

## Conclusion

1. A complete description of the reception of translated Spanish American works in Poland in 1945–2005 that I first intended to provide in this project was certainly a utopian objective. The phenomenon of this reception has many dimensions and requires interdisciplinary research. Therefore, I have analysed only some aspects of the reception directly related to the active participation of various groups of receivers in the process of literary communication, i.e. attitudes of professional receivers of literary works documented in the critical texts, the influence of Spanish American prose on selected Polish writers as well as behaviours and attitudes of ‘ordinary’ readers towards it. The analysis of some aspects of these texts has allowed me to see what kinds of mechanisms lie at the foundations of the shift of meanings and functions of some terms in the translations, terms that are sometimes key as regards the sense of the whole work.
2. Two methodological proposals have been implemented in my work. The first can hardly be called a novelty. Surveys concerning readership have been standard methods almost since the beginning of their application. They have been used in the sociology of literature on a large scale. However, translation theory, which since the cultural turn has emphasised the problem of reception, does not place the real reader in its focus. No empirical research directed to this participant of literary communication has been conducted within translation studies. It is the critical texts and observations of almost every stage of the publishing process and the dynamics of the book market that are regarded as the main sources of information about receivers. Thus, the knowledge of the real readers of literary translations is taken from indirect sources, deduced from various materials that are not necessarily directly connected with receivers. On the other hand, it seems that reaching a group of readers of a concrete type of literature and attempting to discern their preferences and motivations concerning books are worth taking efforts. The images of readers in the eyes of literary critics do not have to automatically reflect the reality.

The differences in the reception of Spanish American prose by professional critics and non-professional readers were striking. The elements which the reviews stressed during the boom, such as exoticism, political dimension, the reflection of social conflicts or considerations on the Hispanic identity, did not occur to be the characteristics that readers expected most. The research material that I have collected does not confirm the opinion that critical texts can

be treated as representative of at least some groups of receivers and that critics act as spokesmen of readers who generally have no occasions to express their evaluations in a wider forum. Naturally, reviews are testimonies of reception, but this is a reception realised in a certain group of receivers – professional readers. It seems that the influence of criticism on readers' behaviours is often overestimated: readers do not always read what specialists recommend and do not unavoidably share their opinions. Friends' suggestions have proven to be a more effective source of motivation. Till 2005, the most appreciated Hispanic writer in Poland, both by critics and readers, was García Márquez. In turn, the opinions about Cortazar's works were divergent. Reviewers generally ignored his works or regarded them as old-fashioned, but *Hopscotch* occupied the second place in the ranking of the most popular Spanish American works, popular with readers of different generations. In the case of Isabel Allende's works, numerous flattering comments caused that her name was known even though her novels were less popular than the works of the greatest stars of the boom. The reviews published in the national dailies with the highest circulations did not help the representatives of the generation, who had built their literary programme by negating the boom, win readers.

My questionnaire was not a perfect tool. Nevertheless, its results were encouraging as regards the purposefulness of carrying out this type of research. If such projects are launched in the future, at the stage of constructing a questionnaire, it will be worth considering the specific nature of literary translation, its difference in relation to native works. Moreover, one should remember that every national literature has its own features that will most likely influence its reception in another cultural-linguistic context, and this aspect should be reflected in the questionnaire. It will also be worth considering what features of the reading public of a given literature should be investigated and emphasised.

3. Since the cultural turn in the theory of translation, textual analyses have been marginalised and regarded as time-consuming and contributing very little to the knowledge of the real mechanisms ruling translations understood as social phenomena. Thus, the contribution of linguistics to research on literary translation has been undermined. Drawing final conclusions from such reasoning, we can ask the question whether the linguistic perspective is still a reasonable solution in contemporary translation studies. I have sought answers to these doubts in intercultural semantics. Following Anna Wierzbicka's proposal I have attempted to confront how concepts that are essential to understanding a work and its final message are perceived in the original text and the translation. It seems that my analysis of the functioning of such concepts in

the context of the source culture and the target culture has allowed for understanding the sources of differences in perceiving a literary work by readers as participants of various cultures and users of various languages.

4. Reflecting to what degree the Polish boom was characterised by its specific features and to what degree it shared features with analogous phenomena in other European countries, it is worth referring to the analyses conducted by Meg H. Brown (1994). Her research shows that a noticeable increase in interest in Spanish American prose in Germany happened in the 1980s, i.e. with an almost 20-year delay in relation to the Spanish boom. Both literal and non-literal factors exerted influence on that. The non-literal factors included the following events: in 1974, the Latin American Programme was initiated by the Suhrkamp publishing company, whose head Siegfried Unseld decided to edit works of both known and debuted writers; the Frankfurt Book Fair held in 1976 was dedicated to Latin America, which led to an increase in editors' interests in this region; the "Horizonte" Festival was organised as a spectacular event in Berlin in 1982, it presented diverse aspects of Latin American culture and hosted 35 writers; the Nobel Prize in Literature for García Márquez in 1982; the Peace Award of the German Book Trade for Octavio Paz in 1984; the debut of Isabel Allende whose magical realism in a *light* version opened the door to reaching mass readers. Before that happened, German readers had not been prepared to read pioneering works speaking of an alien and unknown world, perceived as an area of "permanent revolt," as non-democratic and being in a terrible economic situation. The political and economic transformations taking place in many Latin American countries modified the negative image of this region and at the same time contributed to an increase in tourists' visits to this continent.

Meg H. Brown posed a thesis that the lack of interest in Spanish American prose in the 1960s and the 70s was related mainly to the low level of knowledge about this continent and its cultures as well as the stereotyped, negative images of this region. The development of this knowledge, which coincided with positive changes in some countries as well as numerous initiatives aiming at propagating Spanish American literature, caused that a number of works became the *Spiegel/Buchreport* bestsellers (see chapter two).

The situation in France was completely different. The interest in Hispanic literature preceded the boom to a considerable extent (Malingret 2002:41–48). In 1952, Asturias' novel *The President (El señor presidente)* received the prestigious Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger. In 1956, this award was given to Carpentier's *The Lost Steps*, and the Gallimard collection "La Croix du Sud" was inaugurated in 1957. Moreover, many Latin American writers, forced to

leave their countries, found shelter in France. They included Cortázar and Cristina Peri Rossi. Alejo Carpentier spent his youth in France as well. Their personal contacts with literary and editors' circles contributed to the promotion of contemporary Hispanic prose. An equally essential role was played by Roger Caillois, who during his stay in Argentina had established numerous relationships with local artists, especially with the members of the influential *Sur* (Steenmeijer 2002:147). Moreover, the literature written in Spanish naturally drew French critics' attention because both languages belong to the same family. Therefore, in France the literature of the boom was well received, and soon, in the 1960s, won popularity. Most works of renowned Hispanic authors were published in French within one year (Malingret 2002:43).

These remarks can tempt one to make easy generalisations. Since it seems that a certain principle can be observed: translations of works that belong to new or innovative literary movements win readers easily when there is a tradition of publishing books of authors coming from a given cultural circle, recognised as classics, or when certain knowledge of this country or region has already been spread. In the case of Germany, the lack of such a tradition and knowledge made the reception of the works of the boom difficult, while in France a certain level of literary awareness and knowledge of that region could have facilitated it to a great extent.

However, the case of Poland orders caution while generalising about the rules of cultural processes. All things seem to indicate that in Poland it was the hunger of information about Latin America that was one of the factors triggering interest in its literature and consequently, a huge publishing success. The lack of basic, as it seemed, knowledge of the cultural context in which this literature originated did not hinder intensive and greedy reading. Political and economic contacts between Poland and Latin America were intensified only in the 1990s. During that period, various sources of knowledge about this continent were made available. Yet, all of these facts had no effect on the scale of the reception of Spanish American literature in Poland in the particular decades of the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. This leads to the conclusion that one should not seek easy analogies between the reception of the literature of the boom as well as the later Spanish American prose in Poland and its reception in other countries. The specificity of the context of the reception in each country is different. Diverse factors, both literary and non-literary, influence readers' choices.

5. Summing up my research, I would like to discuss the question whether the presence of the translated Spanish American works in Poland led to some intercultural encounter and whether this encounter left some traces in our

culture. Undoubtedly, such traces can be found in Polish literary culture. Works of a certain group of writers associated with the boom entered the publishing canon and were available on the Polish market. The necessity to deal with Spanish American prose and comment on it revived the language of literary criticism, modified its criteria and introduced new points of reference in evaluating our literature. Today all generations read Spanish American prose although its public embraces those who have sophisticated tastes and are interested in a highly artistic prose that they regularly read. There are a lot of arguments proving that Polish writers who encountered Hispanic works in their youth owe it a lot. Yet, the fashion for Spanish American literature in the form which we dealt with in the 1970s has certainly faded. As Marrodán wrote: in those days, all of Spanish American prose was a bestseller. During the boom, numerous works were published, and almost every new title was immediately sold out and read with bated breath and then commented on – most frequently very enthusiastically, but after 1990 only a few authors of that period survived on the Polish market. Moreover, younger writers' works were hardly noticed by critics and did not win many readers. Spanish American prose could not count on reviewers' favour any longer.

Nevertheless, the literature of the boom has remained the central reference for critics dealing with prose written on the Green Continent. Undoubtedly, the popularity of the stars of the boom paved the way for young Latin American writers to the Polish market, and the juxtaposition of the works of the old and young generation clearly helped the latter gain prestige. New authors were presented in opposition to the writers using magical realism as those who consciously faced the myth of the “wonder, beauty and magic” created in South America. The world that they depicted was called “America postm@condo” by the critics (Domosławski 2006:15). Edmundo Paz Soldán's *The Matter of Desire* was “a chilling alternative of García Márquez's magical realism,” (ibid) while Jaime Bayly was “a diligent disciple of Vargas Llosa” (Grzymisławski 2007:16). Supposedly, when García Márquez read *Rosario Tijeras* by Jorge Franco, he “sighed with relief and anointed Franco as his successor” (Grzymisławski 2005:12).

6. Yet another question can be posed: whether the traces of the encounter with translations of Spanish American prose can be observed only in the literary space. Answers to this question can be sought first of all in the dictionaries of the Polish language, adopting the aim to verify the definitions of the entries *Latino* and *Latin American*. At this point, I am referring to the thesis formulated by ethno-linguistics claiming that if something has been established in language, it is with all certainty part of common consciousness (Bartmiński,

Panasiuk 2001:381). Thus, language can be treated as a source of knowledge of its users, attitudes and convictions.

The aforementioned words appeared only in the dictionaries published in the late 1970s. *Słownik języka polskiego* [Dictionary of the Polish Language] ed. by Doroszewski does not include them at all. The adjective *Latin American* occurs in *Słownik języka polskiego* ed. by Szymczak (1978) and is explained as “concerning South and Central (Latin) America, coming from there, living there.” It does not contain the entry *Latino*. Both words appeared in dictionaries that were published later, such as *Uniwersalny słownik języka polskiego* [Universal Dictionary of the Polish Language] ed. Dubisz (2003) or *Inny słownik języka polskiego* [A Different Dictionary of the Polish Language] ed. Bańko (2000), which explain that a *Latino* is someone coming from Latin America, and *Latin American* is what concerns Latin America or its inhabitants. The definition in *Praktyczny słownik języka polskiego* [A Practical Dictionary of the Polish Language] (1998) is more precise since it explains that a *Latino* is ‘a native inhabitant of Latin America, a citizen of Latin America, i.e. South America and Central America together with Mexico.’ Only this dictionary gives two words derived from the adjective *Latin American* (*latynoamerykański*). They are: a Latin American expert (*latynoamerykanista*) and concerning Latin American studies (*latynoamerykanistyczny*). None of the aforementioned dictionaries provide us with metaphorical meanings and idiomatic expressions related to these words. Neither can they be found in *Słownik frazeologiczny* [Phraseological Dictionary] by S. Skorupka. The most commonly mentioned collocations are: *Latin American literature, music* and *art, Latin American nations* and *Latin American rhythms*.

The fact that in Polish the term *Latino* appeared only in the second half of the 20th century is rather astonishing even if we consider that dictionaries note the state of the development of language with some delay. We should relate the appearance to the big number of translations of Spanish American prose that became very popular on the Polish publishing market at that time. In turn, the lack of figurative and idiomatic expressions with *Latino* and *Latin American* in contemporary Polish testifies to the fact that our culture might not have formed any stereotyped image of a Latin American citizen. The existence of the aforementioned collocations shows that what was Latin American was most frequently associated with literature and music, which corresponds to the results of the questionnaires I have conducted.

However, one can note that certain images of a Latino and Latin America existed in the awareness of an average Pole. The analysis of the critical texts dedicated to Spanish American prose showed a picture of this continent as

a magical, mysterious and irrational world drawing readers by its exoticism and mystery, and at the same time as brutal and cruel. It should be stated that this picture considerably differs both from the image perpetuated in the positivist works, imposed by compulsory reading, and from the idealised visions of Arkady Fiedler's literary reportages.

Yet, we could not learn a lot about the inhabitants of this world since the characters depicted in the novels were analysed mainly as literary protagonists, and not as typical representatives of Latin American nations. If Latinos were depicted, they were presented as people who were torn with contradictions but at the same time, they were backward and brilliant, "this barren ingenuity is the best synthesis of Latin America." Its inhabitants were characterised by laziness and diligence, ignorance and ingenuity, instinct of life and death, intuitive wisdom and destructive impulses (Krzemiński 1982:39). I refer to these texts again since I am convinced that, willingly or unwillingly, they were the texts which helped readers form their opinions not only about Spanish American literature, but also about the world it depicted. I believe that the direction of influence was as follows: the trend for Spanish American contemporary prose caused that the works of Latin American authors dominated the collective conscience. However, its readers spoke and thought about this continent using the words suggested by the reviews of the novels. They were easily available as we should remember that the reviews were published not only in specialist magazines but also in popular periodicals reaching large audiences and in the daily press. Moreover, the reviews were similar, full of repetitions and formulations that were clichés and thus were easily solidified.

A portrait of a Latino could be found in the collections of literary reportages *Moi przyjaciele Latynosi* [My Latino Friends] by Ewa Szumańska written in the late 1970s and published by Iskry in 1981 in quite a big circulation – thirty thousand copies. This time frame corresponded to the period of the boom for Latin American literature in Poland.

Szumańska described her journey to Latin America on a Polish commercial ship, being a passenger on board of this ship. She reported her visits to various cities when the ship stopped in ports. Descriptions of monuments and landscape occupied much space in her accounts. She mentioned numerous historic facts as well as current social and political realities. Yet, the titles of the particular chapters of her reportages are the names of people who she encountered and with who she established friendly relations. Her story of travelling around Latin America was first of all a chronicle of meetings with its inhabitants.

The Latino heroes of Szumańska's book were citizens of Spanish-speaking countries. They shared many characteristics. The author transferred the characteristics of one person to inhabitants of the whole continent. The most conspicuous features that she ascribed to the Hispanics were friendliness and openness to other people.<sup>751</sup> Another typical feature was selflessness. When they regarded someone as a friend, they were ready to make sacrifices for him. She experienced that when her guides who accompanied her on her tour of the ruins of Chan-Chan refused to accept any fee seeing her enthusiasm and fascination with the pre-Columbian civilisation.<sup>752</sup>

The Latino people were profoundly religious.<sup>753</sup> They openly manifested their feelings.<sup>754</sup> They also had an extraordinary sense of rhythm and predisposition to dance.<sup>755</sup> Szumańska put the following interesting self-characteristics on the lips of one of her heroes, Norman:

We are extreme individualists, and the need for freedom has been deeply rooted in us, and at the same time, we have had the biggest number of merciless and stupid dictatorships. Why do we submit to them [...]? I do not know. Perhaps we have got used to the cult of personalities. [...] We are proud with the pride that we inherited from our Spanish ancestors and that was born out of our love of homeland. [...] We also yield to the burden of complexes and are ashamed of our homelands. [...] We are joyful [...] and full of melancholy. We are fervent Catholics but we reconcile that with magic and

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751 “[...] directness, kindness and interest in others characterise most inhabitants of this continent. [...] They are curious but not pressing and nasty, rather disarming. They never get tired, ask dozens of questions and really wait for answers; they are happy to hear the answers that are important to them.” in: Szumańska E., *Moi przyjaciele Latynosi*, Warszawa 1981, p. 9.

752 “They say that it was their day and it should not be spoilt since no one takes money from friends. [...] We hug, kiss and almost cry; it is a kind of great Latino madness,” op. cit., p. 135.

753 “Faith is a great value for us. It is zealous and sensuous,” says Norman, one of the heroes of the book. At the same time, faith embraces traces of pagan cults: “traces of all rituals, some symbols and names, a different sense of sin as well as personal names have been smuggled into it,” *ibid.*

754 Moved by his popularity and expressions of sympathy, Eduardo sheds “tears that are common here, testifying to sorrow and joy since people are not ashamed of their emotions and do not feel the need to hide them,” op. cit. p. 46.

755 “This is the way Latinos dance, later I have seen that many times. [...] It seems that they were born to dance, that this is their natural movement, dancing and not walking,” op. cit. p. 8.

superstitions. [...] There is something dark in us, which we do not understand ourselves [...]. At the same time, we have huge deposits of friendliness for the world, mildness and faithfulness to once established friendships. We show resistance, persistence and endurance along with inertia and apathy.<sup>756</sup>

I have quoted this rather long fragment since the author, showing sympathy for her protagonist, did not try to argue with him, but seemed to have shared his opinions. One can see that many of these judgements correspond to the picture of Hispanics and Latin America shown in the critical texts dedicated to Spanish American prose.

We can wonder whether this slightly romantic, strongly idealised image of a Latino remained in Poles' consciousness or whether it changed or was completely blurred after the trend of Latin American literature and culture had disappeared. Answers to these questions could have been provided by detailed questionnaires. But I only dared to conduct a mini-survey among twenty young people. I asked them to give three typical characteristics of a Latino and to enumerate three things that they associated with him, not specifying whether they should be things, phenomena or elements of nature.

The distinctive features of Latinos turned out to be physical. The most frequently mentioned adjectives described the colour of the skin or complexion: sunburnt, dark, black – close equivalents. A typical Latino is strong and short. As regards his character: amorous, temperamental and resourceful. The term *macho* was mentioned once. The answers to the second question gave a picture that a typical Latino comes from Mexico, speaks Spanish and lives in a tropical country. He was strongly associated with dance – the answers included the word “dance” and its names: samba, salsa, tango. Some respondents gave the associations: *tequila, cactuses, football, hand fans*.

In order to find out whether Poles regarded Latinos as a group with similar characteristics I asked some respondents to list the features of a typical Mexican and Argentinian, deliberately choosing inhabitants of the countries lying on the opposite edges of the continent. A typical Mexican was seen as loud, open and lazy. Moreover, the answers included terms belonging to the same semantic field: cheerful, merry, spontaneous, agile and open. He had a dark complexion. From among the other representatives of Latin American countries, a Mexican was distinguished by a hat, guitar and characteristic cuisine. On the other hand, in the Polish people's opinions an average Argentinian

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756 *Op. cit.* pp. 16–17.

resembled a Mexican. He was spontaneous, merry, vigorous, talkative, expressive, open and easy-going. He loved all kinds of music, but especially tango, and football.

Subsequently, it seems that the characteristics of Latinos, Mexicans and Argentinians given by Poles were very similar, while those of Mexicans and Argentinians – almost identical. Representatives of these two nations were characterised either by elements of clothing or passions, which would confirm the thesis that Poles saw Latinos, regardless of the country of their origin, as a group sharing similar characteristics.

The image of a Latino emerging from this questionnaire differed only to a small extent from the one included in the reviews of Latin American prose written in the 1970s and was highly consistent with the image presented by Szumańska. Therefore, we can put forward a hypothesis that the stereotype of a Latino created on the wave of popularity of Latin American literature, has been preserved and remained valid.

7. In light of the depicted phenomena, the reception of Spanish American literature in Poland can be described as an area of special encounter. This literature became a bridge between the cultures that until that time had had little in common. The Poles' knowledge of Latin America was shallow. On the one hand, it was defined by prejudices formed on the distorted information about immigrants' misery whose source was propaganda works with intended theses, and on the other hand – through naïve images of the world in which one could experience fantastic adventures.<sup>757</sup> This encounter was not of a symmetrical character. Numerous translated Spanish American works had no equivalents as editions of Polish literature in Latin America.<sup>758</sup> This does not change the fact that we can find opinions about a certain similarity of souls expressed by participants of both cultures. "As inhabitants of Buenos Aires like considering themselves as elaborated Europeans, by accident thrown to the continent of Indians and jungle, so many of us used to snobbishly regard ourselves as being mentally Hispanic, lost in the rainy land on the Vistula" – wrote Bratkowski (2004:104–105). In turn, Julio Cortázar claimed, "Poland is a country of cronopios [...], i.e. wonderful, friendly people, a little crazy. I can

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757 In the 1920s, the exoticism of Latin America became attractive through reports of travellers and climbers in which "adventure and nature were put in the foreground" (Ligeza 1996:134).

758 Here Cuba can be an exception because of her sense of community with "the brotherly socialist nation."

see many similarities between Argentinians and Poles. I am not feeling like a stranger here.”<sup>759</sup>

The encounter was not of an interpersonal character, either. Latino visitors did not appear in Poland. We did not invite real people but their artefacts, and our way to invite them was through translations. Therefore, our guests did not have to adjust to the Polish realities and did not undertake any actions. They were simply present through literature. Their presence could be described as discrete since literary works do not impose anything and nobody is forced to read them. Choosing a book, despite some forms of pressure that society exerts, is to a large extent an individual act of will. Nevertheless, even this way of presence can have far-reaching consequences for the target culture. A literary work as a cultural text is entangled in a complicated network of relations in which it is created, and absorbs social values and contexts of the environment (Markowski 2006:522). Reading a literary work, we get to know these values and contexts which we can accept or reject. Therefore, reading translations of prose can enrich our aesthetics if we decide to adopt an attitude of openness and are ready to listen to the voices reaching us through the translations.

Everything seems to indicate that the presence of Latin American literature in Poland has left distinct traces in various areas of culture. The Latin American guests who made their homes in our country systematically transformed our awareness, mainly the literary one, and our readership. The scale of popularity of this literature among the reading elites turned out to be astonishing to almost all circles of our literary public. Consequently, the transformation of our awareness went far beyond the reading culture: in some sense, we “tamed” the continent that was so distant geographically and mentally, so bizarre that until recently Polish dictionaries had not even included the name of its inhabitant.

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759 An interview given to Anna Wcisło, *Gazeta Południowa* 1979, no. 117, p. 3.

