commonly regarded as outstanding by literary criticism," not saying precisely whether she meant Latin American critics, Spanish critics or those of some other nationality.<sup>232</sup> In turn, in the review of *Holy Place* by Fuentes, the same author quoted many evaluations concerning this book published in the Mexican press. Her own opinion was placed at the end of the review and had only two sentences:

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229 In this context, I find it difficult to agree with Elbanowski (1980:306), claiming that the formal side of works is "as a rule completely omitted in reviews."

230 Rode, *Kultura* 1972, no. 23, p. 9.

231 Lubelska, *Nowy Wyrz*, 1973, no. 5, p. 147.

232 Grudzińska, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 23, p. 15.

In Poland, Latin American literature has its lovers fascinated with its specific mood as well as beauty and richness of the language. *Holy Place* is a book that has these attractive values although I would not recommend it to those for whom it would be the first contact with the literature of this continent.<sup>233</sup>

Another strategy to mask one's ignorance or fear of presenting one's own opinions was to use clichés that could appear in a review of almost any book. In the texts dedicated to the second edition of Sábato's *On Heroes and Tombs* (1977), we can read that it discusses the eternal problems of humanity: search for the truth, borders between good and evil, the question about the sense of life and the impossibility of reaching consent.<sup>234</sup> Some critics tried to find shelter by using a pseudo-scientific style, often balancing on the border or at the verge of being understood:

The irrationality of declaration and the randomness of identity and alliance [...] undermine individual aspirations, question the honesty of people's ambitions; only in their stoicism, they show the valuable vulnerability towards betrayal. A philosophy of abnegation? – no, rather the discursive reasons of force.<sup>235</sup>

Analysing the attitude of German critics towards Spanish American prose, Brown (1994:96) showed that they treated it as a kind of sub-genre having characteristics that could not be found in literature created in other parts of the world. Therefore, they stressed its specificity and uniqueness. It does not seem that the attitude of Polish criticism during the boom was similar. Polish reviewers looked for features that would be common with works of world literature in order to bring the prose of a new type closer to Polish readers and to refer it to some known literary context.

One of the strategies leading to this goal was to point to books or authors that were to some extent similar to the discussed work. At the same time, such a technique was of an ennobling character – juxtaposing with a renowned work suggested a good quality of the reviewed book. Being aware of what kinds of works entered the circulation of the Polish literary culture, reviewers referred to the readers' knowledge to help them place Spanish American works on the map of world literature. And so *The Fair* (*La feria*) by Juan José Arreola was called "Stendhal's mirror" although it aroused doubts whether, because of the unusual composition of the book, i.e., juxtaposing short monologues depicting the life of the society of the Mexican little town Zapotlán, it could be called a novel.<sup>236</sup> In

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233 Grudzińska, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 16, pp. 13–14.

234 Mól, *Wiadomości* 1977, no. 29, p. 15, Frontczak, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 23, pp. 18–19.

235 Lubelska, *Nowy Wyraz* 1973, no. 5, pp. 147–149.

236 Tarska, *Echo Krakowa* 1972, no. 289, p. 4.



Borges' works, they found features that were common with Joyce's writings.<sup>237</sup> In *Where the Air Is Clear* by Fuentes, they saw inspirations with the prose of Sartre and Faulkner,<sup>238</sup> while in *The Good Conscience* of that author, Komorowski found the influences of Benito Pérez Galdós and Honoré Balzac.<sup>239</sup> Onetti's *The Shipyard (El astillero)* reminded some reviewers of Kafka's novels,<sup>240</sup> whereas others – *Death in Venice* by Thomas Mann.<sup>241</sup> The writing of García Márquez was interpreted as a literary polemic with Faulkner<sup>242</sup> although Komorowski regarded any similarities with this writer as overestimated.<sup>243</sup> In turn, the tragic grotesqueness of the situations of García Márquez's heroes was to, in Leszek Żuliński's opinion, come from Kafka's prose, and the irrationalism, full of fantasy, fulfilled a similar function as in the works of Mikhail Bulgakov.<sup>244</sup> Kühn perversely called *The Obscene Bird of Night* by Donoso as

an extraordinary novel that makes the impression that as if some Balzac or another demon for realism wrote it after having taken a dose of LSD.<sup>245</sup>

Reviewers rarely saw parallels with Polish writers' works. Borkowska saw some convergence between Borges and Teodor Parnicki in the attempts to go beyond the dimensions of time and reality, while in the way of creating Borges' own mythology and world, she discerned similarities with Bruno Schultz.<sup>246</sup> Komorowski thought that *Un tal José Salomé* by Arturo Azuela resembled the novels of the Polish writer Wiesław Myśliwski.<sup>247</sup>

The critics also tried to define the status of the genres used by Latin American writers. *A Plan for Escape* by Bioy Casares was to combine threads of a detective story and spy thriller.<sup>248</sup> In the novel *The Invention of Morel* written by that author,

237 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 2, p. 3.

238 Bereza, *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, 1973, no. 31, p. 4.

239 Komorowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki*, 1976, no. 2, pp. 130–132.

240 *Literatura na świecie* 1976 no. 7, p. 358.

241 Kolankiewicz, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1976 no. 12, pp. 127–128.

242 Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś* 1976, no. 16, pp. 8–9; Dziubek, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1978, no. 1, p. 8; Bereza, "Wymiary i wartości," in: *Proza z importu. Szkice literackie*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 339–354.

243 Komorowski, *Nowy Wyraz*, 1977, no. 1, p. 104.

244 Żuliński, "García Márquez: realizm magiczny," in: *Sztuka wyboru*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 145–149.

245 Kühn, *Literatura na Świecie* 1976, no. 10, p. 275.

246 Borkowska, *Literatura* 1981, no. 44, p. 12.

247 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1982, no. 3, pp. 57–59.

248 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1974, no. 24, pp. 34–35.

the critics saw elements of a corsair-adventure novel and science-fiction.<sup>249</sup> In *Miesięcznik Literacki*, the book was said to be

a simply excellent, gripping fantasy-adventure novel, with a skilfully interwoven romance, having a well-thought plot and extraordinary mood.<sup>250</sup>

According to Komorowski, *Aura* by Fuentes was an elaborate form of a horror story.<sup>251</sup> *El secuestro del general* by Aguilera Malta was recognised as a political novel of a grotesque-prophetic character.<sup>252</sup> It was shown that *All Green Shall Perish* (*Todo verdor perecerá*) by Eduardo Mallea was a rare example of a successful Spanish American psychological novel.<sup>253</sup>

The most common analyses of the writer's technique concerned the most popular writers of the boom. Cortázar, Carpentier, García Márquez and Vargas Llosa were first of all seen as those who renewed the novel, a genre experiencing such a severe crisis in Europe in the 1960s that it was doomed to disappear. The reason why readers abandoned novels was their being over-refined and excessively avant-garde.<sup>254</sup>

*Hopscotch* was attractive by its being different from what Polish receivers were used to reading. The complete novelty was that the author regarded the work as incomplete, and thus he directly invited readers to co-create it. Niecikowski claimed that for the first time in history Cortázar created a work that did not await an ideal reader. The author drew the reader into his game that seemed to have no end since the number of possible readings was unlimited. This feature constituted the uniqueness of *Hopscotch*.<sup>255</sup>

In their reviews of Carpentier's works published before the beginning of the boom in Poland, the critics noted that the Cuban author returned to the 19th century sources of the novel. This was evident in his large descriptions, strong epic constructions, building clear-cut figures and thrilling plots. The author spared no effort in depicting the epoch in detail, but he also saturated his work with a modern historical thinking concentrated on analysing the complex relationships

249 Tarska, *Nowe Książki* 1976, no. 1, p. 24.

250 Olczak, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1975, no. 10, pp. 133–136.

251 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1974, no. 22, pp. 13–14.

252 Walc, *Literatura na Świecie* 1976, no. 7, p. 36.

253 Komorowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1976, no. 10, pp. 130–131; Walc, *Literatura na Świecie* 1976, no. 7, p. 359.

254 Godlewski, *Radar* 1982, no. 7, pp. 14–17.

255 Niecikowski, *Literatura na Świecie* 1973 no. 2, pp. 114–147

between the individual and society. In that way, he revived the formula of the historical novel that was full of adventure elements.<sup>256</sup>

Polish critics faced many problems with interpreting *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. They saw it as a realistic family saga,<sup>257</sup> written in a traditional way without any “modern fanciful additions.”<sup>258</sup> Some expressed contrary opinions that the author gave up using realism and turned to the creationist convention.<sup>259</sup> They stressed the natural skill of García Márquez’s storytelling.<sup>260</sup> *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was regarded as the unquestionable *opus magnum* of the Columbian writer. Hence all his earlier works, of which some (*In Evil Hour*, *Big Mama’s Funeral*, *No One Writes to the Colonel*) were published in Poland before *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, and some (*Eyes of the Blue Dog – Ojos de perro azul*) and *Leaf Storm* were published later, were interpreted as an introduction to the masterpiece<sup>261</sup> depicting the “pre-history of Macondo.”<sup>262</sup>

Although Vargas Llosa’s works evoked mixed emotions, from a limitless admiration to strong disapproval, the critics generally agreed that the writer mastered his writing technique to the full. In some critics’ opinions, one of his most famous books, *Conversation in the Cathedral*, was a testimony of breaking with the convention of realism;<sup>263</sup> in other’s opinions, it fitted into the realistic categories.<sup>264</sup> In the reviews of *Conversation in the Cathedral* and *The Green House*, the critics noticed the film-collage structures of the works,<sup>265</sup> the skill to conduct a multi-layered narrative<sup>266</sup> and the introduction of the technique of ‘stream of consciousness.’<sup>267</sup> However, the reviewers warned readers that the excess of

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256 Klimowicz, *Nowe Książki* 1966, no. 16, pp. 114–115, Wyka, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1966, no. 4, pp. 120–122.

257 Tremer, *Trybuna Ludu* 1974, no. 139, p. 8; Baterowicz, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1974, no. 31, p. 6.

258 Kragen, *Dziennik Polski* 1974, no. 116, p. 6.

259 Henzel, *Sigma* 1974/75, no. 2, p. 26.

260 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1974, no. 22, p. 12.

261 Marrodán, *Nowe Książki* 1971, no. 19, pp. 1260–1261; Marrodán, *Nowe Książki* 1974, no. 16, pp. 45–46; Lubicz, 1977, no. 24, p. 10; Lichniak, *Słowo Powszechne* 1978, no. 21, p. 4.

262 Pilch, *Życie Literackie* 1976, no. 47, p. 15.

263 Umiński, *Kierunki* 1976, no. 29, p. 10.

264 Henzel, *Sigma* 1973/74, no. 7, p. 25.

265 Marrodán, *Nowe Książki* 1974, no. 9, pp. 30–31, Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś* 1975, no. 32, pp. 8–9.

266 Henzel, *Sigma* 1973/74, no. 7, p. 25, Umiński, *ibid.*

267 Umiński, *ibid.*

literary tricks made it difficult to follow the chronology of the plot and consequently, the reception of these novels.<sup>268</sup> Tadeusz Nyczek regarded the composition of *Conversation in the Cathedral* as a fine piece of work but tiring for readers.<sup>269</sup>

Looking at the few articles dedicated to Vargas Llosa's works, our attention should be turned to the text of Krzysztof Rutkowski who distinguished the fundamental laws which, in his opinion, governed Vargas Llosa's writing. They were: the law of cyclical construction realised through the concurrence of the narrative tenses thanks to which the literary way of presenting the world became more dynamic, the law of "dialogue collision," the law of the "left side" of the material, i.e. the author did not mask the literary tricks he used, and the law of freed imagination concerning the unfolding of the time of the presented reality into the time of the projection of the protagonist's consciousness.<sup>270</sup>

As for the critical texts about Borges' works, one should share Elbanowski's opinion (1980:305) that they evoked "the biggest number of doubts and objections." "Many funny (in their seriousness) studies have been written about Borges" – wrote some mysterious "yo" in *Twórczość*.<sup>271</sup> There were no attempts to conduct reliable analyses; instead there were commentaries "beside" the discussed work that Elbanowski called "a kind of meta-creativity pushing the substance to the margin." Sometimes, the critics confessed this "meta-creativity" straightforwardly like Klemens Szaniawski in his article entitled "Glosa do *Doktryny czasu cyklicznego*" [Gloss to *The Doctrine of Cycles*]. We read among other things:

It seems that Borges' imagination was stimulated by a certain statement of set theory, really rather surprising. It says that a set of points that make up the side of a square is equinumerous with a set of points that make up its interior [...] The same character of point space creates a limitless number of sets, realised without repetitions in a limited time.<sup>272</sup>

These speculations on the mathematical-physical themes extended through several paragraphs of the article.

Many reviewers noted that Borges had drawn from numerous literary traditions and that his works indicated inspirations from various cultures.<sup>273</sup>

268 Marrodán, *Nowe Książki* 1974, no. 9.

269 Nyczek, *Echo Krakowa* 1974, no. 34, p. 4.

270 Rutkowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1977, no. 3, pp. 65–72.

271 yo, *Twórczość* 1977, no. 12, pp. 161–162.

272 Szaniawski, *Literatura na Świecie* 1973, no. 12, p. 239.

273 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 2, p. 34; Taranienko, *Argumenty* 1975, no. 12 pp. 12–13.

[...] Borges, showing that he knew scientific papers, practises the myth-creating cultural 'bricolage,' i.e., breaks up the fixed parts of the whole into pieces and organises them in a completely different way, in different original systems [...],<sup>274</sup>

– stated Chądzyńska. This attitude towards Borges' writing sometimes led to passing judgements that were weird in their extremes. 'The writings of Borges are secondary, a library extract, weaving from someone's else ball,' Wojciech Żukrowski proved, continuing his thought:

every work was conceived from literary stereotypes, in a way it is secondary, parasitic although it astonishes us with an idea; it resembles orchids living in a broken rotten tree.<sup>275</sup>

In the meantime, Komorowski warned against bringing Borges' writing down to a combination,<sup>276</sup> and at another place, he noted:

It seems that the fundamental mistake of the Polish reader [...] was that he interpreted Borges' writing as an example of an elaborated and over-intellectualised literary game, that he treated his writing in the ludic spirit as juggling actually petrified and mummified cultural forms.<sup>277</sup>

Looking at the few reviews of *Paradiso* by Lezama Lima, first of all we note attempts to provide formal descriptions. The critics stressed that the borders between prose and poetry were blurred. In their opinions, the compositional principle of *Paradiso* was its over-organisation characteristic of poetry,<sup>278</sup> implying that

the esthetical effect results from some clash – from some unusual co-existence in time and space – of phenomena, their features and forms of existence.<sup>279</sup>

However, the final effect of conducting narrative from the perspective of the poetical vision of the world did not turn out to be satisfactory for all the critics. Some thought that *Paradiso* "breaks into a number of fragments, which are sometimes poetical and sometimes essayistic, frequently of great beauty."<sup>280</sup> They paid attention to multitudes of metaphors, allusions and citations that require readers' erudition and involvement.<sup>281</sup> Rutkowski did not hesitate to call

274 Chądzyńska, *Odra* 1977, no. 1, p. 33.

275 Żukrowski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 2, p. 18.

276 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1981, no. 4, pp. 68–69.

277 Komorowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1976, no. 6, pp. 131–132

278 Rutkowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1980, no. 2, pp. 131–134.

279 Godlewski, *Literatura* 1979, no. 35 p. 4.

280 Bernat, *Nowe Książki* 1979, no. 23, pp. 19–21.

281 Dopart, *Życie Literackie* 1979, no. 37, p. 14; Rutkowski, op. cit., Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 3, p. 11.

the work of the Cuban writer “one of the most important treatises that have been created in our century.”<sup>282</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Summary

The analyses of several dozen critical texts concerning Spanish American prose produced during the boom allow me to state that the reviewers did their best to be guides to foreign cultures and literatures. On the one hand, they quoted more or less detailed information about writers, literary currents, works and their origins, and on the other hand, they tried to refer the discussed works to a literary tradition that the Polish reader knew. The effects of their efforts varied and depended on the critics' competences, on their knowledge of Latin America and the sources that they were able to reach. One should remember that the access to reliable sources, and above all to the foreign literary and cultural press, was very limited during the times of the Polish People's Republic. Thus, a lot depended on the reviewers' entrepreneurship and personal contacts.

The reviewers often attempted to discuss formal aspects of literary works in the conviction that analysing their structures and literary tricks would help understand the works. Many a time they overestimated their skills. Applying critical-literary methods that proved sufficient in analysing European or North American prose more frequently led to blurring the image of a work than explaining some of its aspects.

It was the cognitive-evaluative function of criticism that was realised in these reviews. Their addressees were predominantly potential readers of the analysed works. The reviewers very rarely addressed the writers; the postulative function can be seen in their articles only sporadically. One of the very few attempts to fulfil this task can be found in the review of Rulfo's *The Burning Plain and Other Stories*, written by Stanisław Stanuch. He claimed that the fictional realism in its 19th century form stopped to be attractive to contemporary readers. Spanish American prose proposed a new formula of realism since on the one hand, it used the achievements of the 20th century novel and at the same time,

it preserved the love of the concrete, ability to care for the fate of every individual and the skill of combining patriotism with sensitivity for social matters.<sup>283</sup>

In his opinion, the prose created in Latin America had the potential that was necessary to create a new literary pattern; that could inspire authors who wrote

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282 Rutkowski, op. cit., p. 134.

283 Stanuch, *Dziennik Polski* 1971, no. 91, p. 5.

in languages other than Spanish. A similar tone was adopted by Piotr Skórzyński in his article under the significant title “An overlooked kingdom” in *Tygodnik Powszechny*. He regarded the publication of *Hopscotch* as one of the most important events in the Polish literary life and warned readers that

not noticing Cortázar’s writing can cost our literature as much as having overlooked Joyce’s works earlier.<sup>284</sup>

Yet, this vision was not fulfilled. Ten years later, Andrzej Ogrodowczyk announced the fall of the myth of the hermetic nature of Spanish American literature since it became a source of inspiration for writers from other continents.<sup>285</sup>

#### 4.5 Exoticism, magic and magical realism

Without any scrupulous calculations one can easily discern that the most frequently occurred words in the Polish critical texts concerning Spanish American prose were exoticism (*egzotyka*) and magic (*magia*) as well as exotic (*egzotyczny*) and magical (*magiczny*).

According to *Mały słownik języka polskiego* (1989:158) “egzotyka” means

all features typical of countries with a completely different climate and civilisation; otherness, strangeness, exoticism,

and “egzotyczny” is typical of

countries of a different climate and civilisation, especially subtropical, coming from these countries; foreign, alien, overseas.

Thus, the concept of exoticism reminds Poles of distant countries, those characterised by completely different climatic conditions, typical of the areas located around the equatorial zone. Moreover, inhabitants of those lands have built a culture that differs from ours. Quotations from the corpus of the Polish language show that certain plants and fruit are exotic for us (yucca, lemon, avocado, pomegranates, palms, Douglas fir), some countries or provinces (Brazil, New Caledonia) and elements of the landscape (tropical beaches, crystal clear seas, islands).<sup>286</sup>

In the Polish language, exoticism also connotes difference, otherness; something that we do not encounter in our daily experiences and what does not

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284 Skórzyński, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1971, no. 29, p. 4.

285 Ogrodowczyk, *Nurt* 1981, no. 10, p. 35.

286 [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=egzotyczny&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=egzotyczny&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center)

necessarily result from the geographical location. These meanings are confirmed by quotations from the corpus of the Polish language:

The fascination of the Czechoslovakian culture was based first of all on the feeling of otherness, attractive exoticism. **Exoticism** that seemed to be included within our possibilities and culture, but still, as it turned out, unexpectedly inaccessible.<sup>287</sup>

If in modern Poland something resembled the local councils of the nobility, these would be the assemblies of fine artists. The April assembly in Lublin resembled the 13 earlier ones in many ways: at least in its noble-democratic-artistic **exoticism**.<sup>288</sup>

In the first case, “exoticism” referred to Czechoslovakia, our neighbour that appeared to be culturally and not geographically distant. In the other one, it referred to the elements of our culture, alien to us because it concerned distant times. “Exotic” also means something that fascinates us with its otherness although being part of our reality:

Lusia told me only about her colleagues from the GS cooperative, about the manager’s fraud, female neighbours, who was with whom and when. It was **exotic** and quite interesting for the first several meetings.<sup>289</sup>

In the Polish reviews of the early 1970s, Latin America appeared as a land that was archetypically exotic, fulfilling the condition of “oversees” and different in its climate, landscape and culture.

In the second half of our century, a journey to the Amazonian basin is an endeavour that is much riskier than a space journey [...]. On the Amazon, people still disappear without any traces; the jungle digests the bodies of its victims more completely than the ocean covered by a radio signal network. [...] There are old thick forests of a purely primordial nature, huts inhabited by people who eat roots and wild bee honey and who can neither light a fire nor kill

– was the image of South America depicted by a reviewer for *Echo Krakowa* towards the end of the 1960s.<sup>290</sup> Similarly, Wanda Kragen saw the nature of Latin America as a dangerous and unpredictable element, while the Hispanic – as people whose attitudes and behaviours were incomprehensible for us.

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287 Werner, “Dekada filmu,” 1997; <http://korpus.pwn.pl/opis.php?id=1669&sel=5222,1;25.03.2010>.

288 *Sztuka*, no. 3, Warszawa 1974; <http://korpus.pwn.pl/opis.php?id=1799&sel=1475,1;25.03.2010>.

289 Antoszewski, *Kariera na trzy karpie morskie*, 2000; <http://korpus.pwn.pl/opis.php?id=1542&sel=5203,1,25.03.2010>.

290 Tarska, *Echo Krakowa* 1968, no. 229, p. 4.



In this novel, its exoticism is wonderful and extraordinary – exoticism of not only the environment in which the plot takes place, not only its nature, destroying the works of human hands by its horrible, brutal exuberance, but first of all, the people are exotic, all of them marked by suffering and loneliness, alien to us by their culture and customs, all the ways of their lives [...]<sup>291</sup>

– Kragen wrote about *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The inseparable elements of this nature were tropical heavy rains and unbearable and paralysing heat, phenomena that were difficult to understand for citizens of a Central European city.<sup>292</sup>

From the Polish perspective, both the customs and rituals of the Indians from the Andes depicted in Alegría's novel *Broad and Alien is the World*<sup>293</sup> turned out to be exotic. So was the attitude of the protagonists in his novel *The Golden Serpent* (*La serpiente de oro*) that was devoid of forms and falsity characterised of people being under the influence of the urban culture. The rafters from the Amazonian basin:

can still feel the spicy taste of life [...]. They do not ponder on the sense of their lives but only think about how to live their lives, to make them wonderful.<sup>294</sup>

Exoticism could be a direct effect of referring to certain poetics as it was in the case of Borges' stories in which the application of suitable artistic means made the unreal world have the appearance and status of reality.<sup>295</sup>

The number of translations and the increasing popularity of Spanish American prose caused that readers expected the next publications to meet the criteria of "exoticism." In the reviews of some books, there were warnings for potential readers if the work could not receive such a label. Komorowski also explained that Uruguay was the most European country of Latin America, hence the literature of this country would not seem exotic for Poles.<sup>296</sup> The Argentinian writer Mallea seemed to be a quite universal artist, and consequently in our eyes, he could not be seen as an exotic author.<sup>297</sup> In fact, Komorowski placed his works outside the boom, which made them be in some opposition to the most popular books in Poland for which this trend was to be a common denominator.

291 Kragen, *Dziennik Polski* 1974, no. 116, p. 6.

292 Tarska, *Echo Krakowa* 1972, no. 206, p. 4.

293 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1975, no. 8, p. 25.

294 AS, *Literatura* 1973, no. 30, p. 11.

295 Borkowska, *Literatura* 1981, no. 44, p. 12.

296 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1975, no. 1, pp. 22–23.

297 Komorowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1976, no. 10, pp. 130–131.

Discussions about the problem of corruption in a country having stable capitalist production attitudes or psychological novels were regarded as “non-exotic.”

Marródan’s statement is not unreasonable in that the term “exoticism,” *de facto* showing the attitude of superiority, helped Europe accept a different culture many times.<sup>298</sup> However, the excess of foreign elements often became an obstacle for readers. When more and more Spanish American works appeared on the Polish market, the lack of characteristics customarily ascribed to the tropical regions, such as the richness of colours, fertile soil, joy, unburdened people, in some works began evoking critics’ astonishment and puzzlement.<sup>299</sup> The reality depicted by Latin American writers considerably differed from this stereotype and was far from the postcard, idyllic picture:

The ruthlessness of nature, intensified by its cyclicity, surely symbolised by rain, is depicting a new image of hell: this is everyday reality which is repeated monotonously [...]; this is also the fear of the advent of evil times<sup>300</sup>

– wrote Kalicki about García Márquizez’s prose. The gap between the European culture and Latin American culture many a time turned out to be so wide that at first it caused discouragement leading to the rejection of some work. According to the reviewer for *Kultura*, *Deep Rivers (Los ríos profundos)* by José María Arguedas was

a book that is [...] exotic in many ways. It is exotic in its description of the child’s experiences. It is exotic as a testimony to a distant culture. Finally, it is exotic as a product of equally distant political, social and moral relationships. All of that constitutes a world that I have never seen and will not surely see. [...] Exoticism is [...] very distant, but in its colours, it is dim and not very effective. In fact, there is no reason to become interested in it at all.<sup>301</sup>

However, the critic admitted that having such artistic skills, Arguedas managed to build a bridge thanks to which the plot and problems presented in the book made him read it with interest. In another critic’s opinion, the course of the heroes’ fates in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* might have seemed incomprehensible for European readers since they did not follow the values which were important from their points of view, such as money, career and love.<sup>302</sup>

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298 Marródan, *Nowe Książki* 1971, no. 12, pp. 780–781.

299 Kalicki, *Twórczość* 1975, no. 1, p. 132.

300 Kalicki, *ibid.*, p. 131.

301 *Kultura* 1973, no. 24, p. 3.

302 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1974, no. 14, pp. 18–19.

In some cases, the barrier of otherness seemed to be insurmountable. Because of the organic connection with the documents of pre-Columbian culture, *Legends of Guatemala* (*Leyendas de Guatemala*) by Asturias appeared to European readers as a hermetic and unfathomable work.<sup>303</sup> Rulfo's prose was almost completely ignored by Polish critics, while for West European critics it proved to be shocking.<sup>304</sup> In the few reviews that appeared in Poland during the boom, their authors emphasised its drastic nature and attitude towards death that could not be understood from the European perspective. In Marródan's opinion, this brutal vision of the world was a serious obstacle to understand the Argentinian writer's works:

Readers from our continent will accept Juan Rulfo's novel or short story as the usage of this or that narrative technique or as some contribution to anthropology [...] – however, they will not accept a vision of the world and human being that is too cruel in their opinion.<sup>305</sup>

The Polish critics' attempts to place the new Spanish American prose among the renowned works of the world literature can be recognised as endeavours to familiarise it, to break down the barrier of its otherness and misunderstanding. The reality depicted in this prose, which was distant from the stereotyped exoticism, appeared to be alien and incomprehensible; the rules of that reality seemed completely different from the ones adopted by our culture. Polish readers were not able to refer numerous Spanish American works to any element of the non-linguistic reality with which they were familiar. The horizons of the knowledge of the writer and of the reader had hardly anything in common. As a consequence, it seemed more effective to get to know this literature by emphasising the questions related to the structure of works and their formal solutions. This tactic was realised by seeking parallels that could be present in Polish readers' awareness and choosing an interpretative key according to the known rules, which was discussed in the previous section. When the reviewers suggested to look at García Márquez's works through the prism of Faulkner's works, they sent a clear message to the readers: it is the type of prose that you know, and the difference is its setting.

According to Skłodowska, the technique thanks to which the impenetrable reality of Latin America appealed to European readers was magical realism.<sup>306</sup> She saw the success of this literature in "the skilful presentation of exoticism."

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303 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 23, p. 11.

304 Marródan, *Nowe Książki* 1971, no. 12, pp. 780–781.

305 Marródan, *ibid.*

306 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 23, p. 11.

Through his works, Gabriel García Márquez introduces us to the exotic Caribbean world. [...] Marquéz's short stories, simply swollen with the tales, myths and fables of the Caribbean, are mixed with surprisingly realistic pictures of life  
 – was written about *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother*.<sup>307</sup>

The Polish critics recognised Carpentier as the creator of the conception “lo real maravilloso,” i.e. miraculous reality.<sup>308</sup> Its source was to be his fascination with the abundant and untamed nature of the Caribbean which the writer observed with the eyes of a thrilled outsider. As a result, the Polish critics dealing with Spanish American prose lost the European origin of this term.<sup>309</sup> This was in a way justified because

some writers and critics, in particular Alejo Carpentier, categorically denied Europe any participation in creating magical realism, restricting the possibility of the existence and perception of the miraculous reality – “lo real maravilloso” – only to the territories of both Americas or even only to the Caribbean (Mroczkowska-Brandt 2009:18).

The “marvelousness” of the Caribbean landscape did not, however, guarantee the quality of the prose which used to describe it. It had to be artistically reshaped. Therefore, the technique of magical realism fulfilled the cognitive function for reality, naming the areas that had not been named in literature so far.<sup>310</sup> The use of this technique caused that Hispanic prose assumed the characteristics of irrationality, which was to result directly from the irrational character of the reality of Latin America. In García Márquez's works, differently than in Carpentier's works, reality was observed, as it were, from the inside, thanks to which exoticism appeared in the appropriate dimension, not as glitter, but as an element

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307 Skoszkiewicz, *Odgłosy* 1972, no. 41, p. 11.

308 Martin, *Literatura* 1975, no. 22, p. 4; Rodowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1980, no. 10, p. 290; Burska, *Twórczość* 1969, no. 12, p. 133.

309 In Poland, two large monographs dedicated to magical realism have been published. The first one, *Zjawy, szaleństwo i śmierć. Fantastyka i realizm magiczny w literaturze hispanoamerykańskiej* [Ghosts, Madness and Death. Fantasy and Magical Realism in Hispanic Literature] by Tomasz Pindel (2004), focuses on Latin American prose. In the other, *Przecucia innego porządku. Mapa realizmu magicznego w literaturze światowej XX i XXI wieku* [Intuitions About Another Order. The Map of Magical Realism in the World Literature of the 20th and the 21st Centuries] by Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brandt, the term is understood in a broader sense as a trend revealed in literatures of various countries. In both studies, one can find large analyses of the usage of this term and interpretations of the works that meet the criteria of belonging to this trend.

310 Ogródowczyk, *Nurt* 1981, no. 10, pp. 35–36.

of common experience for a certain group of people.<sup>311</sup> In other words, what seemed to Polish or European readers improbable, from the perspective of Hispanic receivers it could be a realistic background.<sup>312</sup> Using this technique caused that the distinction between reality and fiction was blurred,<sup>313</sup> and that two worlds: the one perceived with the senses and the one inaccessible to the senses, co-existed.<sup>314</sup> Further, magical realism was interpreted as a modern realisation of the American myth, America as paradise made flesh, as a vision born from the tiredness of classicism and logic as well as longing for the old style sea voyages.<sup>315</sup> The foundation of magical realism was the folkloric origin of the way of depicting<sup>316</sup> as well as the permanent setting in “the plasma of folk morality and spiritual culture.”<sup>317</sup>

In the critics’ opinions, the concept of time – different from the European one – was inseparably connected with magical realism. They pointed to García Márquez as the first writer from Latin America who gave up the traditional chronometry. In his work, time was measured not according to the calendar but to consecutive generations.<sup>318</sup> It becomes a historical time characterised by myth.<sup>319</sup>

This is how History and Myth are interwoven: time that passes and time which we order to rotate. [...] García Márquez’s saga is the description of a process that makes the history of the Buendía family transform into a myth.<sup>320</sup>

In Donoso’s *The Obscene Bird of Night*, the chronometry is measured by myth

that works its way into – and between – the two main layers of the novel, that unites it and consolidates it just as it connects the present tense and past tense, today and history. [...] And moreover, all the stories belonging to the present [...] are subsequent incarnations of myth, modernisations of the 17th century legend.<sup>321</sup>

311 Komorowski, *Nowy Wyrzaz*, 1977, no. 1, pp. 99–105.

312 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki*, 1975, no. 2, pp. 26–27.

313 Baterowicz, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1974, no. 31, p. 6.

314 Onyszyn, *Za i przeciw* 1969, no. 16, p. 13.

315 Kalicki, *Twórczość* 1975, no. 27, p. 12.

316 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 23, p. 11.

317 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 10, pp. 18–20.

318 Komorowski, *Nowy Wyrzaz*, 1977, no. 1, p. 103.

319 Baterowicz, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1974, no. 31, p. 6.

320 Kalicki, *Twórczość* 1974, no. 2, p. 122.

321 Kühn, *Literatura na Świecie* 1976, no. 10, p. 285.

In García Márquez's *Leaf Storm*, time is divided and subordinated to the course of personal experiences. Similarly, "Fuentes does not burden himself with chronology," as one of the reviewers of *The Death of Artemio Cruz* stated,<sup>322</sup> whereas another stressed that the events depicted in the novel followed the order that occurred in the consciousness of the dying hero.<sup>323</sup>

The fascination with various dimensions of time was noticed in Carpentier's works. It was to result from his conception of Latin American reality in which different stages of civilisation co-existed.<sup>324</sup> Subsequently, chronology was replaced by a synthesis of history, as in the novel *The Kingdom of This World*.<sup>325</sup> Carpentier's masterly technique allowed him to do literary anything with time and space.<sup>326</sup>

Nonetheless, according to a large group of critics, magical realism was not a new writing technique or new literary trend, but in the Hispanic writers' works it was predominantly related to the presence of magical elements understood rather literary as "all beliefs and practices based on the conviction of the existence of supernatural powers that can be controlled and invoked."<sup>327</sup> *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was classified as a "typical" work of magical realism directly because of the practices which it depicted and which were regarded as magical.<sup>328</sup> For similar reasons, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* was recognised as "the peak" of this direction.<sup>329</sup> The characteristics of magical realism were

the levitation of beautiful Remedios, who before her astonished relatives took to the skies from the yard where she had used to pour grain to her hens, the dead constantly circling every corner of the house; the raid of thousands of butterflies announcing death or rainfall of yellow flowers that were falling from the sky throughout the night during which Arcadio Buendía passed away.<sup>330</sup>

Asturias' *A Kind of Mulatto* was given as a "classic example of the so-called magical realism." The main heroine was seen as a signal of the world of Indian legends and beliefs as well as the "pre-Guatemalan medium of the magical world." The reviewer for *Kultura* continued:

322 Drohojowski, *Nowe Książki* 1969, no. 11, p. 732.

323 Witan, *Tygodnik Demokratyczny* 1968, no. 49, p. 8.

324 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 20, p. 3.

325 Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś* 1976, no. 35, p. 9.

326 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 24, pp. 59–60.

327 Źródło: <http://www.pwn.pl/?module=multisearch&search=magia>, 2.03.2010.

328 Tremer, *Trybuna Ludu* 1974, no. 139, p. 8.

329 Krzemień, *Kultura* 1981, no. 13, p. 5.

330 Burska, *Twórczość* 1969, no. 12, p. 133.

This book is about the magic of South America, its history, philosophy, geography, geology, demonology and imagination.<sup>331</sup>

The novel *Garabombo the Invisible* (*Historia de Garabombo el Invisible*) by Scorza was included to magical realism because of the invisibility of the main protagonist, the divination from coca leaves, the activities motivated by magic, ghosts and extraordinary expansion of time.<sup>332</sup> Komorowski's remark that magical realism did not depend on the descriptions of shamanistic practices was an isolated case.<sup>333</sup> Czeszko simply ascribed the popularity of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* to the prevailing fashion for spells, magic, divination and all kinds of esoteric practices, predicting that when the fashion faded the book would be forgotten.<sup>334</sup>

In the late 1970s, the term "magical realism" gradually expanded its meaning. It was defined as "a challenge to common sense."<sup>335</sup> Contacts with the inexplicable began to be treated as an indicator of Spanish American literature:

The actions of irrational powers and the existence of extraordinary behaviours, all kinds of friendly terms with the non-human world, whether the world of animals or plants or spirits, everything that is obvious and not subject to commenting.<sup>336</sup>

The Polish critics began using the concept of magical realism referring to various Spanish American works if the books included elements that could not be qualified as realistic.

The realistic and at the same time mythological and philosophical novel by Casares should be certainly counted as a work of magical realism, although at times we are tempted to call it "magical" since in the novel all things are dreams, visions and desires,

– was written about *The Dream of Heroes* (*El sueño de los héroes*).<sup>337</sup> Cortázar was said to have sought elements of magic and myth in our thinking about the world.<sup>338</sup> Sometimes it was signalled that the term "magical realism" was misused:

When someone writes about "the curious alliance between poetic magic and political realism," about "the co-existence between the rational world of revolution and the world

331 K., *Kultura* 1977, no. 24, p. 4.

332 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 10, pp. 18–20.

333 Komorowski, *Nowy Wyrzaz*, 1977, no. 1, pp. 99–105.

334 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1974, no. 14, pp. 18–19.

335 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 10, pp. 18–20.

336 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 10, p. 19.

337 Borkowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1979, no. 5, pp. 327–332.

338 Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś* 1977, no. 14, p. 9.

of the baroque splendour of experiences and magical imaginations,” it should be defined which of the Cuban realities fulfil magical functions.<sup>339</sup>

Otherwise, the allegedly extraordinary, especially from the Cuban perspective, phenomena might have occurred to be rationally explainable. This reasonable view shown in the review of the novel *La última mujer y el próximo combate* by Cofiño was, however, an exception. Despite the efforts of some critics trying to explain the misunderstandings that had arisen around magical realism, the term became a kind of a word-key that was almost automatically associated with Latin American prose. Elbanowski (1980:295) noted that

in all of the critical works, magical realism is the term that is to constitute the essence of Latin American prose, i.e., a certain literary way of seeing and experiencing reality reflecting the whole richness and originality of the continent.

In his opinion, the common characteristics of Latin American works was blurring the distinction between reality and fiction as well as relativizing truth and fantasy, while magical realism should be recognised as one kind of this convention.<sup>340</sup> Yet, the term turned out to be so suggestive that until today it has been functioned colloquially and almost as a synonym of the prose of the Green Continent – “it became a label that has been attached to this literature.”<sup>341</sup>

The identification of Spanish American prose with magical realism caused that the concept of exoticism as referred to this prose underwent a profound evolution and began to be referred to wonder and magic. The reviewer for *Literatura na Świecie* described Elena Poniatowska’s novel *Here’s to You, Jesusa* (*Hasta no verte Jesús mío*), published in 1977, as being reversely exotic as she did not find these elements in it:

It is no longer the kind of exoticism leading to discovering weirdness, uncanniness, wonder and magic, to which we have got used to reading the translations of, for example, Márquez’s or Donoso’s works. The otherness of *Here’s to You, Jesusa* is its authenticity, which seemed not to occur in this literature. Poniatowska introduces us to realism, not a fictional one, typical of the novel – in the traditional sense – but to the authentic realism of truth referred to life, to life that has been conditioned literarily by historical time and inscribed in this time.<sup>342</sup>

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339 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 23, p. 22.

340 Elbanowski seemed to accept the thesis of Kalicki who pointed to the neo-baroque quality as a characteristic of Latin American works.

341 “Czy realizm magiczny umarł?” [Has magical realism died?], *Newsweek*, edition of 12.05.2002, <http://www.newsweek.pl/artykuly/sekcje/kultura/czy-realizm-magiczny-umarl,27164,1>; 5.03.2010.

342 Borkowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1977, no. 11, p. 336.



## 4.6 Politics, violence, social threads

The entanglement of Spanish American prose in politics is a phenomenon that has been seen and stressed both in numerous afterwords to works edited within the series of Wydawnictwo Literackie and Polish critical texts. In *Nowe Książki*, Urbański showed that in Latin America

the ideological confrontation has [...] the most dynamic character, and the novels originated in these conditions are difficult to be seen only from the perspective of literary tradition.<sup>343</sup>

The fight aimed at transforming the reality was regarded as the main task of writers living in this continent.<sup>344</sup>

It is noteworthy that political threads were discussed in the press reviews from different points of view.

### 4.6.1 Reflecting the official propaganda

There was a group of critics who in Spanish American prose saw an ideology that was close to the worldview promoted in Poland by the official propaganda. This attitude was visible, for example, in the reviews of the Venezuelan works belonging to the so-called literature of violence. We can find statements that are now astonishing, and which seem to be rather manifestations of wishful thinking than the real record of the state of mind:

In Poles' opinions, the Green Continent is first of all Bolivia and the greatness of the spiritual leader of the struggle for social-political liberation – Ernesto Guevara, called El Che

– we can read in the review of Adriano González León's novel *País portátil*, whose fundamental theme was the urban guerrillas in Caracas in the 1960s.<sup>345</sup> The ideological perspective allowed the critic to justify the activities that today would be condemned unambiguously. The reviewer for the weekly *Itd* described the *guerrilla* as a social phenomenon, having historical reasons, and protested against recognising it as an expression of the pathology of certain groups of young people or as “Cuban export of revolution,” thundering, “we cannot agree to put into one bag these groups with the Bader-Meinhoff group or Carlos' terrorists” because history explains and confirms the choice of terror as a tool of revolutionary fights.<sup>346</sup> Fight against violence was not the way of parliamentary

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343 Urbański, *Nowe Książki* 1979, no. 12, p. 38.

344 (zm), *Kobieta i Życie* 1976, no. 43, p. 3.

345 Turczyński, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1976, no. 42, p. 4.

346 Kos., *Ita.*, 1976, no. 43, p. 27.

fight – echoed Turczyński on the pages of *Tygodnik Kulturalny* and developed his thought:

Such people as Che Guevara, Regis Debray, Luis de la Puente, Maraluanda, Carlos Marighela or Douglas Bravo, a Venezuelan, became national heroes, apostles of fight. The motto of “Oda do młodości” [Ode to Youth] *Gwałt niech się gwałtem odciska* [When force is used, with force respond] was confirmed in Guerrilla’s activities.

He continued using the best patterns of the rhetoric of socialist realism:

González León’s book [...] allows us to get to know the sense and history of the fight of the Venezuelan nation, tormented by the local and foreign capital, by the self-preservation, i.e., the hostile politics of the clergy [...], finally by the police and security forces.<sup>347</sup>

The reviewer for *Nowe Książki* reproached the author of *La muerte de Honorio*, Miguel Otero Silva, for the lack of the figure of a typical proletarian. Yet, he justified that by the national-bourgeois character of the South American revolution, and concluded his argument, “it is always known who, and with what hands, pulls the chestnuts out of the fire.”<sup>348</sup> We can find similar views in the reviews of Scorza’s *Drums for Rancas* (*Redoble por Rancas*).

The modern world, precisely its American model, degenerated and blighted by the cancer of corruption and the officials’ arbitrariness, forces its way in the Andes with an iron hand [...],<sup>349</sup>

commented Michał Mroziński on the tragedy of the inhabitants of the Peruvian village who had no chance for defending their rights in the world ruled by the American capital and large landowners. The artistic values of the novel were pushed away to the background. The reviewer thought that the style of the book embracing the pathetic-naïve poetry of everyday life, the traces of the mythologised reality, the very complicated time constructions and pretentious languages in some parts, was used earlier many times and so it was intensively exploited. He saw the essential value of the novel in its publicist dimension, which was “to claim the rights of those who cannot do that themselves, to inform about them, to raise the consciousness.”<sup>350</sup>

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347 Turczyński, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1976, no. 42, p. 4.

348 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 16, pp. 15–16.

349 Mroziński, *Literatura* 1976, no. 2, p. 5.

350 Mroziński, *ibid.*

In extreme cases, the ideologised attitude ordered critics to reject magical realism as a trend that was dangerously falsifying the image of social relations in Latin America. Urbański warned the readers of *Polityka*:

This kind of novels [...] does not actually reflect the Hispanic reality but rather testifies to the extremely wild fantasy of some writers.<sup>351</sup>

One can only sporadically encounter the ironic attitude towards the revolutionary fight in the reviews. Paweł Śpiewak wrote about the fighter's dilemmas, the main protagonist of the novel *Dead Houses* by Otero Silva:

He must choose between political fight and a real woman. His alternative is clear and unique. He is a kind of our Doctor Judym,<sup>352</sup> but placed within the rhythms of Latin American rumba [...].<sup>353</sup>

The negative evaluation of the book resulted from the black and white schematic image of the conflict and monumental depictions of men engaged in political fights.

#### 4.6.2 Attitude towards Cuban prose

A striking example of the perception of literary phenomena from the perspective of current politics has been the attitude of the editors and critics towards Cuban literature. The first Cuban writers' translations appeared in Poland in 1965, i.e., six years after the success of the revolution. These were *Gestures* by Sarduy<sup>354</sup> and *Writes of Passage* by Cabrera Infante. The latter supported at first the reigns of Fidel Castro and held high posts in Cuba for a short time.<sup>355</sup> The Polish translation of *Writes of Passage* was published in 1965, the year when the author, who had fallen into disgrace, was arrested by the counter-espionage service officers, and then left the country. This coincidence might have resulted from the long publishing cycle in the reality of the Polish People's Republic. The censor did not decide to withhold the distribution of the book, the probable reason being that some images of the life of various pre-revolutionary social

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351 Urbański, *Polityka* 1978, no. 29, p. 12.

352 Tomasz Judym, a medical doctor, is the main character of Stefan Żeromski's novel *Ludzie bezdomni* (Homeless People), some sort of an idealist who wants to help poor people even at the cost of sacrificing his life and love.

353 Śpiewak, *Literatura na Świecie* 1979, no. 5, pp. 323–326.

354 I have mentioned this book in chapter two.

355 He was also the director of the National Council of Culture, Film Institute, and the deputy editor of the most important press organ – the weekly *Granma*.

strata in Cuba were presented in the background of the author's notes "speaking in a brutally laconic way about the acts of the police's terror during Batista's rules."<sup>356</sup> These scenes were "a river flowing under the surface of everyday life [...] tremor predicting an approaching explosion."<sup>357</sup> The author was presented as an extremely gifted representative of the young generation "before whom Cuba's liberation from the local and foreign dictatorship opened new paths."<sup>358</sup> The critics admired the author's views, being obviously unaware of the fact that he had changed them in a fundamental way after the publication of his novel. They also appreciated that he had presented the known content and "right" message in a modern form.

In 1968, the anthology of Cuban short stories with the Polish title *The Coral Horse* (*El caballo de coral*) was prepared by Babad, Wojciechowska and Piekarec. From 1966, Carpentier's works were gradually published in Poland. In her review of *Explosion in a Cathedral*, Karbowska hoped that "indeed, this novel will end the code of silence and begin demand on Hispanic literature."<sup>359</sup> The reviews of Carpentier's works published in the 1970s were not free from ideological interpretations. Sadkowski<sup>360</sup> called the Cuban writer "the most outstanding writer of our revolutionary world." The writer's enthusiastic access to the Cuban revolution was mentioned.<sup>361</sup> Some critical texts included certain disappointment by the fact that

nobody who has read Alejo Carpentier without knowing his biography would not expect any relations with the Cuban revolution in his prose.<sup>362</sup>

Yet, there were critics who discerned this relation. Rutkowski, in *Miesięcznik Kulturalny*, wrote about *Baroque Concert* (*Concierto barroco*):

In Cuba, music and dance have been manifestations of the victory of the revolution, its most spontaneously artistic expression, the corporal acceptance of the current social transformations. [...]. Here the revolution is combined with carnival – carnival reveals its revolutionary essence.

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356 Jaremko-Pytowska, *Nowe Książki* 1966, no. 7, pp. 422–423.

357 Kwiecińska, *Trybuna Ludu* 1966, no. 93, p. 6.

358 Jaremko-Pytowska, *Nowe Książki* 1966, no. 7, p. 422.

359 Karbowska, *Kierunki* 1966, no. 42, p. 12.

360 Sadkowski W., *Trybuna Ludu* 1966, no. 251, p. 5.

361 Rodowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1980, no. 10, p. 290.

362 Czeszko, *Nowe Książki* 1981, no. 2, p. 77.

and concluded:

The relations between time, music, carnival and revolution are some of the major problems in Carpentier's works.<sup>363</sup>

In Poland, Cuban literature was probably best known among the national literatures of Latin America. In the series "Proza Iberoamerykańska," several works were published and could be counted as Latin American classics. Cirilo Villaverde's novel *Cecilia Valdés or el Angel Hill* was called by the reviewer for *Literatura na Świecie* a melodrama emphasising social issues, whose publication was "a total misunderstanding."<sup>364</sup> Miguel de Carrión's *Las honradas* was evaluated in a milder way in the same magazine. Although the reviewer's opinion about the main thread of the novel, the heroine's non-marital relationship, was ironic, the other values, such as the accurate observations of the customs and interesting remarks concerning economy when the small sugar industry had been developing, were recognised:

It is a very interesting country, so different from the present country; it is Cuba depicted just before the outbreak of World War I; American-European Cuba, for which that trend of African culture, exposed so much in the contemporary reality, has not left any distinct, sometimes decisive, traces yet.<sup>365</sup>

Furthermore, several books of the contemporary writers were published in Poland: *The Situation (La situación)* by Lisandro Otero, Onelio Jorge Cardoso's short stories, *Bertillón 166* by José Soler Puig, *Siempre la muerte su paso breve* by Reynaldo González, two novels of Cofiño. The works of Otero, Puig and González were not reviewed separately. Some critics focused on the novels of Otero and Cofiño. The reviewer for *Miesięcznik Literacki* described *The Situation* depicting the stories of several Cuban families as

a 20th century history of Cuba, a record of the most important political, social and economic problems of this island.<sup>366</sup>

One should add that it was the history of Cuba before the revolution. Otero described the end of this epoch, before the arrival of Fidel Castro. The critic appreciated that the novel

had nothing of a simplified agitation which frequently occurred in the post-revolutionary works; the writer does not try to prove anything at all cost.<sup>367</sup>

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363 Rutkowski, *Miesięcznik Kulturalny* 1978, no. 6, pp. 128–129.

364 Walc, *Literatura na Świecie* 1977, no. 4, p. 362.

365 Borkowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1979, no. 2, p. 348.

366 Kamiński, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1978, no. 9, p. 128.

367 Kamiński, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1978, no. 9, p. 128.

On the contrary, he showed why the revolution had had to break out and what the circumstances of the outbreak had been.

In Cofiño's novels, the critics found analogies to social-realist literature.<sup>368</sup> They showed that the unambiguous presentation of the revolutionary strategy was put into the mouth of the main hero of *La última mujer y el próximo combate*.<sup>369</sup> The Cuban author's book differed from the typical examples of socialist realism fiction by its narrative carried out on two layers: realistic and poetical-fairylike, and its saturation with magic, myth and legend. The reviewer for *Nowe Książki* recommended both works of Cofiño to those interested in contemporary Cuba.<sup>370</sup>

Summarising the 15-year presence of Cuban literature on the Polish publishing market, Kühn wrote:

[...] the political and economic aspects were prevailing: the strengthened links between both countries – Cuba was one of the first and most important stages of the Polish translators and editors' expedition to discover the literary treasures of Hispanic America. Today, after fifteen years, the literature of this country, which is friendly to Poland, belongs to the most known ones in Poland, beside Argentinian and Mexican literatures.<sup>371</sup>

Nonetheless, his opinion was not completely true since Kühn forgot to add that only the works published and officially recognised in Cuba appeared on the Polish market. The literature created by Cuban immigrants and those who fell in disgrace in Cuba was not translated into Polish.

The situation changed in the 1990s. The Polish editors discovered the Cuban authors living outside the island, such as Zoé Valdés or Guillermo Cabrera Infante, while the books published in Cuba were considerably less frequently published in Poland.

#### 4.6.3 *Political novel*

The term "political novel" is not defined in all the Polish dictionaries of literary terms. It does not appear in the vast studies, such as *STL*, ed. Sławiński (2008) or *Słownik rodzajów i gatunków literackich*, ed. Grzegorz Gazda and Słowinia

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368 Borkowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1979, no. 5, pp. 333–337; Zalewski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1979, no. 2, pp. 123–125.

369 Zalewski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1979, no. 2, p. 124.

370 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 23, pp. 22–23.

371 Kühn, *Literatura na Świecie* 1979, no. 5, p. 241.

Tynecka-Makowska (2006). Sierotwiński's dictionary (1986:189) gives the following explanation:

It [political novel] is related to the social novel, in which the mechanism of political life is presented in a particular place and time [...]. The variants of the political novel include those [...] showing the ways of gaining and exercising power as well as creating programmes (the protagonists are personalities who are involved in politics), those showing the practice and formation of political reality (the heroes are activists realising political programmes) and those reflecting in the background of political relationships, the fate of the governed, the formation of their political awareness as well as dependence on the conditions and transformations.

Among the Latin American writers, it was Vargas Llosa who was regarded as the author of political novel thus understood by the Polish critics during the boom. In particular, his *The Time of the Hero* was included in this kind of fiction.<sup>372</sup> The main theme of the novel was thought to be the picture of Peru in the 1950s, during the dictatorship of General Odría.<sup>373</sup> The narrow, schematic analyses, which were published in the 1970s, stated that the novel presented the behaviours of the political elites on the one hand, i.e. the political mechanism of the Latin American state, and on the other hand, the activities of the illegal political groups: the Aprista and the Communist Party.<sup>374</sup> What was also stressed was the authenticity of the political reality, shown, for example, in the descriptions of the methods used by the chief of the security services.<sup>375</sup>

The reviewer for *Nowe Książki* juxtaposed Vargas Llosa's work with the poor novel *The Seed in the Sand* by Volodia Teitelboim, which was omitted by other critics. The comparison was decisively better for the Chilean writer (sic!) since his writing technique should not become a real obstacle for the reader as it could be in the case of *The Time of the Hero*, described as "a gigantic crossword without any slogan":

Not comparing these two so different novels, it should be said that an average Latin American reader [...] will find it easier to understand Teitelboim's novel than the one by Vargas Llosa.

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372 Umiński, *Kierunki* 1976, no. 17, p. 10; Nyczek, *Echo Krakowa* 1974, no. 34, p. 4.

373 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1974, no. 18, p. 5; Nyczek, op.cit.; Wróblewski *Dookoła Świata* 1973, no. 49, p. 17.

374 Henzel, *Sigma* 1973/74, no. 7, p. 25.

375 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1974, no. 18, p. 5.

Teitelboim's book was appreciated for its "lack of over-revolutionary pathos and empty words,"<sup>376</sup> and that he became a symbol of a lifetime struggle for the Chileans.

*El secuestro del general* by the Ecuadoran writer Aguilera Malta was recognised as a political novel. The book depicts

a grotesque picture of "tasty democracy," typical of the police state in South America four centuries after its birth and long after the general political and economic collapse.<sup>377</sup>

According to this vision, representatives of the authorities satisfied their lowest instincts and greed, while the oppositionists were in prison. The grotesqueness of the novel was revealed in the caricatured construction of the portraits of the members of the ruling stratum, contrasted with the figures of the guerrillas having the significant names: Saint Peter, Our Lady and Jesus Christ. The world thus depicted appeared as black and white as well as schematic although the political context was to justify to a certain extent the artistic imperfectness of the work:

There is no doubt who and why should win in the end. This schematisation is obviously not a value of the book as a literary work, probably being a right form in the fight against the South American dictators.<sup>378</sup>

#### 4.6.4 *Novel of the Revolution*

The term "Novel of the Revolution" is understood as

a group of prose works, longer than an average short story, using the theme of fights run by the army and ordinary people, as well as political and social transformations resulting from the movements (peaceful or militant) in the revolution began by the uprising of Francisco I. Madero on 20 November 2010, its military stage could be considered as completed at the moment of the fall and death of Venustiano Carranza on 21 May 1920.<sup>379</sup>

The authors of this trend did not generally limit themselves to depict the military campaigns and the accompanying political transformations but analysed their backgrounds as well as psychological, philosophical and social results. Thus, one can recognise the novel of the Mexican Revolution as a local variant of the political novel.

376 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 5, p. 57.

377 Kolankiewicz, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1976, no. 12, p. 128.

378 Walc, *Literatura na Świecie* 1976, no. 7, p. 36.

379 Petry, "Powieść rewolucji meksykańskiej," *Życie Literackie*, no. 39, p. 14.



In Poland, several novels set in the Mexican Revolution were translated: *The Edge of the Storm* (*Al filo del agua*) by Agustino Yañez (1965), *The Underdogs* (*Los de abajo*) by Mariano Azuela (1973), *Here's to You, Jesusa* by Elena Poniatowska and *El tamaño del infierno* by Arturo Azuela (1977). In the Polish critics' opinions, the theme of the revolution seemed prevailing in the 20th century Mexican literature; its writers were even called "chroniclers of the revolution and at the same time, its thorough analysts."<sup>380</sup>

The reviewer for *Trybuna Ludu* suggestively wrote about *The Edge of the Storm*, focusing on the gloomy mood of the book:

Yañez depicts a city of "women in mourning black." The place is overwhelmed by the mood of musty water. The medieval sense of sin burdens all the forms of life there. The customs are also medieval. The retreats are accompanied by flagellation. People do not live but vegetate. The feelings, when they manage to break through the shell of superstitions and rigors, explode in madness. Even a love song is sung with the sound of the church bells. The sounds of political fights reverberate in this environment [...].<sup>381</sup>

The reviewers of *The Underdogs* generally praised the work, stressing the authenticity of the depicted events. The author, who was involved in the revolution as a physician in the army of Pancho Villa, presented the revolution without any ornaments and black and white divisions.<sup>382</sup> In turn, Arturo Azuela's achievement was to be his introduction of a representative of the low strata, playing the role of a true protagonist in history, into Mexican literature:

The Indian in Azuela's novel became a man of flesh and blood and not a beautiful, though slightly stupid, savage.<sup>383</sup>

The critics discussing Poniatowska's book stressed its unique construction, related to a report based on a tape recording,<sup>384</sup> thanks to which the authoress was able to cover the traces of her interference into the depicted world. However, incoherent stories form a harmonious whole, betraying that the collected material underwent some literary treatment.<sup>385</sup> At the same time, it was emphasised that Poniatowska's novel "is both an excellent literary image of the 50-year

380 Drohojowski, *Nowe Książki* 1969, no. 11, pp. 731–732.

381 Kwiecińska, *Trybuna Ludu* 1967, no. 116, p. 8.

382 Nyczek, *Echo Krakowa* 1973, no. 242, p. 4.

383 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 23, pp. 16–17.

384 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 16, pp. 12–13.

385 Borkowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1977, no. 11, pp. 333–339.

turbulent history of Mexico,”<sup>386</sup> and that “the Polish reader will benefit from it more than reading any textbook on Mexico’s history.”<sup>387</sup>

The book *El tamaño del infierno* was not positively received in Poland. It was described as a well-written novel, but epigonic, secondary and behind time. From the perspective of the Polish reader, who had the chance to read some good works about the Mexican Revolution, it did not have any specific cognitive values.<sup>388</sup>

The threads concerning the Mexican Revolution returned in a number of Fuentes’ works. Pałłasz regarded the disappointment of the results of the agrarian revolution of 1910 as a fundamental, even obsessive, theme of his literary output.<sup>389</sup> In *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, Jan Drohojowski discerned a revolt against “the exploiters of the revolution” who were personified in the dying hero.<sup>390</sup>

#### 4.6.5 Dictator novel

During the boom only two books that can be described as the dictator novel (*novela del dictador*) were published in Poland. These were *Reasons of State (El recurso del método)* by Carpentier (1980) and *The Autumn of the Patriarch (El otoño del patriarca)* by García Márquez (1981).

It seems astonishing that in the reviews of these works, reflections concerning their political dimensions were marginal. It is true that García Márquez’s novel was depicted as “a gigantic parabola of the Latin American dictatorship” and interpreted as an attempt to demythologise absolute power<sup>391</sup> and recommended to be read in its proper political context, which was Pinochet’s dictatorship.<sup>392</sup> Moreover, it was stressed that *Reasons of State* was not a description of a concrete situation but an attempt to synthesise a broader phenomenon.<sup>393</sup> However, other threads prevailed. The critics saw *The Autumn of the Patriarch* first of all as a mature work of magical realism.<sup>394</sup> They pointed to its elements of myth, such

386 Hamerliński, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1976, no. 42, p. 4.

387 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 16, pp. 12–13.

388 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 15, pp. 19–20.

389 Pałłasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 8, p. 9; id., *Kultura* 1973, no. 30, p. 9.

390 Drohojowski, *Nowe Książki* 1969, no. 11, pp. 731–732.

391 Krzemień, *Kultura* 1981, no. 13, p. 5.

392 Mroziewicz, *Polityka* 1981, no. 16, p. 13.

393 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 37, p. 11.

394 Krzemień, *Kultura* 1981, no. 13, p. 5; Wojciechowski, *Nowe Książki* 1981, no. 7, pp. 56–59.

as the age of the dictator and the indefiniteness of time in which the depicted events took place,<sup>395</sup> and the tragic dimension of the old general loneliness.<sup>396</sup> Similarly, Carpentier's novel served as a pretext for reflecting on the essence of magical realism.<sup>397</sup> The critics were much more interested in its relations with the Cartesian philosophy than in the political problems it depicted.<sup>398</sup>

#### 4.6.6 *Social accents*

Spanish American prose naturally related social issues to political matters, which was reflected in the critical texts written during the boom. The critics generally regarded the portrayal of society as an obvious value of a work.

A value of the novel is [...] its attempt of showing a broader perspective on the Venezuelan society: family relationships and traditions, professional and friendly relationships, illegal and as if accidental activities of the opposition, mechanisms of heavy-handed rule

– the reviewer for *Nowe Książki* wrote about the novel *La muerte de Honorio* by Otero Silva.<sup>399</sup> The value of *The Kingdom of This World* by Carpentier was determined by the fact that it could be interpreted as a novel about the political and social reality of the Latin American countries in general.<sup>400</sup> *Conversation in the Cathedral* by Vargas Llosa is “a broad social panorama”;<sup>401</sup> it should be praised for presenting a gallery of characters from different social strata: fraudsters, deviants, politicians, mestizos, revolutionaries, revolutionising students and starving Indians.<sup>402</sup> On the pages of *Miesięcznik Literacki*, Rutkowski demanded that García Márquez's works should be interpreted in the context of social-cultural conditions, otherwise any analysis would be reduced to pure aestheticism.<sup>403</sup> Kazimierz Żórawski included it to “social-political warring fiction.”<sup>404</sup> *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was seen as

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395 Pietrzak, *Trybuna Ludu*, 1981, no. 84, p. 5.

396 Pietrzak, *ibid.*; Wojciechowski, *ibid.*

397 Ogrodowczyk, *Nurt* 1981, no. 10, pp. 35–36.

398 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 37, p. 11; Karbowska, *Kultura* 1980, no. 36, p. 12.

399 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 16, pp. 15–16.

400 Kwiatkowski, *Nowa Wieś* 1976, no. 35, p. 9.

401 Henzel, *Sigma* 1973/74, no. 7, p. 25

402 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1974, no. 18, p. 5.

403 Rutkowski, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1978, no. 6, p. 127.

404 Żórawski, *Kultura* 1970, no. 43, p. 9.

sociological lecture embracing initially simple (family community) and then complex (feudalism, capitalism) social relationships seen through the prism of mythical consciousness.<sup>405</sup>

The societies of the Latin American countries appeared to the reviewers as deeply divided, the indicator of the drastic divisions being predominantly property. The division into the rich and the poor most frequently overlapped with the racial division, defined by the opposition: the White – the Coloured. For example, Arguedas' works were called "prose of a two-edged revolt, being the most distinct testimony of Peru's division into the world of the Indians and the White."<sup>406</sup> It could be a warning for the elites of the country since the Indians who had been pushed to misery were on the verge of their endurance:

The strings of the reality that are tight to their limits break time and time again because of the plundering of the salt, revolts of the coloni, women's riots and the epidemic of typhus.<sup>407</sup>

The critics even mentioned Arguedas' passion for local community activities originated from his personal experiences since he had spent his childhood among the Quechua Indians.<sup>408</sup> They also saw that the Peruvian writer was shocked to observe the destructive influence which the consumptive civilisation of the West began exerting on the Indian culture.<sup>409</sup>

Further, the picture of the divided Peruvian society was discerned in the novel *A World for Julius* (*Un mundo para Julius*) by Bryce Echenique. Its hero, young master Julius, began discovering the existence of two worlds: the world of his parents stuck in isolation – the Peruvian oligarchy, and the world of servants and labourers. In the Polish reviewers' opinions, Fuentes also depicted the Mexican society as being divided into two parts. In *Where the Air Is Clear*, the representatives of the highest social strata in Mexico were divided into "palaces and dung":

The first world is ruled by the desire to maintain property and by inaction. The other is completely involved in looking for better paid jobs or thinking of economic immigration.<sup>410</sup>

According to Rodowska, the Mexican writer

discerns his mission in fighting the relicts of the social and psychological situation left as the legacy of colonialism.<sup>411</sup>

405 Henzel, *Sigma* 1973/74, no. 7.

406 Mazur, *Nowe Książki* 1980, no. 10, p. 34.

407 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 47, p. 9.

408 Marzyńska, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 12, pp. 12–13.

409 Mazur, *Nowe Książki*, 1980, no. 10, pp. 34–35.

410 Pałasz, *Kultura*, 1973, no. 8, p. 9.

411 Rodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 12, pp. 9–10.

“The profound impression concerning social issues, based on the comprehensive knowledge of the fate of peasants, workers and miners’ fate”<sup>412</sup> was recognised as a characteristic of all contemporary Mexican works.

The critics’ attention was drawn to the fate of small local communities that were doomed to die as a result of economic transformations. The community depicted in Alegría’s novel *Broad and Alien Is the World* had to lose not because it did not want to be transformed but because becoming open to the world it began competing with the great landowner whose plantation was based on slave labour.<sup>413</sup> Scorza’s novel *Drums for Rancas* was

a complaint, full of bitterness and desperate irony, lodged on behalf of the Peruvian Indians who had been deprived of their place under the sun.<sup>414</sup>

The depicted world was ruled by the American capital and great landowners; those living in small villages, being obstacles for the landowner’s economic interests, had no chance in this conflict.

#### 4.6.7 Violence

Social tensions often lead to acts of violence. In the Polish reviews of the Spanish American prose of the boom, brutality and violence were frequently connected with politics as a function of specific social relations:

In the eyes of the Europeans, the whole of South America is a continent of violence. After all, its present is determined by politics that is not being manifested by party marches and declarations, but by police terror and conspiracy.<sup>415</sup>

Critics reviewing the trend of the Venezuelan literature of violence stressed the scenes of rapes, tortures and mutilation. They were shocked by the images of bestiality. The overload of scenes presenting all cruel details turned out to be counterproductive: instead of shock, the reader felt tired and oversaturated.<sup>416</sup>

The didactic *loci communes* in *Rajatabla* are full of bleeding victims, tortured fighters or (reversely) awful policemen and senile intellectualists. From this perspective, a special aesthetic category is shouting since it is known that what is loud is perceivable and in consequence, digestible – at all cost, certainly when it is repeated seventy-seven times.

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412 Drohojowski, *Nowe Książki* 1969, no. 11, p. 732.

413 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1975, no. 7, p. 2.

414 Mroziński, *Literatura* 1976, no. 2, p. 5.

415 Urbański, *Nowe Książki* 1979, no. 12, p. 38.

416 Śpiewak, *Literatura na Świecie* 1979, no. 5, p. 324.

– the critic for *Nowe Książki* wrote about the writing method of Luis Britta García.<sup>417</sup> The word “cruelty” also occurred in the reviews of books called novels of the Mexican Revolution.<sup>418</sup>

Extreme misery that the lowest social strata suffered was described in a naturalistic way. The childhood of the heroine of *Dead Houses* fell

on the period of the dying old world, and this dying looked horrible. Malaria, cholera, haematuria, fleas biting the feet, children’s swollen bellies, sallow and ulcerated skin of people who will probably die at night, plaster falling from collapsing houses and empty windows [...].<sup>419</sup>

Grudzińska, discussing the short story *El apando*, which Revueltas wrote in prison, admitted that she was shocked by the sickening scenes and vile language. The reviewer of *The Time of the Hero* was also disgusted with the language of the novel: he called Vargas Llosa’s book “a barrack pornography” and claimed that the number of vulgarisms could be reduced without any loss of its artistic value.<sup>420</sup> Rulfo’s prose was perceived as saturated with violence. The critics saw it as a streak of torment, escapes, hunger, ploughing fallow land and fighting with other people. In the critics’ opinions, there was “a smell of death” in the novel, which was also full of brutality and murders.<sup>421</sup> The world created by García Márquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* seemed to be marked by violence:

the understanding for human weaknesses and vices does not cover the cruelty and ruthlessness prevailing in the world of the relationships that the author reveals in a truly realistic way.<sup>422</sup>

The reviewers of *The Autumn of the Patriarch* were shocked by its cruelty, ugliness and drastic images.<sup>423</sup> Bereza called *The Obscene Bird of Night* by Donoso “a cosmogony of monstrosity” and a product of sick imagination.<sup>424</sup> Kühn also

417 Urbański, *Nowe Książki* 1979, no. 12, pp. 38–39.

418 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 23, pp. 16–17; Nyczek, *Echo Krakowa* 1973, no. 242, p. 4.

419 Żórawski, *Kultura* 1970, no. 11, p. 9.

420 Żukrowski, *Nowe Książki* 1972, no. 2, pp. 48–50.

421 Marrodán, *Nowe Książki* 1971, no. 12, pp. 780–781, Pluta, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1971, no. 30, p. 6.

422 Tremmer, *Trybuna Ludu*, 1974, no. 139, p. 8.

423 Krzemień, *Kultura* 1981, no. 13, p. 5; Pietrzak, *Trybuna Ludu*, 1981, no. 84, p. 5.

424 Bereza, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1975, no. 51–52, p. 4.

showed the specific cruelty of the writing vision of the Chilean author who, in his opinion, depicted horror as “*definiens* of human existence.”<sup>425</sup>

#### 4.6.8 Summary

The analysis of the critical texts concerning the Spanish American publications in Poland during the boom allows me to conclude that the political themes were often chosen by their authors. The presence of these problems was recognised as a characteristic of this prose. At the same time, it was pointed out that in Latin America, literature fulfilled not only artistic functions but also the publicist and propaganda ones; that it was “the voice of conscience,” which in the eyes of some reviewers justified the defects of writing technique.

Political threads were discussed from various perspectives. One can notice a clear tendency to comment on these issues from the perspective of the official line adopted by the Polish People’s Republic. In Spanish American works, many critics saw elements that were similar to the ruling ideological interpretation in Poland, such as the defence of the interests of the lower strata of society and fight against the imperialism of the United States. At the same time, in the Polish reviews there were no attempts to show the universal values of these works; on the contrary, their authors generally stressed the local context of the depicted events, i.e. the specific situation in Mexico, Cuba or Venezuela. It was silently assumed that what the protagonists of Spanish American novels and their authors fought for had already been achieved in Poland, and Polish readers were only to cheer the overseas combatants in their fight for the right cause.

The term “political novel” was relatively seldom used in the Polish reviews. It could have resulted from the fact that this genre did not develop in post-war Poland. Even nowadays, the dictionaries of literary terms mention *The Coming Spring* by Stefan Żeromski and *General Barcz* [General Barcz] by Juliusz Kaden-Bandrowski as examples of political novels. The “engaged” novels of the 1950s were unambiguously associated with socialist realism and pushy propaganda; hence it is no wonder that the reviewers did not refer to them as patterns of political prose. In result, one can hardly find a common denominator in the Polish critical texts as far as the discussion of the political themes depicted in Spanish American works is concerned. What was stressed was their local specific features and different experiences resulting from the social conditions that were fundamentally different from the Polish reality. Consequently, according to the

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425 Kühn, *Literatura na Świecie* 1976, no. 10, p. 277.

Polish critics, the politics presented in Spanish American literature was an area that was necessarily marked with rape and violence which were justified by the extremely unjustly constructed system based on the exploitation of the poorest social stratum originating from the indigenous people.

#### 4.7 The issue of Latin American identity

Another thread that the Polish critics discerned in the Spanish American prose published during the boom was the writers' reflection concerning the identity of the population of this continent:

The whole Latin American contemporary literature [...] is an attempt of self-identification, seeking the answer to the question: what does it mean to be an Argentinian, a Chilean, a Mexican, what does it mean to be a Latin American?<sup>426</sup>

According to the reviewers, Latin American writers saw the modern culture of their continent as an heir of two civilizational formations: European and South American, originating from the pre-Columbian cultures, from both the general and regional perspective. On the one hand, Latin America was discussed as a supra-regional cultural whole. On the other hand, elements of the native cultures were sought in the characteristics of the particular nations. Therefore, in the Spanish American works, the Polish critics saw the tension between the foundation, which was the existing culture, and the elements brought by the culture of Europe. Some books were interpreted as expressions of intellectual complexes towards Europe, which was recognised as a characteristic of Hispanic literature.<sup>427</sup> Since Europe was treated as the most important point of reference to which writers had to define themselves so that their works were not described as provincial:

It is a matter of cultural spaces – the relation between the province and the capital. For these writers who wanted to overcome the frames of regionalism it was not enough to limit themselves to local realism or local myths. And none of them dared to turn their backs on the European culture.<sup>428</sup>

The opposition between Europe with its capital in Paris and Latin America, whose centre was to be New Cordoba, was seen at the foundation of the structure of Carpentier's novel *Reasons of State*. In the novel, the European culture

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426 Kühn, *Literatura na Świecie* 1976, no. 10, p. 286.

427 Nowakowska, *Literatura na Świecie* 1973, no. 11, p. 377.

428 Bernat, *Nowe Książki* 1979, no. 23, p. 20.



personifying Reason was presented in a distorting mirror; its grotesqueness was revealed when it reached the least Cartesian continent. The Cuban writer appeared as a fighter of the recognition of the value of his home culture.<sup>429</sup> In the first part of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the critics saw the destruction of the myth of Europe. García Márquez was to capture the specific character of the relationships between Latin America and the outer world.<sup>430</sup> In turn, in her article bearing the meaningful title “Hispanic Europe,” the reviewer for *Nowe Książki* presented Cortázar as an artist standing between two cultural models.<sup>431</sup>

In the critical texts, the repeated term was “a melting pot of cultures” referring to Latin America.<sup>432</sup> As a result of the impact of so different factors, a completely new quality, incomprehensible by the outer observers, was to be created. And so, for instance in Francisco Rojas González’s *El diosero*, the reviewer found

literarily and sociologically interesting analyses of Indian behaviours and attitudes which may seem strange and unclear to the white, simply constituting the heritage of the pre-Columbian and Spanish tradition and culture.<sup>433</sup>

However, for other critics, the specific culture of Latin America, reflected in literature, was not an obstacle to its reception, but constituted its unique artistic values. As an unprecedented achievement of Asturias in *Legends of Guatemala*, the critics considered the awareness of the duality of heritage that led to a lasting weave of two cultures: indigenous and European.<sup>434</sup> It was stressed that exoticism did not make the book hermetic because it is possible to “discern the signs of universality in the diverse forms of the myth-creating imagination.”<sup>435</sup>

The thread of discovering cultural roots was especially frequent in the reviews concerning Fuentes’ works. In *Where the Air Is Clear*, the critics saw first of all the constant search for national identity.<sup>436</sup> The fate of the protagonists of this novel and the allegedly accidental scenes provided a synthesis and created Mexico’s legend,

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429 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 37, p. 11.

430 Komorowski, *Nowy Wyraz* 1977, no. 1, p. 100.

431 Bojarska, *Nowe Książki* 1977, no. 6, p. 66.

432 Komorowski, *Życie Literackie* 1979, no. 37, p. 13

433 Bujwid-Konopka, *Nowe Książki* 1978, no. 18, p. 53.

434 Skłodowska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1980, no. 23, p. 11.

435 Godlewski, *Literatura* 1980, no. 19, p. 12.

436 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 2, pp. 11–12

its pre-history and history influencing the heroes' awareness, making them astonishingly non-authentic, stubbornly seeking some confirmation of their Mexican or Spanish identity.<sup>437</sup>

Contemporary Mexicans were to bear the curse of the raped mother's children (*hijos de la Chingada*). According to the critics, Fuentes presented them as victims of a sexual relationship between an Indian woman and a white invader; its figure was to be the relationship between Hernán Cortés and his Aztec lover Malinche.<sup>438</sup> The complex of "malinchism" seemed to be a prevailing and at the same time driving factor of Fuentes' prose.<sup>439</sup> However, the greatness of the Mexican writer was testified by the fact that he managed to give a universal dimension to the local problems and conflicts.

Fuentes combines the realities of everyday life and the layer of myth, the past and the present in order to raise the problems of the city and country to the highest level of generalisation in the wonderful final scene,<sup>440</sup>

– was written about *Where the Air Is Clear*. Fuentes' Mexico appeared to be a peripheral country, "a country of snobbish elites, sinister rites of Indian and Spanish origin, a country seeking its own face."<sup>441</sup>

The articles dedicated to Borges' prose focused on the dual aspects of his inspirations: local and European. It was shown that his Argentinian character was combined in a natural way with his cosmopolitanism.<sup>442</sup> His prose was to refer to *gaucho* literature.<sup>443</sup> As it contained such a big number of motives taken from European culture, Borges' works were defined as apocryphal.<sup>444</sup> He was called a Gallophile, but his desires to redefine Argentinian literature were related to his negation of French literature, which had influenced his prose for a long time.<sup>445</sup> At the same time, the critics saw his opposition to any attempts of canonising the gauchoesque saga *Martín Fierro* as the most important paradigm of the Argentinian national literature.<sup>446</sup> Buenos Aires depicted in *The*

437 Chołodowski, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1972, no. 47, p. 4.

438 Drohojowski, *Nowe Książki* 1969, no. 11, pp. 731–73, Pałasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 30, p. 9.

439 Rodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1973, no. 12, pp. 9–10.

440 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 8, p. 9.

441 Chołodowski, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1972, no. 47, p. 4.

442 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1975, no. 32, p. 8.

443 Borkowska, *Literatura* 1981, no. 44, p. 12.

444 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1981, no. 4, pp. 68–69.

445 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1975, no. 10, pp. 36–37.

446 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 2, p. 3.

*Book of Sand* had the characteristics of a universal city, but it also preserved its specific realities.<sup>447</sup>

#### **4.8 The picture of Spanish American prose in the reviews of the boom**

The reviews of Spanish American prose published in the Polish press in the 1970s show the critics' attempts to interpret the otherness that launched a massive attack on the Polish publishing market. The otherness had many aspects. Firstly, there appeared books from a land that in Poland had not been known as a place where literary works were produced. Hence, describing this phenomenon, the critics used the aforementioned terms "continent without novelists" or "explosion from nothingness." As the number of these books was large, the critics and readers had to face over a hundred new names of authors and several times bigger titles of their works in a relatively short time. Naturally, the works did not have the same artistic value, and besides excellent books there were mediocre or even poor ones. That fact escalated the confusion, the more that the number of experts in Latin American culture and literature was small in Poland in those days.

Secondly, Spanish American prose featured a world the knowledge of which was poor in Poland. An average Pole had second-hand information about Latin America, and it was not always reliable. Knowing that, the critics tried, with a better or worse result, to play the roles of guides concerning the culture and literature of the continent that were little known. The task was difficult and should not be fulfilled only by providing historic, biographic or bibliographic data. Yet, sometimes even such sparse data could not be given due to the lack of access to reliable sources.

The strangeness of the world depicted in Spanish American prose did not correspond to the stereotype of exoticism that functioned in Poles' awareness. In the reviews written in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, the critics attempted to find that stereotype but soon discovered that the image of that world did not relate to the common picture of the reality that was described as exotic. For that reason, this concept was gradually redefined in reference to Spanish American literature. Its indicators were those "flying grandmothers" and various kinds of phenomena, which from the European perspective were regarded as paranormal. The works depicting a reality that differed from ours but were devoid of those features appeared to be "reversely exotic."

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447 Pałłasz, *Kultura* 1973, no. 2, p. 3.

The horizons of the Latin American authors and Polish readers coincided to a small extent, which was reflected in the reviews. The inability to match the elements of the depicted world with the possessed knowledge or even the images was a serious obstacle to understand and interpret Spanish American works. Everything seemed alien, commencing from the scenery that was stunning but also horrifying through the system of values that the Europeans could not understand, to people whose appearance and clothing were different and who behaved in a strange way and celebrated unfamiliar rituals.

According to the Polish reviewers, Spanish American prose was full of political and social accents. However, the problems that were essential to the inhabitants of the Green Continent turned out to be difficult to understand from the Polish perspective since their historic context was unknown. Attempts to interpret these problems through tools related to the political propaganda of those times flattened and trivialised the real conflicts and at the same time led to making allowances in the evaluation of particular works. Thus, there were tones of compassion and solidarity with those wronged by fate, but the causes of their tragedies seemed so strange that they made it impossible for the readers to identify themselves with the protagonists. What was emphasised was the locality of the conflicts that were inscribed in the historic background. On the other hand, the critics did not look for any universal dimension of this prose.

In the analysed reviews, one can hardly find any reflections on the identity of the Hispanics. From the Polish perspective, this issue seemed rather uninteresting.

What else struck us was that in the critical texts, Spanish American prose appeared as a literature depicting important but difficult problems concerning big or small communities. The reviewers very seldom saw the problems of individuals, perhaps with the exception of the reviews concerning some books written by Cortázar and Carpentier. This image of Spanish American prose was yet another barrier that made it difficult for readers to understand it: they find it easier to identify themselves with concrete people rather than with ideas.

The analysed reviews testify to the fact that in the 1970s, the Polish critics saw Spanish American literature as a phenomenon that was alien, incomprehensible and difficult to describe. Sometimes they expressed their helplessness straightforwardly. Now it seems that a certain way to familiarise this otherness was their strenuous efforts to refer Spanish American prose to the trends present in the world literature and to confront it with the works that had already existed in the readers' awareness. When the critics found it difficult to see any universal dimensions in the problems and scenery of the particular works, they tried to discover them in the purely literary, formal characteristics of this prose. Their

tools of formal analyses were to be effective means to describe and familiarise the unknown phenomenon. Yet, the tools were generally insufficient. This could have been the reason why, as Elbanowski (1980:302) shown, the Polish reviewers, facing a phenomenon that they could not comprehend and for whose reception they were not prepared, often repeated opinions of international experts. The lack of their own views on Spanish American prose and their repeated judgements of which the Polish critics were so frequently accused must have resulted from their ignorance and lack of courage to seek new instruments of literary analysis.

## 5 Polish critical texts concerning Spanish American prose in 1982–1989

In the 1980s, the number of critical texts concerning Spanish American prose considerably decreased, which was the obvious consequence of the collapse of the publishing market. Only those Spanish American works that the editors managed to include in their earlier plans were published. New positions, even those written by renowned authors, appeared sporadically. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, there was a decrease in the number of magazines, which brought about a smaller number of literary reviews. Moreover, a large group of journalists refused for various reasons to collaborate with the officially published periodicals. Consequently, even the works of those authors who were favoured by critics, such as Cortázar or García Márquez, did not have many reviews.

During the discussed period, *Czytelnik* published a collection of critical texts entitled *Ojcowie i ojcobójcy. Szkice o literaturze Ameryki Łacińskiej* [Fathers and Patricides. Sketches about Latin American Literature] by Jerzy Kühn (1984), embracing interesting texts about the greatest personalities and the most important literary issues of Latin America. It was actually the only book written in Polish that could be used as a guide to Latin American prose for several years.<sup>448</sup>

Some reviewers, for whom time seemed to stop, did not see the publishing crisis and decrease of readers' interests in Spanish American prose. The changes of the context of the reception of this prose, caused by the political transformations in Poland at the early 1980s, did not influence the way of perceiving Spanish American prose. In the mid-1980s, one could still see arbitrary opinions that in Poland the interest in Spanish American literature was timeless,<sup>449</sup> and that every

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448 Only in 2010, a history of Latin American literatures written by two Polish authors Ewa Łukaszyk and Nina Pluta was published.

449 Rudzińska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1984, no. 25, p. 12.

new book was worth noting.<sup>450</sup> The critical texts most frequently focused on the same threads as during the boom. There were no new interpretative proposals, either.

Just as in the texts published in the 1970s, the Polish reviewers saw that Latin American writers strongly emphasised the formation of the culture of their continent by two powerful civilisations: local and European. In the critics' opinions, the origin of the contemporary American culture was the fundamental thread of reflection concerning the Hispanic identity in Fuentes' works:

So Fuentes – as usual – reflects on the specificity of the New World, still dreaming about a harmonious synthesis of the cultural, pre-Colombian and Christian characteristics, which was difficult to achieve.<sup>451</sup>

Carpentier was seen as someone balancing on the verge of two civilisations. In common understanding, the European heritage brought learning, erudition, concern for the reliability of facts and respect for authorities to Latin America. The New World was rather associated with dynamism, spontaneity and irrationalism. However, this did not mean that the European settlers contributed only great values:

The ballast of Europe, which Carpentier ridiculed [...], turns out to be the only guarantee of rescuing fundamental values against the pressure of unbridled instincts, greed for material gain, rape and terror. These instincts crawled out of the stuffy cabins of the first conquerors of America.<sup>452</sup>

The problem of identity, yet from a slightly different perspective, was stressed in the reviews of the short story by the Puerto Rican José Luis González *The Night We Became People Again* (*La Noche que Volvimos a Ser Gente*). The most important problem the heroes faced was to preserve their cultural identity despite the danger of the direct expansion of the Anglo-Saxon culture.<sup>453</sup>

The social reality of Latin America still appeared to be divided by the opposition: the White – local people or the Black. For instance, in Aguilera Malta's novel *Don Goyo*, the critics saw a warning against the possessiveness of the White and the Creoles who lived at the cost of the indigenous people and the Black living in tragic conditions in the Ecuadorian province.<sup>454</sup> The image of the similarly

450 Rudzińska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1984, no. 3, p. 12.

451 Pałasz, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1984, no. 7, pp. 146–147

452 Krasicki, *Opole* 1983, no. 6, p. 29.

453 Olszewski, *Tu i teraz* 1983, no. 35, p. 10.

454 Pałasz, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1984, no. 15, p. 12.

divided Guatemala from the times of Manuel Estrada Cabrera's dictatorship was noted in *Viernes de Dolores* by Asturias.<sup>455</sup> These books were defined as protest literature containing the accusation of the economic and political system, books whose task was to reach people's conscience.

In the articles concerning the novel *I, the Supreme* (*Yo, el Supremo*) by Roa Bastos, the reviewers stressed its epic dimension and concern for historic realities, sometimes trying to inscribe the book in the present political context. However, the reviewer for *Życie Literackie* claimed directly that the problems discussed in the novel were strange for the Polish reader:

the re-evaluation of the figure of the dictator has no essential value for us since very few people know the nuances of Paraguay's history.<sup>456</sup>

The presence of social themes was still one of the indicators of the positive evaluation of books, for example, *Viernes de Dolores* was recommended for its reflections on social problems, along with political and economic issues.<sup>457</sup> A value of *The Angel of Darkness* by Sábato was that one could read the book as a sociological study of the whole country.<sup>458</sup> Social threads were indicated as an important element of José Donoso's prose.<sup>459</sup> *Compadre Lobo* by Gustavo Saínz presented a panoramic picture of the Mexican society.<sup>460</sup>

The critical texts still used the term "exoticism" although it appeared decisively less frequently than in the 1970s. In the review of *Don Goyo*, the term referred to fishermen and peasants living in the Ecuadorian islands.<sup>461</sup> It was used not to refer the reader to the stereotype exoticism but rather in the peripheral sense, to describe what was distant, not necessarily geographically, but culturally and mentally – and thus alien to us. A similar function was attached to this term in the commentary on *Viernes de Dolores*, which "astonished us by its exoticism and originality of the presented plebeian community."<sup>462</sup> Moreover, the critics did not often use the term "magical realism." For instance, it was used to discuss Donoso's novel *This Sunday* (*Este domingo*):

455 Pałasz, *Miesięcznik literacki* 1984, no. 8–9, pp. 225–227.

456 L.B. *Życie Literackie* (rubryka „Między książkami”) 1982, no. 25, p. 15.

457 Dumin, *Tu i teraz* 1983, no. 45, p. 10.

458 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1988, no. 24, p. 6.

459 Horodyńska, *Nowe Książki* 1985, no. 1, pp. 114–115.

460 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1986, no. 1, pp. 21–22.

461 Pałasz, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1984, no. 15, p. 12.

462 Dumin, *Tu i teraz* 1983, no. 45, p. 10.

in the realistic world of facts there are certain gaps through which another world born from the author's over-inflated imagination and the magical folk mythology is breaking.<sup>463</sup>

Among the themes that the critical texts emphasised more than in the previous decade was *machismo*. Poniatowska's *Dear Diego* (*Querido Diego, te abraza Quiela*) was recognised as an interesting contribution to the discussion of this phenomenon because of its analysis of the role of women in strengthening this pattern of masculine behaviour.<sup>464</sup> In the book *Kiss of the Spider Woman* by Puig, *machismo* was shown as the foundation of the Latin American social model in which the cult of masculinity reached its apogee.<sup>465</sup> In turn, Gustavo Sainz in *Compadre Lobo* treated this pattern with an ironic distance and re-validated it.<sup>466</sup>

In numerous reviews of the 1980s, we can find traces of theoretical reflections on the discussed books. For instance, according to a certain critic, *Distant Relations* by Fuentes can be included partly in the convention of science-fiction, and partly in the detective story.<sup>467</sup> The novel reminded another reviewer of the scheme of a Gothic novel.<sup>468</sup> Roa Bastos' books were described in a general way: *I, the Supreme* was, according to the critic for *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, a novel that is "formally innovative"<sup>469</sup> but that innovativeness was not precisely defined. Similarly, the works included in the volume *Kurupi and Other Stories* were characterised by "versatility and formal *maestria*."<sup>470</sup> *On Heroes and Tombs* by Sábato was intriguing with its many-layered plot set in several layers of time, while the novelty of *The Angel of Darkness* appeared to be its constant weaving of three tricks: a theatre in the theatre, a novel about creating a novel and a kind of a live diary.<sup>471</sup> *Kiss of the Spider Woman* by Manuel Puig was particular because of its unique, devoid of a single narrator, construction consisting only of dialogues and monologues.<sup>472</sup> The author perfected his technique thanks to his

463 Borkowska, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1985, no. 4, p. 147.

464 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1987, no. 10, p. 127.

465 Borkowska, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1985, no. 3, p. 135.

466 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1986, no. 10, p. 21.

467 Pałasz, *Miesięcznik literacki* 1984, no. 7, p. 146, Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1983, no. 11, pp. 28–29.

468 Rudzińska, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1984, no. 3, p. 12.

469 Pałasz, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1982, no. 22, p. 12.

470 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1985, no. 4, p. 79.

471 Pałasz, *Kultura* 1988, no. 24, p. 6.

472 Borkowska, *Miesięcznik Literacki* 1985, no. 3, pp. 134–137.



experience gained in film editing.<sup>473</sup> His most important inspirations were to be the patterns of mass culture. In her critical texts, Borkowska tried to use a rather unclear category “Latin Americanness”: “*Son of Man (Hijo de hombre)* is more Latin American than *I, the Supreme* and also than the short stories in the volume *Kurupi*.”<sup>474</sup> However, it was a single attempt to make Latin American prose a separate genre ruled by laws that differed from the known genres functioning in the world prose.

Skłodowska was one of the few critics who in the 1980s noticed trends that differed from the specific poetics of the exemplary works of the boom and from magical realism. In *Distant Relations*, which is “already far beyond the circle of the boom,” she discerned symptoms of the changes: Fuentes, considerably limiting his formal tricks and choosing a more traditional construction, stopped trying to be original:

*Distant Relations* has been written for the reader who prefers an interesting intrigue over the complexities of form although the author’s cultural and metaliterary obsessions have been skilfully interwoven in the narrative.<sup>475</sup>

In a similar way, his earlier book *The Hydra Head* was

not only another variant of reflections on the Mexican nature and the third world [...], but first of all “a thriller” whose hero is a Mexican technocrat.<sup>476</sup>

Skłodowska also mentioned the generational change in Mexican prose. The group of younger writers, such as Gustavo Sainz, José Agustín or Juan Pacheco, creating the La Onda trend, worked out a programme devoid of reflections on the Mexican or Latin American identity and of the effects of the revolution, drawing inspirations from mass culture and using a colloquial language. La Onda destroyed “the temple of literary ceremony” as well as undermined the institutionalised vision of nation and revolution in Mexican literature.<sup>477</sup> According to Skłodowska, the novel *Compadre Lobo* by Sainz was

a synthesis of the tendencies spread in the latest prose written on this continent, prose created increasingly more commonly outside the circle of magic and fantasy, and understood in a human and not exotic dimension.<sup>478</sup>

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473 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1984, no. 10, p. 130.

474 Borkowska, *Miesięcznik Literacki*, 1986, no. 4, p. 127.

475 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1983, no. 11, p. 28.

476 *ibid.*

477 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1986, no. 10, pp. 21–22.

478 *op. cit.*, p. 22.

Similar observations can be found in the reviews included in the anthology of the Argentinian short stories *Każdego lata* [Every Summer] published in 1988. The critics saw “a new face of Argentinian literature” in them,<sup>479</sup> manifested in the rejection of magical realism in favour of new forms of expression.<sup>480</sup> The works of writers who debuted in the 1960s and 1970s, though embracing diverse themes and styles, seemed to be much humbler and more tranquil.<sup>481</sup>

The tone of the reviews published in the 1980s remained friendly and full of approval. Even if some reviewed work did not evoke enthusiasm, its cognitive values, essential from the perspective of the Polish reader, were stressed, like in *The Afternoon of the Dinosaur* (*La tarde del dinosaurio*) by Cristina Peri Rossi. This little book was recognised as noteworthy since

it enriches our knowledge of Uruguay literature and widens our Hispanic horizon of translation by including the genre of narrative poetry.<sup>482</sup>

Similarly, *Kurupi and Other Stories* by Roa Bastos added Paraguay to the literary map of Latin America.<sup>483</sup>

Jan Marx broke away from the unanimous choir of lovers of Spanish American prose. He intended to build his image of a critic on his anti-Hispanic attitude, which he accepted as his programme. “I would like to break away from the bad tradition of praising everything what has the sanction of official greatness”<sup>484</sup> – he declared openly. In the text, assumed to be dedicated to Donoso’s novella *Hell Has No Limits*, he made a ruthless attack on the phenomenon of the boom which in his opinion was,

artificially created and had little to do with true formal-artistic values of the writing of this geopolitical region. It was first of all the sale of exoticism; the Latin Americans simply managed to convince European and American critics who were blasé and bored with their native formal refinements to praise folklore and ethnography.<sup>485</sup>

Unfortunately, Marx never explained which formal-artistic values of Spanish American literature he regarded as true. Additionally, the positive acceptance of the boom in Poland was to result first of all from the fact that “as a rule the

479 ba, (the section “Regał z książkami. Latynoski”), *Kontynenty* 1989, no. 8, p. 29.

480 Sowińska, *Życie Warszawy* 1988, no. 260, p. 7.

481 L.B., the section “Między książkami,” *Życie Literackie* 1988, no. 28, p. 15.

482 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1984, no. 8, p. 85.

483 Skłodowska, *Nowe Książki* 1985, no. 4, p. 77.

484 Marx, *Kultura* 1987, no. 50, p. 11.

485 Marx, *Kultura* 1988, no. 43, p. 15.

reviews of Latin American prose are written by translators, and so, those are interested in its promotion,<sup>486</sup> which was obviously false.

According to Marx, *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* by García Márquez was trash for indiscriminate readers, a kind of a tabloid which fed them a chronicle of accidents. It was full of unjustified erotic descriptions and acts of cruelty.<sup>487</sup> As for *Hell Has No Limits*, he regarded it as a boring, with an over-complicated plot, story about a lowly brothel.<sup>488</sup>

Borges' works remained disturbing. However, any attempts of their re-evaluation led to negate their right to be called literature. For some critics, Borges was still a compiler:

Borges' writing has something of an exclusive, snobbish game, something compiled from rebuses, complicated, metaphysical crosswords, something related to playing solitaire games.<sup>489</sup>

The Argentinian writer's erudition was to cover his inability to face the reality, to face real life:

Dazzling readers with books is good for the nouveau riche; truly metaphysical writing, for example, of Kafka or Beckett, do not need any support and mock-up as it draws from life and reality.<sup>490</sup>

Summarising, the critical texts of the 1980s widened the Polish reader's horizon about Spanish American prose only to a small extent. They did not bring any fresh views or new interpretative perspectives. They generally repeated the threads and opinions that had already been known in the previous decade.

## 6 Critics about Spanish American prose after the transformation (1990–2005)

### 6.1 Introductory notes

The number of critical texts is obviously connected with the number of publications which critics are to review. As already signalled, in the early 1990s, the editors seemed to forget Spanish American literature, as if making a silent assumption that its popularity in the previous decades was some ephemeral

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486 Marx, *Kultura* 1988, no. 43, p. 15.

487 Marx, *Kultura* 1987, no. 50, p. 11.

488 Marx, *Kultura* 1988, no. 43, p. 15.

489 Karasek, *Literatura* 1989, no. 6, p. 55.

490 Ibid.

fashion. Hence, this period witnessed no articles dedicated to this literature in the press. A gradual return of Spanish American prose to the Polish publishing market brought about the critics' interest and a bigger number of publications. In those 15 years, articles and mentions of Spanish American works appeared in dailies, opinion-forming weeklies, magazines for different receivers, and naturally, in periodicals dedicated to cultural and literary issues. The number of the latter was quite big, but some of them were local, sometimes they were ephemeral – only a few issues were published.

Investigations concerning this problem were very difficult due to incomplete bibliographical sources. The most reliable and comprehensive data concerning texts dedicated to literature can be found in the Polish Literary Bibliography (Polska Bibliografia Literacka), accessible online; however, it stopped being updated in 1996. One can also use the Index to Periodicals (Bibliografia Zawartości Czasopism) that is updated on an almost on-going basis. Yet, this catalogue embraces only selected non-scientific periodicals: the dailies – *Rzeczpospolita* and *Gazeta Wyborcza*; the opinion-forming weeklies – *Polityka*, *Wprost*, *Przegląd Tygodniowy* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*, and does not cite any texts published in colour magazines, including the so-called women's press. As far as literary periodicals are concerned, the catalogue cites them only if they have been submitted as legal deposit to the National Library. Consequently, it is not possible to gather an exhaustive corpus of critical texts concerning Spanish American prose published in 1990–2005. Nevertheless, it seems that a corpus consisting of over one hundred press publications should be a representative corpus to signal new tendencies.

In the first period of the return of interest in Spanish American literature, works of the greatest stars of the Polish boom (the dead writers Borges, Cortázar and Carpentier as well as those still active: García Márquez, Fuentes and Vargas Llosa) were published in Poland. In those years and slightly later, the reviewers' attention was drawn exclusively to novelties. They omitted the books of the same authors that had been published earlier, unless they appeared within series aiming at consolidating or establishing a literary canon.<sup>491</sup> Books written by authors who Polish readers did not know, published in the mid-1990s, were noticed only sporadically. Some of them had one or two reviews, others – none. In these cases, literary critics, according to Sławiński's definition, acted as a sieve, introducing certain works into the literary circulation only to a minimal extent, whereas some works were doomed to be forgotten.

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491 I will return to that later on.

There was a generational change of critics dealing with Spanish American literature. In the new period, there were still some critics who had reviewed this prose during the boom, for example Komorowski and Bugajski, but new names prevailed.

During the discussed fifteen years, the texts dedicated to Spanish American prose included considerably more cross-sectional articles than in the previous periods. The time distance obviously favoured in-depth reflections on issues that stopped evoking emotions.

Moreover, the character of the reviews changed fundamentally. The biggest change was probably that the critics stopped seeing Spanish American prose as an extraordinary phenomenon: this prose became a normal element on the map of the world literature. In Poland, it stopped being treated as a literature enjoying special rights. The critical texts did not contain any didactic objectives, which was so characteristic of the boom. The critics did not feel obliged to complete the gaps of readers' knowledge, assuming that they had already gained some information, or in case they had not, assuming that during the period of electronic communication the proper sources were commonly accessible and everyone could gather indispensable information. Thus, in contemporary reviews, we did not generally come across a short history of any national literature or writer's biography. This attitude could have resulted from the acceptance of a different perspective, which did not assume that profound knowledge of the circumstances of the origin of a literary work was needed to experience it.

At the same time, the authors of critical texts stopped attempting at all cost to adhere Hispanic works to a particular literary genre. They also stopped being obsessed with juxtaposing Spanish American works with other, renowned works of European and American writers. Spanish American prose, also from the Polish perspective, began to appear as an autonomous phenomenon, not requiring any justification through its alleged similarities to other works.

The fundamental changes on the publishing market caused that the reviews assumed a more commercial character. As already mentioned, demand on valuable literature exceeding its supply was over. It was considerably more difficult to sell books, especially foreign fiction.<sup>492</sup> The editors tried to reach readers who were interested in various kinds of literature, thus their offers became very rich. The reviewers, aware that their opinions could influence the decisions of potential buyers, generally focused on listing advantages and disadvantages of

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492 I have written about the phenomena on the Polish publishing market in Chapter two, section 9.

the discussed works, giving up their roles of guides to foreign cultures. An interesting aspect of the critical texts of the 1990s was their remarks about the functioning of the emerging book market.

Summarising, in the critical texts of 1990–2005, the cognitive function was considerably reduced as compared with the reviews of the 1970s. The evaluating elements were the top priority. The most important aim of the critics was to encourage, or discourage, readers to buy or simply read a certain book.

## 6.2 Borges, Cortázar, Carpentier: the dead stars of the boom in contemporary criticism

Cortázar, who died in 1984, stopped being the favourite of the Polish critics after 1989, which was testified among other things by the decisive decrease in the number of articles dedicated to his works. The reeditions of his books were seldom reviewed in non-specialist press. He was rather mentioned in literary papers, such as *Odra* and *Literatura na Świecie*. Sometimes these papers published translations of his prose. The reviews of his works were usually short, and their authors presented only the main topics of his works. From time to time, especially when the reviews were written by the critics who belonged to the boom generation, one could observe a sort of nostalgia for the time when Cortázar enjoyed unconditional recognition,<sup>493</sup> revealed even in the title of the note concerning the reedition of *Cronopios and Famas* “The reedition of the cult.”<sup>494</sup> Larger texts about Cortázar’s works could be found in scientific periodicals, including *Nowa Krytyka*, *Ameryka Łacińska* and *Pro Libris*. However, their range was very limited. *Ameryka Łacińska*, edited by CESLA, which was to discuss various aspects of the culture of this continent, is not to be found in most libraries. Thus, its impact can be hardly compared with the popularity of *Kontynenty* or *Poznaj Świat*, which were sold in every press kiosk during the times of the Polish People’s Republic. The authors of the younger generations, who published in these periodicals, focused on Cortázar’s concept of game.<sup>495</sup>

Out of the dead writers whose books became known in Poland during the boom, Borges was in the focus of the critics. The author of the note, published

493 Varga, *Gazeta o Książkach* 1993, no. 9, p. 3.

494 Gondowicz, *Gazeta o Książkach* 1993, no. 10, p. 4.

495 See for example Krupecka, “Gra z czytelnikiem – program literacki i jego realizacja w twórczości Julia Cortazára.” *Ameryka Łacińska* 2005, no. 2. pp. 51–65; Markiewicz “Model gry w układach literackich Julia Cortazára.” *Nowa Krytyka* 2005, no. 18, pp. 141–150.

in *Gazeta Wyborcza*,<sup>496</sup> concerning the seminar on Borges organised by ZAIKS (Polish Society of Authors and Composers) in 1992, reminded readers that he was one of the writers who had fascinated Polish translators in a special way. It was calculated that Borges' works had appeared 952 times in 46 papers in Poland till 1992; some of his works were even translated eight times. His texts were translated into Polish by 38 people!

Borges belonged to the small circle of Hispanic prose writers whose works were published in book form as early as in 1990. That year the Publishing House Przedświt<sup>497</sup> prepared a volume of Borges' texts written in various periods, which was the first edition of his works after his death. Although almost every aspect of his works – commencing from his metaphysical search to his style of writing rendered by the translator in a way that evoked respect – arose admiration, the editorial aspect raised objection.<sup>498</sup> According to the reviewers, the volume was not professionally edited; it was not even proof-read before going to print. Accordingly, it contained stylistic, typing and factual errors.<sup>499</sup> The editor was also criticised after publishing the collection of Borges' books entitled *Historie prawdziwe i wymyślone* [True and Invented Stories]. Now criticism concerned the gangster policy of Muza which combined the short stories from the collections *Fictions* and *The Aleph and Other Stories* in one volume under one title and put information in the footer that it was the first edition. Thus, Musa undermined the efforts of the previous editors and misled potential readers who looking at the title could have thought that they would receive Borges' new, unknown works.<sup>500</sup> The volume did not have any information about the copyright although the copyright did not expire seven years after the writer's death.

The ignorance concerning the legal aspects of an edition could condemn a book to artistic absence in extreme cases, which happened with Borges' *Eseje zebrane* [Collected Essays] translated by Sobol-Jurczykowski. The reviewer for *Odra* was evidently amused by the complexities of the editorial process of this volume:

“[...] the editor is the firm “Lobos,” which I do not know, while “Talleres Barcelona” was responsible for the printing. Now you see what's happening! Spaniards

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496 jagon, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1992, no. 119, p. 9.

497 In 1982–89, Przedświt was an independent editor publishing literature in “clandestine circulation”; this literature could not be published officially. Since 1990 the company has been managed by Markiewicz.

498 P.M. (untitled), *Tygodnik Literacki* 1990, no. 6, p. 13.

499 Gumkowski, *Ex Libris* 1990, no. 1, p. 7.

500 *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1993, no. 46, p. 11.

(sorry – Catalonians!) are printing Polish translations of Argentinian writers, intended for our market.<sup>501</sup>

However, because of the copyright the book could not be distributed in Poland and became inaccessible.

In 1990–2005, the reviews of the volumes of Borges' prose, both the reeditions and first Polish editions, included threads that had been known from the critical texts of the 1970s and 1980s. And so the critics wrote that for Borges, reality was a mirror of what all kinds of books contained; that he avoided current matters in order to deal with issues that had been part of culture for many millennia<sup>502</sup>; that he was a philosopher rather than a writer<sup>503</sup> and that he blurred the borders between truth and fabrication.<sup>504</sup> They praised his erudition and unmistakable style.<sup>505</sup> Beside the enthusiasts of his writing, there were critics who did not appreciate his works because they still regarded him predominantly as a pretentious compiler:

I admit shamefully that I have been fooled. The repetitiveness of the threads, the overuse of Great Words, the all-present phantasms of the Babel Library and the Book made me see an attempt to make time invalid instead of noting in them a *reductio ad absurdum* of Plato's discourse.<sup>506</sup>

In the 1990s, in various periodicals, including the scientific ones, several interesting articles about the writing of the Argentinian author were published. For example, Elbanowski,<sup>507</sup> referring to Gérard Genette's conception, created a typology of Borges' own prologues and enumerated their most important functions. He also paid attention to the fact that the prologues constituted an integral part of the collections composed by the writer although they were so interesting that could be treated as autonomous works. Radosław Piętka, using the classical rules of rhetoric, analysed Borges' selected short stories looking for the means of persuasion in them.<sup>508</sup> Ziętara focused on the Argentinian context of his writing, which was usually omitted by Western critics.<sup>509</sup> In her very

501 Szelegejd, (bt), *Odra* 1999, no. 11, pp. 112–113.

502 Szumlewicz, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1997, no. 3, p. 10.

503 Stawiszyński, *Czas Kultury*, 1998, no. 3, pp. 123–125.

504 Cichowicz, *Twórczość* 2001, no. 4, pp. 129–132.

505 Gondowicz, *Nowe Książki* 2000, no. 3 p. 42.

506 Komendant, *Twórczość* 2002, no. 4, pp. 57–64.

507 Elbanowski, "Jorge Luis Borges. Sztuka przedmowy," *Acta Philologica* 1992, no. 20, pp. 143–172.

508 Piętka, *Meander* 2004, no. 3–4, pp. 257–264.

509 Ziętara, "Borges niepoprawny," *Magazyn Literacki* 1999, no. 8–9, pp. 9–10; Ziętara "Borges przedmiejski," *Literatura na Świecie* 2000, no. 3, pp. 320–327.



thorough and subtle analysis of “Averroës’s Search” (*La busca de Averroes*), Mroczkowska-Brandt showed Borges using the mechanisms of intertextuality to undermine the knowability of the world.<sup>510</sup>

Most critics did not draw attention to Carpentier’s writing. *La consagración de la primavera*, published in Poland twenty years after its appearance on the market, was noticed only by those who remembered the boom. Komorowski discussed the autobiographic background and origin of the work, i.e. that the work was a literary response to the memories of Anaís Nin, who identified the revolutionary inclinations of her Hispanic friends with the manifestations of *machismo*.<sup>511</sup> In turn, Bugajski recalled the author as the creator of the term “magical realism” and enumerated the characteristics of his prose. He did not forget to mention that the book expressed optimism concerning the future of the Cuban revolution.<sup>512</sup>

### 6.3 García Márquez, Fuentes, Vargas Llosa: the older and present works of the stars of the boom from the perspective of literary criticism

#### 6.3.1 *Gabriel García Márquez*

The writers who were younger than those described in the previous section and whose prose appeared in Poland slightly later than the works of Carpentier and Cortázar, and who were still using their creative powers, were heroes of quite a large number of critical texts in 1990–2005. Among them, a special place was occupied by García Márquez who seemed to play a similar role as Cortázar in the 1970s and 80s, who was almost ignored by the critics after the boom. “Márquez’s novels influence me like a drug,” confessed one of the reviewers of *Love in the Time of Cholera*.<sup>513</sup>

Out of the great boom for Hispanic literature that swept over Poland some twenty years ago only Márquez remained. And so did Borges. The rest of the eminent writers from those places: Onetti, Bastos, Llosa, Cortázar, Fuentes, Donoso, Lima and dozens of others, did not endure twenty years (provisional test of eternity)

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510 Mroczkowska-Brandt “Intertekstualność w służbie wyobraźni. Jorge Luis Borges – *Dociekania Awerroesa*,” *Ruch Literacki*, 2002, no. 4–5, pp. 467–474.

511 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1997, no. 11, pp. 27–28.

512 Bugajski, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1997, no. 27, p. 20.

513 Zaworska, *Nowe Książki* 1994, no. 9, p. 49.

– wrote Pilch,<sup>514</sup> having different opinions than the editors who had not avoided publishing the books of Cortázar, Fuentes and Vargas Llosa, and who were thus evidently meeting the readers' expectations.

The reviewers noticed the reeditions of García Márquez's works, even those that were not his bestsellers. Their commentaries that were only short notes were not very innovative: we read that *In Evil Hour* was a preparation for a masterpiece and that

the extraordinary power of Latin American magical realism was the magic of description, its unique vividness and tangibility.<sup>515</sup>

It was also noted that in the new times, the writing of García Márquez wore out. The works that had functioned in common awareness as a literature of particular high artistic values, elaborate literature, were published in pocket series on poor quality paper.<sup>516</sup>

*One Hundred Years of Solitude* was the subject of reflection in many critical texts. This book was also reviewed by authors belonging to the younger generation. Yet, if anyone had expected them to look for a new interpretative key to García Márquez's *opus magnum*, he would have been disappointed. Their texts emphasised the influence of the grandparents' stories on the Columbian writer's imagination and provided the explanation of the term "magical realism" as well as the way García Márquez used this technique:

prosaic realities and historic facts freely mix with supernatural phenomena and incredible events;<sup>517</sup>

Miraculousness, magic, dream, fairy tale... All the terms, contributing to the many-layered construction of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* ...<sup>518</sup>

We learnt about the cyclic nature of the time presented in the novel, about the fate hanging over the inhabitants of Macondo, about the curse of the title loneliness, about the use of biblical motifs, about the suspension of the principle of probability, and finally, of course, about its affinity to Faulkner's prose.<sup>519</sup> Therefore, it was a catalogue of motifs occurring in the Polish critical texts concerning García

514 Pilch, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1993, no. 34, p. 14.

515 Varga, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1995, no. 88, p. 10.

516 Pieszczyk, *Życie Warszawy* 1995, no. 165, p. 7.

517 Kulak, *Polonistyka* 2003, no. 6, p. 336.

518 Rudzik, *Polonistyka* 2006, no. 1, p. 44.

519 Likowska, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1996, no. 38, p. 12; Rudzik "Sto lat bezbożności" *Polonistyka* 2006, no. 1, pp. 44–47; Kulak, *ibid.*, pp. 334–339.

Márquez's prose for over twenty years, which now sounds banal. After reading these articles one can have the impression that contemporary readers could not find any new content in the works of the Columbian writer, that his time has passed and that his books, once bestsellers, are now covered with a thick layer of dust.

However, the market data contradicted that image. The 1990s were a period of catching up with García Márquez's prose which had not been published due to the editors' crisis in the previous decade. In 1993, PIW gave readers *The General in His Labyrinth*, which had its first edition in 1989; while in 1994, Muza edited *Love in the Time of Cholera* (nine years after the original edition) and – *Strange Pilgrims* (three years after the first edition). The publication of the Polish translation of *Of Love and Other Demons* (1996) appeared only two years after the Spanish premiere. Then Polish readers could follow García Márquez's works almost just after they had been written: *News of a Kidnapping* (*Noticia de un secuestro*, 1997) was published a year after its first edition, the writer's autobiography *Living to Tell the Tale* (*Vivir para contarla*, 2004) – less than two years, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* (*Memorias de mis putas tristes*, 2005) – a year later. All of these books aroused the Polish critics' interest.

The first new book by García Márquez, *The General in His Labyrinth*, published after a ten-year break, was favourably received by the critics. They hurried to assure the fans of his writing that the Columbian writer did not break with magical realism,<sup>520</sup> and “they will see all the characteristics of his style and poetic imagination in the book.”<sup>521</sup> The novel was described as a historical reportage about the last days of Bolívar.<sup>522</sup> Pilch saw it as another version of *The Autumn of the Patriarch*:

[...] in that novel, the mythical figure of the Dictator was wildly multiplied, but in *The General*, the writer's untamed imagination tries to subject itself to the historical rigours.<sup>523</sup>

However, in the 1990s, the unwritten principle of praising García Márquez or any writer coming from Latin America ceased to exist. Although positive evaluations prevailed in the reviews, they were not produced by a unanimous choir of flatterers. *Love in the Time of Cholera* enthused most critics, but some were disappointed that it was not another masterpiece and that the writer “is

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520 Kurek, *Odra* 1994, no. 10, pp. 105–106.

521 Skórzyński, *Nowe Książki* 1993, no. 12, p. 56.

522 Skórzyński, *Nowe Książki* 1993, no. 12, p. 56.

523 Pilch, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1993, no. 34, p. 14.

not here – unfortunately – a shaman from magical Macondo.”<sup>524</sup> The book surprised readers with its optimism which García Márquez had not showed earlier, and with, first of all, its move away from the formula of magical realism to a realism that was close to the 19th century novel.<sup>525</sup> It was “rather nostalgic realism, evoking the aura of the colonial epoch,”<sup>526</sup> revealed in the chronicle’s conscientiousness in registering daily details that assumed miraculous features in García Márquez’s writing.<sup>527</sup> For all of the critics, the book was predominantly a remarkable story about love, an alternative to the story of Romeo and Juliet in which the romance stereotypes were reversed.<sup>528</sup> Some clarified that the universality of the Columbian author’s writing depended on the exotic decoration providing the setting for stories whose protagonists could be anyone regardless of the latitude they lived at. Since violent emotions and dependence on the course of history are experiences that are common for all people:

Unfortunately, one cannot read it with relief that it happened a long time ago, far away, and we are living in other lands and at other levels. [...] We can discover ourselves in these love stories as we discover ourselves in an unhappy absurd history.<sup>529</sup>

The volume *Strange Pilgrims* proved to be more controversial. For some it contained twelve novel masterpieces testifying that “Márquez’s writing is unquestionably beautiful, timeless.”<sup>530</sup> For others it was a slightly disappointing collection,<sup>531</sup> uneven, “several interesting little stories showing that being Hispanic is completely different than being European.”<sup>532</sup> The reviewers considered the disillusionment about Europe as the prevailing motif.<sup>533</sup>

The critics’ expectations towards García Márquez’s next works were best illustrated by the statement of the reviewer for *Wiadomości Kulturalne*:

When a writer creates something like *The Tin Drum* or *One Hundred Years of Solitude* before he gets very old, he only has problems afterwards and must constantly compete against himself.<sup>534</sup>

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524 Księżyk, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1994, no. 8, p. 20.

525 Pieszczyk, *Życie Warszawy*, 1995, no. 165, p. 7.

526 Pluta-Podleszańska, *Dekada Literacka* 1994, no. 12–13, p. 13.

527 Ziarkowska, *Odra* 1995, no. 3, pp. 97–98.

528 Varga, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1994, no. 143, p. 10.

529 Zaworska, *Nowe Książki* 1994, no. 9, p. 50.

530 Varga, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1995, no. 244, p. 13.

531 Reanimator, *Nowa Fantastyka* 1996, no. 3, p. 72.

532 Bugajski, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1996, no. 11, p. 20.

533 Milewska, *Nowe Książki* 1996, no. 3, pp. 24–25.

534 Bugajski, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1996, no. 43, p. 20.

The same critic wrote about *Strange Pilgrims* that it could be regarded as excellent “if it is evaluated independently of what we know about its author’s writing.”<sup>535</sup> His attitude towards *Of Love and Other Demons* was similar. Speaking highly of its style and composition reflecting the mood of the fall of a certain cultural formation, he noted that it was devoid of breadth and narrative tension.<sup>536</sup> Some reviews of this novel show how difficult it was to write something original about García Márquez’s works. We read in these reviews that the author drew an intriguing image of the colonial world tossed about by contradictions and embracing complex ethnic relations, the problem of racism, the question of slavery and the role of the Church; that the author found the final source of creative inspiration in the Caribbean and that one could feel the heat of the tropics flowing from the book...<sup>537</sup>

Diverging evaluations were also given by the Polish reviewers to *News of a Kidnapping*, in which, in some critics’ opinions, the penetration of the Columbian reality “under the pen (laptop?) of the master assumed the proportion of a metaphor – so broad that it could embrace the whole world,”<sup>538</sup> while according to others, the novel contains a shallow, naïve and sometimes even suspicious moralising.<sup>539</sup> Abandoning the convention of magical realism in favour of “press realism,” despite the reliability of journalistic skills, turned out to be unconvincing.<sup>540</sup>

García Márquez’s autobiography was recommended to his fans as an exciting reading.<sup>541</sup> Wyka paid special attention to this work proving that it was governed by the same laws as the literary fiction created by the author. She defined it as “a self-portrait novel” in which the writer again showed his mastery:

Márquez [...] unfolding before our prying eyes all of his colourful technique as an outstanding writer, thus avoided the readers’ intrusive curiosity. His skills absorb us so much that we have no desire to ask the writer indiscreet questions.<sup>542</sup>

*Memories of My Melancholy Whores* was appreciated for its unconventional view on eroticism<sup>543</sup> and

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535 Bugajski, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1996, no. 11, p. 20.

536 Bugajski, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1996, no. 43, p. 20.

537 Wojcieszak, *Nowe Książki* 1996, no. 9, pp. 29–30.

538 Warszawski, *Odra* 1996, no. 7–8, pp. 124–125.

539 Rosiak, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1997, no. 4, p. 6

540 Górski, *Polityka*, 1997 no. 39, p. 62.

541 Sobolczyk, *Nowe Książki* 2004, no. 10, p. 40.

542 Wyka, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2005 no. 8, insertion to “Książki w Tygodniku,” pp. 2–4.

543 Pindel, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2004, no. 280, p. 15.

for its polemic with the version of love as a kind of therapy against loneliness and alienation, which is common in our civilisation.<sup>544</sup>

García Márquez was also in focus of some publications that were not directly connected with his literary works. These texts concerned among other things his biographies published in Poland: *Gabriel García Márquez* by Dagmar Ploetz<sup>545</sup> and *Gabriel García Márquez: El viaje a la semilla* by Dasso Saldívar.<sup>546</sup> Much paper and ink was used to investigate the origin of the writer's strange, friendly relationships with Fidel Castro or Pablo Escobar. Many a time, a publication of a book dedicated to some fragment of García Márquez's biography, e.g. *Fidel and Gabo (Gabo y Fidel: el paisaje de una amistad)* by Angelo Esteban and Stephanie Panichelli,<sup>547</sup> was a pretext to discuss these matters. One of the reviews had a meaningful title "My friend executioner."<sup>548</sup> Looking over the current press, one could have the impression that the non-literary aspects of the writer's life became more interesting than his works.

### 6.3.2 Mario Vargas Llosa

As in the case of García Márquez's writing, the works of Vargas Llosa which had not been published in the previous decade appeared in Poland in the early 1990s. In 1992, after an eleven-year delay, PIW published *The War of the End of the World*. In the same year, the Publishing House TENTEN released *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta*, seven years after the first edition. *In Praise of the Stepmother* was published in 1993 by Muza, a five-year delay, while in 1995, Rebis edited the novel *Who Killed Palomino Molero?* that was published for the first time nine years earlier. The same publishing house introduced the translation of *Death in the Andes* in 1997, after a four-year delay. *The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto* was published by Muza in 1999, which was only a two-year break after the publication of the original, and so was *The Feast of the Goat (La Fiesta del Chivo)*, whose relatively quick publication (2002) Polish readers owed to Rebis. The next translations of Vargas Llosa's books appeared about two years after their first editions, which should be regarded as a reasonable date considering the time that

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544 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 2005, no. 8, pp. 36–37.

545 Nowacka, *Nowe Książki* 1997, no. 11, pp. 36–37; Krassowski, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1997, no. 33, p. 21.

546 Łubieński, *Nowe Książki* 2001, no. 11, p. 31.

547 Domosławski, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2006, no. 295, p. 14

548 Masłoń, *Rzeczpospolita* 2006, no. 75, p. A12; Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 2007, no. 1, pp. 50–51.

translators needed to do their renderings of books that were often quite thick and of high artistic values.

The novels of the Peruvian writer enjoyed constant interests of the critics. Their reviews appeared in dailies, opinion-forming weeklies and periodicals dedicated to culture. Sometimes these were long articles and sometimes only short notes, e.g. in the cultural “Menu” of the weekly *Wprost*, where we can find the information entitled “Wysokie loty Llosy” [Llosa’s high flights]:

Mario Vargas Llosa deserved a Nobel a long time ago, and only the members of the Swedish Academy know the reasons why he has not received it yet. The author of *Conversation in the Cathedral*, in his latest book *The Feast of the Goat*, takes us to the Dominican Republic. The plot concerns the last days of the dictator’s life. This time again, Llosa uses his unique rhythm of narration that the critics describe as “others write books, whereas he writes literature.”<sup>549</sup>

The editors cared for the promotion of Vargas Llosa’s books inviting him to Poland. For example, in 1998, he was a guest during the 43th International Book Fair in Warsaw. That year Rebis published *Death in the Andes*. This book and *Who Killed Palomino Molero?* were Vargas Llosa’s most appreciated works out of those published in 1990–2005 by the Polish reviewers. *Who Killed Palomino Molero?* was praised mainly for the tricks that were typical of a thriller and for presenting Peru’s important problems.<sup>550</sup> *Death in the Andes* was recognised as one of the most important works of Vargas Llosa, depicting the most valid and essential issues of his homeland: the sources of terrorism.<sup>551</sup> At the same time, it was seen as one of the author’s best books that:

has everything what can be looked for in a novel: a sensational plot, a moving love affair and a charming hero whom we could encounter again soon. A vision of history and judgement concerning politics were interwoven in the action.<sup>552</sup>

In the reviews of his other novels, the author’s excellent technique was stressed, for instance the polyphonic narrative in *The War of the End of the World*,<sup>553</sup> the elaborate construction in *The Feast of the Goat*, showing parallel stories of the protagonists<sup>554</sup> or the juxtaposition of Paul Gauguin’s biography and

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549 *Wprost* 2002, no. 48, at <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/36369/36369/?I=1044>, 10.05.2010.

550 Ziarkowska, *Odra* 1997, no. 7–8, pp. 125–126, Wojcieszak, *Nowe Książki*, 1996, no. 3, pp. 24–25.

551 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1998, no. 5, pp. 10–11.

552 Potok-Nycz, *Czas Kultury* 1998, no. 3, pp. 121–123.

553 Ciupek, *Dekada Literacka* 1993, no. 20, p. 8.

554 Ziętara, *Polityka* 2002, no. 24, p. 55.

Vargas Llosa's grandmother in *The Way to Paradise*.<sup>555</sup> The critics noted the recurrent motifs and themes in Vargas Llosa's books, such as setting the action in a military environment and describing its pathology,<sup>556</sup> political questions,<sup>557</sup> the clash between the relics of the pre-Columbian civilisations and the present,<sup>558</sup> the impossibility of establishing a clear border between truth and invention, like in literature, like in life.<sup>559</sup> Sometimes the cultural otherness of the depicted world was stressed, for example in the review of *Who Killed Palomino Molero?* called "a magical crime story":

Since such a book could have been written by a writer coming from that cultural circle, a world where crime of jealousy is morally justified, while love has a more complicated dimension, which is at the same time deeply rooted in the quasi-religious context.<sup>560</sup>

Vargas Llosa's works of a purely entertainment character *In Praise of the Stepmother* and *The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto* were evaluated as decisively less significant by the Polish reviewers.

In the Polish press, Vargas Llosa was discussed not only as a writer. The media noticed his role as a politician, for example when he competed for the position of Peru's president,<sup>561</sup> and as an expert and commentator on world politics, e.g. when he praised the Spanish king for his strong statement concerning Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez during the Latin American summit in Chile in November 2007.<sup>562</sup>

### 6.3.3 *Carlos Fuentes*

The reception of Fuentes' works after 1990 was at first similar to those of García Márquez and Vargas Llosa: catching up with his latest works. In 1994, his three novels, including two older ones, were published in Poland. *Czytelnik* published

555 Sarzyński, *Polityka* 2003, no. 50, pp. 70–71.

556 Wojcieszak, *Nowe Książki*, 1996, no. 3, pp. 24–25; Ziarkowska, *Odra* 1997, no. 7–8, pp. 125–126.

557 Pąckiński, *Nowe Książki* 1992, no. 5, pp. 29–30; Merta, *Tygodnik Solidarność* 1992, no. 12, p. 16; Suska, *Życie Warszawy* 1995, no. 305, p. 8; Lektor, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2002, no. 23, p. 13.

558 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 1998, no. 5, pp. 10–11; Żuliński, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1997, no. 26, p. 11; Ziarkowska, *Odra* 1997, no. 7–8, pp. 125–125.

559 Wojcieszak, *Nowe Książki*, 1996, no. 3, pp. 24–25; Górny, *Znak* 1994, no. 4 469, pp. 141–144; Karpińska, *Wprost* 1992, no. 16, p. 66.

560 Varga, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1995, no. 266, p. 12.

561 *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1990, no. 84, p. 7; *Trybuna Ludu* 1990, no. 100, p. 4.

562 Stasiński, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2007, no. 271, p. 13.



*The Hydra Head* (first edition in 1978), whereas *Rebis – A Change of Skin* (1967). The collection of essays *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World* (*El espejo enterrado*), a relatively new book since written in 1992, was published by the Łódź-based Publishing House Opus. In its review, Fuentes was called “a hero of one hundred faces” who “with an equal easiness creates various kinds of prose, monumental and chamber.”<sup>563</sup> The critics saw *A Change of Skin* as old-fashioned and pretentious, though written with passion and pain.<sup>564</sup> The accumulated writing techniques and artistic means were not seen so much as evidence of Fuentes’ virtuosity but rather as elements that made the reading of the book difficult.<sup>565</sup> Similar accusations were made towards *The Buried Mirror*<sup>566</sup> although it was also stated that the irritation resulting from mixing mythology and cultural areas, the use of vocabulary of various register types, the author’s showing off his eloquence and his inclination to use the teacher’s persuasion were essential ingredients of artistic experience while reading Fuentes’ prose.<sup>567</sup>

The critics carefully followed the next editions of the Mexican writer’s works. Yet, they did not evoke the same enthusiasm as his books published in the 1970s and the 80s. The reviewers showed their impatience with the recurrent motifs of his writing. *The Years with Laura Díaz* (*Los años con Laura Díaz*) was described as

another variation on the obsessive themes of Fuentes’ writing: issues determined by the Aztec heritage, the epoch of the Spanish conquistadors and the contemporary history of the identity of Latin American culture [...], the problem of the course as well as moral and political consequence of the Mexican Revolution [...], finally – the image of Mexico City [...].<sup>568</sup>

Fuentes was suspected of flattering readers’ tastes. *Diana: the Goddess Who Hunts Alone* was called “hunting for a *bestseller*.”<sup>569</sup> In this novel, “a leftist soap opera,” the critics saw two persistent sins of Latin American literature: Europe-centrism expressed in the author’s showing off his erudition and summarising the European ideas and “philosophisings,” and anti-Americanism resulting from the complex of a big neighbour.<sup>570</sup> The thread of defining identity was perceived as hermetic:

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563 Ziarkowska, Kurek, *Odra* 1995, no. 12, pp. 112–114.

564 van Purmer, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1995, no. 4, p. 20.

565 Milewska, *Nowe Książki* 1995, no. 2, pp. 48–49.

566 Pankiewicz, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1995, no. 38, p. 21.

567 Komorowski, *Nowe Książki* 2002, no. 9 pp. 6–7.

568 Brzostowska, *Nowe Książki* 2001 no. 8, pp. 42–43.

569 Ziętara, *Literatura na Świecie* 1999, no. 3, pp. 280–283.

570 Pieczara, *Nowe Książki* 1998, no. 5, pp. 12–13.

our troubles with reading this book resemble those of Mexican readers if they were given a book about the problem of the national identity of the inhabitants of Silesia or Masuria, torn between their Germanness and Polishness.<sup>571</sup>

His political involvement, also expressed in his prose, was not convincing for all the critics. *The Crystal Frontier* (*La frontera de cristal*) was “magical journalism”; the writer seemed not to know which role he wanted to play: an elaborate writer or an interim publicist. “Why using magic where humble publicist concreteness would be more effective and understandable?”<sup>572</sup> asked the reviewer for *Gazeta Wyborcza*.

#### 6.4 New names

Out of the writers who were unknown in Poland before 1990, the most popular one was the Chilean Isabel Allende. Her books appeared in 1990–2005 as many times as twenty-five! She belongs to the younger generations of Hispanic artists. She debuted in the 1980s. Her first book translated into Polish was the novel *Of Love and Shadows*, edited by the Kraków-based *Oficyna Literacka* in 1991, seven years after the original had appeared. One had to wait long for the next publication of her books. They were published by Muza. Some titles were reedited, which proved their popularity.

The Polish critics saw Allende as an heiress of the boom, someone who had learnt magical realism in the Venezuelan Caribbean.<sup>573</sup> In her prose

the jungle – together with the power of the ancient names, faith in magical rituals and exuberant, sinless eroticism – is still alive and breathes among the monuments of modern civilisation.<sup>574</sup>

Works “originating directly from the Latin American tradition of magical prose, coloured with the characteristic irrationalism related to the Caribbean region” and having social changes in the background were bound to succeed.<sup>575</sup> Hence Allende’s books were defined as well-written page-turners,<sup>576</sup> classic “middle literature”<sup>577</sup> and “a response to the ordinary need to read, serving

571 Bratkowski, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1999, no. 191, p. 8.

572 Bratkowski, *ibid.*

573 Zakęs, *Odra* 1993, no. 3, pp. 67–69.

574 Beszczyńska, *Nowe Książki* 2001, no. 7, pp. 34–35.

575 Varga, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1996, no. 190, p. 9.

576 Kropiwiiec, *Dekada Literacka* 1992, no. 8, p. 9.

577 Varga, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1996, no. 190, p. 9.

jolly amusement.”<sup>578</sup> However, the female reviewers saw the essential difference between her prose and the magical realism of the boom: her protagonists were mainly women, which made Allende part of feminist literature. Her feminism was evident in her proud emphasis on women’s otherness, most fully expressed through sex, eroticism and sensuality.<sup>579</sup> The authoress

says what the patriarchal culture recognised as non-verbalised – first of all, maternity and its motherly attitude towards the world and creativity.<sup>580</sup>

Allende’s books were seldom reviewed by men. If they were, attention was paid to completely different elements. For Jacek Zychowicz, *The House of the Spirits* (*La casa de los espíritus*) was predominantly a political novel that could satisfy demand for this genre, absent in the Polish contemporary literature:

its social contents impress with perspicacity, and even sometimes they seem to still – or allusively, as one wishes – apply in our reality.<sup>581</sup>

All the critics stressed the autobiographic elements in the prose of the Chilean authoress<sup>582</sup> and her extraordinary gift of narrating which she sometimes shared with her heroines: “the story restores things their proper dimensions, while people the sense of dignity and fulfilment.”<sup>583</sup>

The revelation of the beginning of the new millennium was another Chilean writer – Luis Sepúlveda. In 2002–2005, the Publishing House Noir sur Blanc published five titles of this author: *Diario de un killer sentimental & Yacaré* (2002), *Patagonia Express* (2003), *The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly* (2002),<sup>584</sup> *Mundo del fin del mundo* (2003) and *Desencuentros* (2005). The first volume of his prose published in Poland included two short stories being a pastiche of a crime novel, which were called “pearls.”<sup>585</sup> The critics liked “the mood

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578 Myszkowska, *Nowe Książki* 1999, no. 12, pp. 48–49.

579 Beszczyńska, *Nowe Książki* 2001, no. 7, pp. 34–35.

580 Szumlewicz, *Literatura* 1999, no. 1, p. 59.

581 Zychowicz, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1996, no. 42, p. 20.

582 Szumlewicz, *Literatura* 1999, no. 1, pp. 58–59; Brzostowska, *Nowe Książki* 2002, no. 3, p. 29.

583 Myszkowska, *Nowe Książki* 1999, no. 12, pp. 48–49.

584 This book was published in Poland in 1997 by Muza.

585 Szczerba, *Książki w Dużym Formacie*, insertion to *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2002, no. 219, p. 18.

of magic and mysterious exoticism<sup>586</sup> as well as his reporter's eye for details and skill to describe them.<sup>587</sup>

The Mexican bestseller *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel enjoyed considerable popularity in Poland as well. The premiere of this specific novel, mixed with a cookbook, and firstly distributed in sections, took place together with the premiere of a film having the same title on 17 December 1993.<sup>588</sup> The premiere evoked mixed feelings of the reviewers. In the novel, some saw only stereotypes known from the prose of magical realism, the function of which can be reduced to ornaments:

In the love story by Esquivel [...], fantasy threads have been introduced, and the unreal is interwoven with the real; however, what has been created is not an integrated, poetic vision of the world, but a little work full of poetic decorations; these ornaments have been reduced to the function of evoking a certain mood, constituting the background of an exalted sentimentalism.<sup>589</sup>

The novel was described as “an ersatz of a cookbook and an ersatz of literature” that lacks the Hispanic soul, and the Mexican protagonists made the impression of being Americanised Hispanics.<sup>590</sup>

Once there was a literature for cooks. [...] Now the times have changed. Cooks write books from their kitchens that bubble with life, while the intelligentsia admire their wonderful ideas.

– the reviewer for *Nowe Książki* commented with malicious remarks.<sup>591</sup> According to some other reviewers, magical realism was present in Esquivel's novel as citations, and the convention of a romance was taken in ironical brackets. The book gave both intellectual entertainment and proven, though exotic, recipes.<sup>592</sup>

The other books of Latin American writers published in Poland in 1990–2005 were reviewed sporadically. Most of them were not noticed at all. Attention was directed to several novels written by the Cubans who could hardly be called ‘favourites of the regime.’ Pedro Juan Gutiérrez, living in Cuba, but publishing his works in Spain, intrigued the reviewers with the journey “to one of the last land of the fallen utopia,” described in *Dirty Havana Trilogy* (*Trilogia sucia de La Habana*):

586 Smoleński, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2005, no. 56, p. 14.

587 Kwiatkowska “Zapiski z podróży życia” *Nowe Książki* 2004, no. 5, p. 15.

588 Masłoń, *Rzeczpospolita*, 1993, no. 295, p. 4.

589 Łeńska-Bąk, *Literatura Ludowa* 2004, no. 4–5, p. 69.

590 Kofta, *Nowe Książki* 1994, no. 4, pp. 53–54.

591 Kofta, *Nowe Książki* 1994, no. 4, p. 53.

592 Ziętara, *Polityka* 1994, no. 3, p. VII.

Everyone and everything are painfully authentic. Thanks to Gutiérrez, I again was taken to Havana, found the little streets, squares, pubs and people's behaviour I had known before.<sup>593</sup>

In his books, the critics saw the writer's unconditional love of Cuba's capital, even when the city was ruined after fifty years of the communist rules.<sup>594</sup> Politics was pushed to the background. The function of the metaphor of the social-political sphere was fulfilled by descriptions of natural phenomena, such as cyclones that devastated the island.<sup>595</sup> In *Tropical Animal (Animal Tropical)*, the writer made the "dirty" culture of salsa, defining Cuba, clash with the sterile culture of bolero, identified with Sweden or Europe in general. The critics were shocked by the "unbridled eroticism" of his prose;<sup>596</sup> "if one cannot speak well of the regime, one should draw the joy of life from sex."<sup>597</sup> Yet, not all of the critics seemed to be convinced by such an approach towards the intercultural contrasts:

When the macho spreads his charm, which is not self-ironic enough only in Cuba, this unnecessary novel defends itself in some way. Unfortunately, in the middle of the novel, Pedro Juan, the artist who was known and censored in the island (proven charm of a dissident), goes to the seminary to... Stockholm. This is a graceful theme since there are no two cities that are so different from each other like Stockholm and Havana. Thus, if someone wants to know all the ways in which a fiery, uncompromising and sexually liberated Cuban shows that he is classier than the Swedes who are choked with their conventions – *Animal Tropical* will be irreplaceable.<sup>598</sup>

The press also focused on the Cuban authoress Zoé Valdés. Yet, critics more often wrote about her as a dissident than a writer.<sup>599</sup> The authors of the notes for *Gazeta Wyborcza* saw the grotesqueness of the descriptions of the post-revolutionary everyday life in Cuba<sup>600</sup> and mentioned the spirits of the past from which the immigrants could not free themselves.<sup>601</sup>

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593 Domosławski, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2004, no. 58, p. 12.

594 Uglik, *Czas Kultury* 2006, no. 5–6, pp. 21–22; Sobolczyk, *Nowe Książki* 2005, no. 8, p. 38.

595 Domosławski, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2004, no. 58, p. 12.

596 Uglik, *Czas Kultury* 2006, no. 5–6, pp. 21–22.

597 Sobolczyk, *Nowe Książki* 2005, no. 8, p. 38.

598 Grzymiński, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2005, no. 84, p. 18.

599 For example, this role was stressed in a large interview published in *Wysokie Obcasy* (2005, no. 5, pp. 10–15), in which the writer spoke about her childhood and youth in Cuba, immigration despite her will, surveillance by the agents of Castro's regime.

600 Nowak, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1999, no. 153, p. 21.

601 RFK, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, insertion "Co jest grane," 2004, no. 265, p. 20.

## 6.5 Summary

The collected material, though incomplete, allows us to note that in 1990–2005, as far as Spanish American prose is concerned, the reviewers' attention focused both on the living and dead writers who had won popularity during the boom. This was hardly surprising since their subjects of interest were the current works of García Márquez or Vargas Llosa. The other authors, popular during the boom, were mentioned in articles or notes summarising their literary outputs, often published after their deaths, as it was the case of Onetti.<sup>602</sup> Yet, the brand of Latin American literature itself was not sufficient to attract the Polish critics' attention. This was testified by the divergence between the number of published books of authors who had not been known earlier, and the number of reviews dedicated to them. Many writers whose literary talents were evident remained unnoticed.

The literature of Latin America lost its status of novelty and uniqueness in Poland and other countries. The critics got used to its presence in publishing announcements and in bookstores. At the same time, it stopped being the latest fashion and its knowledge did not guarantee a social success any longer. Spanish American prose was commented on just like other works originating in countries known on the map of world literature. Therefore, the critical texts did not contain any special themes or threads that would be reserved for Spanish American literature.

In the reviews of the works that the critics noted, one could discern some nostalgia for magical realism, which evidently met the readers' expectations. The use of this technique was stressed in the reviews concerning the bestsellers in Poland, i.e. books written by Allende, Esquivel and Sepúlveda. Apart from them, of interest was Cuban prose, but not the one that was promoted by the Cuban authorities in the 1970s and 80s, but the one created by dissidents or by writers in exile. This situation created the impression that the realities of the relics of the communist system touched some strings of the Polish critics' sensitivity in a special way. At the same time, it could be noted that in spite of the stereotype spread in Poland, magical reality was not the only theme of Spanish American prose:

Obviously, the Cubans are not the only immigrants from Latin America. At the airports and in the streets of big cities, we pass by Hispanics whom other dictatorships, persecutions or longings forced to leave their native spaces. New York, Madrid, Paris, London, Stockholm are full of those fugitives and wanderers; Latin American literature narrates as frequently about magic as about exile.<sup>603</sup>

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602 Ziętara, *Literatura na Świecie* 1998, no. 11–12, pp. 344–348.

603 Chrobak, "Kronikarz utopii. O Jesúsie Díazie" [Chronicler of the Utopia. About Jesús Díaz], *Fa-Art*. 2003, no. 3–4, p. 74.

At the threshold of the new millennium, some articles of a general character signalled a change of generations taking place in Spanish American prose. The critics mentioned the anthology *McOndo* published in 1996,<sup>604</sup> including 18 short stories written by writers who were under 35 years old. The title itself was an obvious polemic with the prose of the previous generation that “for the following generations became a death kiss” and attributed “the label of magical realists to Hispanic writers.”<sup>605</sup> The stories were “aggressive variations on urban life pulsing in the rhythm of sex, drugs and pop music.”<sup>606</sup> One could see a change of perspective in them: the sphere of privacy and not the question of national identity was in the centre of interest.<sup>607</sup> The plots in these stories were set in urban communities, giving “a detailed picture of the present-day Latin America, its streets, politics, social transformations and a specific sense of humour.”<sup>608</sup> One of the issues of *Literatura na Świecie* (2004, no. 9–10) was dedicated to the new prose. These threads appeared almost exclusively in larger texts written by experts. Nonetheless, before 2005, this was not reflected even in the books selected to be reviewed.<sup>609</sup>

## 7 Changes of the way of perceiving Spanish American literature in the span of 60 years

Reading the critical texts led to a greater conviction that the attitude towards Spanish American literature had been fundamentally modified from the post-war times till 2005. First of all, this literature emerged from oblivion. Till the mid-1960s, very few critics realised that some interesting prose was born in Latin America. This continent was commonly seen either as a place of the wandering of the 19th century Polish immigrants whose fate was recorded in such works as *Pan Balcer w Brazyli* [Mr Balcer in Brazil] or drew amateurs of colourful, attractive adventures known from Fiedler’s reportages. Latin America was not regarded as a land of valuable literature or art. In fact, the number of experts in Latin American culture was very small in Poland. Literary reviews in the 1970s were written either by enthusiasts or those who had to produce them

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604 Published in Santiago de Chile, ed. Sergio Gómez and Alberto Fuguet.

605 Grzymisławski, “Realiści niemagiczni,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2004, no. 280. p. 15.

606 “Czy realizm magiczny umarł?,” *Newsweek* 12 May 2002.

607 Pindel, “McOndo” *Literatura na Świecie* 2004, no. 9, pp. 192–197.

608 Grzymisławski, “Realiści niemagiczni,” *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2004, no. 280. p. 15.

609 The reviewer for *Gazeta Wyborcza* paid much attention to it, but it was on the occasion of discussing *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* by García Márquez!

because of their professions. Consequently, one should be neither surprised nor outraged by the fact that many a time the authors of critical texts referred to the opinions of Spanish-speaking critics, in a way hiding behind their authority. From the perspective of time, one can state that this situation also had positive aspects: this was the way the reviewers and readers deepened their knowledge of Latin America. They could use that knowledge later when the presence of Spanish American prose became natural and obvious in Poland. The critics, having very humble means at their disposal, did a great job: thanks to them the literature that was almost completely unknown became part of Polish literary life, and knowledge about this literature was reinforced in the readers' awareness.

One of the most striking differences between the reviews published during the boom and those published in 1990–2005 was that the latter lacked long passages about the context of the origin of the reviewed works. In the 1990s, this knowledge was regarded as obvious and not requiring any mention or as unnecessary to be affected by a certain work. However, one should remember that Spanish American works and their critical texts were one of the most important sources of information about the literature and culture of this continent for almost two decades.

The reviews published after 1990 had completely different structures. The aspect of advertisement was prevailing, and their fundamental aim was to gain readers, i.e. potential buyers. Hence, almost every remark assumed an evaluative character. If the use of magical realism was emphasised in a work, the goal was to encourage those readers who had been brought up during the boom to buy it. In the contemporary critical texts, the imperative to praise Spanish American literature, which could be easily perceived in the earlier reviews, was unnoticeable. In other words, the snobbism related to the necessity of showing admiration of every Spanish American work was gone. In the 1990s, ideological interpretations occurred considerably less frequently than in the period of the boom. The political context and significance of a given book were also perceived but to a smaller extent. Spanish American prose became more frequently seen as stories about real people and not ideologies.

Interest in Spanish American literature was fuelled by the stars of the boom promoted in Poland in the 1970s. The younger writers' books were hardly noticed by critics, which was connected with the considerably bigger publishing offers than in the times of the Polish People's Republic; it was difficult to discover an interesting book among numerous new titles on the market. Naturally, great names drew like a magnet. Most periodicals were eager to publish reviews of renowned authors' books rather than those works that appeared on the Polish market for the first time.



From the early 1990s, the appearance of new Spanish American works was not announced as sensational unless they were premieres of some works by García Márquez or Vargas Llosa, still being part of promotional campaigns, at the international or even global level. In the 1970s, almost every new name from that region was a novelty; every new novel was qualified as an obligatory reading if it was not for its artistic values, it was at least for its cognitive function. Quite simply, nowadays the prose of Latin America is evoking substantially less intense emotions. Only in the texts of the critics of the older generation, one can discern some delicate feeling of nostalgia for the times of the boom.



## 4 The status of the translations of Spanish American prose in the polysystem of Polish literature

### 1 Theory of polysystems

One of the most inspiring methodological proposals concerning research on the place of translation in the target culture is the theory of polysystems created by I. Even-Zohar. In light of this theory, the literature of a given country is seen as a dynamic and heterogeneous set of many systems that embrace, beside the so-called canon literature for adults, children's literature, mass literature and translated literature. Each system has its centre and peripheries. They are not fully autonomous; they can exchange their particular elements. The systems are not equivalent to one another, either. They create a certain hierarchy within a given polysystem. Those more powerful are in the centre or close to the centre of the set, while the others are on less or more distant peripheries. However, the hierarchy within a polysystem is not stable, set once for all. Since between the systems there is a continual state of dramatic tension causing them to fight for the most central place. In result, there can be transfers, i.e. elements of one polysystem can be moved closer to the centre or to the centre itself. Even-Zohar perceives the literary polysystem as a set of tensions between the "canonized" centre and the peripheries that threaten it.

Even-Zohar (1990b:45) makes a categorical appeal to value the role of translation in the history of national literatures. In his approach, translated literature is an integral part of the literary polysystem of the target culture, although most frequently occupying a peripheral position (Even-Zohar 1990b:50). Yet, this does not mean that its role is of minor importance; on the contrary, it constitutes one of the most active elements: it is on the peripheries where transfers between polysystems take place, which is extremely important to research on literary interference. Translated literature can also come closer to the centre of a polysystem. In this case, its impact is intensified because it becomes an innovative factor for the target literature.

The theory of polysystems aims at describing the conditions in which a writer or translator creates, conditions that set concrete constraints and essentially influence the creators' decisions. The factors that influence them include repertoires belonging to particular systems, i.e. "the aggregate of laws and elements [...] that govern the production of texts" (Even-Zohar 1990a:17).

The literary polysystem, although showing some autonomy in regard to the remaining systems creating a given culture, is its integral part. Therefore, it cannot be analysed apart from its other manifestations and institutions, for example those that co-create the literary life of a given community. Hence investigating the literary polysystem, one needs to consider the influence of such factors as literary ideologies, activities of publishing houses, criticism, groups of writers as well as other centres dictating the rules of taste and norms (Even-Zohar 1990a:23). Nevertheless, Even-Zohar himself (1990b:47) formulates only two principles governing the choice of a work to be translated, having a strictly literary character. They are 1°, the degree of compatibility of a given text with the new approaches of the target literature and 2°, “the supposedly innovatory role it may assume within the target literature.” Thus, he completely omits the potential impact of non-literary factors on publishing policy concerning translations. Developing his theory, Even-Zohar emphasised the influence of such factors as patronage, social and economic conditions, activities of cultural institutions on the process of selecting texts to be translated and their functioning in the target culture. However, in practice, he focused on analysing factors of literary character, and seldom stressed the real circumstances of the origin of translations, being more eager to refer them to the abstract models which he worked out himself (Gentzler 1993:114–125).

From the perspective of translation studies, Even-Zohar’s (1990a:13) assumption seems to be a key one, namely that “translated literature would not be disconnected from the original literature.” A consequence of accepting this thesis is the imperative to analyse translations only by referring them to the target literature. Thus, the relation between translations and the source literature and culture are placed in the background.<sup>610</sup> Even-Zohar’s fundamental aim is to observe the processes within a given polysystem which as if absorbs translated literature. Such assumptions cause that we lose the roots of literary translation that is

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610 The theory of polysystems was continued by Toury. Analysing Toury’s works, Hermans (1995:218) shows drawbacks of his conception resulting from focusing on the text and target culture, at the same time undermining the role of text and source culture. Among other things, the conception omits the influence of ideological and political factors on the status of the target text, promoting certain translations by the source culture, probable “reverse” influence of translations on the source culture. Moreover, Venuti (2000:470) accused Toury of an “ideological evasion” claiming that “he shifted the emphasis away from exploring an equivalence between the translation and the foreign text and instead focused on the acceptability of the translation in the target culture.”

cut from the source culture. From the perspective of the theory of polysystems, literary translation appears as an alien element, annexed and assimilated by the target culture.

Even-Zohar transfers the approach based on socio-linguistics to literary studies: by analogy to the division into dominant and weak languages, he speaks about weak or peripheral literatures and the dominant ones.<sup>611</sup> Accordingly, peripheral literatures could not develop if it was not for literary translations. Since they lack certain elements of their repertoires, and their drawbacks can be completed only from the outside thanks to patterns delivered by literary works translated from other languages, especially the dominant ones. “For such literatures, translated literature is not only a major channel through which fashionable repertoire is brought home, but also a source of reshuffling and supplying alternatives” (Even-Zohar 1990b:48). This process does not take place in the reverse direction – Even-Zohar puts forward the thesis of self-sufficiency of dominant literatures that “may have the option to adopt novelties from some periphery within their indigenous borders” (Even-Zohar 1990b:48).

Attempts to describe the functioning of a concrete group of translations in a given literary polysystem require precise definitions of terms since Even-Zohar seems to understand the term “translated literature” in a very broad way. According to the Israeli scholar, translations from different languages – and perhaps different epochs – constitute a separate group. Following this thought consistently, we should investigate their place and role in a given polysystem and should not separately analyse issues concerning translations from particular national literatures. Even-Zohar (1990b:46) claims that all works translated into a given language are connected by a series of relations: literary translations are correlated in regard to the selection of source texts as well as the norms, behaviours and strategies they assume. This would mean that every choice of literary texts to be translated is always made from the perspective of the norms dictated by the target literature and its present needs, i.e. resulting from the necessity to complete the repertoire. In foreign literatures, the target culture would seek what is essential and attractive for it, and what can bring an important contribution to its development. Only such works would be translated, and thus absorbed by the polysystem of the target literature.

The creator of the polysystem theory himself must have realised that adopting such assumptions would create methodological barriers that would

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611 For the power of a language see chapter one, section 1.10 “Cultural turn in research on literary translation.”

be difficult to overcome in practice. Therefore, he made his thesis less strict by stating that translated literature was not a monolithic system but underwent stratification (Even-Zohar 1990b:49). It consists of a number of strata that are simply texts translated from particular national literatures.<sup>612</sup> Some of them can be shifted towards the centre of the polysystem, while others remain in its periphery. This approach seems logical but at the same time, it blurs the interesting and tempting perspective of analysing the correlation of translations from different languages.<sup>613</sup> Moreover, it questions the existence of such correlations since if they existed, why would the literature translated from one language occur to be more influential in the target culture than the works translated from another language? Because of these numerous doubts evoked by the question of the existence of alleged correlations between translated literary works from various national literatures, I have assumed the safer thesis of the stratifications of translations in the polysystem of the target literature.

Today, when translation “gained the status of a practical dimension of intercultural communication” and “translation studies are obviously correlated with cultural studies” (Bukowski, Heydel 2009:37), the approach assuming investigating literary translation only from the perspective of the target culture evokes serious doubts. This does not change the fact that the discussed theory proposes a consistent methodology which is very convenient when some scholar focuses on the description of the functioning of translation within the framework of the target culture. Therefore, I intend to refer to it although I am aware of its limits.

The object of my analysis is translations into Polish of the Spanish American works that in Poland were connected with the boom, i.e. those published between 1968 and 1981. The aim of my investigation is an attempt to define their place in the polysystem of our literature. I have consciously omitted the translations of works written by the young generation of writers that were published in Poland after 1990 because some distance is needed to investigate the impact of literary texts on the target culture in a sensible way.

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612 Even-Zohar did not state that directly, but it clearly results from his further arguments.

613 From the perspective of the polysystem of Polish literature, this means giving up various intriguing questions, e.g. what correlations could have connected the works of García Márquez with those of Vonnegut, whose translations appeared in Poland during the same period.

## 2 Quantitative analysis

The concept of canonicity plays an essential role in the theory of polysystems. Even-Zohar distinguishes two types of canonicity: *static* and *dynamic*. The first one occurs when a certain literary work is included into a set of texts recognised by a given community as an element of their heritage, texts that participants of a given culture want to preserve as their constant and important factor. The other one concerns the canonization of a certain literary model that turns out to be productive in the system, thus enhancing its repertoire. This means that a concrete work becomes a pattern or reference for later works.

In order to define the position of the translations of Spanish American works in the polysystem of Polish literature, we should begin with the question whether we can speak of a static canonicity, i.e. whether they became an essential element of the Polish literary life. Therefore, we should first collect quantity data showing the functioning of the discussed books on the Polish publishing market. Such data, for example the number of re-editions or editions of new works of the writers from the period of the boom, are to be treated as an important condition to draw conclusions to which extent the writers were embedded in the Polish literary culture, whether their works became its crucial and lasting element.

The fact that the translations of Spanish American prose played an important role in the Polish literary life in the 1970s does not evoke any doubts today, which was proven by the information provided in the monumental work *Kalendarium życia literackiego 1976–2000* [Calendar of Events of Literary Life 1976–2000] by Przemysław Czapliński, Maciej Leciński, Eliza Szybowicz and Błażej Warkocki (2003). In their introduction (p. V), the authors emphasised the market success of Spanish American prose that was achieved without any advertising campaign. They presented the discussions about the popularity of Spanish American literature in the press (p. 5) and the significance of the series “Proza Iberoamerykańska” (pp. 5 and 37), special issues of *Literatura na Świecie*, dedicated to this literature, and Vargas Llosa’s visit to Poland (p. 15).

As already mentioned, the activities of translators and editors in the 1970s caused that in Poland the literature written in Spanish achieved a similar position as in other European countries, i.e. reached the fifth position as far as the number of published copies was concerned, just after English, French, German and Russian literature. Nowadays the situation is completely different: as for translations, we are living in an epoch of the overwhelming domination of literature translated from the English language. Literary works written in other languages are sporadically published in Poland since editors fear too much risk allegedly related to publishing non-English literature. This state of affairs was

excellently illustrated by data provided in *Kuchnia tłumacza* [The Translator's Kitchen] by Skibińska (2008:82), which showed the rising market share of translations from English among literary translations. In 2001–2005, literature written in Spanish moved to the fourth place on the list, leaving renderings from Russian whose market share seemed to be systematically falling.

As for Spanish American prose, time has verified the editors' choices made over 30 years ago, which has been signalled in the previous chapters. On the Polish publishing market, only a few writers' works, regarded as unquestionable stars of the boom: Cortázar, García Márquez, Vargas Llosa and Borges, succeeded. They function as classic books and are almost always available in bookstores. The editors consider them to be the so-called *ever green* category, i.e. bringing not spectacular, but solid and sure income. The works of Carpentier and Fuentes were also published, but less frequently.

Accordingly, in the analysed period, between 1990 and 2005, Cortázar's *Hopscotch* was reedited five times by Muza.<sup>614</sup> This novel was also published by other editors: De Agostini Polska and Mediasat Poland. Muza prepared four editions of his *Short Stories* as well as two editions of *A Manual for Manuel, Last Round* and *The Winners*. It re-edited *Cronopios and Famas*. In the conditions of a free market, there were no re-editions of the collected stories: *Bestiario*<sup>615</sup>, *Alguien que anda por ahí*, *A Certain Lucas*, *We Love Glenda So Much and Other Tales*, *From the Observatory* (*Prosa del observatorio*) and *Deshoras*. Detailed data are shown in Tab. 7.

For the editors' activities concerning Borges' works see Tab. 8.

As regards Carpentier's prose, the third most popular writer of the boom in Poland (he died before 1989), Muza published only a few of his works: *Explosion in a Cathedral* in 1994, *The Lost Steps* in 1996 and *The Kingdom of This World* in 2000, during the period in question. As seen above, the editors' strategies concerning each of these authors varied. Cortázar's *Hopscotch* was the unquestionable bestseller, while his other books, even *Cronopios and Famas* that had been a cult book in the 1970s, were considerably less frequently reedited. Some collections of short stories of the later period were not reedited at all. The case of Borges' works was slightly different since at the turn of the 20th and the 21st centuries, the publications of his books included not only fiction but also essays and poetry, along with the works that were not published in Poland during his lifetime. One cannot point to any "leader" as far as the number of editions is concerned.

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614 All the data are from the catalogue of the National Library.

615 All the stories from this book (except "Cefalea" and "Circe") were translated into English and included in the collection *End of the Game and Other Stories* (1967).



**Tab. 7:** Polish editions of Cortázar's works in 1990–2005. The dates of the first Polish editions are between the brackets. The books published for the first time in free market conditions were marked as grey.

Editor Title	Muza	PIW	De Agostini	Mediasat Poland	Pomorze
<i>Cronopios and Famas</i> (1973)	1999				1993
<i>A Manual for Manuel</i> (1980)	1993, 1996, 2001				
<i>Hopscotch</i> (1968)	1994, 1995, 1998, 2000, 2002		2001	2004	
<i>Opowiadania</i> [Short Stories] (1975)	1994, 1996, 1999, 2005/06				
<i>The Winners</i> (1976)	1997, 2001				
<i>62: A Model Kit</i> (1974)	1999				
<i>Around the Day in Eighty Worlds</i> (1976)	2000, 2002				
<i>Last Round</i> (1979)	2000, 2003				
<i>The Last Exam</i>		1991			
<i>Silvalandia</i>	2004				

Having the exclusive copyright to reproduce Borges' works, the Prószyński i S-ka Publishing House almost regularly published his various books. According to the editors, however, readers showed no interest in buying Carpentier's re-editions.

As regards the living writers of the boom, being still creative in the period of 1990–2005, both their older works and new books were published on an ongoing basis. For example, the re-editions of Vargas Llosa's books that appeared after 1989 included *The Time of the Hero*, *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*, *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*, *Conversation in the Cathedral* and *The Green House*. His later books, those written after the end of the Polish boom, included *The Storyteller* published by Rebis in 1997, *In Praise of the Stepmother* published three times by Muza and *Who Killed Palomino Molero?* in 1995 by Rebis. The first edition of *The Feast of the Goat* was published by Rebis, and so was *The Way to Paradise*.<sup>616</sup> Detailed data are presented in table 9.

616 At the threshold of the 21st century, the copyright of Vargas Llosa's works was bought by the Kraków-based Publishing House Znak. Since 2007, it has regularly published his new books and reedited the old ones. However, the latter exceeds the time limit of my research.

**Tab. 8:** Polish editions of Borges' works in 1990–2005. The dates of the first Polish editions are between the brackets. The books published for the first time in free market conditions were marked as grey.

Editor Title	Prószyński i S-ka	Lobos	Muza
<i>Dreamtigers</i> (1974)	1998		
<i>Dr. Brodie's Report</i> (1975)	1999		
<i>A Universal History of Infamy</i> (1976)	1998, 1999		
<i>The Book of Sand</i> (1980)	1998, 1999		
<i>The Aleph and Other Stories</i> (1972)	2003		
<i>Ficciones</i> (1972)	2003		
<i>Historie prawdziwe i wymyślone</i>			1993 <sup>a</sup>
<i>Eseje zebrane, vol. 1, 2</i>		1998	
<i>Otras inquisiciones (Other Inquisitions)</i>	1999		
<i>Siete noches (Seven Nights), La memoria de Shakespeare (Shakespeare's Memory), Atlas Shakespeare's Memory</i>		1999	
<i>The Book of Imaginary Beings</i>	2000		
<i>El oro de los tigres (The Gold of the Tigers)</i>	2000		
<i>Autobiografía</i>	2001		
<i>Los conjurados</i>	2002		
	2004		

<sup>a</sup> For information about this book see Chapter III, section 6.2.

García Márquez's works, both the old ones and the latest, were published mainly by Muza only in the early 1990s. PIW reedited two of his books, and in 1993, it published its first Polish edition of *General in His Labyrinth*. The following works were reedited: *Big Mama's Funeral*, *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother* and *Eyes of the Blue Dog* (Tab.10).

As no editor had an exclusive copyright to reproduce Fuentes' books during the discussed period, his books were published by different editors. It is worth noting that many of his works, even the most popular ones: *The Death of Artemio Cruz*, *Where the Air Is Clear*, *Cantar de ciegos*, *Aura*, *The Good Conscience*, *Holy Place*, *Distant Relations* and *Burnt Water*, were not reedited after 1990 (tab.11).

The analysis of the presented data allows me to conclude that it is difficult to speak about distinct publishing strategies concerning the works of the living and creating writers related to the boom. Vargas Llosa's books were published first of all by two editors, Rebis and Muza. The Poznań-based publishing house

**Tab. 9:** Polish editions of Vargas Llosa's works in 1990–2005. The dates of the first Polish editions are between the brackets. The books published for the first time in free market conditions were marked as grey.

Editor Title	Rebis	Muza	PIW	Tenten	Porozumienie Wydawców <sup>a</sup>	De Agostini	Mediasat Świat Poland	Książki
<i>Captain Pantoja and the Special Service</i> (1976)	1996, 1998, 2002		1991					
<i>Conversation in the Cathedral</i> (1973)		1998	1991		2001			2002
<i>The Green House</i> (1975)		1994, 2002, 2003						
<i>The Cubs</i> (1973)		1995						
<i>The Time of the Hero</i> (1971)		1997, 2001						2004
<i>Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter</i> (1983)	1997							
<i>Los jefes</i> (1976)		2000						
<i>The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta</i>	2001			1991				
<i>The War of the End of the World</i>	1998		1992					
<i>In Praise of the Stepmother</i>		1993, 2001, 2004						
<i>Who Killed Palomino Molero?</i>	1995, 1998							
<i>Storyteller</i>	1997, 1998							
<i>Death in the Andes</i>	1998, 2000							
<i>The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto</i>		1999, 2002, 2004						
<i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	2002, 2003							2004
<i>The Way to Paradise</i>	2003, 2004							

<sup>a</sup> "Porozumienie Wydawców" consists of eight publishing houses: Dom Wydawniczy BELLONA, Dom Wydawniczy REBIS, MUZA SA, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy ZNAK, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wydawnictwo Literackie and Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN. It published "Kanon na koniec wieku" [The Canon at the End of the Century], a series of 25 most important books of the 20th century voted by the readers of *Rzeczpospolita*.

**Tab. 10:** Polish editions of García Márquez's works in 1990–2005. The dates of the first Polish editions are between the brackets. The books published for the first time in free market conditions were marked as grey.

Editor Title	PIW	Muza	De Agostini	Porozumienie Świat Wydawców	Świat Książki
<i>Chronicle of a Death Foretold</i> (1987)	1991	1997, 2004			
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i> (1974)	1992	1996, 2000, 2001, 2003, 2003, 2004	2001	2000	2004
<i>La hojarasca</i> (1977)		1995, 1997, 2003			
<i>No One Writes to the Colonel</i> (1985)		1995, 2001, 2005			
<i>In Evil Hour</i> (1970)		1995, 2000, 2005			
<i>The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor</i> (1980)		1999, 2002			
<i>The Autumn of the Patriarch</i>		1993, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2002			
<i>General in His Labyrinth</i>	1993	1998, 2002			
<i>Love in the Time of Cholera</i>		1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004	2002		
<i>Strange Pilgrims</i>		1995, 1996, 2002, 2004			
<i>Of Love and Other Demons</i>		1996, 2001, 2003			
<i>News of a Kidnapping</i>		1997, 2001			
<i>Opowiadania</i> [Short Stories]		1998, 2001			
<i>Notas de prensa 1980–1984</i>		2000			
<i>Un señor muy viejo con unas alas enormes</i>		2001			
<i>La aventura de Miguel Littín clandestino en Chile</i>		2002			
<i>Obra periodística. Vol. 3, De Europa y America</i>		2003			
<i>Vivir para contarla</i>		2004			
<i>Memoria de mis putas tristes</i>		2005			

**Tab. 11:** Polish editions of Fuentes' works in 1990–2005. The dates of the first Polish editions are between the brackets. The books published for the first time in free market conditions were marked as grey.

Editor Title	WL	Rebis	Czytelnik	Prószyński i S-ka	Libros	Świat Książki
<i>Terra Nostra</i> (1980)		1993				
<i>Birthday</i> (1982)	2001					
<i>The Old Gringo</i>	1992					
<i>The Hydra Head</i>			1994			
<i>A Change of Skin</i>		1994				
<i>Diana: the Goddess Who Hunts Alone</i>	1998					
<i>The Crystal Frontier</i>				1999		
<i>The Years with Laura Díaz</i>					2001	2004
<i>El instinto de Inéz</i>					2002	
<i>En esto creo</i>						2003
<i>The Eagle's Throne</i>						2004
<i>Contra Bush</i>						2005

published most of the first editions, while Muza had predominantly reeditions. The Warsaw-based editor published almost all of García Márquez's works. The translations of both writers' works were reedited in 1990–2005, almost every year, there was some reedition. Thus, we can say that the prose of Vargas Llosa and García Márquez was always available in bookstores in Poland. It was completely different with Fuentes' works. Only his new books were reproduced on an ongoing basis, whereas his old works, except for the novels *Terra Nostra* and *Birthday*, were not reedited after 1990. Consequently, it would be hard to state whether Fuentes' works were rooted in the Polish literary culture despite the fact that his new books evoked considerable interests of the critics.

In case of the titles of the writers of the boom who were less popular in Poland in the 1970s and 80s there were very few reeditions, neither was any reedition of the works belonging to the indigenous trend, even its key artists: Alegría and Arguedas. Evidently, this type of prose aiming at building bridges between “the world of the white” and “the world of the Indians” and at solving many social problems, was not popular with readers. This prose was not artistically attractive: on the one hand, it rejected the schemes of a novel of manners, but on the other hand, it was highly formally traditional. Hence it could not introduce anything new to the existing repertoires that Polish literature already had.

There were no reeditions of the works of the Nobel winner Asturias and works of authors who were appreciated in other countries, although less known and popular in Poland, such as Scorza or Poniatowska. This also concerned some outstanding writers like Rulfo. Only one of Donoso's novels was published in the Republic of Poland: in 2002, De Agostini published *The Obscene Bird of Night*, his *opus magnum*. In 2000, Muza decided to reedit the complicated, erudite prose of Lezama Lima: the novel *Paradise*. Moreover, in 2006, Znak published *On Heroes and Tombs* by Sábato, a book that was once very popular in Poland, while the Katowice-based Publishing House Książnica – *The Tunnel* in 2004.

The presented quantitative data allow me to assume that some works of Cortázar, in particular *Hopscotch*, as well as the works of Borges, García Márquez and Vargas Llosa, found their way to the Polish publishing canon. Summarising, only works written by a few writers regarded as belonging to the Polish boom, achieved the status of static canonicity. Several reeditions of their works clearly prove that their literary output was perceived as some value that should be kept vibrant in the Polish background and that it became an element of some heritage that was worth caring for. It is equally clear that not all Spanish American works translated into Polish mainly in the 1970s achieved this status and in the Polish conditions, it was Spanish American prose as a whole, regardless when particular works were created, that constituted the power and specific character of the boom. Both the editors and readers must have preferred to forget most of the Latin American writers.

### 3 Qualitative analysis: encyclopaedias and dictionaries

The above-formulated hypotheses should be confirmed by qualitative analyses. As the research material, I have chosen literary dictionaries and encyclopaedias that were prepared in Poland just after the end of the boom. The presence of entries concerning Latin American literatures was an essential premise to define their positions in the Polish literary culture.

One of the first studies of this kind that included the phenomenon of the boom was *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku* [Dictionary of the Polish 20th Century Literature] (1992). It had the entry "Iberian and Latin American literatures in Poland" edited by Piotr Sawicki (pp. 402–407). In a large, six-page article, he discussed the reception of literature created in Spanish and Portuguese, including translations of works written in South America. However, the main part of the entry was dedicated to the presence of Spanish literature in Poland. As far as Latin American literature was concerned, the author stressed the phenomenon of the boom, pointing to 1963 as the year of the publication of

*The Lost Steps* by Carpentier and *The Tunnel* by Sábato as the beginning of their authentic reception. According to Sawicki, the boom was “an intellectual adventure” attractive to readers, critics and writers. The significance of this prose in Poland led to widening our cognitive and esthetical horizons and to forcing us to assume a stand that today could be called “postcolonial,” i.e. to re-evaluate “the traditional European Europe-centrism” as a fundamental reference in evaluating literary phenomena. Sawicki recognised magical realism as the catchiest term related to that literature in Poland.

The entry “Latin American literary relations” also appeared in the encyclopaedia *Literatura polska XX wieku. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny* [Polish Literature of the 20th Century. An Encyclopaedic Guide] (2000, vol. I, pp. 473–478). This study continued the monumental work *Literatura polska. Przewodnik encyklopedyczny* [Polish Literature. An Encyclopaedic Guide] whose publication in 1984 turned out to be a great event. The first guide, along with entries concerning Polish literature, included entries about literary contacts, for example “French–Polish literary relations,” “German–Polish literary relations” and “Spanish–Polish literary relations.” Yet, there was no entry dedicated to the literary relations between Poland and Latin American countries. Such an entry was inserted into the second guide concerning the 20th century literature. This entry is autonomous, i.e. is not a part of an article about the Spanish–Polish relations. Its authoress is Irena Rymwid-Mickiewicz. She briefly presented contacts between Poland and Latin America from the discovery of the New World and mentioned the first translations during the interwar period. Like Sawicki, she stressed the meaning of *The Lost Steps* and *The Tunnel* published in 1963. Analysing the boom, she focused on the publishing policy, citing many figures. At the same time, she noted that in the 1970s, there were publications of writers who were not connected with the boom but belonging to the older and young generations of Latin American artists. She wrote a section devoted to the presence of Polish literature in Spanish-speaking countries.

Latin American literature as an important and worth noting phenomenon began to be perceived and discussed in Polish works of an encyclopaedic character, dedicated to world literature and published at the turn of the centuries. Let us then analyse what information was given in some selected publications.

In 1997, Świat Książki published the large-sized *Literatura powszechna według Jana Tomkowskiego* [World Literature According to Jan Tomkowski]. The book had a modern coloured design as well as photographs and drawings. As we read in “Instead of an Introduction,” the author aimed to include “a minimum of basic information given in the most accessible form” from the Bible to *The Satanic Verses* in one volume, hence the condensed notes. The patron of this undertaking

seemed to be Borges since quotations from his prose formed some kind of a motto. The special significance of the Argentinian writer for the contemporary literature was testified by the fact that Tomkowski made him the hero of a separate chapter in the section dedicated to the 20th century (pp. 306–307), while the works of other important Latin American writers, like Sábato, Cortázar, Carpentier, Lezama Lima, García Márquez and Vargas Llosa, were discussed in one section entitled “Latin American prose.” Tomkowski also listed several other names: Cabrera Infante, Sarduy, Paz (the only poet in this group), Rulfo, Fuentes, Asturias, Onetti, Donoso and Puig. This part also contains brief descriptions of the following novels: *On Heroes and Tombs*, *The Angel of Darkness*, *Hopscotch*, *Explosion in a Cathedral*, *Paradiso* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. A few words were devoted to the Polish translations of Latin American literature.

In 1999,<sup>617</sup> PWN published *Słownik encyklopedyczny. Pisarze świata* [An Encyclopaedic Dictionary. World Writers] with 6,000 entries. It embraced writers and outstanding anonymous works from all epochs, from antiquity till the present times, representing all cultural circles. The editors stated that while selecting entries they focused only on the contribution of a given national literature to the world literary heritage, not applying any criteria of preference. *Słownik* was of a popularising character, its notes were brief and gave the most important biographical data and characteristics of the works. Moreover, it provided information about the Polish translations of the presented authors and in some case, their most valuable bibliographical positions. The entries concerning Latin American writers did not generally have such data, the reason being that in the 1990s, there were not many studies about them available in Polish.

Separate entries were devoted to about forty Spanish American prose writers from various epochs. The names of the 20th century writers prevailed, especially those associated with the Polish boom. They included Alegría, Allende, Arguedas, Arlt, Arreola, Asturias, Mariano Azuela, Bioy Casares, Borges, Bryce Echenique, Cabrera Infante, Carpentier, Cortázar, Donoso, Fuentes, García Márquez, Lezama Lima, Onetti, Otero, Otero Silva, Quiroga, Pitol, Puig, Rojas, Rulfo, Sábato, Scorza and Vargas Llosa. Among the older writers there are mentions of Gallegos, Güiraldes, Juan Montalvo, Ricardo Palma, José Eustasio Rivera and Villaverde.

The entries, even those dedicated to the eminent writers, were very laconic, for example the entry about Carpentier’s output (Tab. 12).

*Encyklopedia literatury światowej* [Encyclopaedia of World Literature] ed. by Julian Maślanka, published by Zielona Sowa in 2005, had a different structure.

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617 It is the second, enlarged and revised edition. The first edition appeared in 1995.



**Tab. 12:**


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CARPENTIER [karpentier] Alejo (1904–1980), Cuban writer and musicologist; 1927 – co-founder of “Revista de Avance”; participated in fights against G. Machado’s dictatorship; 1928–1939 – living as an immigrant in France, 1945–1959 – in Venezuela; after returning to Cuba he developed outstanding cultural activities; in his foreword to the novel *The Kingdom of This World* (1949, Polish edition in 1968), he formulated the theory of the so-called American marvellous reality, from which stems magical realism – trend in Latin American prose, combining real elements with fantasy; he used his experiments with style and structure to show a specific way of seeing culture, history and the whole reality of the American continent; e.g. the novels *The Lost Steps* (1953, Pol. ed. 1963), *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1962, Pol. ed. 1966), *Baroque Concert* (1974, Pol. ed. 1977), *La consagración de la primavera* (1978, Pol. ed. 1997), short stories *War of Time* (1958, Pol. ed. 1974); moreover, sketches about the culture of Latin America *Tientos y diferencias* (1964, Pol. ed. 1982), and the first history of Cuban music, *Music in Cuba* (1964, Pol. ed. 1980).

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The large volume was divided into three parts. The first part had 38 articles, which were synthetic histories of the most important national literatures. A separate text was dedicated to Brazilian literature, while the remaining literatures of Latin America were discussed under one title “Latin American literature” (pp. 119–131). Its history was divided into the following periods: Renaissance and Baroque, Enlightenment, the years 1830–1888, modernism, postmodernism, avant-garde, literature from 1940 till the present times. The 1940s were regarded as a turning point for the development of Spanish American literature. During that period, superior works were written by Bioy Casares, Borges, Carpentier, Asturias, Yáñez, Sábato and Leopoldo Marechal. The authors of *Encyklopedia* did not focus on any of these epochs. They followed the development of three fundamental literary genres, without favouring prose. Yet, in the next parts dedicated to the key works of world literature and the most important writers, they drew greater attention to the 20th century Spanish American prose. Discussing the key works of world literature, they mentioned the following Spanish American titles in separate sections: *The Aleph and Other Stories*, *Ficciones*, *Hopscotch*, *On Heroes and Tombs*, *The Lost Steps*, *Conversation in the Cathedral*, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *The Death of Artemio Cruz*. The third part had 48 entries concerning writers from Latin America. Most of them were novelists who were active in the 20th century.<sup>618</sup> There were only 14 notes about

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618 They are: Alegría, Allende, Arenas, Arguedas, Arlt, Arreola, Asturias, Azuela, Benedetti, Borges, Bryce Echenique, Cabrera Infante, Lidia Cabrera, Carpentier, Cortázar, Donoso, Elizondo, Esquivel, Fuentes, Gallegos, García Márquez, Lezama Lima, Mutis, Onetti, Otero Silva, Puig, Quiroga, Roa Bastos, Rojas, Rulfo, Sábato and Vargas Llosa.

poets.<sup>619</sup> The editor also mentioned the Argentinian José Hernandez, author of the 19th century eposes of Martín Fierro. No dramatists were mentioned. The entries concerning people were larger than in *Słownik encyklopedyczny. Pisarze świata* edited by PIW. Beside the more detailed biographical data, special attention was paid to synthetic descriptions that characterised the works of a given author. For instance, we can read about Carpentier that his

[...] literary output is distinguished by its baroque richness of style and formal experiments related to the construction of time; the creator of lo real maravilloso (marvellous reality), which combined real and magical elements, presents the syncretism of Latin American culture; one of the main motives of his works is the relation between man and time of History; regarded as the initiator of the so-called new historical novel because of his pioneering way of interpreting history and culture; musical fascinations are omnipresent in his literary works and give them a unique mood (p. 598).

Of a similar character was the encyclopaedia *Literatura świata* [World Literature], also published by PIW in 2007. Its forty articles presented the histories of national literatures and various civilisational circles (hence such entries as French literature, the literature of Black Africa, South Slavonic literatures). Moreover, it contained about two thousand particular and cross-sectional entries, embracing writers' biographies, literary directions and trends, types and genres, esthetical categories, areas of activities as well as the most acclaimed works of world literature.

The seven-page entry "Latin American literature" (pp. 438–444) was written by Elżbieta Skłodowska. She distinguished the following epochs in the history of Latin American literature: colonial, wars of independence, romanticism, realism and naturalism, modernism, avant-garde, creolism and the present times understood as the period since 1940, but she focused on the first and last periods. This division seemed clearer than the one assumed by the authors of *Encyklopedia* edited by Zielona Sowa first of all because it included the specificity of the history of Latin American literatures, while the previously discussed study obviously assumed the European perspective as the basis of its periodisation. As the most important figures of the 1940s, she recognised Carpentier, Borges, Bioy Casares and Asturias, of the 1950s – Onetti, Arreola, Rojas and Sábato. As the

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619 They are the Nicaraguans: Rubén Darío and Ernesto Cardenal, the Argentinians Estebán Echeverría and Alfonso Reyes, the Cubans: Nicolás Guillén, Roberto Fernández Retamar, José María Heredia, José Martí, Antonio Padilla, the Chileans Vicente Huidobro, Gabriela Mistral and Pablo Neruda, the Mexicans Octavio Paz and Sergio Pitol, and the Peruvian César Vallejo.

precursors of the boom, she mentioned Rulfo, Borges and Guimarães Rosa. In her opinion, the beginning of the world boom was marked by the publication of *Hopscotch* in 1963, and its most important authors beside Cortázar were Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, Roa Bastos, Lezama Lima and Cabrera Infante. The apogee of this phenomenon was the international success of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by García Márquez. Discussing the different trends of this direction, Skłodowska distinguished novels against the dictatorship represented by *Reasons of State* by Carpentier, *The Autumn of the Patriarch* by García Márquez and *I, the Supreme* by Roa Bastos, as well as books characterised by the baroque style, such as *Paradiso* by Lezama Lima. The authoress also mentioned the young generation of writers, e.g. Puig, Bryce Echenique, and women's prose created by Allende, Peri Rosi, Garro and Poniatowska. A part of her article about contemporary literature was dedicated to prose, while discussing poetry, Skłodowska wrote that it had developed in the shadow of prose. She treated drama in a similarly marginal way.

With regard to other entries related to Latin American literature, the encyclopaedia included "magical realism" and "indigenism." The sources of the former were seen in Carpentier's theory of American marvellous reality, defined as a trend present in European and Latin American literatures, characterised by combining the elements of "realism, fantasy and grotesque with the analyses of psyche and subconscious of the protagonists as well as exposing the symbolism of customs, the sphere of irrational beliefs and exoticism of the local folklore" (p. 620).

The authors of the encyclopaedia concentrated on indigenism, defining it

as "a direction in literature and social-political thought of Latin America, re-evaluating pre-Columbian cultures and demanding the recognition of the rights (political, economic, citizen's and cultural) of the contemporary Indian populations (Spanish indígena 'native'), developed by non-Indians, using categories and terms that were alien to the Indian civilisation (e.g. nation, development)" (p. 338).

In the next part of the entry, the history of this trend and its political involvement were discussed, several authors representing this trend were also mentioned.

The number of entries concerning Spanish American writers is small, considerably smaller than in *Pisarze świata* – only twelve. They described the works of Asturias, Borges, Cabrera Infante, Carpentier, Cortázar, Donoso, Fuentes, García Márquez, Puig, Sábato, Rulfo and Vargas Llosa. However, these entries were much larger and contained more details, not limited to dates and titles, but showing the problems and most important features of the style and form of the particular works. Separate entries concerned *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Hopscotch*.

The Polish reader may find it little surprising that the entry *magical realism* was inserted into *Słownik europejskich kierunków i grup literackich XX wieku* [Dictionary of European Directions and Literary Groups of the 20th Century] by Grzegorz Gazda (2000) since this trend was generally associated with Latin American literature.<sup>620</sup> Yet, as shown by Gazda (pp. 544–550), the term was used for the first time in Germany in 1925 in regard to painting. It was Massimo Bontempelli, an animator of Italian avant-garde, who transferred the term to the theory of literature; he

used it to his poetics [...] referring to imagination thanks to which the description of reality in a magical mood could present all the world's dimensions, and everyday life was transformed into a marvellous uniqueness (p. 545).

Firstly, Gazda extensively discussed the European: Flemish, Austrian, Danish and Russian, representatives of magical realism and its similarities with surrealism, and then stated:

[...] Latin America, with its culture that is exotic to Europeans, culture saturating the processed values of the old continent with the magic of the mythical understanding of the world by Hispanics having African-Indian-European background, was recognised as a unique enclave of “marvellous American reality” [...] for which the magical perspective of the described world is an immanent and natural feature (p. 548).

Gazda counted as magical realism the prose of Donoso, Onetti, Sábato, Lezama Lima, Fuentes, Rulfo, García Márquez, Cortázar and Borges, as well as, which can be surprising, the later novels of Vargas Llosa and the works of Puig. He also mentioned Polish authors, Paweł Huelle and Olga Tokarczuk, defining their writings as “post-modernist magical realism.”

Finally, it is worth mentioning *Encyklopedyczny słownik szkolny. Literatura powszechna* [Encyclopaedic School Dictionary. World Literature] (2002), addressed to school learners. According to the authors' intention, it was to be “a dictionary of first contact” giving basic knowledge. It had entries about writers like Asturias, Borges, Carpentier, Cortázar, Darío, Donoso, Fuentes, García Márquez, Guillén, Lezama Lima, Neruda, Onetti, Rulfo, Sábato and Vargas Llosa. Separate entries concerned two novels by Carpentier: *Explosion in a Cathedral* and *The Lost Steps*, two by Vargas Llosa: *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* and *Conversation in the Cathedral*, *Ficciones* by Borges, *Hopscotch* by Cortázar,

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620 Gazda himself recollected, ‘In common awareness, it was the literatures of South and Central America that were the main source of magical realism crystallising its poetics and stabilising its critical-literary reception’ (p. 548).

*Paradiso* by Lezama Lima, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by García Márquez and *Terra Nostra* by Fuentes. Placing these entries in a dictionary serving as didactic help in elementary and secondary schools can be interpreted as the authors' intention to introduce them to the Polish canon of knowledge of world literature.

The analysis of the contents of encyclopaedic publications has allowed me to conclude that from the early 1990s, the literatures of Latin America were perceived in Poland as an important element of world literature. However, they were not treated as national literatures since no general publications included separate entries dedicated to Argentinian, Mexican, Peruvian or any other literature. From the Polish perspective, Latin American literature was a product of a certain cultural and civilizational community from the countries of the Green Continent, with a distinct domination of the areas where Spanish was the official language. Literature written in Portuguese (not mentioning the other languages) was discussed marginally (the absolute exception was *Encyklopedia literatury Światowej*, ed. Maślanka, where a separate entry was dedicated to Brazilian literature). From the Polish perspective, Latin American literature meant first of all prose created in the second half of the 20th century or simply – the works of those writers who were related, rightly or wrongly, to the boom. Larger studies took into account the names of those writers who were a little forgotten in Poland, more crucial for the development of concrete national literatures. Yet, on the lists of the most outstanding literary achievements in the world there were the same titles that after the end of the boom still enjoyed great popularity and were systematically reedited in our country.

The same titles appeared among the works constituting the literary canon of the 20th century. In 2004, *Gazeta Wyborcza* began publishing a 40-volume *Collection of the 20th Century Literature*. Beside such works as *Lolita*, *The Master and Margarita*, *The Plague*, *The Tin Drum* or *The Trial*, it included three Spanish American books: *The Time of the Hero*, *Hopscotch* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The last two and *Conversation in the Cathedral* found their way to “The Canon at the End of the Century,” a series of a slightly different character, edited by *Rzeczpospolita*. The list of 40 titles was completed on the basis of readers' voting. The series was published by “Porozumienie Wydawców.”<sup>621</sup>

To sum up, the choices of the editors of literary compendia and preferences of the publishers did not differ for the most part. The analysis of the contents of encyclopaedic publications confirms the thesis that in Poland a concrete group of translated Spanish American works was given the status of static canonicity, becoming an unquestionable element of cultural tradition.

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621 See footnote a, tab. 9

#### 4 Spanish American prose as a literary pattern and reference for critics

Referring to the great popularity of Spanish American prose, it appears to be appropriate to pose a question whether some of the key works of the boom gained the position of dynamic canonicity in the Polish literary polysystem, i.e. whether they became a pattern or reference for writers and/or critics. Certain signals can be found in the aforementioned article by Sawicki found in *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku*. At the threshold of the 1990s, Sawicki claimed that Spanish American prose

gave [Polish writers] patterns of pioneering solutions in narration and constructions [...], in the perception of time and space, examples inspiring to investigate the genealogy of contemporary men and women and the sources of their cultural and national identities (p. 406).

Stanisław Stabro (2002:123) formulated a very cautious judgement about this question, writing in *Literatura polska 1944–2000 w zarysie* [An Outline of Polish Literature 1944–2000]:

Commencing from the 1960s, translations of the most important works of Alejo Carpentier, Jorge Luis Borges, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosa, José Lezama Lima and Gabriel García Márquez were systematically published in Poland. Given this, it is right to state that these authors' books like *Explosion in a Cathedral* (1962), *Ficciones* (1972), *Hopscotch* (1968), *62: A Model Kit* (1968), *The Time of the Hero* (1971), *Paradiso* (1979), *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1974), *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1980) exerted a decisive influence on the writing strategies of the creators of an "artistic revolution" in Polish prose.

Stabro did not develop this statement. A much louder opinion concerning the significance of the translations of Spanish American literature for the development of contemporary Polish prose was given by Czapliński (1997:113–114). He thought that the world prose available in Poland in the 1970s and 80s turned out to be an essential element of the esthetical education of the authors who debuted after 1989. Spanish American prose, beside the American post-modernist novel, became the most important factor sharing their awareness and writing practice. He regarded the following Hispanic writers as most important to Poles: Borges, Cortázar, Vargas Llosa, García Márquez, Donoso, Lezama Lima, Carpentier, Sabato and Fuentes.

In their work *Chwilowe zawieszenie broni. O twórczości tzw. pokolenia bruLionu 1986–1996* [Temporary Ceasefire. About the works of the so-called bruLion generation 1986–1996] (1996:129), Jarosław Klejnocki and Jerzy Sosnowski described readers' experiences at the turn of the 1970s and 80s in a similar way. In the discussed prose, they discerned

traces of books that were fashionable, read and popularised in Poland in 1979–1985, i.e. more or less in the period of secondary school or beyond – in the period of the maturing of the representatives of the formation in question.

The most serious consequences of these experiences were, according to the authors, co-creating the mood of “a healthy smile,” in other words, moving away from the deadly seriousness, and the phenomenon of the so-called double reader’s code, i.e. addressing books to two types of receivers at the same time: mass and elite, seeking intellectual flavours. Hence writers many a time resorted to forms that had been reserved to popular literature so far. The influence of Spanish American prose was also visible in the use of narrative techniques that had not been present in Polish prose:

snapshot, fragmentary constructions, games with time, mist of “magic” are elements that allow us to combine, for example M. Gretkowska’s prose with Cortázar’s works, and the writing of I. Filipiak with the works of García Márquez (op. cit., 136).

Stanisław Burkot (2002:288) saw the role of Spanish American prose in “the widespread use of various conceptions of processing reality in literary images.” Giving additional meanings to faithfully described elements of everyday life and introducing them to the non-real order were to be especially inspiring for Polish writers. Contrary to the views of Czapliński, Klejnocki and Sosnowski, Burkot perceived the influence of Spanish American literature, especially Cortázar whose works were related to magical realism in Poland, predominantly in the prose of the second half of the 1970s.

as close travesties or imitations, like in Jan Drzeżdżon’s works [...], echo reflections, like in Stanisław Srokowski’s [...], or a literary exercise or game like in *Nic albo nic* (1971) or *Kronika wypadków miłosnych* by Tadeusz Konwicki, where the depicted world and the fates of the protagonists are real and unreal at the same time, everything happens on the border-line between dream and reality.

Burkot warned against overestimating the impact of Spanish American prose, stressing that the principle of combining the real and unreal elements had been in Polish prose, e.g. Tadeusz Nowak’s prose, before the translations of Hispanic authors appeared.

The names of Spanish American writers were included in Polish critical texts in a comparative context. “Receivers almost always learnt about a debut like those of Cortázar, Márquez, Faulkner” – wrote Czapliński and Śliwiński (1999:52). Those writers, known for most readers, became a measure – overused – for the achievements of the local prose.

The aforementioned studies are only to signal the similarities between contemporary Polish prose and the Spanish American prose of the boom. None of

these topics, as far as I know, has been elaborated. Yet, these relations have been perceived by reviewers of the works of contemporary Polish writers.

The analysed critical texts have drawn my attention to the frequency of the adjective “magic” and other cognates.<sup>622</sup> One can have the impression that the Polish prose of the late 1980s became magical! The most “magical” works were written by Paweł Huelle: *Who was David Weiser* (1987) and *Moving House and Other Stories* (1991). Let us cite some fragments of reviews:

The caesura between childhood and adulthood is a magical and mysterious source of creative passions [...].

It is a wise and heartrending, subtle in its psychological, moral and social nuances, intriguing in conscious understatements which create the whole magic of the depicted story.<sup>623</sup>

(...) history shines through the lyrical magic of childhood as a dark spot between Elka's hips.<sup>624</sup>

Huelle's debut novel, regarded as one of the most interesting debuts of the 1990s and called the best book of the decade, was juxtaposed with various works of world literature. Alain Fournier and Grass were most frequently claimed to be its literary patrons. Yet, Bratkowski, in *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, realistically noted that associating Huelle with Grass would be less obvious if the plot of the novel had not been placed in Gdańsk. He also showed similarities between *Who was David Weiser* and *The Cubs* by Vargas Llosa because of the depicted mood of maturing, and with his novel *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* because of the “infernal summer mood.”<sup>625</sup>

One of the characteristics of Huelle's prose was to be its mysteriousness. “The child of mystery – some Dawid Weiser”<sup>626</sup> and “A well of mysteries”<sup>627</sup> were the titles of some critical texts. Osiecka wrote about the first novel of the writer from Gdańsk:

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622 Bocheński (2007:30) noted that the adjective “magical,” along with such words as “mystery,” “spiritual,” “ecstasy,” “absolute” and “cultic,” was captured by mass culture and consequently, made common, “One cannot find a better advertisement trick than calling a writer, adding the epithet “magical” to his name.” However, at the turn of the 1980s and 90s, this phenomenon was not so common as it is today.

623 Żuliński, *Literatura* 1988, no. 2, p. 69.

624 Kott, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1993, no. 42, p. 14.

625 Bratkowski, *Tygodnik Kulturalny* 1987, no. 47, p. 12.

626 Drzewucki, *Akcent* 1989, no. 1, pp. 146–149.

627 Czachowska, *Twórczość* 1987, no. 11, pp. 107–110.



As a matter of fact, I am reading it from leaf to leaf since this novel can be peeled like an artichoke, and the leaves are removed with difficulty and toughness as if they are little plates. In the heart of the artichoke, the mystery is stuck and is laughing all the way to those who are curious; actually, it is not laughing but crying for something what is gone and will not come back.<sup>628</sup>

The critics saw “mysterious clearances and fissures” in the plot of *Moving House and Other Stories*.<sup>629</sup> They wrote that *Cold Sea Stories* showed “the mythical, mysterious reality of sleep, dream and recollection.”<sup>630</sup>

The reviewers often mentioned a specific construction of the narrative as a characteristic of Huelle’s works; this construction led to a confrontation of two different layers of time. In *Who was David Weiser*, three such layers: the time of narrative, the time of events and the time of concrete history, were discerned.<sup>631</sup>

The plot of *Who was David Weiser* unfolds on three concurrent layers; events from the childhood, investigation into a missing boy and the investigations of an adult narrator, all of them merge into an extremely cohesive whole that is intriguing by its compositional refinement.<sup>632</sup>

– wrote the critic for *Literatura*. In turn, Tomasz Mizerkiewicz distinguished four layers of time in the novel: the vacations of 1957, investigation into the disappearance of Weiser and Elka, snapshot recollections concerning the events of some characters’ lives and the time of writing the narrative. This time structure, strengthened with the specific use of tenses, reflects, in the critic’s opinion, “the mythical character of the events of 1957 for the narrator’s consciousness.”<sup>633</sup> Jan Kott wrote about *Moving House and Other Stories*:

Huelle’s stories always have two layers of time, although in his narrative these layers are smooth and often interwoven and intermingled in an almost barely noticed way.<sup>634</sup>

The reviewer for *Nowe Książki* saw three worlds in this book: present, past and imagination. Thanks to the world of imagination, the present was to reveal “hidden ways leading to the recesses of the past.”<sup>635</sup> “Complicated use of time”

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628 Osiecka, *Polityka* 1992, no. 13, p. 23.

629 Myszkowski, *Odra* 1977, no. 7, pp. 97–98.

630 Franaszek, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2008, no. 38, p. 29.

631 Ćwikliński, *Nurt* 1989, no. 3, pp. 17–18.

632 Żuliński, op. cit.

633 Mizerkiewicz *Polonistyka* 1999, no. 1, pp. 18–23.

634 Kott, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1993, no. 42, p. 14.

635 Gosk, *Nowe Książki* 1992, no. 1, pp. 15–16.

was also mentioned discussing *The First Love and Other Stories*.<sup>636</sup> “The invisible time door” was to be crossed by the protagonist of one of the stories included in *Cold Sea Stories*.<sup>637</sup>

The critics avoided defining the writing method of the writer from Gdańsk. Nevertheless, the reviewer for *Dekada Literacka* noted discussing *Moving House and Other Stories*:

Considering the whole concreteness of detail, it would be difficult to define the works as “realistic.” The borders between the experienced reality and the imagined reality are not sharp on purpose: they do not actually exist.<sup>638</sup>

According to another critic, “Huelle uses the trick of an allegedly realistic story about events that unnoticeably reveal their supernatural several times.”<sup>639</sup> This remark sounds like a definition of magical realism. In a description of *I was lonely and happy* we can read:

A sewerage gully can be [...] a door to the unexplored kingdom of darkness... [...] Huelle’s prose transforms the space of the usual and everyday into a sublime metaphor of an individual and also [...] collective fate.<sup>640</sup>

Reading numerous reviews of Huelle’s works inevitably led me to associate them with the critical texts concerning Spanish American prose. It was in them that such words as “magic” and “mystery” were used excessively, emphasising the breaking of traditional chronology and intermingling of time layers. The extraordinary properties of things used every day were also stressed. Many a time similar formulations are used to describe Huelle’s prose and similar characteristics are underlined. Its similarities with the prose of the boom seem obvious on the basis of the critical texts although they were not always articulated straightforwardly.

The inspirations of Spanish American prose were more directly shown in articles about Olga Tokarczuk’s prose, a winner of numerous awards,<sup>641</sup> enjoying popularity with readers. Some critics saw the author of *Primeval and Other Times* as a representative of the so-called peasant trend in Polish post-war literature, and in her works – the continuation of the prose of Julian Kawalec, Tadeusz Nowak and

636 Nowacki, *Twórczość* 1997, no. 5, pp. 103–106.

637 Franaszek, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2008, no. 38, p. 29.

638 Zarzycka, *Dekada Literacka* 1991, no. 3, p. 8.

639 Gosk, *Nowe Książki* 1992, no. 1, pp. 15–16.

640 Majerski, *Nowe Książki* 2003, no. 7/8.

641 Among other things, a winner of *Paszport Polityki*, the Kościelskis Foundation, Nike Award. Her books have been translated into 11 languages.

Myśliwski,<sup>642</sup> but the authoress herself regarded such interpretations as exotic...<sup>643</sup> The other possible inspirations included the prose of Faulkner, Umberto Eco, Mircea Eliade and García Márquez.<sup>644</sup> Here the authoress admitted that she had read their works and had been fascinated with them to a certain extent.<sup>645</sup>

In the articles about Tokarczuk's books, one can also find the words "magical" and "mysterious."

The problem that fascinated Olga Tokarczuk for some time was the question about magic and the sense of literature, the borderline of fiction and the bizarre relations between what is real and what is created<sup>646</sup>

– noted a reviewer for *Polityka*. "And again, Olga Tokarczuk consequently seeks magic and uniqueness in everyday activities and ordinary emotions," was written about the collection of her short stories *Playing on Many Drums*.<sup>647</sup> The book was to hide "an intriguing connection between the realistic look at the contemporary world and her desire of mystery."<sup>648</sup> The house from the novel *House of Day, House of Night* is "a magical place."<sup>649</sup> Conclusions after reading *The Journey of the Book-People* were as follows:

The solution of the mystery of life and life itself contradict each other. The mystery can be only understood by those who have crossed the threshold.<sup>650</sup>

According to Jerzy Jarzębski, reading *E.E.* we are dealing with "a mysterious process of an artistic personality being born," and the authoress herself

shows a world in which the mystery surrounding the human condition as well as the nature of substance and psyche was revealed as strange skills of a maturing girl and then gone when the girl grew up. [...] But [...] the mystery remained although its festive setting was reduced and turned into laughing stock. The mystery remained although the historical events as if erased it.<sup>651</sup>

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642 Kula, *Warsztaty Polonistyczne* 1998, no. 4, pp. 130–131, Orski, *Nowe Książki* 1996, no. 8, pp. 46–47.

643 "Kicz nie musi być słodki," interview with Olga Tokarczuk, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2002, no. 220, pp. 16–17.

644 Wołk, *Przegląd Artystyczno-Literacki* 1997, no. 4, pp. 38–39., 39; Cieński, *Odra* 1996, no. 11, pp. 116–118.

645 J. Baran's interview with Olga Tokarczuk, *Sycyna*, 1997, no. 24, p. 3.

646 Nowacki, *Polityka* 2002, no. 5, p. 52.

647 Klejnocki, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2002, no. 27, p. 14.

648 Ibid.

649 Cieślik, *Polityka* 1995, no. 49, p. 51.

650 Lengren, *Twórczość* 1994, no. 7, p. 111.

651 Jarzębski, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1995, no. 40, p. 14.

In the critical texts dedicated to Tokarczuk's books, we can often read that the authoress balances between the reality of the senses and the world that is sensually unreachable. *House of Day, House of Night* is a book "told between waking and sleep, between the concrete and a myth."<sup>652</sup> "The sphere of realism is penetrated by a fantasy of dreams" – discovered a reviewer for *Głos Nauczycielski*.<sup>653</sup> Czapliński added:

All of the various dreams unite, confuse and complement one another, and consequently blur the borders between the reality of events and their drowsiness, between dreaming people and the dreamt world.<sup>654</sup>

The same critic defined her writing method, "she writes about extraordinary things, but she roots marvelousness in commonness."<sup>655</sup>

The aforementioned texts did not attach any clear terms to the narrative technique of the writer. The term "magical realism" appeared in the review of her book *Primeval and Other Times*, which was acclaimed "the first Polish novel [...], in which the experiences of magical realism were successfully transferred into the local realities,"<sup>656</sup> and the name from the title "Prawiek" [Primeval] was compared with García Márquez's Macondo.<sup>657</sup> The similarities between the two invented places resulted from related artistic conceptions on which they were founded. Prawiek, like Macondo, constitutes a closed space, isolated, self-sufficient. Each place is a kind of cosmos in which time has a different dimension and in which the historical time occurs only within a defined scope, an area where the myth is born.

Take a little bit of magic, some realities and model a world. Then create time. Time that could have been although it had not existed. Let people live on this earth and in this time. People who are likely, though invented. People left at the mercy of everyday work, luxuriant nature, solitude, passion and eternal questions. And let this micro-cosmos come alive.

This could have been a recipe for writing *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez. Olga Tokarczuk used it while creating her story

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652 Cieślík, op. cit.

653 Korkozowicz, *Głos Nauczycielski* 1995, no. 29, p. 10.

654 Czapliński, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1999, no. 8, p. 8.

655 Czapliński, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 23.09.2004, p. 12.

656 Bugajska, *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1997, no. 6, p. 20.

657 Bugajska; *ibid.*, Cieński, *Odra* 1996, no. 11, p. 117, Piasecki, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 1996, no. 130, p. 16.

– a reviewer for *Topos* juxtaposed the prose of the Columbian writer with *Primeval and Other Times*.<sup>658</sup> A direct reference to García Márquez's works was also the title of one of the reviews "Eighty years of solitude." The reviewer saw the reference in "the way of mixing everyday life with magic, and the construction of a family saga as a cultural centre."<sup>659</sup> Another critic saw the similarity to his works in "the peculiar time warp because of which the visibility, the eye-witnessing of the deity becomes something day-to-day, common."<sup>660</sup> The critics also wrote about the overlapping of different temporal dimensions in the novel: the time of nature, the time of magic, the time of people's everyday life and the time of history.<sup>661</sup> However, some critics stressed the autonomous creativity of the authoress, not agreeing to only label it as a Polish *à la Márquez* prose: "Tokarczuk cultivates an original – I would say – mythological (not magical) realism" – wrote a reviewer for *Nowe Książki*.<sup>662</sup> Let us quote the authoress' words:

[...] I understand realism in a different way. For me, the real is what people experience, and thus, not only concrete events but subjective understanding, imagined things, illusions and dreams. That is when the borderline between fiction and realism has been blurred completely [...].<sup>663</sup>

Not all of the critics were enthusiasts of the Polish version of magical realism. For Tomasz Bocheński (2007:329) the prose of Tokarczuk, Andrzej Stasiuk and Magdalena Tulli

is only "the imitation of magic," emulation which readers like so much since they are contented themselves with imitations.

Therefore, in their prose one should not see one of the tendencies of contemporary Polish literature because it was nothing more than "a marketing gesture, imitation calculated to gain recognition, a kind of snobbish fashion" (Bocheński (2007:330).

Similarities to magical realism were also seen in Filipiak's book *Absolutna amnezja* [Absolute Amnesia]:

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658 Ostowicz, *Topos* 1996, no. 4, p. 102.

659 Wołk, *Przegląd Artystyczno-Literacki* 1997, no. 4, p. 39.

660 Cieński, op. cit.

661 Ostowicz, *Topos* 1996, no. 4, p. 102.

662 Orski, *Nowe Książki* 1996, no. 8, p. 47.

663 "Kicz nie musi być słodki," interview with Olga Tokarczuk, *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2002, no. 220, pp. 16–17.

The facts that we can define without any greater hesitation as real (in accordance with the tradition of realistic prose) are gently combined with fantastic events, for example in the conversation of the heroine with her dead grandmother or a shocking pep rally that is organised by a half-mad teacher with her pupils on the occasion of the Women's Day.<sup>664</sup>

A reviewer for *Nowe Książki* showed a multitude of fundamental topics in the novel: gap between parents and children, the need to understand one another, to love and to accept, getting used to solitude, maturing, the essence of womanhood and distorted totalitarian systems.

All of the elements of this puzzle result from one another in fantastical orders; they overlap and again emerge unexpectedly.<sup>665</sup>

Gretkowska's works were juxtaposed with the greatest works of the 20th century world literature. Her novel *We Are Immigrants Here* was to reveal relations with *Slaughterhouse-Five*, *Master and Margarita* and *Satanic Verses*. And in the case of *Kabaret metafizyczny* [Metaphysical Cabaret]

the genres that Gretkowska mixes and whose borders she crosses [...] are examples of a very young, since not older than postmodernism itself, novel of magical realism and a love story for female cooks.<sup>666</sup>

A reviewer for *Nowe Książki* wrote about Filipiak's *Śmierć i spirala* [Death and the Spiral] and Gretkowska's *Paris Tarot*:

A manuscript found in Central Park? A hopscotch changed into a deck of the Tarot cards? [...] Can anything result from the fact that when both authoresses were born, in the second half of the 1960s, mankind – and certainly their parents – were reading *Hopscotch* and *nouveau roman*, and going to see the films directed by Lelouch and Godard? [...] *Tarot paryski* is not *Hopscotch* although we have Paris in both, and jazz, and conversations about the sense of life, love and death with people from a distant country.<sup>667</sup>

In this case, the reviewer did not find any parallels between the prose of Gretkowska and that of Cortázar, but the novel of the Argentinian writer was treated as an important point of reference.

An important opinion was expressed by Johann Bidermann. Although he had a German background, his article was published in the volume *Realizm*

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664 Sosnowski, *Ex Libris* 1995, no. 80, p. 4.

665 Gosk, *Nowe Książki* 1995, no. 8, p. 46.

666 Pułaczewska, *Teksty Drugie* 1998, no. 6, p. 163.

667 Jarosińska, *Nowe Książki* 1993, no. 12, p. 49.

*magiczny. Teoria i realizacje artystyczne* [Magical Realism. Theory and Artistic Realisations] by the Institute of Theory of Literature, Theatre and Audiovisual Arts of the University of Łódź.<sup>668</sup> Biedermann, discussing the prose of Stefan Chwin, Huelle and Tokarczuk, wrote straightforwardly that the “Polish magical realism” was not merely a term. Its specific character was that it described the fate of things that changed their owners as result of the course of events. They were “the magical characters” of the works of the authors referred. “They change the environment where they have lived pragmatic-real lives into a landscape with a magical power of attraction, a place of hidden treasures” (Biedermann 2007:322). The literary world shows the past and present of the things that belonged to Germans and became the properties of Poles:

Although real Germans left these territories, they remained; they are permanently cited through their material “traces” that could have desired to be somewhere else, but are stuck in an irreal confrontation with a “new” Poland (ibid.).

## 5 Summary

In the reviews of the works written by the most acclaimed Polish writers who debuted in the 1990s, the following elements were in focus: magic, mystery, overlapped layers of time, the co-existed reality available to the senses and the reality that was beyond sensual cognition, transcending the border between them. In the 1970s and 80s, they were considered, in the eyes of Polish critics, as the most important characteristics of “the Latin American nature” in prose. At the threshold of the new century, they clearly permeated Polish literature and criticism. In many cases, the terms found in the reviews of contemporary Polish works seemed to be taken from the critical texts dedicated to Spanish American prose. We can assume that one of the reasons was that this prose owed so much to the writers of the Green Continent. The critics also owed it a lot – a renewed language which they used speaking about young Polish prose and an enlarged pantheon of literary patterns. Hispanic writers joined the masters of Europe or the United States, and their techniques as well as works became legitimate references for the achievements of Polish authors. If we are to believe the experts in Polish contemporary literature – no reason to doubt in their expertise – the works of Latin American writers became important sources of inspiration for the authors debuting in the early 1990s, opening up new horizons and showing new writing techniques.

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668 Ed. J. Biedermann, G. Gazda, I. Hübner, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2007.

Finally, what was the status of some translations of Spanish American prose in the Polish literary polysystem? My analysis allows me to adopt the following thesis: a certain, quite limited group of Hispanic writers reached the position of static canonicity. Their stable position on the publishing market testifies to the fact that they enjoyed the interest of editors, found buyers and, most likely, readers, too. A slightly bigger group was given permanent entries in Polish encyclopaedias, dictionaries and other related studies dedicated to world literature. In the case of several books, we can speak about dynamic canonicity since from the perspective of literary criticism, they made a considerable impact on the Polish prose created in the last twenty years.



## 5 Polish readers of Spanish American prose

### 1 Readers of literary translations

Empirical investigations concerning readers of literary translations are sparse. Among the Polish studies of that type, it is worth mentioning *Konotacja obcości w przekładzie* [The Connotation of Strangeness in Translation] by Roman Lewicki (1993), in which he analysed surveys regarding the perception and acceptance of elements recognised as indicators of strangeness in a translated text. Even after the cultural turn in translation studies, empirical research on the readers of translations has hardly been conducted despite the fact that the reception of translation and the context of translation attracted many scholars' attention.

Authors of studies dedicated to the reception of literature and problems of the reception of translation generally agreed that critical texts, predominantly reviews, were the most important and almost the only evidence of reception (see e.g. Brown 1994). Reviews in daily press or popular weeklies were recognised, because of their hasted character, as close to readers' common behaviours, and consequently, reliable sources in research on the reception of literature realised within a non-professional distribution (Płachecki 1982:173). Reviews are said to considerably influence and shape readers' expectations and interpretative attitudes. However, media research urges us to be cautious in accepting such judgements. The analyses of readership conducted in the 1970s, the period that is from the perspective of my work especially important because of the huge number of Spanish American works and their critical texts, prove that the real scope of influence of reviews was not as broad as the authors of theoretical-literary studies seemed to suggest.

Reviews of literary works reach readers first of all through literary periodicals. During the period of the Polish People's Republic, the circulation of single issues of the most popular literary periodicals *Literatura* and *Życie Literackie* amounted to one hundred thousand copies (Kupis 1975:71). Their actual range could have been even bigger because of the possibility of the so-called multi-reception – availability in libraries. Yet, this does not change the fact that in those days, readers of particular literary studies constituted less than 1.2 % of the whole population over fourteen years of age as for *Literatura* and 2 % – *Życie Literackie* (Bajka 1976:300). This furthermore means that during the period when literary and cultural press was centralised to a great extent and the number of titles was limited, the public of fiction was much bigger than the

public of particular literary periodicals.<sup>669</sup> Despite the enormous circulations the influence of reviews published in daily press was slight: research shows that only a small number of people read them... (Pisarek 1980:13). Facing these data, we should not overestimate the real impact of literary criticism on the readers of fiction.

It is difficult to state explicitly what the situation looks like today although research on readership is regularly conducted. The Polish Research on Readership project, run since 1998 by MillwardBrown SMG/KRC following the order of the consortium of the Polish biggest press editors, collects data about the number and characteristics of readers of particular press titles. They are meant to help plan publishing strategies and advertising campaigns in Poland.<sup>670</sup> Therefore, this research does not embrace niche or non-profit titles – those that are not interesting from a purely commercial point of view. There is not a single literary paper among 133 titles included on the lists of most popular weeklies, biweeklies and monthlies. Consequently, we cannot determine the scope of literary press today. Since many literary titles exert influence only locally, and there is no single paper that is read by those who regard themselves as intellectuals, we can conclude that the impact range of literary press – and criticism – has now become even smaller than in the 1970s.

Considering that most reviews are published in literary papers, they are meant for specific receivers – interested not only in literature but also in experts' opinions about literary works. Furthermore, this is related to the selection of works to be reviewed (Wojciechowski 1983:96). Thus, reviews of literary works appear to be messages written by experts directed to their colleagues or to readers whose knowledge of literature is profound. Accordingly, they can be regarded as essential testimonies of reception but only the kind of reception that occurs in circles professionally dealing with literature or in groups of readers making deliberate reading choices.

In this context, research on the reception of translation should include real readers if it is to give a complete picture and to describe readers' behaviours, motivations for choosing their readings and, possibly, the effects of their choices. Hence, in my opinion, proper empirical investigations should be undertaken since, as Florian Znaniecki wrote, "the fundamental material concerning some

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669 According to the data of 1992, the readers of highly artistic prose constituted 11 % of the whole population (Straus, Wolf 1996:82).

670 [http://www.millwardbrown.com/Locations/Poland/Uslugi/Badania\\_Syndykatowe/PBC\\_Polskie\\_Badania\\_Czytelnictwa.aspx](http://www.millwardbrown.com/Locations/Poland/Uslugi/Badania_Syndykatowe/PBC_Polskie_Badania_Czytelnictwa.aspx), 8.10.2010.

human activity is the experience of the one who undertakes it.” Otherwise, we will have to rely on working out hypotheses concerning the real reader on the basis of critical texts; hypotheses that will be difficult to verify because they will be based on second-hand materials.

## 2 Readership survey research

The tradition of readership survey research in Poland dates back to the last decade of the 19th century (Wojciechowski 2000:54). During the interwar period, a number of random survey research was conducted but due to the yet imperfect methodology the investigations were rather attempts in this field and are not reliable sources today. After World War II, readership survey research was initiated as early as in 1945. It was the Institute of the Book and Readership founded at the National Library that has systematically conducted surveys since 1955 (op. cit., p. 62). It has investigated the variously understood relationships between reader and book. They are subject matters of research undertaken by scholars interested in culture since a book is traditionally regarded as an important means for spreading, transmitting and conserving values of a supra-individual character (Straus 1993:7). Consequently,

[...] an appropriate level of citizens' literacy determines the possibilities of development of each society. In turn, the essence of literacy lies in its continuous maintenance and even in its increase through frequent reading practices, and especially reading books. Therefore, the state of literacy has far-reaching social and economic effects (Straus, Wolf, 1998:79).

The significance of literary messages for shaping patterns and systems of values is treated as obvious (Ankudowicz 1974:15). Book reading is thought to be the most important form of cultural activity or even its indicator since “sociological research has shown that book readers are more active receivers of other forms of information transfer” (Koziański 1987:108). Moreover, in social awareness one can see a fixed opinion that books play important roles in culture. The results of the survey research conducted in 1984 by the Press Research Centre, cited by Grażyna Straus (1993:9), testified to the fact that Poles were convinced of the high rank of the transmission through books and that reading a big number of books was “an obligation of a cultured person.” This form of activity was regarded as more important than watching television, reading papers, listening to the radio or music, going to the theatre and cinema. The attitude towards book reading considerably changed at the threshold of the 1990s. The 1992 survey of readership showed that it had stopped functioning in “the common awareness as a cultural norm indicating a certain obligation” (Straus, Wolf, 1996:137). A majority

of the respondents wrote that they had read books because they “liked” them and not because they “had to” or “should read.”

One should also consider the numerous aspects of the term “book” that can be defined as a set of contents, preserved in a text, material elements and a social function, the latter causing that the contents influence mental and social life (Wojciechowski 2000:20). In common understanding, a book can be simply a document of at least 64 pages that is designed to be distributed. The term “book” is quite broad and not limited to works of an artistic character. Reading books should not be identified with reading literature, and book rankings made according to various criteria embrace works of a popular scientific nature, encyclopaedias, manuals, etc. The reading public includes those who read at least six books a year (Wojciechowski 2000:20).

Scholars describe reading as “a special form of behaviour which consists in creative participation in the written form of social communication” (Wojciechowski 2000:17), while readership is “a social process consisting in meeting aesthetic, intellectual, scientific, informative and entertainment needs through absorbing the achievements of people’s thoughts, emotions and knowledge that is transmitted in a written form” (Skwarnicki 1960:243). Therefore, reading books is not regarded as a passive – only receptive – action, but as an act of participation in the processes of communication taking place in the society. This attitude towards readership and the role of books direct investigations in this area to capture the significance of books in the broadly understood circulation of culture. These investigations lead to describing the processes of reception of written texts, readers’ behaviours, social functions of texts and their social range as well as channels of circulation (Wojciechowski 2000:35). Sometimes books and their functioning are not objects of scholars’ interests, but appear in the context of “research on the structure of activities undertaken in free time and cultural life of various social categories, and in reflections on the problems of methodology of different branches of the humanities” (Ankudowicz 1978:73).

In the post-war period, readership survey research focused on the size and social diversity of the reading public – differentiating those characteristics that helped scholars see the differences between the reading public and other audiences of culture – on the distribution of books and the sources of distribution; a general description of the main directions of readers’ choices was also provided (Ankudowicz 1978:74–75). These investigations followed the sociological and pedagogical perspective. On the one hand, scholars tried to capture and describe certain processes that happened in the whole society, for instance the percentage of Poles regularly reading books, the percentage of Poles who had access to books as well as the classes or social groups to which readers belonged, etc.

On the other hand, there were specific surveys, e.g. concerning the structure of readership in small towns on the basis of the number of loans from local libraries. The objectives of these investigations were achieved through the methodology taken from social sciences and adopted to readership surveys. The investigations did not consider the psychological, communicative and semiotic point of view (Wojciechowski 2000:36), and the theoretical-literary perspective was hardly taken into account. An example of the last approach was the characterisation of the social requirements of interpreting a literary work.<sup>671</sup> Attempts of portraying readers choosing a concrete genre or a given writer were sporadic. Thus, trying to conduct survey research focused on readers one could not refer to any evidenced methodological pattern since none has been worked out.

### 3 Searching for the reader of Spanish American prose

My survey research did not aim at determining the percentage of readers of Spanish American prose among the reading audience. Firstly, such research would be, after all, an endeavour requiring a powerful research machine and using the tools of statistical analysis, and secondly, its results would be possible to evaluate only on the basis of the circulation of books and the number of loans from libraries, at least referring to the 1970s, and thirdly, the obtained results would not be satisfying. According to the readership surveys conducted on a random representative sample of Polish respondents aged 15 and over, 38 % of the respondents answered that they had read at least one book a year.<sup>672</sup> Out of them, the majority (65 %) declared that they preferred fiction. Yet, we should remember that this number included first of all popular fiction, and not necessarily highly artistically valued fiction. Taking that into account, we should assume that this statistical sample embraced only individuals that had read Spanish American prose. In my view, an interesting question is not how many Poles read Spanish American prose, but who its readers are, why they read it, what they look for in it and what contents they absorb. Therefore, I attempted to create a portrait of a Polish receiver of Spanish American prose. This approach made me try to solve two fundamental problems: how to reach these receivers and which research tools to use. Moreover, I did not want to limit my research to the present times because my aim was to describe the post-war reception of Spanish

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671 See Wojciechowski, *Funkcje krytyki literackiej* [Functions of Literary Criticism], Kraków 1983.

672 <http://ksiazki.wp.pl/tytul,55-lat-badania-czytelnictwa,wid,16095,wiadomosc.html>, 5.11.2010.

American prose. Naturally, my survey research could not embrace 60 years. Therefore, I decided to focus on the 1970s and 80s, the period of the boom. This led to another methodological problem: how to examine the problems of readership that occurred over 30 years ago?

The most natural place where one can meet readers of fiction seems to be public libraries, which according to the library act of 27 June 1997 “serve to meet the educational, cultural and informative needs of the society and participate in spreading knowledge and culture.”<sup>673</sup> However, we should remember that in the new century, the structure of library audiences has considerably changed. The data obtained in 2002 show that out of 7,508,600 registered readers in public libraries, 73 % were school pupils, students and adults attending various kind of courses (Wołosz 2004). This also concerned district towns since in smaller centres a number of branches affiliated to universities (also the non-public ones) were opened, and their students borrowed books from local libraries. “We are dealing with a new kind of library audience, in Western countries defined as *general public*” – noted Jadwiga Kołodziejska (1999) from the Book and Readership Institute of the National Library.<sup>674</sup> Accordingly, the structure of collections in these centres has gradually changed: fiction titles are bought to a smaller extent, while non-fiction titles, professional and scientific literature as well as popular science to a greater extent. This does not change the fact that fiction titles continue to be the majority of collections in public libraries and that they draw most users.<sup>675</sup> The data published by libraries show that among adult readers there are people of different age groups and that these groups are similar as regards their

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673 Journal of Laws of 1997, no. 85 item 539; <http://lex.pl/serwis/du/1997/0539.htm>, 15.10.2010.

674 <http://www.oss.wroc.pl/biuletyn/ebib02/powiat.html>, 16.10.2010.

675 For instance, in 2003, in the Provincial Library in Olsztyn, the loans of fiction titles for adults constituted 46 % of all loans, while popular science – 25 % (the remaining 29 % constituted fiction for children). “Readers of public libraries prefer fiction written by both Polish and foreign authors” can be read on the website of this library ([http://www.wbp.olsztyn.pl/bwm/1-2\\_05-ie/5.htm](http://www.wbp.olsztyn.pl/bwm/1-2_05-ie/5.htm), 15.10.2010). In 2005, in the Communal Public Library in Opatów, the loans of fiction constituted 53 %, and popular science – 17.1 % (<http://www.biblioteka.opatow.internetdsl.pl/>, 15.10.2010). In 2009, in the Municipal Public Library of Szczecin, there were 69 % of loans of fiction for adults and 18 % of loans of popular science titles, considering that fiction for adults was 50 % of the whole collection, whereas popular science – 33 % ([http://www.mbp.szczecin.pl/index.php?modul=mbp&akcja=dokument&dokument\\_id=57](http://www.mbp.szczecin.pl/index.php?modul=mbp&akcja=dokument&dokument_id=57); 15.10.2010).

numbers of users.<sup>676</sup> We can conclude that the users are of different ages, culturally active and many a time interested in their intellectual growth.<sup>677</sup> If we consider that the number of the so-called sporadic receivers reading at the most six books a year amounts to 25 % of the society, and real readers who report to read at least seven books a year – 11 %, <sup>678</sup> public libraries seem to be places where a selected group of the reading public can be identified and examined, noting that “buying books and creating home libraries are not prevailing phenomena in our country” (Wojciechowski 2000:75). Despite the fact that bookstores sell most of their goods to individual customers, and only 30 % to libraries, books from libraries are used many times, while books from private collections only sporadically reach bigger numbers of readers (Wojciechowski 2000:74). This was confirmed by the results of the research “Social range of books in Poland in 2008” conducted by the National Library, according to which libraries are the chief sources of books for 40 % of all readers (Wolf 2009).<sup>679</sup> Accordingly, I took the view that I should conduct my research in public libraries.

#### 4 Research methodology

In Poland, it is interactive methods that are most frequently used in readership surveys. I have regarded a survey as the best technique to achieve my goals. Its advantages and disadvantages are universally known. The indirect character of survey research, i.e. the absence of researchers while collecting data, causes that respondents’ answers are not completely reliable since respondents tend to present themselves in the best possible light – admitting to read books and having some knowledge of literature is still considered as good manners. The anonymous character of this research to a certain extent prevents distortion while obtaining results.

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676 In the Provincial Library in Olsztyn, the structure of readers according to age groups was as follows: the 20–24 age group – 18 %, the 24–44 age group – 29 %, the 45–60 age group – 17 %, over 60 years of age – 10 %. Similar data are given by other libraries (see <http://bibliotekadzierzgon.bloog.pl/kat,393404,index.html?ticaid=6b100;siedlcembp.bip.e-zeto.com/public/getfile.php?id=90674>; 15.10.2010).

677 “Library public is not representative for the whole population – it can possibly represent its better educated and culturally active part, but it meets the requirement of diversity” – writes Wojciechowski (1983:54).

678 <http://www.kongreskultury.pl/title,pid,339.html>, 15.10.2010.

679 <http://52ksiazki.pl/2010/02/czytelnictwo-w-polsce-w-2008-r/>, 15.10.2010.

The impossibility of researchers' participation in distributing questionnaires causes that the success of surveys greatly depends on the librarians' good will and friendly attitude, whether they agree to distribute questionnaires, whether they encourage readers to fill them in and then prevent the questionnaires from being dispersed or destroyed.

Moreover, difficulties occur at the stage of constructing a questionnaire since it should meet several fundamental criteria. It cannot be too long since lengthiness generally discourages receivers. On the other hand, although a questionnaire must be concise, it should provide answers to problems that researchers are interested in. The language of questions must be comprehensible. Any professional jargon must be excluded. Although readers of fiction are generally characterised by a certain level of culture and above-average skills to use the Polish language, one cannot assume that they know the terms related to the theory of literature.

An important advantage of a survey is that being a standardised technique it can be used in large-scale research, conducted in different and distant places. Therefore, it allows researchers to ask all respondents the same questions and their answers are given in comparable conditions. Furthermore, a well-constructed questionnaire with precise instructions concerning its distribution and way of answering is relatively easy to be analysed because the obtained results are analysed with a standardised key.

Survey research aiming at examining readers of Spanish American prose was conducted between January and August 2010. Thus, it went beyond the time limits of the reception of this prose, being the subject of interest of the present work. Nevertheless, it is difficult to analyse readers' choices given five years ago. Readership surveys usually concern the present times. Yet, preferences concerning reading do not change every year, especially given the fact that the Polish reading audience was recognised as rather conservative (Gołębiewski 2002, vol.1, p. 52). Therefore, results obtained in questionnaires should not have differed radically if the surveys were carried out five years earlier.

The questionnaires were distributed in the following libraries: the Juliusz Słowacki Municipal Public Library in Tarnów, the Provincial Pedagogical Library in Rzeszów (branch in Sędziszów Małopolski), the Jan Wiktor District and Municipal Public Library in Bochnia, the Provincial Public Library in Kraków, the Podgórska Public Library, Branch No. 20 in Kraków, the Municipal and District Public Library in Dębica, the Municipal Public Library in Gdynia, the Library of the Institute of Romance Philology and the Library of the Institute of Polish Philology of the University of Wrocław.



The questionnaires included mostly closed-ended and partially open-ended questions. The latter appeared when the respondents had to indicate the given authors' names – whether they had already known them, or to indicate the titles of the works they had read. In these cases, respondents could add their own proposals. The aim of this strategy was to discern whether in the literary circulation there functioned other books or authors than those that were regarded as most popular on the basis of critical reception and data resulting from publishing policies.

In the specification, there were the usual questions about gender, age and education. There were no questions about profession, assuming that a possible correlation between the type of job performed and love of Spanish American literature was not essential.<sup>680</sup> As regards students, they were asked to give their study fields since the studies of the humanities or strict sciences could have had important influence on their choices of books.

Asking about the respondent's age, the standard divisions used in readership surveys were abandoned. From the perspective of my research goal, it was more important to ask in which period of life the respondents encountered Spanish American prose. It was also assumed that the survey concerned fiction for adults. Hence the first proposed age division concerned the 15–25 age group, i.e. teenagers and adult learners, those whose "choices of readings are to a large extent consistent with preferences" (Straus 1993:24). The readers of this age group who still shape their literary tastes are regarded as most vulnerable to influences of various sources of information about a book, both of an informal character, such as other people's opinions, and of an institutionalised character – schools, reviewers, etc. The second age group (26–40) embraced adults who many a time had stable literary preferences and who had not experienced the boom, i.e. had been too young to remember the fascination with Spanish American prose. Determining the next age division (41–60), I aimed to see those respondents who could have remembered and personally experienced the enchantment with this prose. Finally, the last age group included the oldest readers for whom the boom could not have been a generational experience.

The specification also included a question about the number of novels read in a year. This was to verify whether a given respondent reads, and how often,

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680 Here I refer to Wojciechowski's opinion (1983:61) based on his research concerning a similar topic, "the collected material does not allow me to make any conclusions as regards any possible dependence of readers' attitudes towards literary prose on professional conditions."

fiction and not books in general, which is usually asked in general readership surveys. Moreover, this question was to verify the thesis, which was common and quite often repeated, that there had been some special group of readers – fans of only Spanish American prose.

The next questions concerned the knowledge, direct or from hearsay, of seventeen names of Spanish American authors and sixteen titles of novels that had been published in Poland in the last 50 years. They were to check which authors and titles functioned in the respondents' awareness and which they had read themselves. Thus, they were to verify the hierarchy of the popularity of Spanish American writers among Polish readers. Since the survey research was planned to be conducted in 2010, the list of authors included works published within the last five years so that the respondents had the possibility to show their knowledge of current publications.<sup>681</sup>

Another question – about the time when a given work was read – was to establish whether this prose still enjoyed popularity with Polish readers or whether reading it was rather a question of some trend that had been long gone. Moreover, I wanted to investigate the incentives for reading Spanish American prose.

The final set of questions was to help determine certain characteristics of people reading this prose. Therefore, the scope of their interests was thought-provoking. The questions about the knowledge of foreign languages as well as visits abroad and their aims were to answer whether lovers of Spanish American prose had any contacts with other cultures and whether they participated in any forms of intercultural exchange. Of significance was also to check whether their interests in Spanish American literature went hand in hand with their interests in other cultural expressions of this continent. The question about the regular reading of some paper was to throw light on the issue of the impact of literary criticism published in the press on readers' choices.

However, my survey research was not to focus on contemporary readers of Spanish American prose. Consequently, the questionnaire was divided into two parts. The second one was directed to the third age group, those between 41 and 60, i.e. those who could have remembered the boom and experienced the generational fascination with Spanish American literature. The dominant questions were the open-ended ones. The first one concerned the moment of the first contact with Spanish American prose. The second one was to show the most popular

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681 The research showed dependence of the readers' choices on the current offers of publications (Straus, Wolf 1996:89).

writer of this age group. The third one was to check whether reading this prose had a communal dimension or led to socialising, i.e. could have drawn groups of people to it. The next question was to examine whether in the 1970s and 80s, reading certain periodicals could have influenced readers' choices (as already mentioned, some periodicals regularly published reviews of the translated Spanish American works). The last two questions were to explain the problem of the motivation of the readers' choices and potential values drawn from the readings.

The second part of the survey was to enlarge and after a lapse of time verify the knowledge about the readers of the Spanish American prose of the boom, coming from other sources. Using additional sources and their analysis was to fulfil the postulate that survey research was not the only source of information on the topic it concerned because of the possible occurrence of distortions and low degree of exactness (Wojciechowski 1983:39).

In the circle of experts in Latin American studies, it was often repeated that in the late 1970s, several MA theses dedicated to the reception of this literature, focused on examining its readers, had been written at the University of Warsaw. Unfortunately, I did not manage to find such theses in the archives of the Faculty of Polish Studies and the Institute of Romance Philology. It is very likely that – if they existed – they were destroyed after the 25 years of mandatory retention. It is also possible that for some reason they were not taken to the archives. Therefore, I had no access to the results of research conducted during the boom, with one exception – the analyses carried out by Michał Boni and published in *Literatura*<sup>682</sup> and *Przegląd Humanistyczny*.<sup>683</sup> Consequently, his results constituted the fundamental comparative material for contemporary research. Another source was press mentions – unfortunately only a few – concerning readers and problems of reception, found not only in the critical texts.

## 5 Working hypotheses

A questionnaire used to solve a concrete research problem should be constructed in such a way that it would be possible to verify the assumed hypotheses on its basis (Wojciechowski 1983:37). My hypotheses concerning the behaviours and

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682 Boni, M., "Skąd ten szum o boom?", *Literatura* 1976, no. 31, p. 10.

683 Boni, M., "Literatura iberoamerykańska w kulturze czytelniczej studentów," *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1977, no. 12, pp. 143–159.

preferences of Polish readers of Spanish American prose, formulated on the basis of conclusions flowing from the analyses of critical texts about this literature and articles placed in encyclopaedias and literary lexicons, are as follows:

1. The most popular Spanish American writers in Poland include Cortázar, García Márquez, Fuentes, Vargas Llosa and Allende. The “old masters,” that is the authors associated with the boom, are more appreciated and better known by Polish readers than younger writers.
2. The most frequently read novels are *Hopscotch* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.
3. The readers of Spanish American prose are open to the world, participate in various forms of intercultural exchange and above all, are interested in the cultures of Latin America.
4. It is a public interested in literature, having elaborated tastes and precise preferences, recruiting mainly from the generation that personally experienced the boom, i.e. those aged 41 – 60.
5. This group’s preferences have chiefly been influenced by the preferences of their peers and regular contacts with certain periodicals.
6. What readers seek most in Spanish American prose is exoticism, eroticism, artistic impressions and analogies to the political situation in Poland.

## 6 The analysis of the data

In this section I am going to discuss the results of the survey research. Altogether 229<sup>684</sup> questionnaires filled in by those who declared that they had read at least one book written by a Latin American author were analysed. Most of the respondents were women, which to a certain extent corresponded to the results of the national readership surveys: increasingly more Polish women than men read books.<sup>685</sup> In my research, there was an overwhelming majority of female readers. Yet, it would be too hasty to claim that mostly women read Spanish

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684 A similar number of questionnaires (254) was analysed by Wojciechowski (*Funkcje prozy literackiej*, Kraków 1983).

685 “A certain feminisation of readers can be recognised as their characteristic seen in the survey research conducted in 2000–2008, but only in 2008, the difference between female and male readers increased considerably (earlier it oscillated ca. 10 points);” (Wolf, “Współczesny czytelnik w świetle badań Biblioteki Narodowej,” in: *Poradnik bibliotekarza* 2010, no. 4, p. 3.)

American prose in Poland. Perhaps women were more eager to complete the questionnaires.

It seemed that the most transparent way to order the material was to divide it into the respondents' age groups. Consequently, I analysed the groups of the youngest readers, the middle-aged ones and the old, and finally, the 41–60 age group, i.e. those who could have experienced the boom of Spanish American prose as secondary school or university students.

### 6.1 The youngest readers (15–25)

In my investigations, this age group was over-represented which resulted from the fact that beside public libraries the questionnaires were distributed in the libraries of the Institute of Romance Philology and the Institute of Polish Philology of the University of Wrocław and filled in mostly by students. My decision was justified by the fact that in the mid-1970s, Boni conducted similar research among students (Polish literature and computer science students) in Warsaw. Thus, I thought it would be interesting to juxtapose the behaviours of similar readers' circles over the years. Moreover, students studying foreign languages were especially interesting as a group that theoretically read the biggest number of books and seemed to be the most open circle to read novelties or even avant-garde literature.

Students dominated in this group not only because of the distribution of the questionnaires at the University of Wrocław, but also because they prevailed in this age group as readers of Spanish American prose. A detailed distribution of readers by their field of study and other forms of education goes as follows:

• Polish philology students	<b>40</b>
• Spanish philology students	<b>20</b>
• students enrolled in other philology programmes	<b>11</b>
• students of other humanities programmes	<b>15</b>
• students of non-humanities programmes	<b>7</b>
• secondary school students	<b>4</b>
• university alumni	<b>2</b>
• vocational school students	<b>1</b>

The surveyed students, especially those pursuing the humanities, generally read a lot of books, including fiction (although one female pedagogy student admitted that she had not read novels at all, while another art history student – that she read one novel a year). A detailed juxtaposition was as follows:

• Polish philology students	read ca. 40 novels a year
• Spanish philology students	ca. 10 – 11 novels a year
• students enrolled in other philology programmes	ca. 21 novels a year
• students of other humanities programmes	ca. 30 novels a year
• students of non-humanities programmes	ca. 38 novels a year
• secondary school students	ca. 6 novels a year
• university alumni	ca. 8 novels a year
• vocational school students	2–4 novels a year

One of the objectives of the survey was to select the most known and popular Spanish American writer. The respondents were asked to write whether they had ever read some book of the listed authors or whether they had only heard of him/her. Seventeen writers were listed in the questionnaire. They included the biggest stars of the boom: the dead ones (Carpentier, Cortázar, Borges) and the living (García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Fuentes), those who were popular in the 1970s and 80s and appreciated for the artistic values of their prose (Asturias, Sábato, Rulfo, Donoso, Lezama Lima, Poniatowska, Roa Bastos, Puig), Allende who had the biggest number of editions in the Third Polish Republic among the writers who did not belong to the boom, as well as two writers of the younger generation whose books were published in the last several years (Jaime Bayly, Fernando Vallejo). The list was not treated as complete, the respondents were asked to write new names according to their preferences. Tab. 13 presents the results.

In this age group, the most popular writer turned out to be García Márquez. Eighty-two students declared that they had read at least one of his books, out of the remaining 18, fifteen had heard of him. The second most popular writer was Cortázar, whose prose was read by 57 respondents, and his name was known to other 17. High positions were occupied by Borges (40 read his books and 27 heard of him) and Vargas Llosa (39 declared that they had read his works and 17 had heard of him<sup>686</sup>). Rulfo and Sábato occurred to be very popular as well. They were mentioned by 19 students. However, most of these students studied Spanish and might have been obliged to read this literature. Rulfo was heard of by other 14 respondents, Sábato – 16. A similar score was achieved by Fuentes (16 people read his works and as many as 29 heard of

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686 The survey had been conducted before the Peruvian writer received a Nobel Prize. Today almost all respondents could have known his name.



him). Carpentier's works enjoyed a small interest as he had been known only by 12, while 25 had heard of him. Other writers whose names were related to the boom in Poland (Asturias, Donoso, Lezama Lima, Poniatowska, Roa Bastos) or whose works were published right after the boom (Puig) were read by fewer readers although more students – up to twenty – declared that they had heard of them. A big surprise was that a relatively small number (18) admitted having read Allende's prose, although 30 declared that they had known her. Only single readers admitted having read the authors of the younger generation who had appeared on the Polish publishing market in the third millennium.

The respondents added a few new names to the list. Those were writers associated with the boom: Quiroga, Benedetti and Arguedas as well as the Columbian Gamboa, whose two novels were published by Muza. Moreover, three Spanish American poets were added: Gabriela Mistral, Pablo Neruda and Octavio Paz, the last two were marked as "heard of." A series of Spanish writers were added, e.g. Cervantes<sup>687</sup> and Valle Inclán. However, most of them were contemporary authors who enjoyed great popularity in Poland, like Carlos Ruiz Zafón (mentioned three times), Arturo Pérez Reverte (mentioned twice), Eduardo Mendoza, as well as the writers whose works were published by Muza in the "Salsa" series: de Posadas, José Carlos Somoza and Marina Mayoral.

In the discussed age group, almost all of the Spanish literature students (18) declared that they had read works of more than two Spanish American writers, and also:

• Polish philology students	19
• students of other philology programmes	4
• students of other humanities programmes	10
• students studying other fields	2
• the rest	2
Total:	37

Another question in the questionnaire concerned the most known titles of Spanish American prose. At the same time, it was a control question to a certain extent verifying the reliability of respondents – whether they did not try to

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687 Of interest is that this name was added by a woman who defined herself as a Spanish philology student.



present themselves as those who had read more books – and their knowledge about this literature. Their answers were to be confronted with their answers to the previous questions, i.e. to control the respondents who declared that they had read some book and also indicated that they had read the prose of the author of the marked book.

The most popular work turned out to be *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – as many as 76 respondents read it, and the second *Hopscotch* (49). Other titles were less popular: *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* by García Márquez – 26, *The House of the Spirits* Allende – 21, *The Time of the Hero* by Vargas Llosa – 18, *The Feast of the Goat* by the same author, and *Pedro Páramo* by Rulfo – each 12 answers (the last title was read mostly by Spanish philology students). The remaining titles were marked by fewer than 10 readers. Tab. 14 illustrates the results.

The respondents added a number of García Márquez's works, first of all *Love in the Time of Cholera* (17 times), *Of Love and Other Demons* (7 times), *The General in His Labyrinth* (twice) and *The Incredible and Sad Tale of Innocent Eréndira and Her Heartless Grandmother* (once). They also referred to Cortázar's works: *A Manual for Manuel* (3 times), *Short Stories* (4 times), *62: A Model Kit* and *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds* (each once). Two respondents mentioned Vargas Llosa's *The Bad Girl* (*Travesuras de la niña mala*), and one respondent – *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*. Two respondents added *Eva Luna* by Allende, and one – *The Infinite Plan* (*El plan infinito*) by the same authoress. *The Burning Plain and Other Stories* by Rulfo, *Amor mundo* by Arguedas and *The Years with Laura Díaz* by Fuentes were mentioned once. There were also works of Spanish writers: two novels by Mendoza (*La verdad sobre el caso Savolta* and *La aventura del tocador de señoras*), two by Pérez-Reverte (*The Queen of the South* and *The Club Dumas*), three – by Somoza (*La caja de marfil* – twice, as well as – *The Art of Murder – Clara y la penumbra*, *The Athenian Murders – La caverna de las ideas*), four times: *The Shadow of the Wind* (*La sombra del viento*) by Ruiz Zafón, and *La Regenta* by the 19th century classic Clarín.

The data show unambiguously that the position of García Márquez among the youngest readers of Spanish American prose was indisputable. Some respondents marked the Columbian writer as the only author whose works they had read. His works were mentioned most frequently. His old and latest works were known. The last remark also referred to Vargas Llosa's works although he seemed to be less popular than García Márquez.

Tab. 14: The numbers concerning the 15–25 age group who read the listed titles.

	Polish philology students (40)	Spanish philology students (20)	other philology students (11)	other humanities students (15)	other fields students (7)	the rest (7)	total (100)
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i>	33	14	7	13	5	4	76
<i>Hopscotch</i>	26	12	2	9			49
<i>Memories of My Melancholy Whores</i>	13	5	2	4	2		26
<i>The House of the Spirits</i>	8	3	3	4	3		21
<i>The Time of the Hero</i>	3	10		4	1		18
<i>Pedro Páramo</i>	4	9	2	1			12
<i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	4	4	2	1	1		12
<i>The Book of Sand</i>	1	4	1	2	1		9
<i>The Kingdom of This World</i>	2	2	1	1			6
<i>On Heroes and Tombs</i>		6					6
<i>Rosario Tijeras</i>		4		2			6
<i>Son of Man</i>	1	1	1	1	1		5
<i>Our Lady of the Assassins</i>	1	1					2
<i>The Obscene Bird of Night</i>	1					1	2
<i>Heartbreak Tango</i>	1		1				2
<i>Paradiso</i>	1				1		2

The articles published in the press suggested that Spanish American prose was still popular among teenagers although this could not be confirmed by the results of the questionnaires – their number was too small. A teacher of Polish from one of the grammar schools in Warsaw referring to the annual survey entitled “What do we read?” claimed that the most popular authors were Coelho, Wharton and Latin American writers.<sup>688</sup> Other secondary school teachers thought that the knowledge of Latin American prose added prestige in a peer group, “It is enough to read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Márquez and *Hopscotch* by Cortázar. Social success is surely guaranteed.”<sup>689</sup>

The questionnaires filled in by this age group did not show any serious discrepancies between the questions concerning known/read authors and the titles read. Some respondents marked more names of writers whose works they had read than the titles. This tendency was seen especially among the Spanish philology students. Yet, this did not necessarily testify to the lack of competence or building up an “improved” self-image of the respondents. The suggested list might not have included the works that they had read, and at the same time, they did not add the titles that they knew. Some of them might not simply have remembered the titles they had read.

The next question was to show the reasons for choosing Spanish American prose (the respondents could select more than one answer choice). The results were astonishing. Most of them, i.e. 54 %, declared that their friends’ opinions had made them read the works. The second motivation was their aesthetic needs (45 %). In the case of the Spanish and Polish philology students, such a source was the school, which made me wonder since Spanish American prose was not on the list of compulsory readings. Current trends did not seem to be decisive – only 17 % of the respondents declared their influence. Reviews had small impact on choosing readings. Tab. 15 illustrates the results.

Four respondents wrote “by accident” as their reason for reading Spanish American prose, while two – their fascination with this literature, two – editor’s paratexts, and one – film adaptations.

The next characteristic of readers of Spanish American prose is the description of their interests and hobbies. It was not surprising that most of the respondents – 61 – were interested in literature, they were generally language students. This interest was declared by 33 out of the 40 Polish philology students

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688 Szpunar, “Wyzwanie literackie,” *Gazeta Wyborcza Kraków* 2002, no. 299, p. 8.

689 Zablocki, “Iliada nie pomaga,” *Co jest grane* 1999, no. 128, p. 11.

Tab. 15: Reasons for reading Spanish American prose in the 15–25 age group.

	Polish philology students (40)	Spanish philology students (20)	other philology students (11)	other humanities students (15)	other fields students (7)	the rest (7)	total (100)
Friends' opinions	19	6	7	9	7	6	54
Aesthetic needs	18	9	4	11	1	2	45
School	13	13	1	4	1	1	33
Trends	8	2	1	3	2	1	17
Radio or TV programmes	5	1		1			17
Press reviews	7	3	1	2	2		15
Internet sources	4	1					5

and just over a half of the Spanish philology students (12 out of 20). Besides, the answers varied – from music, widely understood fine arts and visual arts through sport, travelling, photography, psychology to computer science, mathematics, modelling, trends and cooking. Consequently, it was impossible to see any correlation between the type of hobby and reading Spanish American prose. Only a general remark can be made that the respondents from this age group had different hobbies and interests.

As a rule, students can speak several foreign languages, are mobile and travel all around the world. Consequently, I will not analyse the respondents' answers concerning these issues. A majority of the respondents declared that they knew at least two foreign languages and that they had travelled abroad within the last several years, as tourists or for further education.

Over 1/3 of the respondents (36, including 12 Polish philology students) admitted that they did not regularly read any paper. Those who declared that they had read a paper mentioned various titles, from opinion-making weeklies through coloured magazines and literary periodical to papers related to a concrete type of interest or political convictions. Some mentioned one title and some several. Most of them, 21, declared that they had read *Polityka*, 6 – *Newsweek*, and 3 – *Odra*, *Wprost* and *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 2 – *Przekrój*, one – *Forum* and *Angora*. The answer choices included quite a big number of the so-called women's press: *Cosmopolitan*, *Vogue*, *Zwierciadło*, *Elle*, *Claudia*, *Glamour*, *Wysokie Obcasy* and *Twój Styl*. Magazines dedicated to geography and travelling were also mentioned: *National Geographic*, *Poznaj Świat*, *Podróż* and *Odkrywca*. The following literary papers were mentioned: *Twórczość* (twice), *Nowe Książki* (twice), *Bluszcz*, *Zeszyty Literackie*, *Topos*, *Polonistyka* and *Lampa* (once). Moreover, the respondents referred to *Kino*, *Film*, *Charaktery*, *Frona*, *Krytyka Polityczna*, *Najwyższy Czas*, *Gość Niedzielny* and *Machina*.

Some of the periodicals mentioned by the respondents published short or long reviews of Spanish American prose. Critical texts about the newly published titles appeared in *Polityka*, which was most frequently declared to have been read by the respondents belonging to this age group. However, in my opinion, the number of its readers was not sufficiently big to conclude that regular contacts with this paper were connected with reading Spanish American prose. Only 15 respondents pointed to press reviews as their motivation to choose this literature.

The answers to the questions about interest in Latin American culture were interesting (tab. 16). It turned out that most readers of Spanish American prose from this age group did not declare any such interest! The exception was, not surprisingly, the Spanish philology students.

**Tab. 16:** The declared interest in Spanish American culture in the 15–25 age group.

	YES	NO
<b>Spanish philology students</b>	17	3
<b>Polish philology students</b>	10	30
<b>Students of other philologies</b>	3	8
<b>Students of other humanities</b>	5	10
<b>Students of other fields</b>	1	6
<b>The rest</b>	3	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>61</b>

The lack of a clear correlation between interest in Spanish American culture and reading the prose created on this continent can testify to the recognition of its artistic values. Spanish American prose was read since it was seen as valuable literature, satisfying aesthetic needs, while its other functions went to the background.

The last question of this part of the questionnaire concerned the most frequent associations brought by Latin American culture. The respondents were instructed to select only one answer choice, but here most respondents did not obey the instruction and ticked more answers. Some even added their own proposals. They associated Latin American culture first of all with dance (64 choices) and music (55 choices). This could be both the reason and effect of the great popularity of schools of Latin American dance in Poland. Moreover, the respondents mentioned literature (41 choices). Similar numbers of choices were given to soap operas (37), exoticism (36) and travels (31). Twenty-nine respondents selected films, which was interesting given the fact that Latin American films were not widely distributed in Poland. They were shown only during festivals and other events promoting Latin American culture. Fine arts received fewer answers than films (19). Single respondents mentioned Latin American food, sport, soccer, complicated political situation and García Márquez's magical realism.

The analysed data provide an image of a young reader of Spanish American prose as a person undergoing education, reading fiction, having broad and varied interests, actively participating in intercultural exchange and seldom being interested in Latin America. His reading activities did not have to concern the press and hence he did not yield to reviewers' suggestions as regards his choices of books. In this respect, the young readers trusted their friends' opinions or followed their own aesthetic needs.

As far as reading preferences were concerned, students living at the beginning of the third millennium did not differ much from those of the 1970s. The most popular writers preferred by the latter were Cortázar, García Márquez, Borges,

Carpentier, Vargas Llosa and Fuentes. The new ranking had similar results, yet the works by Carpentier and Fuentes were read considerably less frequently than 30–40 years ago. The students surveyed by Boni (1976:10) more often spoke about a trend towards Latin American literature and saw the reasons for its success in its difference as compared with European literature, cultural “otherness,” connecting the real sphere with the unreal sphere, in the description of social conflicts other than those in Europe and in formal novelty. Moreover, as a source of knowledge of publishing novelties and their values they showed press reviews, especially critical texts published in *Literatura na Świecie*. At the beginning of the third millennium, students did not seek information and opinions about literary works in the press, and there was no opinion-making paper. A trend towards some literature stopped being an essential element influencing readers’ choices.

## 6.2 Middle-aged readers (26–40)

This group included 61 people, out of whom 47 were women and 14 men. As regards their education, the structure of the group was as follows:

- university graduates            41
- high school graduates        11
- vocational school graduates    1

Moreover, eight people declared that they were still students (they claimed of studying law, administration, medicine, Spanish philology, Romance philology, advertisement, cultural studies, editing and Polish philology).

Most of them worked (53) and lived in cities (49). Their average number of novels read within a year was 24, but only three respondents declared that they had read one book a year. Thirteen respondents declared that they had read less than four books a year. Most read a lot, from a few to several novels a month.

The most popular writer in this group, like in the youngest group, was García Márquez, and his name was known by eight out of the remaining 12 respondents who had no personal contacts with his prose (tab. 17). Like in the previous group, some respondents selected him as the only Latin American writer whose books they had read. The next positions were occupied by Cortázar and Vargas Llosa, but the number of their readers was considerably smaller. Even fewer people – 13 – declared that they had read Borges’ prose, and 18 had heard of him. The rather low position of Isabel Allende was quite surprising. The remaining writers, both those whose books appeared in Poland on the wave of the boom, and those representing the slightly younger generation, had single readers in this group.

**Tab. 17:** The numbers concerning the 26–40 age group who read some book of the listed authors or only heard of the author.

	I have heard of	I have read
Gabriel García Márquez	8	49
Julio Cortázar	21	25
Mario Vargas Llosa	17	25
Jorge Luis Borges	18	13
Isabel Allende	15	12
Carlos Fuentes	14	11
Alejo Carpentier	10	6
José Donoso	5	4
José Lezama Lima	7	4
Ernesto Sábato	6	3
Fernando Vallejo	8	3
Miguel Angel Asturias	5	2
Augusto Roa Bastos	1	2
Juan Rulfo	2	2
Jaime Bayly	4	1
Elena Poniatowska	4	1
Manuel Puig	4	1

One respondent added Eduardo Galeano, the author of *Las venas abiertas de América Latina* (*Open Veins of Latin America*), which cannot be counted as fiction, and Paz. Moreover, four readers added Ruiz Zafón, and one – Cervantes.

As regards the answer choice “I have read,” 19 respondents selected the names of at least three authors.

The most popular title of this middle-aged group was *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (tab. 18). This novel was read by 47 respondents. Another book by García Márquez, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, appeared as fourth, but with a considerably smaller number of choices. The readers added to the proposed list three other titles of this author: *Love in the Time of Cholera* (5 choices), *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* (2) and *Leaf Storm* (1).

The second most popular was *Hopscotch*, considerably less frequently read, and *The House of the Spirits* (21 choices). This was astonishing because only 12 respondents declared that they had read Allende’s prose. This inconsequence of the answer choices can be explained by the popularity of the film based on the novel, bearing the same title. The relative popularity of Vargas Llosa was testified by eight choices of the novel *The Time of the Hero* and six of *The Feast of the Goat*.



**Tab. 18:** The number from the 26–40 age group who read the titles.

Title	No. of the respondents who read the title
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i>	47
<i>The House of the Spirits</i>	21
<i>Hopscotch</i>	21
<i>Memories of My Melancholy Whores</i>	12
<i>The Time of the Hero</i>	8
<i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	6
<i>The Kingdom of This World</i>	4
<i>Heartbreak Tango</i>	4
<i>Paradiso</i>	4
<i>Son of Man</i>	3
<i>The Book of Sand</i>	2
<i>Our Lady of the Assassins</i>	2
<i>On Heroes and Tombs</i>	2
<i>The Obscene Bird of Night</i>	2
<i>Rosario Tijeras</i>	2
<i>Pedro Páramo</i>	1

The respondents mentioned another work of this writer: *The Bad Girl*. Only a few respondents marked the other titles.

Therefore, it seems that this age group preferred popular writers, those who had achieved the status of a star during the boom. Other writers were indicated by single readers.

The data obtained from the answers concerning the knowledge of writers and their works seem to be coherent. Nevertheless, this age group seems to be less reliable than the first one. Their questionnaires contained more inconsistencies between the questions about a given writer and the titles of his or her works. In some questionnaires, the respondents neither selected an answer nor added a title although they declared that they had read some works. In other questionnaires, the respondents declared that they had read some title but did not mark its author. For example, one respondent claimed that he had read the prose of Vargas Llosa and García Márquez, but selected *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and *Hopscotch*. Another declared that he had read the books by Asturias and Donoso, but selected *The House of the Spirits* and *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Yet another admitted having read *Paradiso*, but did not select Lezama Lima from among the authors. Although

such questionnaires were not numerous, they made me look at the results with certain cautiousness. I did not reject them since it was difficult to prove bad intentions of the respondents. Such discrepancies can always result from fallible memory.

Like in the case of the youngest readers, this age group's choices were influenced by their friends' opinions and aesthetic needs (tab. 19). The impact of trends and press texts was less intensive.

**Tab. 19:** Reasons for reading Spanish American prose in the 26–40 age group.

	<b>Number of choices</b>
<b>Friends' opinions</b>	36
<b>Aesthetic needs</b>	30
<b>Trends</b>	13
<b>Press reviews</b>	13
<b>School</b>	11
<b>Internet sources</b>	10
<b>Radio or TV programmes</b>	7

Answering the questions concerning personal interests, most respondents (39) declared literary ones. A slightly smaller number (33) was interested in music, sport – 22 and politics – 19. The other interests embraced computer science and mathematics, fine arts, audio-visual arts, yoga, martial arts, gardening, motorisation, apiculture and cooking. These answers led me to conclude that the readers of Spanish American prose had a clearly defined interest in fiction although had other different passions.

As regards the knowledge of languages, nine respondents admitted that they had known no languages. The knowledge of one foreign language was declared by 26, two languages – 17, three – five, four and five – one reader. Moreover, two respondents claimed to have known foreign languages but had mentioned none. Most of the respondents knew English – 43, German – 11, Russian – 9, Spanish – 6, French – 4 and Latin – 2. The knowledge of Greek, Italian, Turkish, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish was declared by one person per language.

In this age group, ten respondents did not go abroad for the last several years; 44 went abroad as tourists, 12 – on business, 6 – for work, 4 – for education. This group was slightly less mobile than the young respondents and included more of those who did not know any foreign languages.

Eighteen respondents, i.e. almost 30 %, read no papers. The rest mentioned a big variety of titles, as many as 45 periodicals dedicated to various issues: popular coloured papers, opinion-making weeklies as well as specialist and professional press. Most of the respondents marked *Wprost* (10) and *Polityka* (8).

Half of the respondents (34) declared that they had had no interest in Latin American culture. Yet, many of them selected concrete books, most frequently García Márquez's works. On the other hand, interest in Latin American culture does not necessarily refer to reading the prose of this cultural circle. Some of those who admitted that they had been interested in Latin American culture did not mark a big number of Spanish American books they had read.

Latin American culture was mostly associated with dance (38 respondents) and music (33). A similar number of respondents associated it with soap opera (20) and literature (19). Eighteen pointed to exoticism, 15 to films and 14 to travels. Some added sport, cuisine, poverty, sex and another way of making relationships.

To sum up, most of the readers of this age group were educated, living in cities and having jobs. They read a lot and declared that they had been interested in literature. They also had various passions. Most of them knew foreign languages and travelled abroad. While choosing a given book, they followed their friends' advice and their own aesthetic needs.

### **6.3 Senior readers (over 60)**

Readers who were over 60 years old formed the smallest group of the respondents. Nevertheless, their number (15) constituted 9 % of the readers using public libraries, which was in accordance with the national statistics (see footnote 672 in this chapter). The number included only two men. Twelve respondents had higher education, three – secondary education. Six had jobs, while nine did not work. All of them lived in cities.

The members of this age group read a lot of books. Only three admitted having read four novels a year at the most, others – a lot more. On average, they read ca. 50 novels a year, i.e. almost one a week. They mentioned first of all García Márquez, Cortázar, Vargas Llosa and Allende. In this way, the ranking of the popularity of Latin American writers in the oldest age group resembled the one of the previous group. Tab. 20 presents the data.

They added only one name – Bioy Casares. This name was given by a reader who declared that they had read over 200 novels a year. This respondent selected all the names of the listed writers. Nine respondents chose at least three authors whose prose they had read.

**Tab. 20:** The numbers concerning the over 60 age group who read some book of the listed authors or only heard of the author.

Author	I have heard of	I have read
Gabriel García Márquez		13
Julio Cortázar	1	8
Mario Vargas Llosa		8
Isabel Allende	2	7
Jorge Luis Borges	1	4
Carlos Fuentes	2	3
Alejo Carpentier	1	3
Ernesto Sábato	1	3
Jaime Bayly		3
José Donoso		2
José Lezama Lima	1	2
Fernando Vallejo		2
Miguel Angel Asturias	2	1
Augusto Roa Bastos		1
Juan Rulfo		1
Elena Poniatowska	2	1
Manuel Puig		1

**Tab. 21:** The number from the over 60 age group who read the titles.

Title	Number of choices
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i>	11
<i>The House of the Spirits</i>	9
<i>Hopscotch</i>	7
<i>The Time of the Hero</i>	6
<i>Memories of My Melancholy Whores</i>	2
<i>Paradiso</i>	2
<i>Our Lady of the Assassins</i>	2
<i>The Obscene Bird of Night</i>	2
<i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	1
<i>The Kingdom of This World</i>	1
<i>Heartbreak Tango</i>	1
<i>Son of Man</i>	1
<i>The Book of Sand</i>	1
<i>On Heroes and Tombs</i>	1
<i>Pedro Páramo</i>	1
<i>Rosario Tijeras</i>	0

There were no surprises on the list of the most popular books (see Tab. 21).

The following titles were added to the list: *The Green House*, *Conversation in the Cathedral*, *The War of the End of the World*, *The Storyteller*, *The Leaders* by Vargas Llosa, *No One Writes to the Colonel*, *Eyes of the Blue Dog* and *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* by García Márquez, *Alguien que anda por ahí* by Cortázar and *The Lost Steps* by Carpentier.

These results confirmed the popularity of García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, Cortázar and Allende as well as little knowledge of other Latin American writers. In five cases, there were essential discrepancies between the answers to the question about the knowledge of a given author and concrete titles of the books read. In this group, five respondents stated that they had encountered Spanish American prose in the 1970s and 1980s, while the rest had known this prose for the last several years.

**Tab. 22:** Reasons for reading Spanish American prose in the over 60 age group.

	<b>No. of choices</b>
<b>Press reviews</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Friends' opinions</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Aesthetic needs</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Trends</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Radio or TV programmes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>School</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Internet sources</b>	<b>0</b>

In this age group, almost half of the respondents pointed to press reviews as their inspirations to choose books (tab. 22). Some even wrote the names of the papers where they had sought reviews: *Przekrój* (3 respondents), *Literatura* (2) and *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Angora*, *Nowe Książki* and *Pani* (1). Six people pointed to the influence of their friends while choosing books.

Similar to the previous groups, the old respondents declared that they had been interested in literature (12). The other interests included politics and music (5). They also mentioned many passions: fine arts, computer science, mountains, photography, cooking and handcraft.

The oldest readers declared that they had known at least one foreign language; only one admitted having known none. Four knew three languages, and three – two. Most of the respondents (9) declared that they had known Russian, seven – English, one – Slovak, Ukrainian, Swedish, German and Czech. Eleven of them went abroad, most often as tourists (8) or to visit their

families (3). Nine declared that they had regularly read some paper: *Polityka* and *Wprost* (3 respondents). They also mentioned 22 papers of a different character: entertainment, opinion-making and professional. Half of the respondents declared that they had been interested in Latin American culture, half – no such interests. They associated this culture with dance and music (7), literature (6) and exoticism (5).

#### 6.4 The veterans of the boom (41–60)

This group was most interesting to me since they belonged to the generation for which the boom for Spanish American literature could have been important experiences.<sup>690</sup> They were given the second part of the questionnaire, which would allow me to reconstruct the impressions and feelings of the readers of the 1970s and the 1980s.

Fifty-three people of this age group, including 51 women and only two men, filled in the questionnaire correctly. Thus we should rather speak of female readers of Spanish American prose.... Most of the respondents were proud of their higher education (35), 14 completed secondary education, and 4 – vocational schools. The majority had jobs (43) and lived in cities (49).

Most of the respondents in this age group read fiction, declaring that they had read on average 33 novels a year. Only 13 admitted having read fewer than 10 novels a year.

The most popular Latin American writer was García Márquez; only two respondents did not select his name (tab. 23). The majority of the respondents (37) read Cortázar's books, and six had heard of him. For this age group, also Allende was a popular author and so were Vargas Llosa and Borges. More respondents than in the other age groups read Fuentes' works (20) and Carpentier's works (18). Fewer than ten respondents read works of the remaining writers.

Only three names were added to the suggested list: Laura Esquivel, Bryce Echenique and the American writer Nora Roberts. Thirty respondents declared that they had read the works of at least three Latin American writers. The lack of Spanish writers can testify to the fact that these readers had known better which writers came from the Iberian Peninsula and which from Latin America.

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690 "The present middle-aged generation had their own great literary advantage – an encounter with Latin American writing which captured their imagination and shaped their literary tastes for a few or even several dozens of years." (Bugajski, "Rewolucje," *Wiadomości Kulturalne* 1997, no. 27, p. 20).

**Tab. 23:** The numbers concerning the 41–60 age group who read some book of the listed authors or only heard of him/her.

Author	I have heard of	I have read
Gabriel García Márquez	4	47
Julio Cortázar	6	37
Isabel Allende	6	30
Mario Vargas Llosa	7	27
Jorge Luis Borges	12	21
Carlos Fuentes	9	20
Alejo Carpentier	12	18
Ernesto Sábato	9	7
Fernando Vallejo	8	5
Manuel Puig	6	4
Jaime Bayly	6	3
José Lezama Lima	7	3
Miguel Angel Asturias	7	3
Juan Rulfo	5	3
José Donoso	9	2
Augusto Roa Bastos	4	2
Elena Poniatowska	3	2

**Tab. 24:** Number of readers from the 41–60 age group who read the listed titles.

Title	No. of choices
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i>	46
<i>Hopscotch</i>	33
<i>The House of the Spirits</i>	30
<i>Memories of My Melancholy Whores</i>	14
<i>The Time of the Hero</i>	13
<i>The Kingdom of This World</i>	7
<i>Our Lady of the Assassins</i>	6
<i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	6
<i>Paradiso</i>	5
<i>The Obscene Bird of Night</i>	5
<i>The Book of Sand</i>	5
<i>On Heroes and Tombs</i>	5
<i>Son of Man</i>	4
<i>Heartbreak Tango</i>	3
<i>Pedro Páramo</i>	2
<i>Rosario Tijeras</i>	0

The list of the titles read by the respondents does not differ a lot from the previous lists (tab. 24). Almost all of the respondents claimed to have read *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Fourteen read *Memories of My Melancholy Whores* by the same author. Moreover, one respondent added *The Story of a Shipwrecked Sailor* and one *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Over half of them knew *Hopscotch* (33) and *The House of the Spirits* (30). Some added *The Winners* by Cortázar and *Eva Luna* and *The Stories of Eva Luna* by Allende. Vargas Llosa's works enjoyed some popularity: *The Time of the Hero* (13) and *The Feast of the Goat* (6). The other mentioned titles included *Conversation in the Cathedral* and *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* by the same author. Two novels by Laura Esquivel were added: *Like Water for Chocolate* and *Swift as Desire*; *Diana: the Goddess Who Hunts Alone* by Fuentes and *The Lost Steps* by Carpentier.

The number of inconsistencies between the answers to the questions about the writers and concrete titles noted in this age group was the smallest.

As regards the motivation for reading Spanish American prose, the answers of this readers' group did not differ considerably from those of the other groups (tab. 25). Our respondents relied mostly on their friends' opinions.

**Tab. 25:** Reasons for reading Spanish American prose in the over 41–60 age group.

	<b>No. of choices</b>
<b>Friends' opinions</b>	36
<b>Aesthetic needs</b>	25
<b>Trends</b>	16
<b>Press reviews</b>	13
<b>School</b>	3
<b>Internet sources</b>	3
<b>Radio or TV programmes</b>	1

They were also motivated by their aesthetic needs (25 respondents). They yielded to trends to a considerably smaller extent (16). Only 13 respondents pointed to press reviews as their inspiration for reading. Critical texts were found mainly in *Nowe Książki*. School, radio and TV programmes were marked by single respondents.

Like in the previous groups, the respondents of the 41–60 age group declared that they had been interested in literature (44), in music (30) and in politics (16). They also mentioned more or less popular hobbies.



More than half of the respondents (35) declared that they had known some foreign language; one language – 20 respondents, two – 10 respondents, three – 3 respondents, four – two respondents. Most of them admitted having known English (19) and Russian (16); German (8), French (6) as well as Kashubian, Lithuanian, Italian, Slovak and Serbian-Croatian (each language marked by one respondent). Two respondents declared that they had known Spanish. Forty-one respondents travelled abroad, most often as tourists (33).

The readership of papers in this age group remained at the same level as in the other groups. Nineteen respondents, i.e. ca. 36 %, confessed having no regular contacts with some periodical. The rest mentioned 34 titles of different profiles. They chiefly listed *Polityka* (17 respondents), *Wprost* (15) and *Newsweek* (8).

Thirty-eight respondents did not declare any interest in Latin American culture. The most frequent association with this culture was dance (34 respondents), but in this group a unique number of respondents signalled association with literature (29). Latin American culture was also related to music (23), films (16), soap opera (13), exoticism (14) and travels (12).

In the second part of the questionnaire, the respondents were to say when they had firstly encountered Spanish American prose.<sup>691</sup> Thirty respondents declared that the encounter had happened in the 1970s and 80s, nine in the 1990s, and the rest in the new millennium. Yet, in the first part of the questionnaire, only nine respondents selected “in the 1970s and 80s” in the question when they had read the listed works. A majority read the works in the last several years. However, I did not consider these answers to be contradictory. In some cases, they must have read them again, and partly, the answers concerned works that were published in Poland after 1990.

Most of the respondents associated Spanish American literature with García Márquez's writings (38), nine with Cortázar's prose, five with Fuentes' works, four with Vargas Llosa's books and three with Allende's prose. One respondent chose Borges and one – Carpentier.

Reading Spanish American prose had a social dimension for them. As many as 45 respondents wrote that their friends had also read this literature.

Several respondents did not answer the questions concerning papers that they had read in the 1970s and 80s, hiding behind oblivion. Most respondents listed some titles, most frequently *Przekrój* (12) and *Polityka* (10), *Filipinka* (8), *Kultura* (7), *Przyjaciółka* (6), *Kobieta i Życie* (4), *Radar* (4); three respondents mentioned *Film*, *Forum*, *Razem*, *Literatura* and *Życie Literackie*, two – *Na przełaj*, *Szpilki*,

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691 Several people did not fill in this part of the questionnaire.

*Świat Młodych* and one – *Życie Gospodarcze*, *Zwierciadło*, *Kontynenty*, *Poradnik Domowy*, *Sztuka*, *Tygodnik Kulturalny*, *Poznaj Świat*, *Dialog*, *Ekran*, *Kino*, *Tygodnik Powszechny*, *Odra* and *Jestem*. Like in the question about contemporary periodicals, the variety of titles was high, and it would be difficult to state that some title could have influenced the readers' choices to a considerable extent in the discussed group. It was astonishing that only one respondent declared that he had read *Literatura na Świecie*, which in many critics' opinions made Spanish American prose popular in Poland.

The next questions were to reconstruct the readers' approaches, i.e. potential results which readers expected from fiction, and the social function of reading understood as its real effects (Wojciechowski 1983:31). The register of the expected functions and the register of the fulfilled functions in the process of reception are not generally the same, in other words readers do not necessarily find in literary works what they looked for when resolving to read a book.

Wojciechowski (1983:34) listed eight functions:

- Philosophical-social, is fulfilled when the ideological content of a work is confronted with the receiver's views which results in creating a certain "added value," i.e. reflections and thoughts that open up new intellectual perspectives.
- Educational, simply understood as providing positive or negative examples of behaviour. Nevertheless, it is completed indirectly, i.e. when it enriches individual systems of values and principles of action.
- Aesthetic, is to make people aware of the uniqueness of the organisation of linguistic signs, which is not encountered in other forms of communication.
- Emotional, is to make the reader feel emotional tension towards elements of the depicted world.
- Veristic, related to the literary interpretation of a literary work, orders the receiver to identify the depicted world with the real world, thus confirming or completing the reader's knowledge concerning some fragment of reality.
- Cognitive, although refers to the non-literary reality, it reflects the awareness that the depicted world constitutes a certain interpretation of the real world.
- Entertainment, turns our attention to the fact that reading fiction can provide entertainment and satisfaction.
- Substitutionary, uses a literary work to resolve tensions. It is also fulfilled when the reader identifies himself with the protagonist. Another form of this function is to use reading fiction as a tool to build social prestige.

The question "What do you seek while reading Spanish American prose?" was to help me reconstruct the readers' attitudes towards this prose (they could tick a few answers). The list of the suggested answers was based on the opinions

repeated in critical texts. The results of the answer choices to this question were as follows:

• an encounter with an unknown culture	38
• aesthetic experiences	30
• a different view on reality	25
• exoticism	21
• information about Latin America	17
• a new pattern of a novel	10
• humour	8
• impressions that European literature does not give	7
• eroticism	1
• analogies to the situation in communist Poland	0

These data prove that during the boom and just after it, the readers of Spanish American prose expected to have their cognitive function fulfilled. Having profound knowledge of literature, they realised that the world depicted in a literary work was an artistic transformation of the model of the real world. Hence their choices of books were acts to approach another, little known culture that they wanted to get to know through artistic prose. Their desire for exoticism as a feature they looked for in this prose could testify to the cognitive needs. A small group of respondents treated the depicted works in a literary way, confessing that Spanish American prose was to be a source of knowledge about this continent. The readers' expectations related to the aesthetic function were high, which was declared explicitly and by marking the new pattern of a novel and impressions that European literature could not provide as features they desired to find in this prose. "A different view on reality" can be interpreted as the readers' expectation to see the work as something that would modify their system of values to a certain extent, i.e. to fulfil the educational function. Only a few readers declared that they had looked for elements of humour in Latin American prose, which could mean that its entertainment function was not regarded as essential. According to the respondents, this prose was not to fulfil the substitutionary function: they did not look for eroticism and analogies to the political situation in Poland. These answers were suggested to the respondents because some critics ascribed the success of Latin American prose to its heavy load of eroticism that should have influenced especially young readers. In *Rocznik Literacki 1974*, Karczewska-Markiewicz expressed her indignation referring to the Polish editions of the works by Asturias, Fuentes, García Márquez and Vargas Llosa:

Investigating these works with curiosity we cannot, however, accept their sexual contents, obsessively treating these matters that are difficult to be assumed by readers brought up in a different European cultural circle. The huge popularity of these books, especially with young readers, testifies to the characteristic interests in this type of subjects (p. 470).

On the other hand, the mechanism of associating the presented political and social events with the situation in Poland was described in contemporary texts referring to some aspects of the reception of this prose in the 1970s. "We treated dreams, sex and politics as mixed together, with the addition of loneliness and cruelty, as a revelation," Krubski wrote in *Wprost* after years.<sup>692</sup> In turn, Bratkowski<sup>693</sup> recollected:

In the case of many works, their universal message was in the background; we have read them first of all as strong allusions to our own situation, to our desires for the sovereignty of the citizens of the non-sovereign country ruled by the authoritative regime. Jokingly, when the hero of *Conversation in the Cathedral* repeated the question as a refrain, "Why has Peru got rotten?" we knew that Llosa meant Poland, and only because of the censorship he used the metaphor of Peru. We read *The Time of the Hero* in the same spirit.

The last question of the questionnaire aiming at providing answers concerning the fulfilment of the functions of Latin American prose was open-ended. Some readers ignored it, yet a majority made an effort to give brief answers. The answers show that in the process of reading the philosophical-social function and educational function were fulfilled to the biggest extent. The readers indicated that that had gained "broader perspectives and deepened possibilities," "spiritual enrichment and widening of their intellectual horizons," "interesting spiritual experiences," "broader views," "confirmation that one can speak and think differently than the forced norms and patterns prevailing in my lifetime." The modifications of the readers' system of values was testified by the repeated declarations that Latin American prose brought "different (or new) views on reality" and "different views on time and people." The cognitive function was fulfilled in the responses that Latin American prose had given them "a different look at the culture and real life of those living in Latin America," "a new perception of Latin America" and "getting to know an alien and unknown culture." Some respondents confirmed the fulfilment of the veristic function stating that

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692 Fortunately, the cited article appeared under the non-prophetic title "Nie za późno na Nobla dla Llosy" [Too late for a Nobel for Llosa?], *Wprost* 1991, no. 6, p. 52.

693 "Balzak, który przeczytał Joyce'a" [Balzac who read Joyce], *Gazeta Wyborcza* 2000, no. 258, p. 14.

in the books they had found “information concerning South America, its customs and culture,” “news about culture, daily life, social-geographical environment, history.” One reader wrote precisely, “I was interested in the history of Hispanic countries and relationships between Latin America and the USA in the background of the OAS activities.” The aesthetic function was revealed to a small extent. Yet, some respondents admitted that thanks to Spanish American prose they “had experiences that differed from those given by European or American literature,” and “discovered a different aesthetic approach towards the surrounding reality” and “a new pattern of a novel” as well as they got to know magical realism. “I got to know the magic of the depicted world and the extraordinary metaphors of the language,” wrote one reader. Only one person stressed the entertainment flowing from reading this prose. In a few cases, reading this prose proved unsuccessful. One reader answered the question concerning the benefits of reading this prose writing “a slight loss of sight.” Two readers admitted that they had not benefited at all; yet another declared, “I am not a fan of this prose, but thanks to these books I know what I do not like.” The respondents’ answers did not reveal any emotional function and substitutionary function.

The research conducted by Boni in Warsaw in 1976 showed that the reading of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, which he regarded as representing contemporary Spanish American prose, satisfied pupils’ aesthetic and identity needs as well as informed them about the external world.<sup>694</sup> Thanks to this novel, adults fulfilled their needs of identity and information about the external world, while students fulfilled their aesthetic, identity and compensatory-integrating needs (Boni 1976:10). These observations were compatible to a great extent with the results of the survey conducted over 30 years later. Only the identity need, i.e. seeing your own problems and dilemmas in the books you read, was not confirmed.

Boni (1977:158) also put forward a hypothesis combining the choices of books by young people in the 1970s with the important philosophical and cultural tendencies prevailing in the 1960s that were revealed mainly in the contestation movement. He saw similarities between the values that readers discovered in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* and the things characterising “a different view on reality.” These were: attempts to reject a rational interpretation of reality, repressive treatment of culture, seeking metaphysical ways of understanding the world, confidence in intuitive cognition, rebellion against breaking bonds between man

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694 Boni used the typology of readers’ needs proposed by E. and E. Wnuk-Lipiński, distinguishing aesthetic and identity needs, patterns of behaviour, information about the external world, social acceptance, compensation and entertainment.

and the environment he lives in, desire to treat a human being as a spiritual-physical unity. Thus, reading Spanish American prose would fulfil the substitutionary function, i.e., resolving social-civilisational tensions. However, this desire was not reflected in the survey research conducted recently.

The answers given in the questionnaires that I analysed did not reflect the emotions that, if we were to believe recollections, accompanied the reception of Spanish American prose in the 1970s. Boni stressed that readers' choices concerning this literature were to a great extent influenced by trends.<sup>695</sup> Only 30 % of my respondents from the discussed age group admitted that. Actually, Marrodán Casas (1998:4) described the beginnings of the boom as follows:

I felt trapped during the third, or perhaps fourth year of my studies. [...] None of my friends, nor the beautiful and wise girls could have thought that I did not know who Cortázar, Sábato, Carpentier, Fuentes were. During that time, I loved reading Peiper, Przyboś, Białoszewski, Karpowicz and did not even note that something had changed in the lives of my closest people studying Polish literature at the University of Warsaw, that the titles were not from this register, that the poses and gestures were different, that they carried different books. Latin American prose entered my life [...]."

In turn, Bratkowski (2000:14) recollected "girls from grammar school walking along Krakowskie Przedmieście in such a way that others could see them carrying *Hopscotch* or *On Heroes and Tombs*." The knowledge of Spanish American prose became an indicator of the generation:

[...] in Poland, the boom for Latin American literature has just begun: like it was at school several years earlier, in order to get to know one another we asked control questions, "Who do you prefer: the Beatles or the Stones?"; now at university, we were asking, "Who do you prefer: Márquez or Llosa?" (Bratkowski 1992:2)

These exalted poses provoked ironical commentaries. Andrzej Wajs (1997:5), referring to the collection of short stories written by the then most popular Argentinian writer, wrote about "the Warsaw famas who spoke the language of Cortázar, the language of transcendental nirvana," and with malice he attributed his success among juvenile readers to the fact that "he showed the shortest communication line between a disco and Ezekiel's prophecies." People impatiently waited for the next books written by Hispanic writers:

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695 In his opinion, the existence of a trend towards Latin American literature was to be confirmed by the fact that "the awareness of the popularity of the Latin American phenomenon is not correlated with the real knowledge of this literature" (Boni 1976:10).

Are you reading *Hopscotch*? – they asked and disrespectfully waved, “*One Hundred Years of Solitude* is way better than it.” “Are you reading Márquez? Donoso’s *The Obscene Bird of Night* will be published soon, this is a really good book.” The whole Latin American literature was to be beaten by the legendary *Paradiso* by José Lezama Lima, everyone was waiting for its publication with an increasingly bigger tension (Bratkowski 2000:14).

Individual testimonies also prove that some novels strongly influenced young readers’ imagination. The graphic designer Halina Fleger recollected:

I was consumed with *Hopscotch* in my third year of the Arts College. It was a trendy book, difficult to buy, but I managed to do that. [...] Reading this decoded novel as a teenager it dawned on me, I crossed one of the doors of the maturity of imagination. [...] I was fascinated by the cultural difference and a certain kind of magical fantasy.<sup>696</sup>

The mood of the boom was reflected in the recollections about the meetings with writers. Komorowski compared the hysteria of Cortázar’s fans who did not manage to attend a meeting with the reactions observed during the visit of Gérard Philippe to Poland (Komorowski 1977:129). The mood when people awaited the writer’s visit was characterised well by the fragments of the report about the meeting with Warsaw students published in the weekly *ItD*:

Julio Cortázar – a writer to whom hundreds of sketches, essays and critical texts have been dedicated, whose name, especially now, after his visit to Poland, is still being commented on in weeklies; whose books are eagerly sought-after not only in academic circles, and his statements quoted in conversations, often taken for granted almost as Euclid’s certainty. The writer – a legend, has now revealed himself as a human. [...] And so let us be led towards these »gates of heaven« that he is opening before us: He, great, wonderful Cortázar (Jordan 1975:18).

Marrodán Casas (1998:15) recollected the meeting with Vargas Llosa at the University of Warsaw in a similar way:

The hall in the Institute of Polish Philology was packed although it was September, and the organisers – the Warsaw Circle of Students of Polish and the Society of Spanish Philology Students – feared that nobody would turn up. But there were crowds.

Lapse of time made emotions fade and caused that the former enthusiasts of the boom looked at their juvenile behaviours in a sceptical way. They did not want to see their old motivation concerning the choice of books or they simply did not remember it. Analysing their questionnaires, it was difficult to assume that the

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696 “Ta książka olśniewa,” interview with Halina Fleger, *GW Mazowsze* 2004, no. 210, p. 2.

boom for Spanish American literature could have been a phenomenon that was important for the whole generation – none of the questionnaires had an answer that could testify to the fulfilment of the emotional function. Nevertheless, it was obvious that the works of some writers regarded as the authors of the boom, the old and latest ones, remained in the sphere of the respondents' interests and so, their preferences in this respect did not change fundamentally.

## 7 Summary

The research shows that at the threshold of the third millennium, thirty years after the boom, Spanish American prose was read by all generations. In every age group, there were people who read this prose sporadically or quite regularly. An average reader of this literature lived in a city, had university education or was a student, and was professionally active. Regardless of their age, the readers knew at least one foreign language and travelled abroad. They could be included in the reading public, i.e. had contacts with at least six books a year.<sup>697</sup> Moreover, their reading preferences embraced highly artistic prose; we should remember that in all of the analysed groups, the respondents declared that they had read on average more than twenty novels a year. Consequently, they might have been included in the elite circle of readers who were educated citizens residing in cities, employees of educational and cultural institutions as well as representatives of the intelligentsia (see Straus, Wolff 1996:87). Nothing really changed in this area from the time of the research conducted by Boni in the 1970s (1976:10), its results being that the readers of Spanish American prose usually represented a high reading-cultural level. Boni stated:

Reading Latin American literature is not a privilege of some circle but characterises these circles of the society that constitute a stable, relatively constant literary public. Consequently, we cannot unambiguously state that Latin American literature is a phenomenon that has embraced completely new masses of readers (Boni 1976:10).

Already at that point, the myth of some special group of the literary public being created around Spanish American prose disappeared. The myth was naïve because it was difficult to assume that some pioneering and demanding prose speaking about an alien world would reach unskilled readers who had no literary competences. So the literature of Latin America did not reach wide audiences in the 1970s and in the later periods. Nevertheless, it entered the literary canon of readers who had the necessary critical faculties.

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<sup>697</sup> This indicator of readership has been accepted in national investigations.



The most popular Latin American writer in Poland was certainly García Márquez (tab. 26). As many as 83 % of the respondents declared that they had read at least one of his books, and 12 % had known his name. Consequently, only 5 % of the respondents did not hear of him. The second place in the ranking was occupied by Cortázar, whose prose was known to over half of the respondents, 20 % heard of him. Here we could note a change as compared with the results of the mid-1970s, which said that this Argentinian writer had been most popular in Poland in that period (Boni 1977:148). High positions were maintained by the stars of the boom: Vargas Llosa and Borges. The former was read to a similar extent by representatives of all the age groups, while Borges owed his position to the veterans of the boom and students. Among the writers who appeared on the Polish publishing market after the political transformations only Allende found a big number of readers, although most of them belonged to the age group that had shaped their literary preferences during the boom. The juxtaposition between his prose and that of García Márquez proved to be good recommendation. Fuentes and Carpentier, listed among the most popular Latin American writers during the boom, owed their relatively high positions to those readers who remembered this phenomenon and were obviously faithful to their favourite authors. The other writers who were popular in the 1970s, even Sábato whose books were demonstratively carried by secondary school students, were rather sporadically read soon after. Neither did Polish readers appreciate works of those writers who built their image by openly contesting the literature of the boom, like Bayly or Vallejo.

The results have been fully confirmed by the data showing the most popular titles of Spanish American prose (tab. 27). All of the age groups read *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. García Márquez's position was also supported by the fact that another work of his, *Memories of My Melancholy Whores*, was placed as fourth. This strengthened the fact that readers were not satisfied by reading the *opus magnum* of the Columbian writer but followed his current works. According to Skórzyński (1993:56), he was doomed to succeed in Poland from the very beginning:

[...] he is one of the Nobel Prize winners who have been appreciated both by readers and critics. I think that it is partly thanks to the times when his novels appeared – it was a period when critics, and even more readers, were exhausted and also bored with the so-called ambitious prose, which on the one hand, competed with psychology trying to penetrate the darkest corners of the human soul, and on the other hand, it evolved towards the philosophical-ideological essay writings. That's why Márquez's books in which men fight (for life and death) and women love (with their whole hearts and bodies) in the midst of lush tropical nature must have achieved popularity that they fully deserved.

**Tab. 26:** The percentage of readers who read some book of one of the listed authors or heard of him or her.

Author	Readers									
	15–25 age group (100)		26–40 age group (61)		41–60 age group (53)		over 60 age group (15)		all readers (229)	
	heard	read	heard	read	heard	read	heard	read	heard	read
<b>Gabriel García Márquez</b>	15 %	82 %	13 %	80 %	7.5 %	89 %		87 %	12 %	83 %
<b>Julio Cortázar</b>	17 %	57 %	34 %	41 %	11 %	70 %	6.5 %	53 %	20 %	55 %
<b>Mario Vargas Llosa</b>	17 %	39 %	28 %	41 %	13 %	51 %		53 %	10.5 %	38 %
<b>Jorge Luis Borges</b>	27 %	40 %	29 %	21 %	23 %	40 %	6.5 %	27 %	25 %	34 %
<b>Isabel Allende</b>	31 %	18 %	24.5 %	20 %	11 %	56.5 %	13 %	46 %	23.5 %	29 %
<b>Carlos Fuentes</b>	29 %	16 %	23 %	18 %	17 %	38 %	13 %	20 %	23.5 %	22 %
<b>Alejo Carpentier</b>	25 %	13 %	16 %	10 %	23 %	34 %	6.5 %	20 %	21 %	17.5 %
<b>Ernesto Sábato</b>	16 %	16 %	10 %	5 %	17 %	13 %	6.5 %	20 %	9 %	12.5 %
<b>Juan Rulfo</b>	14 %	19 %	3 %	3 %	9 %	5.5 %		6.5 %	9 %	11 %
<b>José Lezama Lima</b>	20 %	8 %	11 %	6.5 %	13 %	5.5 %	6.5 %	13 %	15 %	7.5 %
<b>José Donoso</b>	12 %	6 %	8 %	6.5 %	17 %	4 %		13 %	10 %	6 %
<b>Fernando Vallejo</b>	14 %	6 %	13 %	5 %	15 %	9.5 %		13 %	13 %	7 %
<b>Miguel Angel Asturias</b>	24 %	5 %	8 %	3 %	13 %	5.5 %	13 %	6.5 %	16.5 %	5 %
<b>Elena Poniatowska</b>	20 %	5 %	6.5 %	1.5 %	5.5 %	4 %	13 %	6.5 %	12.5 %	4 %
<b>Augusto Roa Bastos</b>	11 %	3 %	15 %	82 %	7.5 %	4 %		6.5 %	7 %	4 %
<b>Jaime Bayly</b>	13 %	2 %	17 %	57 %	11 %	5.5 %		20 %	10 %	4 %
<b>Manuel Puig</b>	8 %	2 %	27 %	40 %	11 %			6.5 %	8 %	3.5 %

Tab. 27: The percentage of those who read the listed titles.

Title	Readers				Total (229)
	15–25 age group (100)	26–40 age group (61)	41–60 age group (53)	over 60 age group (15)	
<i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i>	76 %	77 %	87 %	73 %	78.5 %
<i>Hopscotch</i>	49 %	34.5 %	62 %	60 %	49 %
<i>The House of the Spirits</i>	21 %	34.5 %	56.5 %	60 %	35 %
<i>Memories of My Melancholy Whores</i>	26 %	19,6 %	26 %	1.5 %	23.5 %
<i>The Time of the Hero</i>	18 %	13 %	24.5 %	40 %	19.5 %
<i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	12 %	10 %	11 %	6.5 %	11 %
<i>The Kingdom of This World</i>	6 %	6.5 %	13 %	6.5 %	8 %
<i>The Book of Sand</i>	9 %	3 %	9.5 %	6.5 %	7.5 %
<i>Pedro Páramo</i>	12 %	1.5 %	4 %	6.5 %	7 %
<i>On Heroes and Tombs</i>	6 %	3 %	9.5 %	6.5 %	6 %
<i>Son of Man</i>	5 %	5 %	7.5 %	6.5 %	5.5 %
<i>Our Lady of the Assassins</i>	2 %	3 %	11 %	1.5 %	5 %
<i>The Obscene Bird of Night</i>	2 %	3 %	9.5 %	1.5 %	5 %
<i>Paradiso</i>	1 %	6.5 %	9.5 %	1.5 %	5 %
<i>Heartbreak Tango</i>	2 %	6.5 %	5.5 %	6.5 %	4 %
<i>Rosario Tijeras</i>	6 %	3 %	0	0	3.5 %

García Márquez is the only Latin American writer who appeared on the lists created within the national research on readership. It was declared that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* had been read by 55 of the respondents in 1992. This title also appeared twice in spontaneous answers (Straus, Wolf, 1996:85).

Numerous people declared that they had known *Hopscotch* although critics kept silence over Cortázar's works or showed resentment towards him. However, the popularity and appreciation of this book were confirmed even by young readers in their messages placed on various forums dedicated to literary discussions:

- Now I am reading *Hopscotch* by Cortázar. [...] Excellent prose, I like it – fantastic descriptions of Paris and the protagonists' impressions, a lot of information about jazz, literature and philosophy.

- Cortázar, Cortázar... magic.
- Julio Cortázar and Jostein Gaarder. My literary gods. I can only say that you must try to read their works.<sup>698</sup>

Mainly García Márquez and to some extent Cortázar were regarded as classics in Poland, writers whose works, at least some of them, belonged to the literary canon. Since they were also read by those who did not read any other books of Hispanic writers.

The relative small number of answer choices for Vargas Llosa's novels can result from the fact that the Peruvian author had no single "bestseller" with which his name would be obviously associated. Consequently, the readers' choices went to several titles. The remaining works related to the boom were read only by a few readers in 1990–2005, and those who read them experienced the phenomenon of the boom during their youth. The only book written by an authoress who was not connected with the boom and whose books were read by different generations was *The House of the Spirits*, "a pop version of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*."<sup>699</sup> Other works were mentioned by single respondents. In this context, Pindel's opinion (2004a:197):

If someone feared that after the death of the classics of the book there would be some vacuum, they can relax. Readers have learnt to love Latin American literature for its completely new features.

seems to be wishful thinking.

The most effective way to promote Spanish American literature in Poland turned out to be the so-called word of mouth (tab. 28). Over half of the respondents admitted having followed their friends' opinions. The readers' choices were also made by considering their own aesthetic needs. A trend towards some literature did not incline many readers to pick up a certain book; this was the commonest motif of the generation for who the boom was an experience of their youth. In recent years, school encouraged people to read Spanish American prose, some of its titles being on the list of optional readings.<sup>700</sup> Only

698 Citations from <http://www.portalsukcesu.pl/?usr;6432>, 10.02.2008.

699 Łobodziński, "M. Vargas Llosa – mistrz fikcyjnego realizmu," *Newsweek* 14 July 2009, <http://www.newsweek.pl/artykuly/sekcje/kultura/m--vargas-llosa---mistrz-fikcyjnego-realizmu,41369,1>, 12.11.2010.

700 See the interesting proposal of a lesson about the short forms of Cortázar's writing in Dutka "O czytaniu utworów Julia Cortázara na <godzinach polskiego> w gimnazjum," *Nowa Polska* 2002, no. 1, pp. 10–19.

**Tab. 28:** Motives to read Spanish American prose.

	<b>15–25 age group (100)</b>	<b>26–40 age group (61)</b>	<b>41–60 age group (53)</b>	<b>over 60 age group (15)</b>	<b>total (229)</b>
<b>Friends' opinions</b>	54 %	59 %	68 %	40 %	<b>57.5 %</b>
<b>Aesthetic needs</b>	45 %	49 %	47 %	33 %	<b>46 %</b>
<b>Trends</b>	17 %	21 %	30 %	33 %	<b>22 %</b>
<b>School</b>	33 %	18 %	5.5 %	0	<b>20.5 %</b>
<b>Press reviews</b>	15 %	21 %	24.5 %	40 %	<b>20.5 %</b>
<b>Radio or TV programmes</b>	17 %	11.5 %	5.5 %	20 %	<b>13 %</b>
<b>Internet sources</b>	5 %	11.5 %	2 %	0	<b>5.5 %</b>

1/5 of the respondents claimed that the critical texts published in the press had encouraged them to read Spanish American prose. At this point, it is worth mentioning that we cannot name a periodical that would be authoritative for readers. The first reason for this situation is that 1/3 of the respondents did not read any press titles and secondly, the rest read periodicals having very different profiles. Radio and TV programmes had marginal meaning as regards readers' choices.

My research has not shown correlations between reading Spanish American prose and readers' interest in Latin American culture. There is no connection between the knowledge of Spanish or learning Spanish and reading Spanish American literature, and so it seems that readers did not treat this literature in an instrumental way as a source of knowledge but chose it because of its artistic values. Therefore, this prose was of an autotelic value for them. When it became a bridge triggering intercultural communication, this did not happen directly – since readers did not seek information in it – but as a result of the fulfilment of the philosophical-social and the cognitive function, i.e. through the internalisation of reading experiences.

Finally, it is worth noting the inconsistencies between the results gained in empirical research and those obtained through the analysis of the critical texts. The inconsistencies can especially be seen in the juxtapositions between the answers of the veterans of the boom and the reviews published in the 1970s. The critics stressed the historical-literary context of the discussed works, their political and social dimensions as well as the debates on the Latin American identity. Yet, it does not seem that these elements attracted the attention of readers who satisfied completely different needs through reading Spanish American prose. This is of a greater interest because, as the research showed,

these readers belonged to the skilled public, seeking a prose of highly artistic value, i.e. public whose reception of literature is said to be predominantly at the same level as the professional public. This only confirms the thesis that in order to get to know readers' motives, behaviours and needs, we should approach them directly.

## 6 Intercultural semantics in research on the reception of literary translations

Studies concerning translation theory, originated after the cultural turn that occurred in translation studies in the 1990s, focus on the role of non-linguistic elements in the translation process.<sup>701</sup> In the article regarded as a breakthrough,<sup>702</sup> Bassnett and Lefevere (1990:4) factually questioned the validity of linguistic tools in research on literary translation, at the same time undermining the significance of comparative analyses of the source text and the target text. Focusing translation research on the widely understood cultural conditions of the process of translation and its reception does not necessarily mean that we give up referring to the achievements of linguistics. Contemporary linguistics strongly emphasises the relationships between language and culture, especially the necessity of knowing the context of culture in order to properly understand a given text.<sup>703</sup>

### 1 Donal Carbaugh's concept of cultural communication

In chapter one, I have discussed problems related to the precise definitions of the terms “intercultural communication” and “cultural communication” as well as the misunderstandings that can result from using a big number of related terms. I share Zarzycka's opinion (2000:35) that the multiplication of terms does not lead to the transparency of an argument. Nevertheless, at this point, I would like to refer to the concept of *cultural communication*, worked out by the American ethnographer Donal Carbaugh (1990) since in my opinion, it can appropriately be applied to interpret a situation in which people who use various mother tongues need to communicate.

A starting point of Carbaugh's reflections is the distinction between these two terms. He regards **communication**, embracing all linguistic behaviours, as a fundamental process thanks to which social life is created, maintained and

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701 See chapter one, section 10.

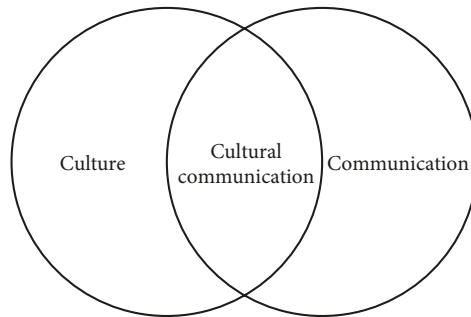
702 See Gentzler's foreword to Bassnett and Lefevere, *Constructing Cultures. Essays on Literary Translation* (1998).

703 I understand text in a very broad sense: an oral and written message being a series of sentences that can be recognised as a complete message (Dobrzyńska 1993:11).

transformed. A message contains structures and processes of creating meanings; it includes man's efforts to understand the world. Moreover, communication is performed in a concrete space through specific forms and actions, fulfilling variable functions.

On the other hand, **culture** is a system of symbols, symbolic forms and their meanings. Cultural systems possess integrative potentials. This means that culture allows combining the scattered parts of the system of symbols and senses into a meaningful whole. A cultural system is not static and as such it can be transformed. It is understood by participants of a given culture, thanks to which they see the world as being coherent. A set of suitable codes gives access to this system. Thanks to the codes, the cultural system is profoundly experienced, i.e. these codes also suggest the participants of a given culture what feelings are proper at a given moment. The last characteristic of culture that Carbaugh distinguished is its being rooted in history: the characteristic constitutes a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic forms thanks to which people can communicate, deepen and develop their knowledge and shape their attitudes towards the world.

Finally, precise definitions of communication and culture allow us to see clearly that these terms, although having many common features, are not identical<sup>704</sup>; not all communication is culture and not all culture is communication. Carbaugh presents their mutual relationships in a model: two overlapping circles.




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704 Carbaugh calls Hall's statement that "culture is communication and communication is culture" an irritating tautology.



The common part of these circles marks the scope of the concept which Carbaugh called “cultural communication.” It embraces all situations in which, through certain discourse behaviours, including linguistic activities, elements characterising a given culture, specific only for this culture, become visible.

A frequent reason for communication failures between representatives of various cultures is that they interpret the recalled symbols by referring to different cultural systems. Since the same symbol placed in different systems can refer to completely new meanings. So it can happen that one of the participants of a communication act recalls a concrete sign which the partner of the interaction refers to his or her native cultural system, and thus the sign is misinterpreted. In other words, the participants of a communication exchange do not always have “codes of access” to the meaning of the native culture of their interlocutors.<sup>705</sup>

In my opinion, this perspective can contribute to explaining the mechanism of the phenomenon that Berman (1985) called “the experience of the foreign” in translation. The reader of a translation subconsciously, almost automatically, refers signs to his or her native cultural system, which leads to interpreting them in a way that is contrary to the author’s intentions. This can to a smaller or greater extent modify the meaning and message meant by the author. Consequently, the work acquires a new reading, departing from the context of its origin.

## 2 Semantic indicators of reading proposed by Janusz Lalewicz (1977)

Two basic stages can be distinguished in the process of understanding a written text – all texts, not only the literary ones. The first stage is to properly decode the expressions and their combinations used in a text, i.e. to capture the meanings suggested by the system of a given language. The other stage is connected with the skill to ascribe a concrete fragment of reality to the text. This means that even

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705 Carbaugh (1990:15) gives an example of such a situation by recalling university courses during which students were asked to present the cultural heritage of their communities. The representatives of the Osage Indian tribe, who usually participated in discussions, limited their presentations to half-words and general statements (*Yeh, I guess that sounds okay to me*). It turned that out in the culture of Osage, in the presence of the elderly and non-members of this community one should be reserved, and the Indians were faithful to the cultural norms of their own group, showing them in practice – it was a manifestation of their cultural heritage, which other participants of the courses wrongly interpreted as an expression of disregard and lack of interest in this issue.

excellent knowledge of the lexical and grammatical subsystems of language does not guarantee that the reader can understand the text. Understanding requires knowledge of at least some realities, i.e. knowledge of the world that would be sufficient to appropriately associate the linguistic means used with the fragments of the non-linguistic reality.

This can best be seen in scientific texts. In order to understand them correctly, we need the knowledge of a given field, i.e. its terminology, characteristic expressions and rules of constructing scientific texts. Moreover, we need the knowledge of the model of this discipline, i.e. the universe of the objects it speaks about as well as their characteristics and properties. Reading a scientific text is not connected with the reader's interpretative effort since "its interpretation is determined by a fixed [...] language and a model, so is given *a priori*" (Lalewicz 1977:11).

In the case of texts written in colloquial language, not having any artistic character, such as letters, reportages or diaries, the language does not impose any interpretative key "since there is no model of this language" (Lalewicz 1977:11). The meanings of such texts are actualised in utterances. In order to understand them, we need to know the circumstances of the act of communication and possess certain knowledge of the world which the reader must share with the author of the text. When these conditions are not provided, it is impossible to interpret the text properly.<sup>706</sup>

A literary text originates in a colloquial language and speaks about colloquial reality, but refers the reader to the depicted world and not the real one. It does not speak of objects known directly from experience but of objects that do not exist in reality. Nevertheless, the phenomena and matters depicted in such a text reveal characteristics that are analogous to the characteristics of the objects known from everyday experience. "We read a literary story as a story about analogous figures and events, and at least comparable with the figures that we read about in real stories – although not placed in our world" (Lalewicz 1977:13).<sup>707</sup> Thus, the reader interprets, for example, a novel referring it to the world that he knows and to the experiences that have become part of his life within this world. Interpretation is performed thanks to discovering analogies between the events

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706 For instance, we will not probably be able to discover the meanings of a letter which was found by accident unless we have the information of the sender, addressee and circumstances of its origin.

707 A similar opinion was presented by Grzegorzcykova (1995:18), "In novels [...] we deal with a *quasi*-real world accepted on the basis of some convention."

of the depicted world and the real world. It is not possible to find a situation depicted in prose in the real world, but based on experience one can recall such situations to the description of which this text proves adequate. In other words, a literary work speaks of certain events, people and objects created in one's imagination, but a story about them is not the author's basic aim. Since through them the writer wants to say something important about real events and people. The interpretation of a literary work is not *a priori* imposed since there is no model that would determine it, "it is in the literary sense created and given to the text by its reading" (Lalewicz 1977:15). Therefore, there is no single "right" interpretation; there can be many interpretations. It would be difficult to determine their hierarchy, i.e. recognise which are most accurate or best. The reading and interpretation of a text depend on a number of non-textual factors, such as the circumstances of its origin and reception as well as the author's intentions, the reader's world, including his world view and ideologies, etc.

What can influence the modification of interpretation of a literary work? Lalewicz's factors of reinterpretation include the change of the world in which we read a given work, the change of literary public and the change of the reality to which the text is referred. The first factor occurs when readers encounter a text written in a different epoch. The second factor concerns the sociological conditions of transformations taking place among different readers' groups. The last factor emerges when readers refer a text to a sphere that is different from the usual one, like in the 18th century novels by Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift, which by their contemporary readers were understood as novels conveying a philosophical meaning, while our youth public reads them as adventure novels. Readers' visions of the world or their views can influence their interpretations of literary texts, too.

Examining a literary translation, we can ask to which extent the change of language can influence its reinterpretation. From the reader's perspective, Shakespeare's translated drama is still his drama, only written in the language the reader knows... However, Lalewicz omits this aspect. He thoroughly analyses how *La Princesse de Clèves* by Marie de la Fayette could have been interpreted by the literary public during the authoress' times and by contemporary readers. Lalewicz lays a strong emphasis that the distance of time between the origin of a work and its contemporary receivers modifies the interpretation of the work to a considerable extent. However, he does not say whether he means the French or the Polish public, whether he has used the original version of the work or its translation. Thus, concentrating only on non-linguistic phenomena in his analysis, he has not included the change of language and has not counted it as a factor of the reinterpretation of text.

### 3 The semantics of the artistic text

Today no one questions the contribution of various linguistic theories to research on literary works.<sup>708</sup> Continuing my reflections on the reception of literary translation, I would like to discuss to which extent the methods worked out by contemporary semantics could be applied in research on the reception of literary translation.

In order to interpret the semantic layer of a work shaped by the syntactical-semantic and lexical-semantic conventions, it is the theories of semantics that undoubtedly have the value of being a basic analytical tool

– writes Ewa Sławkowa (2001:10), stressing the importance of theoretical and methodological problems suggested by the relationships between the semantic analysis of language and the semantic analysis of text. An artistic text results from the author's creative approach to all norms: linguistic, stylistic and literary. It contains a specific way of seeing the world, different from the common one. The author passes his own vision using the language system in a non-typical way as he “goes beyond the standard meanings and connectivity that reflect this common view of the world” (Grzegorzczkowska 1999:45).

Polish scholars dealing with the semantics of the artistic text as a rule focus on poetry. They discuss the metaphor as an artistic mean built on the unconventional collation of words. Another aspect of their analysis is the non-standard use of various grammatical categories in poetry.<sup>709</sup> The number of papers dedicated to the semantic content of prose is decisively smaller.

The semantics of the artistic text can be understood in a narrow way, limiting research to “the static layer of meanings” (Sławkowa 2001:11), i.e. the so-called semantic fact. One can also assume a broader perspective considering potential senses whose discovery depends to a large extent on the receiver conditioned by various factors of a cultural character. Each approach influences the semantic analysis of text in a different way. This analysis fundamentally aims at reconstructing the author's intentions and his vision of the world depicted

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708 See Sławkowa “Instrumentarium badawcze współczesnego językoznawstwa w opisie semantyki tekstu artystycznego (wybór zagadnień)” [Research Tools of Contemporary Linguistics Used to Describe the Semantics of the Artistic Text (Selected issues)] in: *Semantyka tekstu artystycznego* [The Semantics of the Artistic Text], eds. Pajdzińska and Tokarski, Lublin 2001, pp. 9–23.

709 See for instance the articles in the volumes of *Kreowanie świata w tekstach* [Creating the World in Texts], ed. Lewicki and Tokarski (Lublin 1995) and *Semantyka tekstu artystycznego*, eds. Pajdzińska and Tokarski (Lublin 2001).

in his work or showing a variety of possible readings, conditioned by the context of time and culture of the receiver. Hence Sławkowska suggests the semantic analysis of the sender, the semantic analysis of text and the semantic analysis of the receiver (Sławkowska 2001:11). Consequently, the research on the semantics of the artistic text should consider many aspects. These issues are more complicated when we deal with translations of literary works since we should investigate not only the meanings as consequences of going beyond the norms and conventions found in the original text, but we should also verify how these non-standard linguistic activities have been translated and to which extent translators' activities have influenced the modification of the meanings in translations.

However, I would like to reflect on situations that look apparently simpler in which the translator, looking for equivalents of the words and structures of the source text, is not forced to take dramatic decisions and treat the linguistic material in a creative way. Since there are words that have obvious equivalents in the target language, and the translator should simply use them. There still remains the question to what degree these words are rooted in the native culture, and consequently, to which extent the meanings of these words and their equivalents overlap in the source culture and the target culture. Transferring this problem to intercultural communication, we can ask how receivers would understand these signs after they have been moved to another cultural system.

#### 4 Intercultural semantics

In various languages, the same segments of non-linguistic reality are understood and described diversely. In other words, linguistic conceptualisation can vary to a considerable extent; it concerns first of all cultures that are distinct from one another, but in some cases, it also refers to similar cultures.

Although concepts are not connected with a certain language system, the system can influence them because language expresses the way of the organisation of knowledge referring to objects – and thus it includes concepts – in a culture using a given language. Objects creating the given state of affairs can be conceptualised in the same or different way in the source culture and the target culture

– indicates Zofia Berdychowska (2005:125). These differences appear at all the levels of the linguistic structure: phonology, morphology, syntax and the lexicon (Goddard, Wierzbicka 1998:175). The question which scholars have posed for years is: are there more things that connect people in this area or are there more things that divide them? The followers of the universalist conceptions claim that people see and think in a similar way, and so their languages, reflecting their thoughts, must have numerous things in common.

The extreme version of linguistic relativism claims that linguistic structures, above all the grammatical ones, determine our thinking. A consequence of this attitude is the thesis of the untranslatability of languages and essential problems with communication between representatives of cultures using different languages.

The stand of Cliff Goddard and Anna Wierzbicka (Goddard, Wierzbicka 1998:138) is a compromise solution. In their opinion, “though incompatible in their extreme versions [...] it is possible to see some truth in both linguistic relativity and universalism.” On the one hand, most concepts of language are strongly linked to the culture of the society that uses them. Yet, there is a group of concepts of a universal character, i.e. occurring in all languages.

According to Wierzbicka (1995:103), there are three types of concepts:

- universal (semantic primes). They are most likely innate, so found in the languages of all kinds of human groups. They constitute minimal units of meaning that can neither be divided into smaller elements nor defined. People understand them intuitively. Wierzbicka (1989:42) writes that all complex meanings in all languages constitute different configurations of these fundamental conceptual blocks. According to the 2002 research, the number of primitives was 59,<sup>710</sup> and they embraced, for example I, you, one, many, say, good;
- culture-specific. They belong to one concrete language community, reflecting its unique experiences and lifestyle. Words referring to the culture-specific concepts as a rule have no equivalents in other languages, but in their original sound they many a time widen the range of their vocabularies, i.e. function as borrowings. The examples can be the commonly known and understood terms, like *kamikaze*, *kolkhoz*, *kibbutz*, which we explicitly associate with the right cultures and do not try to seek equivalents in the Polish lexicon since in our culture, as well as in other cultures, there are no phenomena and institutions similar to these terms. As regards Polish examples, we can refer to the word “*inteligencja*” [intelligentsia]” as a term defining a social group; it is not translated since it is untranslatable: it refers to the term that has not even a close counterpart in other cultures;
- intermediate. They have equivalents in many languages. On the one hand, they can go beyond the borders of cultures and reflect certain elements of

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710 See Goddard, Wierzbicka, (eds.) *Meaning and Universal Grammar. Theory and Empirical Findings*, John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia 2002.

human experience. On the other hand, they are closely related to the culture of the society that uses them. Thus, they partly embrace universal elements and partly reflect what is characteristic of a given culture. The experiences to which given concepts refer in one culture are not identical with the experiences that stand behind these concepts in other cultures. That is why, words naming these concepts in various languages have a different semantic scope; one can hardly speak of their equivalence, and in consequence – full translatability.

The fundamental universal semantic concepts create a metalanguage thanks to which we can precisely define concepts occurring in various languages, and then we can juxtapose these definitions. This allows us to capture the differences between intermediate concepts that under the illusion of apparent similarity make effective communication between representatives of various language communities difficult.

The attention of scholars investigating meaning, whether in philosophy or semantics, has most frequently been drawn by abstract concepts, like *truth*, *good*, *freedom*, fundamental to define the ideological and philosophical attitudes of concrete societies.<sup>711</sup> Yet, it is much more difficult in practice to define concepts referring to material objects that surround people in their lives. Some linguists undermine the sense of defining lexical units naming “ordinary” objects arguing that the native users of a language do not need such definitions. Indeed, they understand such words as *coffee*, *apple* or *chair*, and their intuitive knowledge in this respect exceeds even the most perfect definition. However, such definitions are indispensable when we want to explain the meanings of a given culture to representatives of another culture.

## 5 Intercultural semantics vs. research on literary translation

The analysis of the meanings of some words used in the original text and comparing them with the meanings of the equivalents used in translations should, in my opinion, at least to a certain extent provide answers to the question how readers have understood translations. The reception of a literary text is done in the act of reading; understanding the meanings of words and grammatical forms of a literary work is directly related to its interpretation. That is why it

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711 Analyses of such concepts can be found, for example, in Anna Wierzbicka's works, in the volume *Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words* (1997), and in Jadwiga Puzynina's *Slowo – wartość – kultura* [Word – Value – Culture], where one chapter is dedicated to “words important to Polish culture.”

seems important to attempt to reconstruct how receivers could decode words in translations and what semantic scope he could ascribe to them. It is neither possible nor necessary to analyse all words used in a translation in case of a novel. However, I think that interesting results can be obtained by concentrating on words that are important from the perspective of the structure of the whole work, which Kazimierz Wyka (1969) defined as “key words.” This should allow us to pose hypotheses which contents and senses included in the text of the original are available to readers of translations, and which can occur to be difficult to decode or even unavailable. It is also worth attempting to answer the question to which fragment of the reality readers know they can refer the elements of the world depicted in a given literary work. Since at this stage, according to Lalewicz, the most crucial part of the process of understanding is realised: receivers will understand texts if they are able to match them to some concrete *universum* of objects, conditions or events. Another important thing is whether this process of associating a word with its designate will follow the author’s intentions since the sender’s knowledge of the world does not always correspond to the receiver’s knowledge of the world.<sup>712</sup>

In order to carry out these analyses it seems appropriate to apply Wierzbicka’s methodology, which she used in numerous studies concerning the semantic scopes of words in various languages and cultures. Defining meanings in a complete way, she first refers to their definitions in dictionaries and/or encyclopaedias. Subsequently she investigates their usages of words in various types of text: artistic, scientific, and sometimes also popular. Thanks to that, she can reconstruct the specific experiences, being part of users of a given language, that are hidden behind the concepts to which these words refer. Her ultimate aim was to create definitions of the analysed words through a metalanguage worked out on the basis of universal units.

I have not undertaken the final stage of the analysis since in my research on literary translation constructing precise definitions does not seem to be most important. Instead, it could be valuable to verify what potential differences between the functions of selected words in the source text and their equivalents in the target text can appear. Therefore, I will limit my research to several examples of what meanings a given word contributes to the original text and what meanings of the equivalent of this word readers can discover in translations.

Words in the original literary work convey information of a non-themed character about the depicted world. Formulations and grammatical forms

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712 I have written about this in chapter one, section 3.



adopted in the work carry implied knowledge about the sender – at all the levels of literary communication, i.e. about figures uttering concrete statements and the narrator as well as the author.

The scope of information implied and coded in the structure of utterances [...] reveals the code of utterances and its realisation, indirectly characterising the sender and receiver as users of this code – the sender as the real user and the receiver as a potential user (Okopień-Sławińska 1971:113).

In translation, the character of this information must be modified. First of all, the translator is not always able to find equivalents in the target language which could convey implied information of the character that is comparable with the original. Moreover, the reader of the target text does not always have knowledge that will be necessary to capture non-themed information in order to understand the work in accordance with the author's intentions. In my opinion, in research on translation from the reader's perspective it is worth verifying which information has penetrated the target text, whether the information has been modified to a certain extent through the very fact of being immersed in another language and culture or whether it has not totally been distorted.

## 6 *Mate* as a culture-specific word

Many words concerning food and beverages refer to concepts that can be counted as culture-specific.

It is clearly no accident that Polish has special words for cabbage stew (*bigos*), beetroot soup (*barszcz*) and plum jam (*powidla*), which English does not; or that Japanese has a word *sake* for a strong alcoholic drink made from rice, whereas English does not.

– note Goddard and Wierzbicka (1998:145) These words do not only name concrete dishes and drinks but also reflect “the distinctive historical and cultural experiences of the speech community” (p. 145). Such Polish words as *pierogi* or *barszcz* can be found in French or English dictionaries in almost unchanged forms, sometimes written according to the spelling rules of these languages.<sup>713</sup>

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713 For example, *Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary* (<http://mw1.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>) explains the entry *pierogi*:

Main Entry: **pie-ro-gi**

Variant(s): also **pi-ro-gi** \pə-<sup>1</sup>rō-gē, pi-\

Function: *noun*

Inflected Form(s): plural **pie-ro-gi** also **pie-ro-gies**

As examples, I have selected a few names of beverages used by the protagonists of *Hopscotch* by Cortázar. My focus is on the word *mate*. It is the name of the traditional infused drink from leaves of a plant grown in some areas of South America. This word also conveys other important contents and can be counted as an important key word of Argentinian culture.<sup>714</sup> It is especially interesting as it combines different contents: on the one hand, it names an object belonging to the world of daily experiences and on the other, it conveys cultural information and is a characteristic of the Argentinian nature. This word has no equivalents in other languages; it can be found in other (non-Spanish) dictionaries in its original form: *yerba mate* in Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary<sup>715</sup> and *le maté* in the Spanish-French dictionary *elmundo*.<sup>716</sup> Therefore, it refers to a term that fulfils the criteria of being a culture-specific concept.

### 6.1 The cultural references of *mate*

Spanish dictionaries give several contemporary meanings of this word originating from the Quechuan language. *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española (DRAE)* (Dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy)<sup>717</sup> and the on-line dictionary *elmundo.es*<sup>718</sup> explain that *mate* is a beverage made of the leaves of *yerba mate* and also a special gourd for its drinking. *elmundo.es* adds that the word refers to the plant and its leaves. Moreover, the first dictionary enumerates the phraseological phrases containing *mate*. These are: *cebar el mate* (to brew mate),

Etymology: Polish, plural of *pieróg* dumpling, *pierogi*

Date: 1811

: a case of dough filled with a savory filling (as of meat, cheese, or vegetables) and cooked by boiling and then panfrying.

In turn, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=8975&dict=CALD>) has the entry: *barszcz* defined as:

**borscht, borsch**

noun [U]

a type of soup made from beetroot (= a small dark red vegetable); access: 15.09.2010

714 About key words of cultures see Wierzbicka 1997.

715 <http://mw1.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>; access: 15.09.2010.

716 [http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee\\_diccionario.html?busca=mate&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=6](http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=mate&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=6); access: 15.09.2010.

717 <http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltGUIBusUsual>; access: 15.09.2010.

718 [http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee\\_diccionario.html?busca=mate&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1](http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=mate&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1); access: 15.09.2010.

*mate amargo* (or *cimarrón*) – bitter, *cocido* (boiled), *de leche* (with milk instead of water), *dulce* (sweet), *lavado* (insipid, “washed” resulting from unsuccessful brewing), *verde* (lit. green, meaning bitter). All these terms refer to the process of brewing or they name its variants. Their number indicates that it is a popular drink that can be made in many ways. This dictionary gives yet another important piece of information: the scope of the use of these terms is limited to Argentina and Uruguay.

The quotes with *mate*, placed in the online Corpus of the Spanish Language, come first of all from Argentinian and Paraguayan literature, and sporadically, from Chilean. By analysing them we can conclude that brewing and drinking *mate* has been an element of daily routine:

- *El agudo chillido del despertador suena y despierta a Julián. Julián se sienta como un autómata en la cama. (...) pone el agua a calentar y, luego de dejar el **mate** listo para que respire el agua a punto de hervir, hace flexiones en el suelo. Uno, dos, tres, cuatro, cinco...* (Santiago Giralt, *Rutinas*, <http://www.ficticia.com/indicePorTitulo.html>)
- *A sharp squeak of the alarm can be heard, and Julian is waking up. Julian is getting up like an automaton. [...] he prepares **mate**, pours water, which has almost reached its boiling point, over it; doing sit-ups on the floor. One, two, three, four, five...*

Brewing *mate* can be a special ritual:

- *Empezó a preparar la merienda. Cuando llovía, el brasero iba derecho al cuarto de la abuela y su presencia lo transformaba en aromática cocina: a salvo de la lluvia, Lidia se puso a quemar la yerba y el azúcar para el **mate** cocido de todas las tardes.* (Riquelme de Molinas, *De barro somos*, <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>)
- *She started preparing snacks. When it rained, the brazier went straight to the grandmother's room and its presence transformed it into a kitchen full of aroma. Safe from the rain, Lidia began preparing the yerba with sugar for the afternoon boiled **mate**.*

*Mate* is also a drink that is usually served to guests:

- *Cuando José Pedro vio al gobernador consultar su reloj, le dijo adivinando su prisa: - Ya pronto nos iremos, señor. Van a servirnos otros asadito, el vino y el **mate** del estribo. Luego... ¡a casa!* (Barrios Eduardo, *Gran señor y rajadiablos*, <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>)

- *When José Pedro saw the governor look at his watch, he said, guessing that he was in a hurry: - We'll be gone soon, sir. They are going to serve us asadito, wine and mate before we leave. Then ... we'll go home!*

*Mate* turns out to be an effective cure in various situations, even for a hangover:

- *Ignacio se levantó embotado. No había dormido ni dos horas corridas. Rumbé hacia el pozo. Deseaba reavivarse con el agua escarchada de la palangana. Metió la cara de golpe y se puso a tiritar. La resaca se irá con el **mate**, se ilusionó. Y el mate bien caliente, lo despabiló en unas cuantas chupadas.* (Riquelme de Molinas, *Bazar de cuentos*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4379>)
- *Ignacio got up dull. He had not slept even for two hours. He moved towards the well. He wanted to revive himself with the frosted water from the basin. He shoved his face in and began to shiver. He deluded himself that the hangover would disappear after drinking **mate**. And the hot mate has woken him up after having a few sips.*

Brewing *mate* can be a kind of a ritual that contributes to building a family community and helps build an intimate relationship between partners:

- *Elvira lo admitía - su marido era muy condescendiente; la dejaba salir, siempre y cuando estuviera de regreso temprano. A él le gustaba encontrarla en la casa cuando volvía del cuartel. Satisfacía su ego que ella personalmente le sacara las botas, pese a que tenía un ordenanza. Lo hacía sentirse el amo que ella le cebara el **mate** y le relatara las mil trivialidades del día, aunque él no le prestara mayor atención.* (Pardo Carugati, *La víspera y el día*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4506>)
- *Elvira admitted - her husband was very condescending, he let her go out as long as she was back early. He liked to find her at home when he came back from the barracks. His ego was satisfied when she took off his boots, even though he had an ordinance. He felt that he was the master when she was brewing **mate** and telling him thousands of trivial stories that had happened that day, even though he did not pay any attention to them.*

*Mate* is treated as one of the essential elements that stress the Argentinian identity:

- *Siempre supe que mi incapacidad de comer chinchulines y de jugar al truco y la falta de pasión y militancia futbolera me segregaban de la argentinidad, circunstancia dolorosa a la que trato de paliar con fervor tanguero, el culto a Gardel, el **mate** amargo y los recurrentes, frustrantes y frustrados intentos de*

*sumarme a posiciones políticas populistas (...)*. (Luis de Montalto, *Fiesta en la montaña*, <http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~fernand4/atrasados.html>)

- *I always knew that my aversion to eating chinchulines and playing the billiard as well as my lack of passion for football separate me from Argentineness, which is painful and I am trying to sooth it by my eagerness to dance tango, love of the cult of Gardel, bitter **mate** and the recurrent, frustrating unsuccessful attempts to join the populist political parties [...]*.

The citations clearly show that *mate* is an important element of Argentinian everyday life. Everyone drinks it regardless of age and circumstances. It accompanies formal and informal conversations. Drinking *mate* brings comfort in the midst of psychological and physical sufferings. Moreover, it fulfils important cultural functions: in the private dimension, it can be an element that strengthens family, and in a broader dimension, it is regarded as an indicator of Argentinian identity.

## 6.2 The functions of *mate* in *Hopscotch*

In the first part of *Hopscotch* taking place in Paris, *mate* is drunk by the main protagonists: La Maga coming from Uruguay and Oliveira from Argentina. The ritual of drinking *mate* is very important to them. They do not give up drinking *mate* despite the fact that in Paris *mate* is expensive and difficult to buy, and its taste is far from prefect:

- *Oliveira cebó otro **mate**. Había que cuidar la yerba, en París costaba quinientos francos el kilo y era una yerba perfectamente asquerosa (p. 95).*<sup>719</sup>
- *Oliveira made himself another **mate**. He had to watch out for his mate, in Paris it cost five hundred francs and it was a terrible stuff.*<sup>720</sup>

The inability to give up *mate* is such a strong impulse that Oliveira accepts it as a present from his brother whom he hates and who sometimes sends him cash and things that cannot be obtained in Paris.

Brewing and drinking *mate* are elements of the couple's routine leading to some kind of bond between them and creating intimacy:

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719 All the citations come from Cortázar, *Rayuela*, Bruguera Mexicana de Ediciones, México D.F 1984.

720 All of the citations are from *Hopscotch: A Novel*, tr. Gregory Rabassa, Random House, Inc., 1966, New York, e-book.

- *Cuando volvió con las manos rojas y brillantes, Oliveira le alcanzó un mate. Se sentó en un sillón bajo chupando aplicadamente. Siempre estropeaba un mate, tirando de un lado y otro la bombilla, revolviéndola como si estuviera haciendo polenta (p. 101).*
- *When she came back her hands were red and shining; Oliveira handed her the gourd. She sat down on the low easy chair and sucked the mate in a deliberate sort of way.*

A gourd of *mate* given by the partner brings comfort both in emotional and physical fatigue. “[...] this *mate* is like a pardon, something incredibly reconciliatory” says Oliveira, coming home tired, completely soaked and mentally exhausted after a night, full of absurd adventures, of walking around Paris.

- *Le pasó el mate vacío a la Maga, que se había acurrucado a sus pies con la pava entre las rodillas. Empezaba a sentirse bien. Sintió los dedos de la Maga en un tobillo, en los cordones del zapato (...) El mate estaba muy caliente y muy amargo (p. 174).*
- *He passed his empty gourd to la Maga, who had squatted by his feet. He began to feel good. He felt La Maga’s fingers on his ankle, on his shoelaces. He let her take off his shoe with a sigh. (...) The mate was hot and very bitter.*

This private dimension of celebrating *mate* is not the only element that makes the relationship between La Maga and Oliveira a special one in the group of cosmopolitan friends. This group called the Serpent Club includes people who have come to Paris from all over the world: a Chinese, some Englishmen, a Yugoslavian and a Frenchman. Despite their close relationships, La Maga and Oliveira never propose to drink a gourd of *mate* with them. Since for La Maga and Oliveira brewing and drinking *mate* is an expression of cultural fellowship, a signal of a relationship that characterises those who celebrate the same rituals although they live abroad, far from their home. This is a ceremony that the non-initiated profane people are not allowed to participate in. The borders of this community are not set by the Spanish language – La Maga and Oliveira do not serve *mate* even to the Spaniard Perico Romero.

For the main protagonist of *Hopscotch*, his attitude towards *mate* defines his Argentinian identity. The questions about one’s roots becomes especially important to immigrants, even those who were not forced to migrate. Thus, Oliveira is obsessively seeking that mysterious, elusive centre that he describes as “the unity, the sum of all the actions which define a life.” At some moment, he concludes, “This *mate* might show me where the center is.”

His attitude towards *mate* helps him divide the world into those whom he treats as his locals, i.e. who drink and participate in his ritual of brewing *mate*,

and the others, i.e. those who are not allowed to take part in the ceremony and do not understand it. This creates a gap between Argentinian culture characterised by *mate* and French culture that does not know this drink:

- *la droguería de la estación Saint Lazare la vendía con una vistosa calificación de maté sauvage cueilli par les Indiens, diurética, antibiótica y emoliente* (p. 96).
- *[it was] sold in the pharmacy of the Saint-Lazare station next to a gaudy sign that said “maté sauvage cueilli par les Indiens”, diuretic, antibiotic, and emollient.*

Oliveira's return to Argentina means a return to the country where *mate* is brewed in a perfect way.

As regards personal contacts, distance towards a strange culture is articulated as aversion towards *mate*, being one of the expressions of Argentinian culture, “I'll never know these delights of the pampas,” says Gregorovius, one of the members of the Serpent Club and Oliveira's rival for Lucia's affections.

My analysis leads to a conclusion that the use of *mate* expresses a number of meanings and nuances referring to a concrete cultural context. Their proper understanding and interpretation require knowledge of this context. Otherwise, readers can encounter problems in interpreting some fragments of the novel. In my opinion, Spanish-speaking readers are able to decode most of these senses. In the case of readers coming from the most southern parts of Latin America, the contents conveyed by *mate* also contribute to creating a feeling of close cultural bonds with the author.

### 6.3 Polish readers versus *mate*

Let us reconstruct what the Polish readers of the late 1960s and the early 1970s could have known about the Argentinian *mate*. This word appeared in the dictionaries and encyclopaedias of that period. *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych* [Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases] by Władysław Kopaliński in the 1968, 1989, 1994 editions defines this word in an identical way:

Paraguay holly; Paraguay tea, aromatic beverage similar to coffee and tea, from the dry leaves and shoots of mate.

*Encyklopedia Powszechna PWN* [PWN Universal Encyclopaedia] published in 1975 has a longer explanation:

Paraguay tea; Paraguay holly, *ilex paraguariensis*; a bush or tree from the species of the holly genus, ovate leaves, length up to 10 cm, evergreen; as a wild plant, it grows in South America (extinct species); it has been cultivated since the 17th century (currently mainly in Brazil, Paraguay and northern Argentina); the infusion from dry leaves is a beverage.

Generally speaking, the information that the Polish readers of the first editions of *Hopscotch* could gain about *mate* was rather sparse. Knowing the laconic definitions of *mate*, they could not imagine how the exotic beverage should be prepared and what its taste was. The available sources did not give any knowledge of the cultural references of this term. This is confirmed by Majcherek's recollection about the novel (1984:116), "It became a part of my life; one could not part with it; people spoke about the novel, and it completely captured our imagination (our tea tasted like *mate* although nobody knew what it was exactly)." A characteristic thing was also that in the numerous reviews and essays concerning the most famous novel by Cortázar, which were published in the Polish press in the 1970s, the tread of the Argentinian identity of the main protagonist was hardly discussed.

Therefore, for the average Polish receiver who did not know the cultures of Latin America but who reached for the first editions of this novel, the load of cultural senses conveyed by *mate* was impossible to be captured. That is why *mate* meant first of all a breeze of exoticism, which was difficult to define. *Mate* introduced a certain aura of mystery. It signalled a world that was unknown and attractive because of its otherness and unavailability. It was these meanings that were brought to the foreground. And it did not matter that this exotic mystery happened in Paris in the 1960s. For an average Pole, Paris was as exotic as distant Argentina.

Let us note that the change of the language and cultural context of reception caused that from the perspective of the real receiver, the function of *mate*, one of the key terms in *Hopscotch* was fundamentally changed. For Spanish-speaking receivers, this word conveys profound meanings being a sign of the Argentinian identity, whereas in the world of the novel, it is a symbol of fellowship between the main couple, voluntary immigrants. From the Polish receiver's perspective, the situation looked slightly different. Although careful readers could see that drinking *mate* was a specific ritual distinguishing the main protagonists of the novel, they did not know its cultural references. Thus, for them *mate* was first of all a mark of exoticism.

Naturally, today the situation of Polish receivers is totally different than 40 years ago. Yet, the definitions of *mate* in dictionaries and encyclopaedias remain almost the same.<sup>721</sup> The exception is *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny* [Practical Dictionary of Contemporary Polish] that gives the widest explanation of the word:

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721 The contemporary edition of *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* PWN says that *mate* or *herba mate* or *yerba mate* is a holly with leathery leaves and small flowers, cultivated for its leaves containing caffeine or a beverage form dry leaves of this plant; <http://usjp.pwn.pl/lista.php?co=mate>, access: 20.09.2010.



*mate* from Quechua, an American Indian language, *mati* through Spanish *mate*; noun, neuter; flexionless.

1. botanical “species of tree of the holly genus (Aquifoliaceae), up to 13 m high, with whitish smooth bark and evergreen, leathery ovate leaves up to 13 cm long; characterised by small red and red-brown fruits: it grows wild in South America, cultivated in Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina because of its leaves from which after proper processing we can have an aromatic beverage: *Ilex paraguariensis*”: *Mate* grows in large areas in Paraguay and Brazil and it is the main source of tea there. The infusion from dry leaves of *mate* is a beverage containing ca. 1 % of caffeine.
2. “a beverage from dry leaves of this plant”: *Mate* is drunk with sugar or with milk, yet lovers of *mate* say that it is best without sugar. [...]”<sup>722</sup>

This dictionary does not only provide strictly scientific information, but also, to a small extent, certain contents of a cultural character. As the only Polish dictionary it shows its grammatical gender – *mate*: neuter. This decision of the editors’ of *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny* might have been taken in accordance with the rule that Polish nouns ending with a vowel other than *a* are usually neuter.

Chądzyńska, who translated *Hopscotch*, chose a different way. She regarded the word *mate* as a feminine noun. The reason could have been the similarity of this beverage to tea, which Poles knew (tea – Polish: *herbata* is a feminine noun). Ascribing the feminine gender to *mate*, the translator gave readers a valuable indication – with what they could compare the unknown beverage.

Contemporary receivers are in a different situation than the readers 30 years ago. Paris stopped being an inaccessible capital of Europe; even Argentina became less alien and exotic. Today readers are not doomed to gain knowledge only from dictionaries and encyclopaedias since almost everyone can use the powerful source of information – the Internet. One does not need to know Spanish. It will be sufficient to open a proper page of Wikipedia<sup>723</sup> to acquire basic information about *mate*. Its rather short article provides information about the etymology of the word, on which territories it grows, that its leaves are used to brew a beverage, and a detailed description how to brew *mate*, a process being a kind of a ritual. In the photos, you can see the Paraguay holly, the special utensil to brew it and the gourd to drink it. If someone wants to taste *mate*, he can find online shops (but not only), where the herbs and all necessary accessories for brewing can be bought (usually “healthy food” shops). However, this does not

722 *Praktyczny słownik współczesnej polszczyzny*, ed. H. Zgólkowa, Wydawnictwo Kurpisz, Poznań 1999, vol. 20, pp. 345–346.

723 <http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mate>, access: 15.09.2010.

change the fact that at present, an average Polish reader can find it difficult to capture the most important functions of *mate* in *Hopscotch*. Polish readers perceive *mate* as a key word in the novel, but will probably ascribe to it a function that would be different from the one in the original.

Roman Jakobson (1959:232) defines the meanings of words as linguistic or semantic facts. Therefore, in his opinion, it is not necessary to taste dishes or beverages to understand words that name them. Such words as “nectar” or “ambrosia” are commonly understood although nobody could try to taste these beverages. “Any representative of a cheese-less culinary culture will understand the English word *cheese* if he is aware that in his language it means «food made of pressed curd»” claims Jakobson. We can agree with him if we assume that the receiver knows what curd is ... (the bacterial fermentation is not achieved at all of the latitudes).

Wierzbicka stresses the importance of comparison in constructing and understanding meanings. Thanks to the translator’s effort, Polish readers of the translation of Cortázar’s novel could understand *mate* as a beverage similar to tea. They could have assumed that *mate* had its own properties and understood that it was an important term in the world of the novel, but if they did not make big efforts they could not decode all of the senses of this word. Since *mate* brings to mind the whole system of behaviours and rituals and is an element of cultural communication in the sense which Carbaugh ascribed to this term. *Mate* is a culture-specific term transferring contents that are important to Argentinian culture and that characterise only this culture. As such, it is recognised outside Argentina, but this does not change the fact that a person who does not know its culture has limited access to this knowledge.

## 7 Beer in Latin American culture and in Polish culture

The drinking of *mate* distinguishes the main couple in Cortázar’s novel among the other figures. Hence it may be surprising that this beverage does not accompany La Maga and Oliveira in their love scenes. *Mate* fulfils many cultural functions but it is obviously not a beverage of lovers, which is confirmed by the analyses of citations included in the Corpus of Spanish.

For many readers, *Hopscotch* is first of all a love story. Chądzyńska recollects a couple who performed a peculiar dialogue through pages torn off from the novel.<sup>724</sup> Yet, La Maga and Oliveira brew and drink *mate* during long and serious

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724 “Okno w murze,” an interview given to Warszawski, *Czas* 1980, no. 21, p. 26.

conversations when the fate of their relationship hangs in the air, while in the background of their intimate situations the beverage is ... beer:

- *(La Maga) pensaba en Rocamadour, cantaba algo de Hugo Wolf (mal), me besaba, me preguntaba por el peinado, se ponía a dibujar en un papelito amarillo, y todo eso era ella indisolublemente mientras yo ahí, en una cama deliberadamente sucia, bebiendo una **cerveza** deliberadamente tibia, era siempre yo y mi vida, yo con mi vida frente a la vida de los otros* (p. 24).
- *(La Maga) was thinking about Rocamadour. She sang something from Hugo Wolf (badly), she kissed me, she asked me about her hairdo, she began to sketch on a scrap of yellow paper. That was all she, no doubt about it, and that was I on a deliberately dirty bed, drinking a glass of deliberately flat **beer**, always being myself and my life; there was I with my life face to face with other people's life.*
- *No había un desorden que abriera puertas al rescate, había solamente suciedad y miseria, vasos con restos de **cerveza**, medias en un rincón, una cama que olía a sexo y a pelo, una mujer que me pasaba su mano fría y transparente por los muslos (...)* (p. 25).
- *There was no disorder to open escape-hatches, there was only filth and misery, glasses with stale **beer**, stockings in a corner, a bed which smelled of sex and hair, a woman who ran her small, thin hand along my thighs [...]*

Perhaps it is worth reflecting why Polish readers did not associate beer with this couple that was certainly one of the well-known lovers in literature in Poland in the 1970s. Let us look at the cultural references related to beer for the users of Polish and the users of Spanish.

Dictionaries of both languages provide similar explanations. In Spanish, we read that beer is “alcoholic drink of bitter taste, yellow, pale or dark, made through the fermentation of barley, brewed with hops.”<sup>725</sup> The Polish definition of beer is “a foamy drink with a small percentage of alcohol, brewed from malted barley, hops, yeast and water.”<sup>726</sup> *Inny słownik języka polskiego*<sup>727</sup> states precisely: a beverage of a golden or dark brown colour. The fundamental difference between the Polish and Spanish dictionaries is that the former gives a long list of collocations and phrasemes with the element *beer*. According to *SJP*, beer can be *strong, light, pale, dark, mulled, lager*. Other collocations inform about the utensils in which beer is served or stored: *glass, mug, bottle, barrel*. *Słownik*

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725 [www.diccionarios.com/consultas.php](http://www.diccionarios.com/consultas.php). A similar definition is given by the dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy.

726 *SJP*, PWN, Warszawa 1978, vol. II.

727 Ed. M. Bańko, PWN, Warszawa 2000.

*frazeologiczny języka polskiego* by Stanisław Skorupka<sup>728</sup> gives adjectives related to the places of beer production: *English, Bavarian, Okocim, Pilzen*. In Polish, we also have idioms with beer production: *nawarzyć sobie lub komuś piwa* (to make troubles for oneself or others) and *pić piwo, którego się nawarzyło* (to face the music), *dać na piwo* (give some money for beer) or *dostać od kogoś na piwo* (get some money for beer). *Wielki słownik frazeologiczny z przysłowiami* [The Great Dictionary of Idioms and Proverbs] gives the idiom *małe piwo* (a piece of cake).

The Spanish equivalent *cerveza* does not appear in many phrases: the dictionary of the Academy gives only one collocation: *cerveza doble* explained as “strong beer.”<sup>729</sup> The online *elmundo* gives two collocations: *cerveza de barril* (draught beer) and *una jarra de cerveza* (a pitcher of beer).<sup>730</sup>

The quantitative predominance of Polish phrases with *beer* over the Spanish phrases is striking. The number of idioms and collocations in Polish testifies to the fact that beer has been profoundly rooted in Polish culture. It was a beverage that accompanied meals of the rich from the 11th century, drunk in big quantities (up to 3 litres a day). Only in the second half of the 18th century, beer was replaced by mead and vodka. Beer was regarded as a beverage of the common people (Kuchowicz 1992:31). But it did not disappear from Polish tables. Nevertheless, its prestige and popularity decreased in the post-war period. The low quality of beer served in the period of the Polish People’s Republic resulted from the process of production that did not meet the norms, and also the ingredients were of poor quality, neither was it not properly stored. As one of the protagonists from Włodzimierz Kowalewski’s work recollected:

- *None of us drunk beer, by the way, one could seldom buy it, and when one could, it had the taste of cabbage and rotten potatoes.*<sup>731</sup>

This negative connotation of beer must have originated in those times. Since beer was preferred by a specific group: only men, mostly physical workers having

728 S. Skorupka, *Słownik frazeologiczny języka polskiego*, Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1977.

729 [http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente), access: 25.09.2010.

730 [http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee\\_diccionario.html?busca=cerveza&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1](http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=cerveza&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1); access: 25.09.2010.

731 The Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=piwo&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=piwo&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center); access: 25.09.2010.

the opinion of overusing alcohol. Beer was bought and drunk in booths. Thus, we have images of

- *booths selling beer, crowded with people resembling trees torn by wind.*<sup>732</sup>

*Inny słownik języka polskiego*<sup>733</sup> gives the phrase *osoba spod budki z piwem* (a person standing at a beer selling booth) meaning someone rude.

Beer selling booths were so much rooted in the Polish scenery that they were even glorified in literature: in Miron Białoszewski's poem, such a booth became "a manger in Wołomin" for "three shepherds wearing donkey jackets, stitched kings."<sup>734</sup> The sight of a woman, especially a young one, drinking beer could have been shocking:

- *girls representing "zero"; they have no respect for themselves very pretty girls standing with such boozers; I say that: they stand, drink beer, no respect.*<sup>735</sup>

Therefore, in post-war Poland, beer was seen as a beverage for men, drunk only in male company. Today this stereotype is kept in advertisements directed to male customers. It is no wonder that the Polish readers of *Hopscotch* preferred not to remember that in the breaks in love scenes the main protagonist drank beer. Since from our perspective, beer was not romantic at all. But the Spanish word *cerveza* has no such associations. It is a beverage that everyone can drink, men and women, regardless of their education, and it is not shocking:

- *Estoy un poco nerviosa. - ¿Quieres tomar algo? - Sí, una cerveza, por favor. Leah era una de esas mujeres en las que era difícil adivinar su edad y su estado civil, si era soltera, divorciada, viuda o si seguía casada. (Gertopan Susana, El nombre prestado; <http://www.corpusdelespanol.org/>)*
- *I am a little nervous. Do you want to drink something? - Yes, beer, please. Leah was one of those women whose age was hard to guess, and so was her marital status; it was not known whether she was single, divorced, a widow or married.*

Hence, the image of La Maga drinking beer is nothing special for Spanish readers.

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732 *ibid.*

733 *Inny słownik języka polskiego*, ed. M. Bańko, PWN, Warszawa 2000.

734 "Filozofia Wołomina" [The Philosophy of Wołomin] /in:/ M. Białoszewski, *Trzydzieści lat wierszy* [Thirty Years of Poems], PIW, Warszawa 1982, p. 23.

735 The Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=piwo&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=piwo&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center)

## 8 The Spanish drink *el vodka* and the Polish *wódka*

Another alcohol drunk by the protagonists of Cortázar's novel is *el vodka*; obviously translated into Polish as "wódka." In this case, the translator of the novel had no choice. However, it is worth stressing that in Spanish there are two words for the Polish word *wódka*: beside the cited *vodka* we have *aguardiente*. Both terms have similar explanations in Spanish dictionaries: alcoholic drinks as products of distillation.<sup>736</sup> Yet, *vodka* has foreign connotations: according to the dictionaries, it is a strong alcoholic drink drunk mainly in Russia (Spanish Academy Dictionary<sup>737</sup>) or associated with Central European countries (*elmundo*<sup>738</sup>). Spanish receivers have no other associations with this word; both in Spanish and Hispanic culture it is less common than *aguardiente*. This is confirmed by the data collected in the Corpus of the Spanish Language: 425 citations

### 736 DRAE:

**aguardiente.** (De *agua* y *ardiente*).

1. m. Bebida espirituosa que, por destilación, se saca del vino y de otras sustancias; es alcohol diluido en agua. *Aguardiente de caña, de guindas, de Cazalla.*

([http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente))

**vodka.**

1. amb. Especie de aguardiente que se consume mucho en Rusia.

[http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente), access: 28.09.2010

**elmundo.com: aguardiente**

m. Bebida alcohólica que, por destilación, se saca del vino y otras sustancias. Puede ir seguido de la prep. de, indicando la sustancia de la que se obtiene o el lugar del que procede: *aguardiente de caña, de Cazalla.*

([http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee\\_diccionario.html?busca=aguardiente&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1](http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=aguardiente&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1)); access: 28.09.2010

**vodka**

amb. Aguardiente de cereales (centeno, maíz, cebada), incoloro y de fuerte graduación alcohólica que se consume mucho en los países de Europa Oriental. Más c. m.: se tomó un vodka con naranja.

([http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee\\_diccionario.html?busca=vodka&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1](http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=vodka&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1)); access: 28.09.2010

737 [http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO\\_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente](http://buscon.rae.es/draeI/SrvltConsulta?TIPO_BUS=3&LEMA=detenidamente); access: 28.09.2010.

738 [http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee\\_diccionario.html?busca=vodka&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1](http://diccionarios.elmundo.es/diccionarios/cgi/lee_diccionario.html?busca=vodka&submit=+Buscar+&diccionario=1); access: 28.09.2010.

with *aguardiente* and only 75 with *vodka*. *Aguardiente* is a more popular drink, almost plebeian; everyone can taste it and get drunk with it:

- *Ya de mayor, como dependíamos del jornal que nos cayera cada día, íbamos a la plaza cada mañana a la espera de que alguien nos cogiera para trabajar. Allí, a la puerta del único bar que por entonces había, estábamos todos los jornaleros esperando. Muchos entraban a tomar la copa de **aguardiente** y una cosa caliente y oscura a la que llamaban café.* (Patricio Chamizo, *Paredes, un campesino extremeño*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4797>)
- *When I grew older, as we worked on the daily wage, we went to the plaza every morning waiting for someone to hire us. There, at the door of the only bar that was then there, we, labourers of one day, waited. Many came in to drink a glass of **aguardiente** and a dark and hot liquid that was called coffee.*
- *Cuando está como ahora, es un alma de Dios: cuando está borracho, una tromba: recupera toda agilidad que el bote le ha quitado; ningún policía se atreve a acercarse a él en los días que bebe, y bebe semanas enteras. Trabaja borracho: se cae al mar, resopla como una foca y sube la bote; le cambian ropa y le dan un trago de **aguardiente**; sigue trabajando y ni siquiera estornuda.* (Manuel Rojas, *Hijo de ladrón*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=4018>)
- *When he is like today, he is a soul of God; when he is drunk, he becomes a typhoon: he regains all agility lost in prison; no policemen dare to approach him on the days he drinks all the time, and this can last for weeks. He works drunk: he falls into the sea, snorts like a seal and the boat goes up; they gave him new clothes and a glass of **aguardiente**. He keeps working and does not sneeze even once.*

On the other hand, *vodka* is more exotic, drunk for example by figures in foreign films:

- *Bueno hay otra película - no recuerdo - cuál de la serie, una de las de cero, cero, siete, que a él lo mandan a hacer un chequeo antes de una misión lo - y lo - y sac/ - abre un maletín con **vodka**, huevos de codorniz y caviar, ¿ eh?. Sí, recuerdo aquello. Bueno, supongo que lo recordáis también, no recuerdo quién, no sé si es Contra el doctor No o contra - Gol/ - No, contra - Goldfinger, no. Yo creo que es una de las más recientes.* (oral utterance, *España Oral: CCON031B, pus.html* [http://elvira.lllf.uam.es/docs\\_es/corpus/cor](http://elvira.lllf.uam.es/docs_es/corpus/cor))
- *Well, there is another movie, I do not remember which one of the series, one about OO7, in which he is made to do a check before his mission - and what? He opens a briefcase where he has **vodka**, quail eggs and caviar, huh? Yes,*

*I remember that. Well, I guess you remember it too, I do not remember whether the film was about Dr. No or Goldfinger. No, this was not Goldfinger but one of the most recent films.*

Drinking *wódka* is profoundly associated with Russian culture from the Spanish-speaking receivers' perspective; it penetrates every aspect of the Russian people's lives:

- *Los cultores del alcohol, en realidad, se preocupan menos por las últimas letras de la marca que por el contenido de las botellas. El vodka no es para los rusos sólo una bebida, sino un condicionante genético que se manifiesta en los más diversos aspectos culturales. Cualquier aniversario o evento - por insignificante que sea - es digno de regar con **vodka**. Una gripe, resfrío o traumatismo no resiste una cura de **vodka**; las infecciones retroceden ante su presencia; limpia manchas, purifica espíritus y, claro está, levanta el ánimo. En una conferencia, un académico puede saltar de una ecuación de ingeniería molecular a las virtudes del vodka en la desactivación de isótopos radiactivos. (Arg:Cronista:628\_LOZA, <http://www.illf.uam.es/~fmarcos/informes/corpus/coarginl.html>)*
- *The lovers of alcohol really worry less about the make than the content of the bottle. **Vodka** is not just a drink for Russians, but a genetic condition that manifests itself in the most diverse areas of culture. Any anniversary or event, even insignificant, is worth watering with **vodka**. An influenza, cold or trauma must yield to the cure by **vodka**; it cures infections; it takes off stains, purifies the spirit and, of course, makes one feel better. During a lecture, a professor can jump from a molecular engineering equation to the virtues of applying vodka in the deactivation of radioactive isotopes.*

Sometimes going for *el vodka* to a bar is nothing extraordinary, it is part of social life:

- *Puse en alquiler mi departamento y me mudé a vivir con Laura. Cada tanto iba al bar a tomar un vaso de **vodka** con José, o a jugar al dominó con don Samuel, hasta que la muerte fue llevándolos uno a uno, cumpliendo con la justa ley. (Susana Fuente Gertopan, *El nombre prestado*, <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=5483>)*
- *I rented my apartment and moved in to Laura's. From time to time I went to the bar to have a glass of **vodka** with José, or to play dominoes with Don Samuel, until death took them one by one, complying with the just law.*

Yet, in Spanish-speaking cultures, *vodka* is more often associated with drunkenness, dead-drunk and alcoholism:



- *Después llegó el momento en que me dije, Pedro, estás exagerando, no te pases, y allí empezó la cuestión del vodka, y ya no fueron solamente dos traguitos, sino dos botellas diarias, un poco más de relajo...* (Perú: Caretas:1414, <http://www.caretas.com.pe/1414/1414.htm>)
- *Then came the moment when I said to myself: Pedro, you're exaggerating, give it a rest and the topic of vodka began, and it was not two sips, but two bottles a day, a little more of relaxation...*

Cortázar, ordering his protagonists to drink strong alcohol, could choose between *vodka* and *aguardiente*. It seems that he omitted the second term on purpose since in Spanish *aguardiente* is more commonly used and refers to the native culture. Moreover, drinking *aguardiente* in Paris could have been little realistic: in France one could hardly buy a strong alcoholic drink produced from corn. The protagonists of *Hopscotch*, pretending to be elaborated intellectuals, would not have wanted to drink a common, plebeian drink. That is why, Cortázar orders them to drink *vodka*. In Paris, *vodka* could be easily bought, and from the perspective of Hispanic culture, it brings some breeze of exoticism.

The members of the Serpent Club drink *vodka* during a meeting in a flat in Quartier Latin, listening to music, mainly jazz, and talking all the time ... about everything. They see *vodka* as a strong alcohol and drink it to get drunk:

- [...] *un poco bebidos todos* (p. 62).
- [...] *all of us a little tight* (...).
- *La sbornia en su momento más alto. Vodka dudoso, horriblemente fuerte* (p. 89).
- *A binge at its highest moment. Doubtful vodka, terribly strong.*

Thanks to *vodka*, the world appears to be a little unreal:

- (...) *a Oliveira le costaba creer que todo eso estuviera sucediendo* (p. 63).
- [...] *it was hard for Oliveira to believe that all of this was taking place.*

However, *vodka* predominantly allows them to get rid of their daily concerns:

- - *Los intercesores – pensó otra vez, hamaándose con Babs que estaba completamente borracha y lloraba en silencio escuchando a Bessie, estremeciéndose a compás o a contratiempo, sollozando para adentro para no alejarse por nada de los blues de la cama vacía, la mañana siguiente, los zapatos en los charcos, el alquiler sin pagar, el miedo a la vejez, imagen cenicienta del amanecer en el espejo a los pies de la cama, los blues, el cafard infinito de la vida* (p. 63).

- “*The intercessors,*” he thought once more, snuggling up to Babs who was completely drunk and was crying quietly as she listened to Bessie, trembling in time to the rhythm or counterpoint, weeping inside so not to get far away from the blues about an empty bed, tomorrow morning, shoes in puddles, unpaid rent, fear of old age, the ashen image of dawn in the mirror at the foot of the bed, the blues, life’s infinite cafard.

Drinking *vodka*, the protagonists do not make any ritual gestures, like encouraging others to drink with them, making toasts or drinking at the same time. Everyone drinks in his own tempo and pours his glass himself or asks someone to do that. Their drinking *vodka* is not of a communal character; on the contrary, they seem to be very lonely and their talks become monologues – aloud or in silence.

The Polish definitions of *wódka* are similar to the Spanish. *SJP* defines it as “a strong alcoholic drink made from spirit and water.”<sup>739</sup> Similarly, *MSJP* (1989:906) reads, “an aqueous solution of spirit.” But the Polish dictionaries also give lists of collocations and idioms, proverbs and sayings with the word *wódka*: *pure, flavoured, Gdańsk vodka, something to eat with vodka, to distil vodka, to neck vodka back, to neck vodka, drunk with vodka* (*Inny słownik języka polskiego*). *Uniwersalny SJP* (PWN) lists: *alcohol (wine, vodka, etc.) idzie, poszedł, uderza, uderzył komuś do głowy, idzie, poszedł komuś w nogi* [become drunk]; *ić, pójść, skoczyć na kieliszek, na kielicha, na wódkę* [go for a drink]; *łać w kogoś (w siebie) wódkę* [pour vodka in oneself]; *podłać coś wódką; strzelić kielicha, wódkę* [drink vodka]; *szukać zapomnienia, pociechy w kieliszku, topić, utopić coś, np. kłopoty, smutki, troski, zmartwienia, w alkoholu (w wódce, w winie), w kieliszku* [seek comfort in vodka]. The number of these phrases and idioms testifies to the fact that vodka has been deeply rooted in Polish culture.

For Poles, vodka, defined by Tadeusz Konwicki as a “tribal drink of Central and Eastern Slavs,” is associated with a system of behaviours. This beverage seems to be democratic: everyone can drink it regardless of age and social status. However, it should be stressed that vodka is regarded as a man’s drink. Women most frequently accompany men drinking vodka, but they themselves do not drink it a lot:

- *Był już trochę podcięty, ale przyniósł pół litra. Hanka przygotowała zagrychę i popijali. Co to jest jednak pół litra na trzech? Nawet na dwóch, bo Hanka prawie nie piła.*<sup>740</sup>

739 <http://sjp.pwn.pl/lista.php?co=w%F3dka>; access: 08.09.2010.

740 Bielecki, *Siostra komandosa*, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowego PWN, <http://korpus.pwn.pl/opis.php?id=1527&sel=3051,1>; access: 08.09.2010.

*Although he was a bit drunk, he brought a half litre. Hanka prepared a variety of snacks and began drinking. But what did half a litre mean for three people? Even for two since Hanka drank very little.*

Vodka turns out to be a necessary element in doing business:

- *Na kuchni grzał się bigos i skwierczały kurze udka. Paweł nalał do kieliszków **wódki**. Mężczyźni usiedli naprzeciwko siebie i rozmawiali o cenach skór w Taszowie i w Kielcach. Potem Ukleja rzucił sprośny kawał. **Wódka** znikwała w gardłach, a kieliszki wydawały się zbyt małe, żeby nasycić to potworne pragnienie ciała.*<sup>741</sup>

*There was bigos stew heating up and chicken thighs sizzling in the kitchen. Paweł filled the shot glasses with **vodka**. The men sat opposite each other and talked about the prices of animal hides in Taszów and Kielce. Then Ukleja told a dirty joke. Vodka kept disappearing in their throats, and the glasses seemed too small to slake their bodies' monstrous thirsty.*<sup>742</sup>

It is also a universal cure for feeling unwell because of sad events:

- *Znów nie możesz dogadać się ze swoją kobietą, a twój najlepszy kumpel właśnie leczy kaca i nie chce pójść z tobą na **wódkę**.*<sup>743</sup>

*Again, you are not able to come to an agreement with your woman, and your best companion has just been treating his hangover and does not want to go out for **vodka** with you.*

This universality of drinking vodka, because of the status of the one who drinks and the reason for some trauma, has been recently described by Janusz Głowacki:

- *Narzeczona zdradza - seta, nie ma na buty - sto pięćdziesiąt, cenzura zdejmuje książkę - pół litra, przyjaciel zakapuje - półtora, nasi przegrywają z Ruskimi w nogę - trzydniówka.*<sup>744</sup>

741 Tokarczuk, *Primeval and Other Times*, [Primeval and Other Times] quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=w%F3dka&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center); access: 10.09.2010.

742 Tokarczuk, *Primeval and Other Times*, tr. A. Lloyd-Jones, Twisted Spoon Press, Prague 2010, p. 168.

743 CKM 1999 / 5, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=w%F3dka&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center); access: 08.09.2010.

744 <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6634769.html>; access: 12.06.2009.

*Your fiancée has betrayed you – a hundred grams, she does not have money to buy shoes – a hundred and fifty, the censorship has cancelled your book – half a litre, your friend will inform on you – a litre and a half, our football players lost against the Russians – three days of drinking.*

Vodka has become a permanent element of Polish culture, something you must have in many situations:

- *Kiedys gościł tu Iredyński z dziewczyną i tak się spił, że nazajutrz nie miał ani na **wódkę**.*<sup>745</sup>  
*Iredyński was our guest here, with his girl, and he drank so heavily that had no money even for vodka the next day.*
- *Już raz w życiu były odczytane w kościele moje zapowiedzi, nawet kupiono **wódkę**.*<sup>746</sup>  
*Once in my life there was my publication of banns, even vodka was bought.*
- *Czego się napijecie? Jest jeszcze **wódka**, no i wódka, i może być jeszcze ewentualnie wódka z sokiem.*<sup>747</sup>  
*What are you going to drink? We still have **vodka**, and more vodka, and perhaps vodka with juice.*

Vodka has also become an important theme of Polish contemporary literature: suffice it to mention *Pod mocnym aniołem* (The Mightly Angel) by Jerzy Pilch or Marcin Świetlicki's volume of poems entitled *36 wierszy o wódce i papierosach* [36 Poems about Vodka and Cigarettes].

Świetlicki's volume is especially interesting. In his poems, the word "wódka" does not occur even once, it is only in the title. Yet, it is a very important signal that he speaks of difficult matters, perhaps painful, straightforward, without any ambiguity and hiding behind masks that one can assume every day. A drunk is devoid of any restrictions and speaks frankly.

[...] everyone that even once led to have a horrible hangover knows very well in what cosmic perspective his life seemed to be, how beneficially a hangover influences the

745 *Przekrój* 2001/2918, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=w%F3dka&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center); access: 08.09.2010.

746 *CKM* 1999/8, quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=w%F3dka&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center); access: 08.09.2010.

747 Dunin, *Tabu*; quoted after the Corpus of Polish by Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, [http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k\\_set=1&k\\_find=w%F3dka&k\\_free=free&k\\_limit=300&k\\_ile=100&k\\_left=10&k\\_right=10&k\\_order=Center](http://korpus.pwn.pl/results.php?k_set=1&k_find=w%F3dka&k_free=free&k_limit=300&k_ile=100&k_left=10&k_right=10&k_order=Center); access: 08.09.2010.

understanding and proper placing of your own being in the order of existence (social orders lose their meanings), how a hangover ridicules the trinkets and trivialities which we are suddenly chasing with inexplicable zeal

– Śliwiński showed, discussing Świetlicki's poetry (Czapliński, Śliwiński 1999:120). For readers living in the Polish People's Republic, drinking vodka had another aspect: the pervasive habit of drinking received an ideology that it was to widen the space of freedom in the oppressive system:

[...] dealing with drunkenness is like dealing with sexual life. This was a sphere that the state could not completely control. A person got drunk and felt free, or at least felt free for a while.<sup>748</sup>

– recollected Janusz Głowacki. Moreover, the fact that you were drunk caused your being forgiven of behaviours that would be unacceptable in other circumstances:

(A person) could topple all trashcans, pick up some young woman, tell the boss: Go to hell! The next day, you had a hangover but also an excuse: I was drunk! Well, in this case, it's all right. A drunken man is forgiven, it is not proper to harm him. A human being is sensible – that is why he gets drunk.<sup>749</sup>

The appearance of vodka in the Polish translation of *Hopscotch* brings images and behaviours that are typical of the Poles' culture of drinking this alcohol. It inevitably recalls specific associations that are obvious for every Pole, and which consequently creates a completely different mood than the one in the source text; it creates a mood of commonness and ordinariness. Through the fact of drinking vodka, in the eyes of Polish readers, the cosmopolitan protagonists of *Hopscotch* torn in Paris are transformed into a group of neighbours, drowning their grudges against the world in a sea of alcohol.

The members of the Serpent Club from Cortázar's novel are related to our native drunkards by the fact that they treat vodka as a mean to get drunk and thus forget the daily reality, and at the same time, vodka makes them relax and they can discuss the most difficult subjects straightforwardly (like Oliveira analysing complex existential issues) or can recall traumatic events (like La Maga saying that she was raped in her youth). However, for them drinking vodka is not an element of everyday life; it has no rituals having a social meaning nor any rituals which they created to meet the needs of their group.<sup>750</sup> Its character is accidental.

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748 <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,6634769.html>; access:12.06.2009.

749 *ibid.*

750 The rituals related to drinking vodka in Polish culture, as an example of a translational problem, are discussed by Skibińska in *Kuchnia tłumacza* (2008). She stresses

Vodka is a beverage that is culturally alien, slightly exotic and so in a sense more elegant than the alcohols that can be accessible every day.

## 9 Summary

Translators of fiction must meet numerous challenges. The process of translation consists in choosing right grammatical forms and finding right equivalents in the name of variously understood faithfulness to the original text. Words have not only lexical meanings but also bring to mind different associations rooted in a concrete culture.

Out of the three analysed words, only *mate* refers to a culture-specific concept. It is strongly connected with Argentinian culture, brings to mind contents that only characterise this culture. In the Polish rendering, the word *mate* has remained it is original spelling, and so it is a borrowing. However, we should note that from the Polish readers' perspective, its meaning seems considerably poorer. An average Pole cannot decode the numerous meanings of *mate*, which the Argentinian users of Spanish can perceive.

*Vodka* and *cerveza* are intermediate concepts. Although in Polish and Hispanic culture, there are words indicating this concept, their meanings are not identical. Each word is followed by a different load of experiences and each evokes different connotations. Their definitions in dictionaries and encyclopaedias sound similarly in both languages since they reflect the scientific image of the world, referring to objective experiences. Yet, they do not reflect their multiple senses that they communicate in each culture.

At this point, we are dealing with slightly different situations. From the perspective of the readers of the original, *mate* occurs to be semantically broader than for Polish readers. For the latter, the semantic scope of this word is narrower than for Spanish users. In turn, vodka and beer as the equivalents of respectively *vodka* and *cerveza* introduce into a translated text cultural references that are missing in the source text. Therefore, readers of the translation cannot help not actualising the senses that are absent in the original. Consequently, they understand and interpret the text in a slightly different way than the readers of the original text.

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that "the scenarios of drinking alcohol are different, the Polish and French images concerning this sphere are different, and so are the images of the second community that experiences the rituals in the act of translation" (p. 133).

One of the consequences of the shift of meanings that occurs in the process of translation can be the modification of the functions performed by a given element in a literary work. *Mate*, which in the original version is a symbol of the fellowship of the voluntary immigrants, a sign of familiarity, is chiefly an indicator of exoticism for the Polish reader. As regards vodka, the situation is reverse: in the Spanish version, vodka gives the meetings of the Serpent Club a certain value of elegance – drinking a special alcohol coming from an alien culture, whereas the Polish reader has completely different connotations, signalling the familiarity of the situation.

It is also worth remembering that concepts are not given once for always; they can be modified slightly with the growth of the knowledge of the members of a given community and their new experiences. I think that for Polish contemporary readers, *mate* is a less exotic beverage (but to a certain extent rather strange and seldom used) than for the readers who lived 30 years ago.

The Argentinian word *mate* and the Polish *wódka* can certainly be described as elements of cultural communication in the sense suggested by Carbaugh. Both communicate a series of meanings and behaviours that are typical of each of these cultures. For participants of other cultures, these meanings can be partially available, and their full understanding requires openness to another culture and sensibility to communicative signals that characterises it. Their understanding entails using a certain amount of cognitive energy.

The conducted analysis has allowed me to note that the change of the language of a literary work can essentially influence its understanding. The aforementioned words do not pose any serious difficulties for the translator: *mate* remains in its original form, and the choice of the Polish equivalent for *vodka* seems obvious. Yet, their meanings have been modified in another linguistic environment. Hence the change of the language in which we read some text can and should be counted as a factor of its reinterpretation. Adequately, the factors of reinterpretation would be not only external phenomena as Lalewicz seemed to suggest but also, in the case of translated texts, linguistic phenomena. It would therefore appear that analysing a literary translation stressing the problems of its reception, it is worth using the tools worked out by linguistic semantics. Thanks to these tools, we can describe the modifications of the meanings of particular words in the process of translation and the way that they can influence the understanding of the whole work.





# Conclusion

1. A complete description of the reception of translated Spanish American works in Poland in 1945–2005 that I first intended to provide in this project was certainly a utopian objective. The phenomenon of this reception has many dimensions and requires interdisciplinary research. Therefore, I have analysed only some aspects of the reception directly related to the active participation of various groups of receivers in the process of literary communication, i.e. attitudes of professional receivers of literary works documented in the critical texts, the influence of Spanish American prose on selected Polish writers as well as behaviours and attitudes of ‘ordinary’ readers towards it. The analysis of some aspects of these texts has allowed me to see what kinds of mechanisms lie at the foundations of the shift of meanings and functions of some terms in the translations, terms that are sometimes key as regards the sense of the whole work.
2. Two methodological proposals have been implemented in my work. The first can hardly be called a novelty. Surveys concerning readership have been standard methods almost since the beginning of their application. They have been used in the sociology of literature on a large scale. However, translation theory, which since the cultural turn has emphasised the problem of reception, does not place the real reader in its focus. No empirical research directed to this participant of literary communication has been conducted within translation studies. It is the critical texts and observations of almost every stage of the publishing process and the dynamics of the book market that are regarded as the main sources of information about receivers. Thus, the knowledge of the real readers of literary translations is taken from indirect sources, deduced from various materials that are not necessarily directly connected with receivers. On the other hand, it seems that reaching a group of readers of a concrete type of literature and attempting to discern their preferences and motivations concerning books are worth taking efforts. The images of readers in the eyes of literary critics do not have to automatically reflect the reality.

The differences in the reception of Spanish American prose by professional critics and non-professional readers were striking. The elements which the reviews stressed during the boom, such as exoticism, political dimension, the reflection of social conflicts or considerations on the Hispanic identity, did not occur to be the characteristics that readers expected most. The research material that I have collected does not confirm the opinion that critical texts can

be treated as representative of at least some groups of receivers and that critics act as spokesmen of readers who generally have no occasions to express their evaluations in a wider forum. Naturally, reviews are testimonies of reception, but this is a reception realised in a certain group of receivers – professional readers. It seems that the influence of criticism on readers' behaviours is often overestimated: readers do not always read what specialists recommend and do not unavoidably share their opinions. Friends' suggestions have proven to be a more effective source of motivation. Till 2005, the most appreciated Hispanic writer in Poland, both by critics and readers, was García Márquez. In turn, the opinions about Cortazar's works were divergent. Reviewers generally ignored his works or regarded them as old-fashioned, but *Hopscotch* occupied the second place in the ranking of the most popular Spanish American works, popular with readers of different generations. In the case of Isabel Allende's works, numerous flattering comments caused that her name was known even though her novels were less popular than the works of the greatest stars of the boom. The reviews published in the national dailies with the highest circulations did not help the representatives of the generation, who had built their literary programme by negating the boom, win readers.

My questionnaire was not a perfect tool. Nevertheless, its results were encouraging as regards the purposefulness of carrying out this type of research. If such projects are launched in the future, at the stage of constructing a questionnaire, it will be worth considering the specific nature of literary translation, its difference in relation to native works. Moreover, one should remember that every national literature has its own features that will most likely influence its reception in another cultural-linguistic context, and this aspect should be reflected in the questionnaire. It will also be worth considering what features of the reading public of a given literature should be investigated and emphasised.

3. Since the cultural turn in the theory of translation, textual analyses have been marginalised and regarded as time-consuming and contributing very little to the knowledge of the real mechanisms ruling translations understood as social phenomena. Thus, the contribution of linguistics to research on literary translation has been undermined. Drawing final conclusions from such reasoning, we can ask the question whether the linguistic perspective is still a reasonable solution in contemporary translation studies. I have sought answers to these doubts in intercultural semantics. Following Anna Wierzbicka's proposal I have attempted to confront how concepts that are essential to understanding a work and its final message are perceived in the original text and the translation. It seems that my analysis of the functioning of such concepts in

the context of the source culture and the target culture has allowed for understanding the sources of differences in perceiving a literary work by readers as participants of various cultures and users of various languages.

4. Reflecting to what degree the Polish boom was characterised by its specific features and to what degree it shared features with analogous phenomena in other European countries, it is worth referring to the analyses conducted by Meg H. Brown (1994). Her research shows that a noticeable increase in interest in Spanish American prose in Germany happened in the 1980s, i.e. with an almost 20-year delay in relation to the Spanish boom. Both literal and non-literal factors exerted influence on that. The non-literal factors included the following events: in 1974, the Latin American Programme was initiated by the Suhrkamp publishing company, whose head Siegfried Unseld decided to edit works of both known and debuted writers; the Frankfurt Book Fair held in 1976 was dedicated to Latin America, which led to an increase in editors' interests in this region; the "Horizonte" Festival was organised as a spectacular event in Berlin in 1982, it presented diverse aspects of Latin American culture and hosted 35 writers; the Nobel Prize in Literature for García Márquez in 1982; the Peace Award of the German Book Trade for Octavio Paz in 1984; the debut of Isabel Allende whose magical realism in a *light* version opened the door to reaching mass readers. Before that happened, German readers had not been prepared to read pioneering works speaking of an alien and unknown world, perceived as an area of "permanent revolt," as non-democratic and being in a terrible economic situation. The political and economic transformations taking place in many Latin American countries modified the negative image of this region and at the same time contributed to an increase in tourists' visits to this continent.

Meg H. Brown posed a thesis that the lack of interest in Spanish American prose in the 1960s and the 70s was related mainly to the low level of knowledge about this continent and its cultures as well as the stereotyped, negative images of this region. The development of this knowledge, which coincided with positive changes in some countries as well as numerous initiatives aiming at propagating Spanish American literature, caused that a number of works became the *Spiegel/Buchreport* bestsellers (see chapter two).

The situation in France was completely different. The interest in Hispanic literature preceded the boom to a considerable extent (Malingret 2002:41–48). In 1952, Asturias' novel *The President (El señor presidente)* received the prestigious Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger. In 1956, this award was given to Carpentier's *The Lost Steps*, and the Gallimard collection "La Croix du Sud" was inaugurated in 1957. Moreover, many Latin American writers, forced to

leave their countries, found shelter in France. They included Cortázar and Cristina Peri Rossi. Alejo Carpentier spent his youth in France as well. Their personal contacts with literary and editors' circles contributed to the promotion of contemporary Hispanic prose. An equally essential role was played by Roger Caillois, who during his stay in Argentina had established numerous relationships with local artists, especially with the members of the influential *Sur* (Steenmeijer 2002:147). Moreover, the literature written in Spanish naturally drew French critics' attention because both languages belong to the same family. Therefore, in France the literature of the boom was well received, and soon, in the 1960s, won popularity. Most works of renowned Hispanic authors were published in French within one year (Malingret 2002:43).

These remarks can tempt one to make easy generalisations. Since it seems that a certain principle can be observed: translations of works that belong to new or innovative literary movements win readers easily when there is a tradition of publishing books of authors coming from a given cultural circle, recognised as classics, or when certain knowledge of this country or region has already been spread. In the case of Germany, the lack of such a tradition and knowledge made the reception of the works of the boom difficult, while in France a certain level of literary awareness and knowledge of that region could have facilitated it to a great extent.

However, the case of Poland orders caution while generalising about the rules of cultural processes. All things seem to indicate that in Poland it was the hunger of information about Latin America that was one of the factors triggering interest in its literature and consequently, a huge publishing success. The lack of basic, as it seemed, knowledge of the cultural context in which this literature originated did not hinder intensive and greedy reading. Political and economic contacts between Poland and Latin America were intensified only in the 1990s. During that period, various sources of knowledge about this continent were made available. Yet, all of these facts had no effect on the scale of the reception of Spanish American literature in Poland in the particular decades of the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. This leads to the conclusion that one should not seek easy analogies between the reception of the literature of the boom as well as the later Spanish American prose in Poland and its reception in other countries. The specificity of the context of the reception in each country is different. Diverse factors, both literary and non-literary, influence readers' choices.

5. Summing up my research, I would like to discuss the question whether the presence of the translated Spanish American works in Poland led to some intercultural encounter and whether this encounter left some traces in our

culture. Undoubtedly, such traces can be found in Polish literary culture. Works of a certain group of writers associated with the boom entered the publishing canon and were available on the Polish market. The necessity to deal with Spanish American prose and comment on it revived the language of literary criticism, modified its criteria and introduced new points of reference in evaluating our literature. Today all generations read Spanish American prose although its public embraces those who have sophisticated tastes and are interested in a highly artistic prose that they regularly read. There are a lot of arguments proving that Polish writers who encountered Hispanic works in their youth owe it a lot. Yet, the fashion for Spanish American literature in the form which we dealt with in the 1970s has certainly faded. As Marrodán wrote: in those days, all of Spanish American prose was a bestseller. During the boom, numerous works were published, and almost every new title was immediately sold out and read with bated breath and then commented on – most frequently very enthusiastically, but after 1990 only a few authors of that period survived on the Polish market. Moreover, younger writers' works were hardly noticed by critics and did not win many readers. Spanish American prose could not count on reviewers' favour any longer.

Nevertheless, the literature of the boom has remained the central reference for critics dealing with prose written on the Green Continent. Undoubtedly, the popularity of the stars of the boom paved the way for young Latin American writers to the Polish market, and the juxtaposition of the works of the old and young generation clearly helped the latter gain prestige. New authors were presented in opposition to the writers using magical realism as those who consciously faced the myth of the “wonder, beauty and magic” created in South America. The world that they depicted was called “America postm@condo” by the critics (Domosławski 2006:15). Edmundo Paz Soldán's *The Matter of Desire* was “a chilling alternative of García Márquez's magical realism,” (ibid) while Jaime Bayly was “a diligent disciple of Vargas Llosa” (Grzymisławski 2007:16). Supposedly, when García Márquez read *Rosario Tijeras* by Jorge Franco, he “sighed with relief and anointed Franco as his successor” (Grzymisławski 2005:12).

6. Yet another question can be posed: whether the traces of the encounter with translations of Spanish American prose can be observed only in the literary space. Answers to this question can be sought first of all in the dictionaries of the Polish language, adopting the aim to verify the definitions of the entries *Latino* and *Latin American*. At this point, I am referring to the thesis formulated by ethno-linguistics claiming that if something has been established in language, it is with all certainty part of common consciousness (Bartmiński,

Panasiuk 2001:381). Thus, language can be treated as a source of knowledge of its users, attitudes and convictions.

The aforementioned words appeared only in the dictionaries published in the late 1970s. *Słownik języka polskiego* [Dictionary of the Polish Language] ed. by Doroszewski does not include them at all. The adjective *Latin American* occurs in *Słownik języka polskiego* ed. by Szymczak (1978) and is explained as “concerning South and Central (Latin) America, coming from there, living there.” It does not contain the entry *Latino*. Both words appeared in dictionaries that were published later, such as *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* [Universal Dictionary of the Polish Language] ed. Dubisz (2003) or *Inny słownik języka polskiego* [A Different Dictionary of the Polish Language] ed. Bańko (2000), which explain that a *Latino* is someone coming from Latin America, and *Latin American* is what concerns Latin America or its inhabitants. The definition in *Praktyczny słownik języka polskiego* [A Practical Dictionary of the Polish Language] (1998) is more precise since it explains that a *Latino* is ‘a native inhabitant of Latin America, a citizen of Latin America, i.e. South America and Central America together with Mexico.’ Only this dictionary gives two words derived from the adjective *Latin American* (*latynoamerykański*). They are: a Latin American expert (*latynoamerykanista*) and concerning Latin American studies (*latynoamerykanistyczny*). None of the aforementioned dictionaries provide us with metaphorical meanings and idiomatic expressions related to these words. Neither can they be found in *Słownik frazeologiczny* [Phraseological Dictionary] by S. Skorupka. The most commonly mentioned collocations are: *Latin American literature, music* and *art, Latin American nations* and *Latin American rhythms*.

The fact that in Polish the term *Latino* appeared only in the second half of the 20th century is rather astonishing even if we consider that dictionaries note the state of the development of language with some delay. We should relate the appearance to the big number of translations of Spanish American prose that became very popular on the Polish publishing market at that time. In turn, the lack of figurative and idiomatic expressions with *Latino* and *Latin American* in contemporary Polish testifies to the fact that our culture might not have formed any stereotyped image of a Latin American citizen. The existence of the aforementioned collocations shows that what was Latin American was most frequently associated with literature and music, which corresponds to the results of the questionnaires I have conducted.

However, one can note that certain images of a Latino and Latin America existed in the awareness of an average Pole. The analysis of the critical texts dedicated to Spanish American prose showed a picture of this continent as

a magical, mysterious and irrational world drawing readers by its exoticism and mystery, and at the same time as brutal and cruel. It should be stated that this picture considerably differs both from the image perpetuated in the positivist works, imposed by compulsory reading, and from the idealised visions of Arkady Fiedler's literary reportages.

Yet, we could not learn a lot about the inhabitants of this world since the characters depicted in the novels were analysed mainly as literary protagonists, and not as typical representatives of Latin American nations. If Latinos were depicted, they were presented as people who were torn with contradictions but at the same time, they were backward and brilliant, "this barren ingenuity is the best synthesis of Latin America." Its inhabitants were characterised by laziness and diligence, ignorance and ingenuity, instinct of life and death, intuitive wisdom and destructive impulses (Krzemiński 1982:39). I refer to these texts again since I am convinced that, willingly or unwillingly, they were the texts which helped readers form their opinions not only about Spanish American literature, but also about the world it depicted. I believe that the direction of influence was as follows: the trend for Spanish American contemporary prose caused that the works of Latin American authors dominated the collective conscience. However, its readers spoke and thought about this continent using the words suggested by the reviews of the novels. They were easily available as we should remember that the reviews were published not only in specialist magazines but also in popular periodicals reaching large audiences and in the daily press. Moreover, the reviews were similar, full of repetitions and formulations that were clichés and thus were easily solidified.

A portrait of a Latino could be found in the collections of literary reportages *Moi przyjaciele Latynosi* [My Latino Friends] by Ewa Szumańska written in the late 1970s and published by Iskry in 1981 in quite a big circulation – thirty thousand copies. This time frame corresponded to the period of the boom for Latin American literature in Poland.

Szumańska described her journey to Latin America on a Polish commercial ship, being a passenger on board of this ship. She reported her visits to various cities when the ship stopped in ports. Descriptions of monuments and landscape occupied much space in her accounts. She mentioned numerous historic facts as well as current social and political realities. Yet, the titles of the particular chapters of her reportages are the names of people who she encountered and with who she established friendly relations. Her story of travelling around Latin America was first of all a chronicle of meetings with its inhabitants.

The Latino heroes of Szumańska's book were citizens of Spanish-speaking countries. They shared many characteristics. The author transferred the characteristics of one person to inhabitants of the whole continent. The most conspicuous features that she ascribed to the Hispanics were friendliness and openness to other people.<sup>751</sup> Another typical feature was selflessness. When they regarded someone as a friend, they were ready to make sacrifices for him. She experienced that when her guides who accompanied her on her tour of the ruins of Chan-Chan refused to accept any fee seeing her enthusiasm and fascination with the pre-Columbian civilisation.<sup>752</sup>

The Latino people were profoundly religious.<sup>753</sup> They openly manifested their feelings.<sup>754</sup> They also had an extraordinary sense of rhythm and predisposition to dance.<sup>755</sup> Szumańska put the following interesting self-characteristics on the lips of one of her heroes, Norman:

We are extreme individualists, and the need for freedom has been deeply rooted in us, and at the same time, we have had the biggest number of merciless and stupid dictatorships. Why do we submit to them [...]? I do not know. Perhaps we have got used to the cult of personalities. [...] We are proud with the pride that we inherited from our Spanish ancestors and that was born out of our love of homeland. [...]. We also yield to the burden of complexes and are ashamed of our homelands. [...] We are joyful [...] and full of melancholy. We are fervent Catholics but we reconcile that with magic and

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751 “[...] directness, kindness and interest in others characterise most inhabitants of this continent. [...] They are curious but not pressing and nasty, rather disarming. They never get tired, ask dozens of questions and really wait for answers; they are happy to hear the answers that are important to them.” in: Szumańska E., *Moi przyjaciele Latynosi*, Warszawa 1981, p. 9.

752 “They say that it was their day and it should not be spoilt since no one takes money from friends. [...] We hug, kiss and almost cry; it is a kind of great Latino madness,” op. cit., p. 135.

753 “Faith is a great value for us. It is zealous and sensuous,” says Norman, one of the heroes of the book. At the same time, faith embraces traces of pagan cults: “traces of all rituals, some symbols and names, a different sense of sin as well as personal names have been smuggled into it,” *ibid.*

754 Moved by his popularity and expressions of sympathy, Eduardo sheds “tears that are common here, testifying to sorrow and joy since people are not ashamed of their emotions and do not feel the need to hide them,” op. cit. p. 46.

755 “This is the way Latinos dance, later I have seen that many times. [...] It seems that they were born to dance, that this is their natural movement, dancing and not walking,” op. cit. p. 8.



superstitions. [...] There is something dark in us, which we do not understand ourselves [...]. At the same time, we have huge deposits of friendliness for the world, mildness and faithfulness to once established friendships. We show resistance, persistence and endurance along with inertia and apathy.<sup>756</sup>

I have quoted this rather long fragment since the author, showing sympathy for her protagonist, did not try to argue with him, but seemed to have shared his opinions. One can see that many of these judgements correspond to the picture of Hispanics and Latin America shown in the critical texts dedicated to Spanish American prose.

We can wonder whether this slightly romantic, strongly idealised image of a Latino remained in Poles' consciousness or whether it changed or was completely blurred after the trend of Latin American literature and culture had disappeared. Answers to these questions could have been provided by detailed questionnaires. But I only dared to conduct a mini-survey among twenty young people. I asked them to give three typical characteristics of a Latino and to enumerate three things that they associated with him, not specifying whether they should be things, phenomena or elements of nature.

The distinctive features of Latinos turned out to be physical. The most frequently mentioned adjectives described the colour of the skin or complexion: sunburnt, dark, black – close equivalents. A typical Latino is strong and short. As regards his character: amorous, temperamental and resourceful. The term *macho* was mentioned once. The answers to the second question gave a picture that a typical Latino comes from Mexico, speaks Spanish and lives in a tropical country. He was strongly associated with dance – the answers included the word “dance” and its names: samba, salsa, tango. Some respondents gave the associations: *tequila, cactuses, football, hand fans*.

In order to find out whether Poles regarded Latinos as a group with similar characteristics I asked some respondents to list the features of a typical Mexican and Argentinian, deliberately choosing inhabitants of the countries lying on the opposite edges of the continent. A typical Mexican was seen as loud, open and lazy. Moreover, the answers included terms belonging to the same semantic field: cheerful, merry, spontaneous, agile and open. He had a dark complexion. From among the other representatives of Latin American countries, a Mexican was distinguished by a hat, guitar and characteristic cuisine. On the other hand, in the Polish people's opinions an average Argentinian

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756 *Op. cit.* pp. 16–17.

resembled a Mexican. He was spontaneous, merry, vigorous, talkative, expressive, open and easy-going. He loved all kinds of music, but especially tango, and football.

Subsequently, it seems that the characteristics of Latinos, Mexicans and Argentinians given by Poles were very similar, while those of Mexicans and Argentinians – almost identical. Representatives of these two nations were characterised either by elements of clothing or passions, which would confirm the thesis that Poles saw Latinos, regardless of the country of their origin, as a group sharing similar characteristics.

The image of a Latino emerging from this questionnaire differed only to a small extent from the one included in the reviews of Latin American prose written in the 1970s and was highly consistent with the image presented by Szumańska. Therefore, we can put forward a hypothesis that the stereotype of a Latino created on the wave of popularity of Latin American literature, has been preserved and remained valid.

7. In light of the depicted phenomena, the reception of Spanish American literature in Poland can be described as an area of special encounter. This literature became a bridge between the cultures that until that time had had little in common. The Poles' knowledge of Latin America was shallow. On the one hand, it was defined by prejudices formed on the distorted information about immigrants' misery whose source was propaganda works with intended theses, and on the other hand – through naïve images of the world in which one could experience fantastic adventures.<sup>757</sup> This encounter was not of a symmetrical character. Numerous translated Spanish American works had no equivalents as editions of Polish literature in Latin America.<sup>758</sup> This does not change the fact that we can find opinions about a certain similarity of souls expressed by participants of both cultures. "As inhabitants of Buenos Aires like considering themselves as elaborated Europeans, by accident thrown to the continent of Indians and jungle, so many of us used to snobbishly regard ourselves as being mentally Hispanic, lost in the rainy land on the Vistula" – wrote Bratkowski (2004:104–105). In turn, Julio Cortázar claimed, "Poland is a country of cronopios [...], i.e. wonderful, friendly people, a little crazy. I can

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757 In the 1920s, the exoticism of Latin America became attractive through reports of travellers and climbers in which "adventure and nature were put in the foreground" (Ligeza 1996:134).

758 Here Cuba can be an exception because of her sense of community with "the brotherly socialist nation."

see many similarities between Argentinians and Poles. I am not feeling like a stranger here.”<sup>759</sup>

The encounter was not of an interpersonal character, either. Latino visitors did not appear in Poland. We did not invite real people but their artefacts, and our way to invite them was through translations. Therefore, our guests did not have to adjust to the Polish realities and did not undertake any actions. They were simply present through literature. Their presence could be described as discrete since literary works do not impose anything and nobody is forced to read them. Choosing a book, despite some forms of pressure that society exerts, is to a large extent an individual act of will. Nevertheless, even this way of presence can have far-reaching consequences for the target culture. A literary work as a cultural text is entangled in a complicated network of relations in which it is created, and absorbs social values and contexts of the environment (Markowski 2006:522). Reading a literary work, we get to know these values and contexts which we can accept or reject. Therefore, reading translations of prose can enrich our aesthetics if we decide to adopt an attitude of openness and are ready to listen to the voices reaching us through the translations.

Everything seems to indicate that the presence of Latin American literature in Poland has left distinct traces in various areas of culture. The Latin American guests who made their homes in our country systematically transformed our awareness, mainly the literary one, and our readership. The scale of popularity of this literature among the reading elites turned out to be astonishing to almost all circles of our literary public. Consequently, the transformation of our awareness went far beyond the reading culture: in some sense, we “tamed” the continent that was so distant geographically and mentally, so bizarre that until recently Polish dictionaries had not even included the name of its inhabitant.

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759 An interview given to Anna Wcisło, *Gazeta Południowa* 1979, no. 117, p. 3.



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