

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.⁶¹⁰ 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

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.⁶¹¹ 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

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.⁶¹² 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.⁶¹³ 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.

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.⁶¹⁴ 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*⁶¹⁵, *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.

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*.⁶¹⁶ 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 wymyslane</i>			1993 ^a
<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>Autobiografia</i>	2001		
<i>Los conjurados</i>	2002		
	2004		

^a 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 ^a	De Agostini Poland	Mediasat Świat 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						

^a "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 1999,⁶¹⁷ 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.

617 It is the second, enlarged and revised edition. The first edition appeared in 1995.

Tab. 12:

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).

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.⁶¹⁸ There were only 14 notes about

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.⁶¹⁹ The editor also mentioned the Argentinian José Hernández, 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

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.⁶²⁰ 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,

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.”⁶²¹

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.

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.⁶²² 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.⁶²³

(...) history shines through the lyrical magic of childhood as a dark spot between Elka's hips.⁶²⁴

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.”⁶²⁵

One of the characteristics of Huelle's prose was to be its mysteriousness. “The child of mystery – some Dawid Weiser”⁶²⁶ and “A well of mysteries”⁶²⁷ were the titles of some critical texts. Osiecka wrote about the first novel of the writer from Gdańsk:

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.⁶²⁸

The critics saw “mysterious clearances and fissures” in the plot of *Moving House and Other Stories*.⁶²⁹ They wrote that *Cold Sea Stories* showed “the mythical, mysterious reality of sleep, dream and recollection.”⁶³⁰

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.⁶³¹

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.⁶³²

– 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.”⁶³³ 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.⁶³⁴

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.”⁶³⁵ “Complicated use of time”

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*.⁶³⁶ “The invisible time door” was to be crossed by the protagonist of one of the stories included in *Cold Sea Stories*.⁶³⁷

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.⁶³⁸

According to another critic, “Huelle uses the trick of an allegedly realistic story about events that unnoticeably reveal their supernatural several times.”⁶³⁹ 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.⁶⁴⁰

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,⁶⁴¹ 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,⁶⁴² but the authoress herself regarded such interpretations as exotic...⁶⁴³ The other possible inspirations included the prose of Faulkner, Umberto Eco, Mircea Eliade and García Márquez.⁶⁴⁴ Here the authoress admitted that she had read their works and had been fascinated with them to a certain extent.⁶⁴⁵

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 created⁶⁴⁶

– 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*.⁶⁴⁷ The book was to hide "an intriguing connection between the realistic look at the contemporary world and her desire of mystery."⁶⁴⁸ The house from the novel *House of Day, House of Night* is "a magical place."⁶⁴⁹ 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.⁶⁵⁰

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.⁶⁵¹

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."⁶⁵² "The sphere of realism is penetrated by a fantasy of dreams" – discovered a reviewer for *Głos Nauczycielski*.⁶⁵³ Czaplński 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.⁶⁵⁴

The same critic defined her writing method, "she writes about extraordinary things, but she roots marvelousness in commonness."⁶⁵⁵

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,"⁶⁵⁶ and the name from the title "Prawiek" [Primeval] was compared with García Márquez's Macondo.⁶⁵⁷ 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

652 Cieślík, op. cit.

653 Korkozowicz, *Głos Nauczycielski* 1995, no. 29, p. 10.

654 Czaplński, *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1999, no. 8, p. 8.

655 Czaplński, *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*.⁶⁵⁸ 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."⁶⁵⁹ 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."⁶⁶⁰ 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.⁶⁶¹ 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*.⁶⁶² 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 [...].⁶⁶³

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]:

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.⁶⁶⁴

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.⁶⁶⁵

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.⁶⁶⁶

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.⁶⁶⁷

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*

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.⁶⁶⁸ 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.

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.