

POLISH PROSE WORKS IN THE SOVIET OCCUPATION ZONE (SBZ, 1945-1949)
AND IN THE GDR (1949-1990).
PUBLISHING STRATEGIES AND CULTURAL POLICY

Between 1949-1982 publishing houses in the GDR printed over 850 Polish literary works (inclusive of 311 re-prints). Prose works constituted the majority of this staggering number. This quantitatively impressive transfer of Polish literature to the German literary system occurred in very special ideological, political and cultural circumstances has so far not been researched in a systematic manner with a view to a comprehensive analysis.

30 years after the fall of the Berlin wall this historiographic gap needs to be filled. The archival background enabling this enterprise is unusually favourable (relative to the poor condition of preservation of East German archives overall): the archives of the two publishing houses, whose importance was central to the production of Polish literature translations in the GDR, Volk & Welt and Aufbau-Verlag are stored in Akademie der Künste and in Staatsbibliothek in Berlinie respectively. Queries into these resources will enable answering the questions as to text selection methods, grounds behind their publication or censorship, the involvement of publishers, editors, translators and cultural intermediaries.

It is important to bear in mind that the connections between the literary and political field in the GDR were exceptional. Publishing plans and „contingents” of translations from various source literatures were not devised by publishing houses, but in the offices of the Ministry of Culture where political and cultural guidelines coming directly from the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany Unity (SED) were followed. Does this plain fact mean that publishing houses had no autonomy of action? Do the blurred boundaries between the political and literary system means that the GDR were a premodern state? Not necessarily.

Research into the conditions of publication of Polish literature translations in the Soviet Occupational Zone and in the DGR should pay attention to the attitudes of the publishers/editors/translators/censors, which were, on the hand, determined by systemic/political/ideological limitations, but on the other, constantly pursued the aim of broadening the literary repertoire to include new motifs, themes and genres. Not infrequently, was Polish literature viewed as non-conformist by the East German readership and, by the same token, as innovative in function.

In this context, processes of *transformation* of individual texts from the source literature (Polish) to the target culture (East German) are particularly fascinating. For instance, how were the titles of works by Polish writers presented in the obligatory publishing reviews, which, although they were part of the of the censorship system, were also persuasive regarding the more resistant employees of the Ministry of culture? Did ministerial censors played a role of the guardians of doctrine only, or did they perceive their own part (paradoxically) as actors of the literary field and emphasised, here and there, the autonomy of literary works? Were they just *gatekeepers* regarding Polish literature, or where they also from time to time *gatemakers*? Did the term „World Literature” used in the Communist Manifesto work as a handy tool for special treatment of literary translations (including translations of Polish prose works)? Was the dynamics of literary translations from Polish, as suggested by research conducted so far, determined by political events exclusively, or was it more likely a creation of chance?

Addressing the above-mentioned questions will enable a better understanding of the complex cultural relations between the Polish People’s Republic and the GDR. The project will also be a contribution to the toolkit of the analysis of culture transfer in the conditions of political oppression.