

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.¹ 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*

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.² 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

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.

