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PART II

# STABILITY AND VOLATILITY OF THE TEXTUAL WORLD: CHOICES MADE BY BOOK READERS AND BUYERS

CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Book reading is only one of the many types of reading so important in the lives of societies today. For this reason, the questions asked in this survey pertained not only to books in either paper or electronic form but also the press, Internet content and a general text of several pages in any form. This methodology allowed Izabela Koryś to draw a multidimensional picture of readership in Poland (as described in the first part of this report). Koryś disassembled the declared reader and buyer behaviour into a broader array of information about the public's contact with text.

This broader approach does not imply, however, that books have ceased to be the area of special interest to the Book and Readership Institute of the National Library. The fundamental task of this multi-year study has always been to describe in-depth the phenomena and processes that are decisive for the social role of books in modern Poland. This part of the report is dedicated fully to analysing respondents' declarations concerning their contact with books. The information provided in the first part of this report – namely, how many Poles define themselves as book readers and buyers and how much different social groups are interested in books – will be supported in this part with more detailed data on the types, subjects, specific authors and titles of books that the respondents indicated as their choices for reading and/or buying. This knowledge provides a foundation for identifying certain functions (cognitive, emotional, social) performed by books, which are a unique medium, and defining the attributes of their content.

The 2010 book reading and buying data are supplemented with a historical background in the first part of this report.<sup>1</sup> A brief historical summary seems appropriate

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1 The current results are compared with the data found in the previous reports of earlier readership studies carried out by the Book and Readership Institute (National Library) Specifically: G. Straus, K. Wolff: *Polacy i książki: społeczna sytuacja książki w Polsce 1992* [Poles and Books: Social Status of Books in Poland 1992], Warsaw 1996. ISBN: 8370091628; G. Straus, K. Wolff: *Czytanie i kupowanie książek w Polsce w 1994 r.* [Book Reading and Buying in Poland 1994], Warsaw 1996. ISBN: 8370091725; G. Straus, K. Wolff: *Zainteresowanie książką w społeczeństwie polskim w 1996 r.* [Polish Society

here, as the year of the current study phase is not only the tenth anniversary of the inaugural *The Social Reach of Books*, the study conducted by the National Library every two years, but it also closes the first 20 years of the free publishing market in Poland with the resultant vast offering of books.

A summary of the areas of interest from the last 20 years follows a short description of the nature of the collected data and an explanation of the study's methodology.

#### OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS – READERSHIP DATA OBTAINED IN *THE SOCIAL REACH OF BOOKS*

First, let us explain our method of collecting information about book authors and titles of interest to the Poles. It is crucial that the information was collected on the basis of answers that the respondents submitted to open-ended questions, such as “Can you list the books that you read in the past 12 months?” and “Can you list the books that you bought in the past 12 months?” This means that the study is based exclusively on what a given respondent is willing to tell and able to recall about his/her readings and purchases.

Responses can be interpreted correctly only if the interpreter is aware of the limitations of this methodology. After all, an answer may address a question different from the one that was actually asked. The respondents cannot actually be expected to list *all* the books they came across in the preceding 12 months. This is not possible because of the limitations of human memory, individual perceptions of the terms *book* or *purchase* and, not unimportantly, a respondent's desire to project a particular image of themselves. Therefore, this study is not a source of exhaustive information about the exact books that Poles had in their hands. However, the study can answer a different question of at least equal value: how do Poles like to portray themselves as readers and how well can they accomplish this? This study is able to demonstrate the image of books in the public mind. Based on the 10 surveys carried out over the past 20 years, the changes in the range of book readership and buying practices can also be evaluated in terms of internal shifts and the impact of various social and literary events.

#### UNAVOIDABLE PIGEON-HOLING: THE PRINCIPLES OF CLASSIFYING BOOKS INDICATED BY RESPONDENTS

The trends observed in the collected data depend largely on the method of description. Let us begin by explaining the criteria according to which the books listed by the respondents have been classified.

According to the traditional method applied in the previous phases of the study, the categories used here are based on both the genre description of texts (as employed in the study of literature)

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and its Interest in Books in 1996], Warsaw 1998. ISBN: 8370092357; G. Straus, K. Wolff: *Sienkiewicz, Mickiewicz, Biblia, harlequiny... Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2000 roku* [Sienkiewicz, Mickiewicz, Bible, Harlequin Series... Social Reach of Books in Poland 2000], Warsaw 2002. ISBN: 8370094082; G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny: *Książka na początku wieku. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2002 roku* [Books at the Start of the Century. Social Reach of Books in Poland 2000], Warsaw 2004. ISBN: 8370094481; G. Straus, K. Wolff: *Czytanie, kupowanie, wypożyczanie. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2004 roku* [Book Reading, Buying, Borrowing. Social Reach of Books in Poland 2006], Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 8370094465; G. Straus, K. Wolff, S. Wierny: *Czytanie, kupowanie, surfowanie. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2006 roku* [Reading, Buying, Surfing. The Social Reach of Books in Poland 2006], Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 9788370096175; I. Koryś, K. Wolff: *Wybieram książkę. Społeczny zasięg książki w Polsce w 2008 roku* [I Choose Books. The Social Reach of Books in Poland 2008], Warsaw 2010. ISBN: 9788370096342.

The conclusions drawn from the trends observed in the behaviour of Polish readers over the last 20 years are largely a transposition and a synthesis of the analyses conducted by the authors of the earlier study phases.

and their actual usage in society (customary classifications and descriptions of books that reflect the perception of books among our respondents and the readers of this report alike).

The body of literature mentioned by the respondents was divided into three parts. The first part contains various types of fiction. It includes three types of popular fiction books for adults: romance & drama, action & detective and speculative fiction; and two types of “high” literature: classic (books published in Poland before 1945) and modern (published since 1945). The issue of the potentially subjective evaluation of the classic and modern literature was resolved by applying prevailing customary usage as the basis for classifying those types of literature (rather than the personal taste of the study’s authors), as well as the other types. As such, the high literature category includes titles for which there is evidence of such perception among the majority of critics and readers. A separate category encompasses novels, short stories and poetry intended for young readers and/or read primarily by children and adolescents. These works are classified as children’s literature and adolescent literature. We also decided to include in the fiction category set readings for school (in the previous phases of this study, they were included in the broader category of school textbooks). This category covers high literature that is included in the school curriculum and was named by respondents who were secondary-school pupils.

The following section describes the various types of non-fiction. This category includes documentaries, essays and works by journalists, encyclopaedias and dictionaries, guides, instructions, scientific and popular science books. These categories cover the vast majority of literature mentioned by respondents, but not all the works listed by them. This led the authors of this study to create an additional structural division based on subjects, because it covers even the most unusual works that would otherwise be omitted from all the categories based on literary genres and customary usage (i.e., books which the respondents described by subject only, such as “history”, “health” or “child care”). Above all, this additional division intends to provide a more in-depth view of areas of interest to the respondents.

The books listed by readers and buyers were analysed again, but this time solely in the context of their subjects. Several subjects appear most frequently in the respondents’ answers: in addition to religious and esoteric literature (these categories were used in the previous study phases), the new categories include history, travel & geography, psychology, the human body (health, nutrition, sports, fitness), business & law, the environment and technical subjects.

Let us add that the analysis by subject covered mainly non-fiction works, the group that required this additional description to begin with. Such categories as scientific literature, guides, documentaries – unlike the very specific fiction types such as romance or detective stories – tell very little about the actual content of interest to readers.

Only historical literature received special treatment. The term “historical book” is a description used frequently by respondents to cover both fiction and non-fiction. For this and other reasons, we decide that this very broad but unusual category is useful because it covers both fiction and non-fiction and, as such, demonstrates the entire scope of readers’ interest in history.

#### QUANTITATIVE DATA: REFERENCE POINTS FOR THE POPULARITY RATES OF PARTICULAR LITERARY CATEGORIES

There are two methods of presenting data on the popularity of the different literary categories. The first one shows the share of the respective categories in the areas of interest of the entire society (i.e., what share of all respondents read or buy books in a given category). The second method presents the same data, but with reference to the areas of

interest for book readers or buyers only (i.e., what share of all book readers read books in a given category, what share of all book buyers are the respondents who listed books from a given category). In the first perspective, the changes that could be observed result from two mutually overlapping factors, the shifts in the overall level of declared book readership and purchasing, and the periodical shift of interest of both book readers and buyers towards various types of literature. In the second perspective, only the second factor, periodical shift in interest, has an impact.

The first method is preferable for presenting the level of interest in literature in the entire population (how many people were interested in a given category at a given time). Certainly, this is a worthwhile objective, but, as was said above, the collected data would hinder such estimates because of the open-ended questions about book reading and buying, which then leads to incomplete responses. What can be determined with certainty on the basis of the collected declarations is the ranking of the different types of texts by Polish readers and buyers of books in 2010 and earlier. Furthermore, certain trends can be discerned in the areas of interest for readers and buyers alike (which texts were prevailing over others and which areas of interest were gaining readers' attention in a given period).

With these objectives set, it is less useful to gauge the popularity of book categories by estimating the percentages of the population who read them because it blurs the actual trends that interest us, making them less clear and more difficult to distinguish from the other factors. Therefore, we decided that the whole population of book readers and buyers will serve as the main reference point in this part of the study.

We must point out that this choice entails a different reference point from the one used in Part I of this report, whose main area of interest was the distribution of readers of the different types of texts in the entire population. Our choice of the new reference point in this part of the study will cause the growth and decline curves representing interest in the different types of literature not to follow the previously described (Part I) growth/decline outcomes in the overall book readership and buying. Instead, they will show changes occurring in the reader and buyer groups regardless of these groups' actual size.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF BOOK READERS' AND BUYERS' CHOICES IN POLAND

To conclude this introduction, let us briefly explain the system of presenting the data in this part of the report. The collected data were organized in several ways in order to develop a multifaceted panorama of the literature that Poles choose.

First, Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 describe the roles of the types of books in the reader and buyer declarations on the basis of pre-defined literary types, customary usage and thematic categories. In the case of each category, the entire scope of the information collected in 2010 will be compiled and compared with the previous years (to the extent possible), with due consideration given to such information as the frequency of choices per category, respondents' social groups, and the characteristics of the specific authors and titles recalled by the respondents. The entire body of knowledge thus obtained will be put to use to discern the literary and social issues, which are crucial for better understanding of the trends occurring in a given area of readership and buying in each category. Combined, this information should create a "landscape" of the book world in which Poles live today.

However, this method of organizing the data does not answer some questions. To that end, we have chosen to deploy an additional structural division of the data on hand with two supplemental analyses.

Chapter 6 investigates correlations between book choices and such demographic variables as the gender, age, education and place of residence of respondents. The social profile of readers and buyers has already been mentioned in the descriptions of the types of literature, yet such information is worth further analysis that would not look for the type of readers of a type of literature, but rather the choice of literature specific to a given type of reader. This evaluation shows which books are most interesting to different social groups and how the discovered differences in reading behaviours are correlated (as an effect and a cause) with the major differences in society.

Last but not least, Chapter 7 attempts to summarize the entire information about the transformations that have been observed in readership over the past 20 years so as to draw a history of trends in areas of interest to Poles.

# THE MAIN TYPES OF LITERATURE CHOSEN BY BOOK READERS AND BUYERS: BASIC INFORMATION

## CHAPTER II

This chapter presents the basic data concerning the types of literature that book buyers and readers tended to choose in 2010 and earlier. First, books were divided into three general categories by genre (fiction vs. non-fiction), the nationality of authors (Polish vs. foreign), and the date of their first publication. Next, more detailed divisions were applied, literary genres and the customary usage of literature, thematic categories, specific choice of authors, with popularity rankings presented across the series of surveys. This information made it possible to draw a general map of Polish book readers' and buyers' interests. The next chapters will fill in the map with more detailed data.

### 1. FICTION VS. NON-FICTION

In the declarations of book readers, the shares of fiction and non-fiction have followed a fixed pattern in the 20 years of our readership study. The respondents declared more interest in fiction (usually slightly above 60% of the readers) than in non-fiction (c. 40%). The situation in 2010 was similar, with 65% of the readers favouring fiction and 39% non-fiction.

### 2. POLISH VS. FOREIGN LITERATURE

For almost the entire 20-year period, Polish literature has been a close runner-up to foreign literature. The year 2010 saw similar results. The likely cause of this trend has been the dominance of foreign literature among the works of popular fiction, which the respondents listed most frequently and were able to recall in greater detail.

### 3. OLD, MODERN AND CURRENT LITERATURE AND THE LATEST RELEASES

The third type of classification is based on the original Polish publication dates of the books listed by the survey participants. This classification informs about the choice of books from older times (published in Poland before 1945), those published in 1945-89, those that

appeared in the last twenty years (1989-2009) and the latest titles published in Poland in the year before the survey.

The results revealed that the largest group of respondents (44%, or almost half) chose books published in the last twenty years. Significantly fewer readers (16%) chose pre-Second World War classics and 12% literature from 1945-89. Only one reader out of ten was interested in the latest titles, from 2010. It appears that although the readership is dominated by relatively new publications, the most recent releases are more of a rare and exclusive choice.

The exclusive or even elite nature of the latest books is corroborated by the characteristics of the social group that reads them. These are respondents with the highest level of education, managers and specialist professionals, people who read the press and books regularly. The other types of literature do not have an equally elite readership.

#### **4. POPULARITY OF THE MAIN GENRES AND THEMES CHOSEN BY BOOK READERS**

This section of the chapter concludes the overview of the literature that Poles choose, which is followed by a more detailed treatment. Below are the popularity rankings of the literary genres, subjects and key authors. These data make it possible to investigate how often the book readers selected them in the past 20 years.

The most popular types of fiction books in 2010 were the main genres of popular types of stories: action & detective, romance & drama and speculative fiction. Literature for younger audiences (set readings for school, adolescent literature, children's books) and high literature attracted less attention. In the case of the latter, contemporary works received slightly more interest than older literature. The most popular genre of non-fiction books was documentary literature, a category that included books in fact belonging in the fiction category. Respondents paid less attention to more practical books, such as guides, scientific and popular science books. The remaining categories of non-fiction, such as dictionaries, encyclopaedias, textbooks, essays and journalist texts, were very rare in the reader declarations. There is further information about the most popular subjects of 2010. The obvious number one was history (as a reminder, this is the only field included in fiction as well as non-fiction). The following subjects each interested 5% of the respondents: psychology, religion, geography & travel and the human body. The fewest respondents declared that they read books on business & law, the environment and technical and esoteric subjects.

The list of the most popular authors who obtained at least 1% of the vote included first the authors of the most popular fiction books: four authors of action & detective stories (Dan Brown, Stieg Larsson, Robert Ludlum, Harlan Coben), two authors of romance (Małgorzata Kalicińska, Danielle Steel), two authors of horror fiction (Stephen King, Graham Master-ton) and Stephenie Meyer, the author of speculative fiction for adolescents. Popular literature also included reportage by Wojciech Cejrowski and the works of Paulo Coelho, which span different categories. The list features two Polish classics as well, Adam Mickiewicz and Henryk Sienkiewicz.

In the case of fiction, or at least those types of literature that were thus classified in the earlier study phases, the distribution observed in 2010 is relatively representative of the entire 20-year period. During this period, readers have almost always declared, interchangeably, either romance & drama or action & detective stories as the most popular genre, with the former slightly more volatile (9-31%) than the latter (14-26%). Speculative fiction, children's and adolescent literature attracted somewhat less attention. The changing interest in

romance & drama and action & detective resembles two different models. These two types of stories enjoyed a peak popularity in the early 1990s, followed by a decline and another distinct rise in the middle of the 2000s. Speculative fiction and children's and adolescent literatures were relatively unpopular in the 1990s, but in the following decade their popularity increased.

A less stable trend was observed in the case of non-fiction. Major changes occurred in the readership of documentary literature: it was at the top of the non-fiction list in the early 1990s and in the most recent study phase of 2008-10, but near the bottom of the list at the turn of the century. The earlier relatively stable interest in encyclopaedias and guides declined in 2010, especially in the area of encyclopaedias and dictionaries. (Scientific literature and popular science books had not featured as a category in the earlier phases of the study.) The level of interest in the most similar category ("specialist literature") was rather unstable, as though the respondents had forgotten about it and later returned to it depending on their other literary selections (however, an insignificant increase has occurred at the beginning of the last decade). The interest in essays and journalism has been relatively stable but low (never above 4%). Let us add that of the book categories in the 2010 study, only religious and esoteric categories were present in the earlier studies. While the latter have always attracted little interest, the former appear to be declining in 2010, after a slight rise in the middle of the last decade.

The following chapters analyse current trends by describing the book categories listed above in greater detail.



# THE MAIN TYPES OF LITERATURE CHOSEN BY BOOK READERS AND BUYERS: FICTION

## CHAPTER III

### 1. ACTION & DETECTIVE STORIES – CRIME ABOVE SOCIAL DIVISIONS

Action & detective stories are a broad and diverse category. The books under this tag include several types of fiction. Namely, it encompasses detective stories (which describe riddles to be solved and criminals to be identified, like in the stories of Agatha Christie), action books (which revolve around quickly paced action and many threats that their heroes face, such as the stories by Robert Ludlum) and thrillers (which may include similar types of plots as those above, but are set in a dread-filled atmosphere caused by the unusual cruelty of their perpetrators, as in the books of Robert Harris).<sup>2</sup>

The common attribute of these types of fiction,, and the reason why they fall under a single category in this report, is the plot unfolding around events which violate the normal order of the world and take the reader on a journey outside everyday reality to risky places, more often than not such events being a sudden, unnatural death of one or more individuals.

This category includes only realistic stories and excludes the speculative fiction books, which are treated as a separate type of fiction even though their plots sometimes fall under the criteria of action or detective stories.

#### ACTION & DETECTIVE STORIES IN 1992-2008, FROM SPIES TO KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

Throughout the last 20 years, action & detective stories were one of the two most popular types of fiction, next to romance & drama. Detective stories, action books and thrillers drew the attention of over 10% of readers, at times reaching above 20%. There were two peak periods for the popularity of this literature. The first one was the early 1990s. In 1992, action & detective stories were chosen by as many as 26% of readers. This peak did not last long,

2 Definitions formulated based on *Slownik literatury popularnej* [Dictionary of Popular Literature], see T. Żabski (ed.): *Slownik literatury popularnej* [Dictionary of Popular Literature]. Wrocław 2006. ISBN: 8322927673.

as two years later it attracted only half of that readership (14%). The low level of interest sustained for the next 10 years, until 2004. The second peak began in 2006, with 20% of readers indicating action & detective stories. Two years later, the level declined but not for long because in the most recent study 22% of the respondents chose this type of literature.

The relatively large number of respondents selecting action & detective literature in the subsequent surveys over the past 20 years has made it possible to conduct a long-term study of both the level of readership and the social structure of this group. Our analysis indicates that the interest in this literature tends to spread evenly across all social groups.

It appears reasonable to assume that gender would be the key differentiating factor, as action & detective stories seem to be a type of literature read mostly by men. This stereotype used to be true in the early 1990s, when its readership was 59% male and 41% female. However, the next years saw a rising share of women who read that literature, until the two genders levelled out, even with a slight reverse in the proportions. Today, there are more women (53%) among the readers of action & detective literature.

The age of the respondents is only a minor differentiating factor. The only age group that has always demonstrated interest in reading below the average was the youngest (15-19). This result is not surprising because popular literature intended for adults and read by teenagers competes with the popular readings intended for adolescents.

Action & detective stories attracted individuals with various levels of education. However, in the entire period being discussed, there are slightly more well-educated readers who have completed secondary or higher education. Among the educated readers, action & detective books tend to have a larger audience than the other most popular type of fiction, romance & drama. This correlation may be related to the quite high popular opinion of action & detective stories. Like crosswords or other puzzles, riddle-solving is deemed an intellectual game. Detective stories are sometimes associated with certain cognitive values, for example they contain social critique (as in the case with American detective fiction of the 1920s and 1930s or contemporary detective stories from Scandinavia).

In terms of the level of education, the different respondent groups fluctuated, but the most interest in action & detective stories was demonstrated by the respondents with a secondary or higher education in the second half of the last decade, when this genre was on the rise. It is likely that these well-educated readers have helped this type of literature to increase in popularity.

There are some indications why the popularity of books in this category fluctuates in the specific choice of authors and titles, which respondents named in the subsequent surveys. The interest in action & detective stories in the early 1990s is associated chiefly with the unique situation on the book market in that period. After the political breakthrough of 1989 and upon becoming free of the decades-long command economy, it started to grow dynamically in the new social and economic environment. In the case of action & detective books, both publishers and readers at that time appeared to concentrate on one type of this literature in particular, namely suspense stories by Western authors (but not only). Among action & detective authors who gained the attention of at least 1% of readers in the surveys of 1992 and 1994, there were Robert Ludlum (5%), Ken Follett (3%), Frederick Forsyth (3%), Alistair MacLean (3%), Jack Higgins (1%), David Morell (1%) and Viktor Suvorov (1%). Most of them were brand new to the Polish audience, while others like MacLean and Follett, had had their books published before 1989 but in small editions. Soon after the political revolution, the developing publishing market in Poland began to fill the gap of the old times by providing a vast array of suspense fiction, with huge numbers of titles and large editions.

Without a doubt, fiction by these authors has many features in common that brought them popularity in the early 1990s. Most importantly, they responded to the previously unsatisfied demand for action literature. It also seems significant that they tended to locate their plots in exotic parts of the globe, with travel playing an important role; their characters acted as “guides,” showing the world to the readers as in Poland borders were only just officially opening. The readers were perhaps intrigued by the special portrait of the western world drawn from the perspective of politicians and secret service agents who used luxury hotels, aircraft, cars and, last but not least, rare advanced technology. It appeared to be a man’s vision of western luxury, which in the woman’s world was described in romance novels by Joan Collins and Judith Krantz. The political plots found in these stories were also regarded highly by Polish readers in that period. One of the reasons why this literature had been restricted by the Polish government prior to 1989 was these books’ presentation of the Cold War. The stories featured American spies challenging the Soviet espionage services, which must have been very appealing shortly after the 1989 political transformations.<sup>3</sup>

The exceptionally high level of interest in the early 1990s among readers of books in this category in detective books with political, espionage and wartime plots is proven by the fact that the group of authors mentioned by at least 1% of the readers in 1992 included seven male and one female writer of detective stories. It was Joanna Chmielewska who was selected by 3% of the readers. Her success was due not only to her long-established popularity, but also to the originality of her writing. In her fiction the detective plot is secondary to a humorous depiction of society; there have been virtually no similar works on the Polish market since then. The special rank of this author who appeals so well to the Polish sense of humour is even more meaningful considering the fact that humorous texts have a negligible share of the Polish readership.

Joanna Chmielewska retains her position among those popular authors of the early 1990s who have managed to sustain their popularity in the last 20 years. Only a few of the above-mentioned action & detective authors maintained the interest of a considerable number of readers in the years that followed: Forsyth and Follett until 1994, and MacLean until 1996. Only Robert Ludlum has achieved a relatively stable popularity (at least 1% of the readers in 1992, 1994, 1996, 2000, 2006 and 2008). His unique position is further upheld by the fact that his name is used as a common noun to describe the type of literature that he represents. The most popular authors of political and espionage action stories mentioned above have been accompanied throughout the 20 years by a vast group of less popular authors of similar books, such as Tom Clancy, Colin Forbes, and Hans Hellmut Kirst.

Even though the political and espionage stories of the past two decades once found a large group of followers, their role has started to diminish since the mid-1990s. Other types of action & detective literature have begun to emerge. In the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the classic genre of detective stories attracted the considerable attention of readers, with special focus on Agatha Christie (1% in 2000 and 2008). Other contemporary authors of detective stories also had a following. Robin Cook, John Grisham, Stephen Frey and Jeffrey Archer, to name a few, would set their detective plots against distinctive social backgrounds, like Agatha Christie used to do. In addition, the first authors of thrillers emerged: Thomas Harris in the 1990s and especially Harlan Coben starting in 2004. There were also other authors who wrote detective stories with a touch of romance, like Nora Roberts and Alex Kava (since 2005).

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3 Furthermore, the readers followed a broader model of cultural interests. For example, the books had a cinematic reference in films that were watched using the first video tape players of the time (e.g. the James Bond series).

In 2004, readers' declarations reflected the new rising star of action & detective literature, namely Dan Brown. The author of *The Da Vinci Code* reached the group of the top authors in 2006, which was also the year of the cinematic premiere of his story. And his success was paramount with 6% of the readers, who placed his works in top position – this result was achieved only by the Polish icon of literary classics, Henryk Sienkiewicz. It is likely that the rising share of the action & detective category observed in 2006 was an effect of the rising interest in Brown's work, which then drew more attention to action & detective literature in general (also among those readers who had not been keen on it beforehand). Also, respondents specified several books discussing the arguments found in Brown's book, leading us to believe that readers also valued the informative aspect of his work.

Finally, the authors named by readers are evidence that the English-speaking world dominated the genre. However, year 2010 brings certain changes in that aspect, as well.

#### ACTION & DETECTIVE STORIES IN 2010 – THE ANGLO-AMERICAN EMPIRE, THE SCANDINAVIAN ISLAND AND THE POLISH FOOTPRINT

2010 was a very favourable year for action & detective literature. 22% of readers mentioned it, breaking the record set 4 years earlier. As in previous years, its readers came from all social groups. This broad and varied audience declared an array of literary selections, including dozens of authors of action stories, detective books and thrillers with the top four being Dan Brown (3%), Stieg Larsson (2%), Robert Ludlum and Harlan Coben (1% each).

Dan Brown achieved such great popularity in 2010 thanks to both his new bestseller *The Lost Symbol* and the sustained level of interest in his older works, such as *Angels & Demons* (mentioned by 1% of the readers) and *The Da Vinci Code* (listed by almost 1%). The relatively long track record of Brown's popularity on the top author list is leading him towards the status that Robert Ludlum has already achieved: he is one of the most prominent representatives of this literary type, and sooner or later every [sic] reader of action stories encounters him. This gives Ludlum great potential to win new readers again and again.

Furthermore, in addition to Brown's works, readers mentioned other books written on the basis of the model devised by Brown, namely, a combination of suspense plots and historical mystery or, more often, a religious one. Such books have included *Da Vinci's Secret Diary* by David Zurdo and Angel Gutiérrez, *The Genesis Secret* by Tom Knox, and action stories taking place in the past, such as *Forgotten Pharaoh* by Philipp Vandenberg and *Inquisitor* by Patricio Sturlese. It appears that in 2010 Brown's works had a significant impact on the readers of detective stories.

Mimicking a tested plot can perhaps be a good move towards popularity as the above authors have shown, yet genuine success requires an original idea or at least an original combination of old ideas. Such originality is certainly the feature of the 2010 runner-up in the action & detective category, namely Stieg Larsson. Like *The Da Vinci Code* a few years before, in 2009 *Millennium* became a literary hit, which drew the attention of both the readers dedicated to that category who were pleased finally to see its revival and the broader audience of readers who saw something more in it.

Larsson's stories not only follow the Scandinavian tradition of combining detective plots with social critique, but make that social critique very harsh, devoting a lot of attention to the risks that women must face in society. This has most likely given Larsson a unique position in the world of literature. Without losing any of the value of the action & detective novel, *Millennium* is respected as a raw and, at the same time, controversial voice in discussions about modern society.

These features attract a special kind of audience to Larsson's works (however, we are drawing this conclusion on a small sample of a dozen or so readers, those who mentioned *Millennium* in this survey). His readers include educated people, those with a secondary or, more frequently higher, higher education, an overwhelming majority of them women. This book may be attractive because of the women's issues it raises and the openness to its bold social views characteristic of well-educated strata. However, it is also likely that the large share of the well-educated among the book's readers was attracted by the fact that *Millennium* was released in 2010 since, according to our study, readers with a higher education are the ones most interested in new titles.

Larsson's success is a good example of the recent popularity of Scandinavian detective stories among buyers, literary critics and the media alike. However, even though the 2010 readership study did confirm this interest in Scandinavian literature, readers indicated very few authors other than Larsson (single declarations of Camilla Läckberg and Henning Mankell). As such, like the post-Dan Brown authors, the Scandinavians formed a rather minor trend in the overall readership of action & detective stories. Yet even this small number of readers who like this Scandinavian literature increases the community of readers of foreign action & detective literature written in languages other than English (14% of all action & detective readers). These readers are an interesting group because they stand out with a relatively high level of education (50% of them are university-educated, while in the group of all readers of action & detective books only 25% have a higher education). This difference suggests that the seemingly unimportant variance based on the language of the original publication actually reveals a deeper diversification being made by the readers. Perhaps the readers believe that the truly innovative and original model of the action & detective novel, which appeals to well-educated readers, can now be found among writers outside the Anglo-American world.

This does not alter the fact that books translated from the English remain the huge majority of the action & detective category. It is in the literature written in English that some of its popular types and sub-genres fit almost entirely. For example, readers' choices continue to include prominently war, espionage and political action novels, including the same most popular authors who have been appearing throughout the last decade and even longer: Ludlum, Follet, MacLean, Forsyth, Morrell. There are also the lovers of detective stories set in distinct communities, legal (Grisham) or medical (Cook, Palmer) or high society (Jana Frey, Jeffrey Archer). Readers of thrillers seek out James Patterson, Simon Beckett, Douglas Preston and Jack Ketchum.

Books by Harlan Coben are also becoming increasingly popular. The growing number of his novels and the expanding range of their plots explain the growth of his audience. There are female writers, as well, Mary Higgins Clark, Alex Kava and Nora Roberts, who have a considerable following as authors of detective-and-romance stories, appealing predominantly to women. The great detective classics, especially the works of Agatha Christie, also have a small place on the market.

Finally, there are Polish writers of action & detective stories who need to be mentioned here, even though they rank low. Joanna Chmielewska has been enjoying a stable following, although she was not among the most popular authors in 2010. As in the previous studies, readers mentioned a few titles from the Polish wartime series *Biblioteka Żółtego Tygrysa* (Yellow Tiger Collection) and added a new author, Marek Krajewski. This choice of the literature from the *Yellow Tiger* series shows a wider interest in the Second World War, and Polish history in particular. Krajewski also benefits from this interest in history, which was additionally awakened by the successes of Dan Brown's books. Both Krajewski and Chmielewska set their plots in local communities to show the regional flavour, which lies close to the hearts of Poles in both its historical and contemporary versions. No Polish au-

thors of political thrillers were mentioned in this study. Evidently, authors from the United Kingdom and the United States write better about global politics, while politics in Poland is not an attractive setting for Polish readers. Mariusz Kraska attempted to explain this phenomenon already 10 years ago: "It seems that readers of popular literature today escape from everything that could be directly associated with the current political events in Poland."<sup>4</sup>

Considering the knowledge we have acquired about the readership of action & detective novels in recent years, the most noticeable finding that applies to the whole period is its exceptionally democratic character. Men and women, older and younger generations, residents of cities and villages and the educated and uneducated like this type of book. This broad and diverse group has been able over the past two decades to choose from an expanding selection of a wide variety of novels. Various sub-genres of action & detective literature, which started to emerge in the early 1990s, continue to be popular today. In 2010, too, books by authors who have been persistently popular for over a dozen years continue to comprise the majority of choices for this category's readers. Still there was some room for at least two new types of action & detective fiction, which appeared in the second half of the last decade. One new trend were historical plots, which to some degree replaced those set in modern times. The second trend were detective stories combined with social critique, a good example of which is the Scandinavian literature. However, there was no revolution in the readers' interests, but rather an expansion, an addition of new styles to the vast choice of action & detective stories already on the market.

## 2. ROMANCE & DRAMA BOOKS – THE WOMEN'S GENRE

In creating the romance & drama category, we used the most common current meaning of romance. Romance originates from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when stories of this type started forming a separate genre from more action-oriented books. Romance literature provided a somewhat simplified version of the novels of manners of the time.<sup>5</sup> Love stories are easy reading, fictional main plots revolving around a love affair and focussing on the characters' emotions and relationships. There are many sub-genres in the romance category, ranging from the *Harlequin* series, whose novels concentrate on a touching love story set against a barely outlined social background, to light novels of manners in which the love affair develops against a meticulously painted background of work connections, friendships and family relations (for example, *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding).

This category does not include adolescent literature (fiction for girls) and romances set in the world of speculative fiction. These types of books will be addressed together with books for children and adolescents, and speculative fiction.

### THE ROMANCE & DRAMA READERSHIP IN 1992-2008: FROM HELENA MNISZKÓWNA TO HELEN FIELDING

The romance & drama readership data provided by the series of studies since 1992 most importantly confirm the colloquial opinion of romance & drama stories as popular enter-

4 M. Kraska: *Dlaczego Forsyth nie jest Polakiem* [Why Forsyth is not Polish]. In: *Literatura i Kultura Popularna* 1999, vol. 8, pp. 225–237.

5 M. Bujnicka: *Romans* [Romance] In: T. Żabski (ed.): *Słownik literatury popularnej* [Dictionary of Popular Literature]. See above, pp. 353–544.

taining women's literature. Romance books are a type of fiction that continually enjoys great popularity among an invariably majority female audience. However, the relative stability of this target group in Poland does not mean that there have been no noteworthy fluctuations in it over the last two decades. Rather, to the contrary, the study phases have shown a clear long-term decline, followed by a rise which have been accompanied by changes in the selection of titles and, to some degree, the make-up of the group (especially in its level of education). A short summary of the last two decades demonstrates the trends in the interests of the modern romance readership and also identifies factors that have been decisive in recent years for the popularity of that genre among the various groups of women.

The first half of 1990s was a time of exceptionally elevated interest in romance books. They reached the top of the list of most popular literature in 1992, a year of very good readership results, and sustained a similar level in the study two years later. The sudden rise of interest in romance literature could be explained by the expanding number of books on offer after the political breakthrough of 1989: new types of love stories, which had not been available or known in Poland beforehand, appeared. Dominant among the books named by the respondents in that period, there were two types of romance fiction. The first were the popular classics, the re-issued works of Tadeusz Dołęga-Mostowicz, Maria Rodziewiczówna, Hedwig Courths-Mahler, Helena Mniszkówna, Polish and foreign writers from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who were rarely published under the communist regime in Poland. The second type of love stories was the modern Western literature – a very new kind of reading for Polish women. The readers focussed mainly on the *Harlequin* series and later (from 1994) on the works of Danielle Steel.

At that time, these books must have had the charm of newness. It is likely that it was not only the habitual readers of that type of literature who liked them, but also new readers who wanted to try something new in this era of a developing book market. This is confirmed by the fact that romance stories had a major following not only among those with a low level of education (incomplete secondary school), but also others who were better educated (completed secondary school or more), something that was visible especially in 1994.

But nothing is new forever, and the next years brought a decline in the readership of romance stories. That trend was accompanied by the small number of new authors emerging in the respondent declarations. Until 2000 the selection of romance stories remained similar and included, first and foremost, Danielle Steel, the *Harlequin* series and the pre-Second World War classics, with interest in the latter two categories declining steeply. Romance literature seemed to be changing into a niche for connoisseurs only.

Meanwhile, the turn of the centuries brought clear changes. In 1998, Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* was published in Poland, followed by *Sex and the City* by Candace Bushnell in 2001. In the same year, two well-known romances were published by Polish authors: *Nigdy w życiu* (Not on your life) by Katarzyna Grochola and *Samotność w sieci* (Loneliness on the Web) by Janusz Leon Wiśniewski. Polish romance literature, stimulated by the creation of several new series of books, began to develop rapidly. The rising stars were quickly followed by other popular writers who mimicked some of their ideas (Izabela Sowa, Monika Szwaja).

However, the new development was not about a handful of new names and series appearing on the market, but rather about the evolution of this entire category of literature into new imaginary worlds, plots and characters. The new readings of the 1990s were uniform, even though they originated from different eras and cultures. The classics by Dołęga-Mostowicza, Mniszkówna and Courths-Mahler along with the modern love stories from the West (the *Harlequin* series and Danielle Steel) were full of pomposity, exploiting the roman-

tic/sentimental idea of love, featuring unconvincing behaviours and plots revolving around dramatic and unusual experiences and taking place in exotic settings (from the perspective of the Polish reader).

*Bridget Jones's Diary* brought to the market a new type of reading. It contained descriptions of contemporary lifestyles, more in-depth psychological portraits of characters, a greater variety of relations between men and women, as well as humour. The world described in the book reflected the reality known to Polish readers because by that time there were many Bridget-like women in Poland.

The new type of romance literature acquired new readers quite slowly. In 2000 and 2002 only Danielle Steel and the *Harlequin* series still prevailed among the most popular selections, with new authors a rarity in the respondent declarations. Helen Fielding, Katarzyna Grochola and Janusz Wiśniewski reached the group of the most popular writers (at least 1% of readers) years after their books had appeared in Polish. A factor that enormously increased the interest in their books were the big-screen premieres of films made on the basis of their books (Part Two of *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *Nigdy w życiu* in 2004, *Samotności w sieci* in 2006).

The growing popularity of the new authors and types of romance novels was limiting, but not eliminating, the interest in the earlier books in this category. *Harlequin* books and the romance classics were being read by a shrinking audience. Only Danielle Steel retained her popularity.

The expanding selection of romance & drama titles, including the famous ones, which were filmed for the big screen and widely discussed, likely caused an evident but minor rise in the popularity of the type as a whole in the middle of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The social profile of its readers changed, as well. Romance & drama books became slightly more important for women with secondary and higher education rather than for its poorly educated readers. Therefore, it appears that the social esteem of this type improved.

#### ROMANCE & DRAMA READERSHIP IN 2010 – MAŁGORZATA KALICIŃSKA WINS AND DANIELLE STEEL NEVER FADES

The 2010 study shows a slightly diminished interest in the romance literature in recent years – only 15% of the readers mentioned it. Perhaps the initial wave of interest surrounding the new variations on romance fiction is starting to fade away, but no firm conclusions can be drawn before at least the next study phase.

The choice of romance & drama stories in 2010 appears to be quite similar to the titles readers selected in the previous years, but with some additions and changes within the category. The most important event observed in 2010 was Małgorzata Kalicińska's entry into the group of the most popular writers. She is a Polish writer who has published several romance & drama novels. As was the case with Grochola and Wiśniewski, the great wave of interest in her books appeared when one of her books was filmed, in her case as a TV series. *Dom nad rozlewiskiem* (The house by the flood plain) and subsequent instalments in the series were the choice of 3% of the polled readers in 2010. It seems that working in her favour is a combination of fictional devices which can be found in the books by other contemporary Polish authors (such as the modern woman who has been through a lot): the form of a series, which ensures the lasting commitment of her female readers, and the use of the family saga, which provides a long and colourful history as background to the main character's life. Such writing is so unique that we might be facing the latest, and the last one for the time being, variation on the romance novel to emerge on the Polish market in recent years.



Although Kalicińska is the only Polish author of romance novels whose books exceeded the 1% threshold of popularity, Polish books occupy quite a significant place in this genre. Grochola has sustained her popularity and the works of Sowa, Szwaja and Wiśniewski found their readers, as well. Overall, the modern authors predominated with a minor share of the readers following the classics of the romance genre: Zarzycka, Dołęga-Mostowicz, Rodziewiczówna.

Such interest in local authors of romance novels is a common trend observed also beyond the Polish market. Similar results were reported in the Czech Republic where the most popular authors included Danielle Steel and Michal Viewegh,<sup>6</sup> the Czech author of romance novels. Perhaps unlike the action books described in the previous section, this genre is valued particularly for local settings where the plots unfold and for a sense of community with the characters.

Among the foreign authors of romance novels in 2010, Danielle Steel ranked number one with 2% of the Polish readers, and the *Harlequin* series of romance books reached 1%.<sup>7</sup> Several readers chose Nora Roberts, a truly original writer who combines the genre of romance with action books. A similar following was gained by other authors of romance and adventure sagas with a historical setting, such as Frid Ingulstad and Wilbur Smith. The remaining authors of romance books who were mentioned by single respondents include only female writers who focus on contemporary times and the behaviours and issues of society at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City*; Lauren Weisberger's *The Devil Wears Prada*; Sophie Kinsella's *The Secret Dreamworld of a Shopaholic*; Jennifer Weiner's *Good in Bed*; Jodi Picoult's *My Sister's Keeper*).

With the choice of romance literature of 2010 presented above, following is a description of the social profile of the readers. In 2010, as before, romance novels were read mostly by women. The previous study phases showed that women of various levels of education read romance novels. This literature was more popular among older women - a relatively stable trend. However, younger readers and adolescents in particular continue to be interested in this type of literature dedicated to emotions and social relations. The true cause for this is the new genre for girls which has recently emerged, called *supernatural romance*.

The crucial variables in the group of romance & drama readers are place of residence and professional status. Women living in small towns and the unemployed (pensioners and housewives) showed an interest in this genre above the average level. Such correlation resembles the stereotype reader of such literature: a woman finding entertainment in romance novels because otherwise she has no opportunities to enjoy life, even though she has plenty of time (with the figure looming of the most famous reader of romances, a doctor's wife living a small town, namely Emma Bovary). However, this might not be the best among all possible interpretations. A different take on the social status of the unemployed female reader is presented in the work of Janice Radway, who believes that romance literature is a way for women to create their own space within the everyday duties of a wife, a mother, or a grandmother who is always dependent on her family.<sup>8</sup>

6 J. Trávníček: *Čítáme? obyvatelé České republiky a jejich vztah ke knize* (2007). Brno 2008. ISBN: 9788072942701.

7 In this study, it is treated as a special type of romance literature. However, the changing policy of the publishing house has blurred the borderlines of that category which used to be very clear. Today, next to books of unknown authors that look like and are commonly referred to by the name of 'harlequins' in Poland, the house also publishes romance stories by more famous writers under a different market format. See also L. Gołębiwski, K. Frolow, P. Waszczyk: *Rynek książki w Polsce 2011* [The Book Market in Poland in 2011]. Warsaw 2011. ISBN: 9788361154914.

8 J. Radway: *Reading the romance: women, patriarchy and popular literature*, London 1991. ISBN: 0807843490.

Housewives and female pensioners are not the only readers of contemporary romance. Certainly, this type of literature is not as important for employed women, who nevertheless make a significant group of romance followers as well. The employed and the unemployed groups consist of different types of readers, with the former having better education (almost half of them have higher education) and living in bigger cities.

The fact that there are various types of romance readers encourages us to look for more social factors in the choice of specific titles, authors and kinds of books. However, such differences are not clear. It remains unclear what are the correlations between the different social groups and the types of romance stories they choose (e.g. the employed and well-educated female residents of big cities vs. the unemployed and poorly-educated residents of small towns).

Romance & drama literature seems to lack clear differentiators that would allow dividing its readers into distinct social groups. There could be many causes to that.

Firstly, in the past two to three years there have been no truly famous or notable books which would reach the circle of more knowledgeable readers or people with easy access to books, such as well-educated females or residents of big cities. All the types of romance novels have been circulating on the market for at least five years, and as a result the wider public has accustomed itself to them, partially thanks to the cinematic and TV versions of the books.

Secondly, the currently popular romance & drama literature does not contain models of womanhood or opinions which would clearly divide the general pool of female readers into, for example, more liberal ones (living in big cities, well-educated, employed) vs. more conservative ones (living in smaller towns, poorly-educated, unemployed). Except in certain unique books, the world of romance & drama, according to Przemysław Czapliński, is that of a woman at the centre: a modern but radical female who is ambitious but not rough, self-reliant but not overly independent — and a woman who is alone and waiting for a change in that status. In fact, most of the books referred to, even the new ones, are based on the same traditional type of love story, concealed under differing descriptions of the outer world but always with a happy end and a successful romance between the main female character and her hero. More controversial models of womanhood can be found in the rare but ambitious women's literature and more frequently in action stories, such as Larsson's *Millennium*.

Thirdly, the most popular types of romance stories today seem to demand very little difference in the level of reader competence or social status. Certainly, a clear decline in the popularity of the *Harlequin* series is observed. However, while the choice or rejection of *Harlequin* books by certain social groups could perhaps provide a clear distinction between readers with, for example, better or worse level of education, the differences between Kalicińska, Grochola and Steel are much more subtle.

It is thus possible that female readers from different social groups do not differ in the choice of sub-genres so much as by the degree of *guilty pleasure* they feel from reading which they identify in themselves.

In summary, the study results presented in this sub-chapter demonstrate that romance & drama fiction is both a diversified literary genre, as it depicts various worlds (especially within the subsequent sub-genres emerging on the market), as well as relatively uniform in the way this type of literature fulfils the basic needs of women. Another assumption is that, regardless of certain fluctuations, the world of romance & drama books is not so much a place for games of social prestige as an intimate world of women's pleasures.

### 3. SPECULATIVE FICTION – BETWEEN NICHE AND MAINSTREAM

In this Report, speculative fiction is a type of literary work which constructs a world using phenomena, objects, characters and events which could never occur in reality because they contradict the laws of nature (a requirement fulfilled by the two most popular types of speculative fiction, horror and fantasy), or which could have occurred in the past but it is common knowledge that they did not (alternative versions of history), or which have not occurred and are not possible today but could potentially occur in the future (science fiction mainly).<sup>9</sup>

Speculative fiction does not include books depicting supernatural forces that are believed in a religious manner by the author and/or the expected readers (e.g. hagiographic stories). The extraordinary events portrayed in such books as part of a given system of religion are not deemed impossible and as such do not fulfil the above definition of speculative fiction.<sup>10</sup>

For the purposes of this Report, the definitions of speculative fiction that can be found in literary dictionaries and encyclopaedias must be supplemented. There is a group of books where the depicted world is constructed using the above principles, however they are never classified as speculative fiction in libraries and bookshops. They include works which belong to high literature, and the literary classics in particular, but which also meet the speculative fiction criteria.

This situation needs further explanation because it is important for this study and the unique nature of the social reach of speculative fiction. This unique nature can be described well in the way in which speculative fiction is contrasted with mainstream literature – the former is treated as secondary to the mainstream.<sup>11</sup> The mainstream is usually defined as the classics of high literature, while speculative fiction is evaluated in the context of the mainstream using two methods. Firstly, speculative fiction is either considered a branch of popular literature (and likewise its authors are not associated with high literary ambitions) or treated as a *separate* genre because of its specific depiction of the world and its different literary community (dedicated authors and readers, their own events, their own book prizes, etc.)<sup>12</sup> that produces works of various literary quality (also high) but that falls outside the general literary hierarchies and classifications.

The way these two meanings of speculative fiction overlap each other impacts the perception of quality for the works of that genre. The books which were first published within the speculative fiction community, for example by a dedicated publishing house, and are associated with speculative fiction as a stand-alone genre, are rarely listed together with the classics of high literature even though they are considered splendid writing. On the other hand, a text depicting a fantasy world and functioning as high literature from the beginning

9 A. Smuszkiewicz: *Fantastyka* [Speculative Fiction] In: *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku* [Dictionary of Polish Literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century]. Wrocław 1993. ISBN: 8304039427.

10 Ibid.

11 Such an understanding of speculative fiction is often discussed in press articles, interviews and specialist discussion groups. For example, see M. Parowski: *Fantastyka i reszta świata* [Speculative Fiction and the Rest]. In: *Była sobie krytyka. Wybór tekstów z lat dziewięćdziesiątych i pierwszych* [Literary Critique. Selected Texts from the 1990s and the Early Years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century]. Edited with introduction by D. Nowacki, K. Uniłowski. Katowice 2003. ISBN: 8322612532; J. Dukaj: *Futur-prymityw* [Future Primitives]. In: *Nowa Fantastyka* [New Speculative Fiction]. 2004, issue 267, pp. 72–73; P. Ciećwierz: *Od wzniosłości do literatury getta i z powrotem* [From Sublime to Low Literature and Back]. In: *Creatio Fantastica* 2006, issue 35. Available on the Internet at <http://creatio.art.pl/index.php?menu=archiwum&archid=7&artid=103>.

12 O. Czarnik: *Obiegi społeczne literatury* [The Social Functions of Literature]. In: *Słownik literatury polskiej XX wieku* [Dictionary of Polish Literature of the 20th Century]. See above, p. 739.

is rarely associated with speculative fiction. In general, once a text enters the domain of high literature it is rarely considered as belonging to the speculative genre, and vice versa, the speculative genre tag excludes a text from being considered as high literature.<sup>13</sup>

This is the source of the customary use of the term speculative fiction which this study also reflects: books falling under both categories (speculative fiction and high literature) are classified based on their functioning in society.

The above understanding of the contradictions between the speculative genre and mainstream literature seems to dominate the discourse concerning the speculative genre and its role in society. However, there is one more way to define the opposing styles of writing. Speculative fiction can be treated as a niche which is valued highly within a closed community of people who have original taste and as standing in opposition to literature for the general public which comprises well-known and trendy works for a wider audience.<sup>14</sup>

However, the situation is undergoing changes today. The outstanding writers of speculative fiction are being recognised among the group of authors of high literature, as in the case of Jacek Dukaj who received a literary prize. Meanwhile, the sales of selected speculative fiction books show that it has a sound readership and a place in the very centre of popular culture.

#### SPECULATIVE FICTION READERSHIP IN 1992-2000 – DEMONS FROM THE USA AND SCANDINAVIA

The niche-like nature of speculative fiction (a closed community of readers which scarcely expands) is proved by the fact that this genre did not experience the same clear peak of popularity in the early 1990s which was otherwise observed in the case of the other types of fiction, even though as in the case of romance & drama books and action & detective stories, the number of speculative fiction works available on the market rose greatly in 1990 as if to catch up on the Western authors who were not available before. The speculative genre had a rather minor share of the market in those times: fantasy and science fiction was chosen by 2% of the readers in 1992, and horror by 4%.

Such a situation could be caused by two separate but overlapping factors. Firstly, the speculative genre clearly lost the bid for the easy and popular reader to romance and action books. Secondly, the values which speculative fiction conveyed before the political transformation ceased to be as important for ambitious readers afterwards. With the collapse of the communist system, speculative fiction lost the power to convey political controversies and no longer was the art that carried the forbidden message and commented on the reality.

The minor following which speculative fiction attracted after the political transformation was sustained on a similar level throughout the 1990s. Horror, science fiction and fantasy caught the attention of only 8% of the readers. However, some speculative fiction writers reached beyond the niche and the 1% of the readers. In the 1990s, the three most popular authors of the speculative genre were Guy Smith (1992), Graham Masterton (1992, 1994) and Margit Sandemo (1992, 1994, 1996). They all had their debuts in Poland at that time, so perhaps the charm of the unknown was a decisive factor (yet still weaker than in the case of action & detective stories and romance & drama books) for readers who were looking

13 Such an issue is observed by, for example, Jacek Dukaj in *Futur-Prymityw* [Future Primitives]. See above.

14 See the discussion group dedicated to speculative fiction, topic name *Rzecz o mejnstreamie* [About the mainstream]. (<http://www.fantastyka.pl/10,2218.html>).

for new offerings in those times. Such an assumption seems warranted because Smith and Masterton write horror novels, which were rarely available in Poland prior to 1989, while Sandemo's saga was not only a novelty for readers of the time but itself is a very unique piece of literature unlike any other work.

As regards Smith and Masterton, neither is considered the leading writer of their genre in the world, but a great number of their works were published soon after the political transformation in Poland. Perhaps it was the early publication that helped draw attention to those writers rather than any specific value in their writing. The original style, quick publication of many books, and possible the unrestricted descriptions of erotic scenes could have been factors promoting Margit Sandemo's *The Legend of the Ice People* and the two other series which were not as popular. However, Sandemo's works are more on the fringe of the speculative fiction genre rather than at its heart. This is perhaps due to the fact that romance and family plots are more important in her books than the supernatural content. It is not without cause that *The Legend of the Ice People* was published in Poland at a similar time as the *Harlequin* series and was often treated and discussed as a special kind of women's literature similar to the *Harlequin* series in many aspects. It is likely that many female readers would be attracted to the book due to its family and romance plots rather than to its depiction of a supernatural world.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1990s, Margit Sandemo, Guy Smith and Graham Masterton were joined by a small group of other writers of horror (Stephen King, James Herbert), fantasy (Robert Howard, Andre Norton) and science fiction (Isaac Asimov, Philip K. Dick, Michael Crichton).

The 1990s were the period of foreign books, especially those translated from English. The biggest spike in that trend was caused by *The Legend of the Ice People* from the Scandinavian writer. There is virtually no readership of any Polish authors large enough to be detected in this rather general readership study. The only writer from Poland who appeared from time to time in the reader declarations was Andrzej Sapkowski, the author of *Saga o wiedźminie* (*Saga of the Witcher*). The readership of speculative fiction began changing at the start of the new decade.

#### SPECULATIVE FICTION READERSHIP IN 2000 – 2008 – THE GREAT MASTERS RETURN

Firstly, the speculative genre became more popular after the turn of the century. After 2002, books in that genre were mentioned by 10-11% of readers, i.e. a few percentage points more than in the previous decade.

The increasing number of respondents who declared they had read speculative fiction enabled an in-depth analysis of the social structure. It revealed that the readership was clearly correlated with the age of the readers. In both study phases, the youngest age groups, namely adolescents and 20-year-olds were the ones most interested in speculative fiction. There are two possible explanations. Firstly, the interest in speculative fiction could be associated with a specific lifestyle. Perhaps speculative fiction is best understood in the adolescent period. After all, adolescent readers should be familiar with the frequent motifs which can be found especially in fantasy, showing the characters becoming mature only after a time of transition and trial. Young readers are perhaps more likely to dream about being able to exceed the limits of the human body and more open to worlds other than the real one, an attitude which older readers may consider immature.

15 E. M. Szyszowska: *Odmiany uczuć. Popularny romans kieszonkowy w Polsce 1990–2000* [Shades of Emotions. Pocket love stories in Poland, 1990-2000]. Warsaw 2003. ISBN: 8370094244.

Secondly, the increasing popularity of speculative fiction among the younger generation in that period could be associated with a changing regard towards speculative fiction, beginning gradually in the younger generations first. The younger readers accept the expanding offerings of speculative fiction more easily than the older readers, and are more likely to treat it as one of the clear literary options on the market rather than as a separate strange and lightweight kind of literature enjoyed by connoisseurs only.

Other social variables were not as strong differentiators as age, however certain trends could be still detected from the data. In both studies a slightly higher level of interest in speculative fiction was observed in men, residents of cities, and people with better education (and with higher education in particular) rather than people with less education. This confirms somewhat that speculative fiction is men's literature, however the difference between the genders was not great. At the same time, the data implies that speculative fiction was an elite type of literature.

The increase in popularity observed in the past decade, even if small, gives good reason to ask whether there are any specific authors who could have caused such an improvement. The names and titles listed by the respondents show a rather unusual situation. It appears that, unlike in the case of romance & drama books and action & detective stories, the rising interest in speculative fiction is not associated so much with any specific new authors or types of literature emerging on the market, but rather with the revival or expansion of interest in the same authors which have been known for decades already.

J. R. R. Tolkien was the single author of speculative fiction who clearly gained popularity and was at the centre of the growth in interest. Such a sudden rise in interest is not difficult to explain. The direct cause behind this popularity was the filming of his masterpiece *The Lord of the Rings*. In 2002, shortly after the premiere of the first episode, Tolkien's books were selected by as many as 4% of the readers, with his works taking a secure place among the most popular authors until 2008.

As already observed in the case of new releases such as *Bridget Jones's Diary* and *The Da Vinci Code*, the mutual support of literature and the cinema can lead to the rising popularity of books, particularly after the release of their cinematic versions. Clearly this is also a strong factor impacting books that have been known before for decades and are already deemed classics that stir emotions and have a stable group of committed followers.

Without a doubt, the unique rank of Tolkien's story was decisive in establishing the grand scale and the fame of the film by Peter Jackson. However, according to the readership studies, the film was likewise decisive in establishing the wide popularity of the book (at least in Poland). A cult work is not always a very popular book and sometimes needs the help of the other media to reach a wider group of readers.

Another writer whose popularity rose was Stanisław Lem, the classic Polish author of science fiction. His works remained unnoticed in the studies of the 1990s, but in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century appeared twice above the 1% threshold: in 2000 and 2006. The rising popularity of the author of *The Star Diaries* (*Dzienniki Gwiazdowe*) could have resulted from having of all his works published in a quality series, and also from Soderbergh's film adaptation of his *Solaris*, launched in 2002 with many big stars of the screen. Certainly, the death of Stanisław Lem was an important factor as well. This study confirms that the death of a public person usually acts to promote his/her works and to spread knowledge about the artist. Such was the case of Karol Wojtyła and Ryszard Kapuściński, for example.

In addition to Tolkien and Lem, Stephen King was also mentioned among the popular authors of speculative fiction in the past decade. His works has been the declared choice of readers since the early 1990s, with the 1% threshold crossed in 2006 and sustained thereafter.

The number of speculative fiction writers found in the group of the most popular authors in 2000-2008 (with a minimum of 1% of readers) is not much bigger than in the 1990s: Tolkien, Lem and King, with Margit Sandemo as the new entry. However, these are unique authors who have been the key writers of the three main speculative fiction genres of recent years: fantasy, science fiction and horror. At the same time, they provided literature of a relatively good quality and more often than not were considered to be authors of high literature rather than of popular literature. The fact that readers are returning to authors who have been known for years and regarded as masters of their genres shows that these readers wanted to get familiar with the classics of the genre. Such a need could prove that speculative fiction is becoming associated with good literary and cultural values.

The increasing interest in speculative fiction of the past decade was connected not only with the return of the great classics, but also with an expanding variety of books mentioned by the respondents. In particular, respondents demonstrated an increasing demand for Polish writers.

The author Andrzej Sapkowski appeared in almost every survey conducted over the past decade. However, in the second half of the decade more Polish authors joined this group, namely Jarosław Grzędowicz, Jakub Ćwiek, Łukasz Śmigiel, Tadeusz Oszubski, and Andrzej Ziemiański.

The readership surveys reflected the changing offerings of speculative literature. Sapkowski's works published in the 1990s by SuperNowa were the start of a wave of Polish speculative fiction which in the beginning was not of interest to publishers. That situation changed with the start of the new century. Other publishing houses (Runa and Fabryka Snów) were launched and focused on speculative fiction. It was also garnering the attention of other publishers that were not dedicated to that genre.

This study shows that it takes several years following the market premiere of an author or even his/her initial market success, be it a major or a minor one, before a wider audience begins to notice that author. Sapkowski's works started appearing in the reader declarations when his second series of fiction stories were published, i.e. a few years of the success of *Saga o wiedźminie (Saga of the Witcher)*. Other Polish authors of speculative fiction who were published in the first half of the last decade were mentioned by readers only in the most recent years.

#### SPECULATIVE FICTION READERSHIP IN 2010 – THE WORLD OF IRONIC MAGS AND SOCIALISED VAMPIRES

In 2010, speculative fiction was selected by 11% of the readers. As such it occupies a similar space as that which it had gained at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The social variables that best defined the usual readers of speculative fiction in 2010 were age and place of residence. It was chosen mostly by residents of big cities and by two age groups: 20-29 and 30-39. Compared to older results (2002, 2004), while similar trends continue and speculative fiction is most popular in cities and among the younger generations, some interesting changes have occurred too, especially in the age structure of the readers.

Let us remember that in the previous years, speculative fiction appealed mostly to adolescents and people 20-29 years of age. In 2010, the age groups have shifted upwards by one decade. Instead of adolescents, there are 30-year-olds. Most likely the 20-year-olds from 2002 have not changed their area of interest and continue to read speculative fiction, while the genre reaches to older generations every year. At the same time, while it wins over older readers, speculative fiction is also losing the younger generation. The case, however, is not that simple. The decline observed among adolescents does not necessarily mean that they are no longer interested in the supernatural world. Rather to the contrary, they are simply

focusing their attention more on the dynamically growing choice of speculative fiction dedicated specifically to the younger generation (classified as adolescent literature in this report and discussed separately). Therefore, the situation shows not a shift but an expanding interest in speculative fiction, which has reached a new age group. If this trend continues in future surveys, it will confirm the process wherein speculative fiction is becoming a common reading option, starting in the younger generations some time ago and now reaching middle age readers. It would be a good sign for the future success of that genre.

Similarly to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, 2010 saw an increased interest in speculative fiction among men rather than women and among readers with secondary or higher education, however the differences are not statistically significant.

What makes the readers of speculative fiction different in 2010 is the high share of Internet users and book buyers. Although in both aspects speculative fiction is far behind high literature, the readers of speculative fiction are still much ahead of those of other fiction categories. It is a reasonable correlation because both Internet users and book buyers tend to live in bigger cities and to be younger – two social attributes of speculative fiction readers.

The choice of speculative fiction mentioned by respondents in 2010 was not a significant departure compared to previous years. The group is divided into fantasy readers (5%) and horror readers (4%). On the other hand, science fiction was receding and did not achieve 1% of the readers.

There are not many new items on the list of authors and titles mentioned by the respondents. However, some changes can be noticed. Andrzej Sapkowski was the only fantasy writer selected by 1% of the readers. It seems that his works are becoming well-rooted in the minds of Polish readers. However, Sapkowski was not the only fantasy writer popular in 2010. In total, 2% of all readers and 20% of the speculative fiction readers chose Polish fantasy. In addition to Sapkowski, the respondents also listed Lidia Kossakowska, Jacek Piekara, Andrzej Ziemiański and Andrzej Pilipiuk. This is a group of authors very characteristic for the Polish fantasy world of recent years. Their works are popular, easy, and feature emotional plots and a language which is not overly complex. On the other hand, their literature remains original and inventive. According to Jacek Dukaj, “the Polish fantasy is unorthodox, ‘spiced up,’ namely a combination of other genres. Poles like to mix things up; and it is a good sign.”<sup>16</sup> Dukaj also adds: “There is plenty of post-modern fantasy which winks at the reader from behind a quasi-historical background.”<sup>17</sup> The works of the authors mentioned in this study are good examples supporting that thesis. The post-modern character, consisting not only of a combination of various eras but also of a mix of various genres and literary styles, ironic and inter-textual references, and autothematism, is a feature of all the Polish fantasy writers who were mentioned in the 2010 reader declarations. The set of creative methods so characteristic of contemporary fantasy writers in Poland, including the skill of combining modern (or post-modern) literary ideas with an easy style as found in popular literature, may be one of the factors decisive for the recently growing demand for such literature in Poland.

The interest in Polish fantasy stories is not detrimental to foreign literature in any way, as 3% of readers chose the latter, in particular Tolkien, Pratchett and Margit Sandemo.

There were slightly fewer readers of horror stories than of fantasy (almost 4% of all readers). In 2010, the most popular horror writer was Stephen King, followed closely by Graham

16 J. Dukaj: *Krajobraz po zwycięstwie* [Landscape After Victory]. In: *Nowa Fantastyka* [New Speculative Fiction] 2007, nr 292.

17 Ibid.



Masterton. The return of Masterton's works can be explained by intensive promotional efforts, including his trips to Poland. Certainly, it was important that one of his novels published in 2009 was *Basilisk*, with a plot set in Cracow, Poland.

Vampire stories also form a significant sub-genre, and not only for adolescent readers, including the books of Charlaine Harris and John Lindqvist. In one instance a classic author of horror was also mentioned: H. P. Lovecraft.

Science fiction was represented by only two works of Stanislaw Lem, as well as *Space Odyssey* and *The X Files* – books associated more with films. The small number of mentions of Lem's books may indicate the end of the return of his works. Two readers named Jacek Dukaj, probably the most ambitious and original Polish writer of speculative fiction who is difficult to classify with others and requires high competencies from readers (a factor that might be preventing his acceptance among a wider audience).

#### **4. HIGH LITERATURE – BETWEEN SCHOOL, NIKE AWARDS AND GAZETA WYBORCZA DAILY**

This is the first readership study report that features high literature as a separate literary category. As such the report analyses its current situation primarily, with some references made to the previous reports and their readership data concerning specific authors.

High art encompasses stories, poetry and works of drama which are associated with high artistic and intellectual value. Simply speaking, high literature includes books which are considered more than just a source of entertainment or information but also provide an aesthetic experience and an opportunity for reflection. As any evaluation of a piece of art leaves room for discussion, the *high literature* category was created with exceptional caution. The classification of high literature works was not based on personal discretion or the subjective assessment of values that a given work may or may not give rise to. Rather, objective criteria were sought, in particular how a given book functions within the social discourse (in the case of older works – has the book been part of the classics? or in the case of newer books – what are the reviews of the book, who wrote them, which books were they compared to, what tags did bookshops use?).

It seemed useful to introduce timeframes to enhance the structural division of high literature into classics (books published in Poland prior to 1945) and contemporary literature (books published after the Second World War). Each of the types was expected to function differently in society, and that expectation proved right.

Last but not least, books indicated by adolescents as set readings for school (i.e. most likely compulsory books for educational purposes) were excluded from the general pool of high literature books mentioned by respondents. This type of reader is very unique and deserves a separate place in this Report.

#### THE CLASSICS IN 2010 – FAR FROM COMMON TRENDS

The high literature classics published in Poland prior to 1945 were of interest to only 5% of the readers and as such one of the least popular types of fiction, according to our classification.

This type of literature was most important for the three oldest age groups, people with secondary education (followed by people after preparatory vocational and primary schools), labourers and pensioners. The readers of the classics were more often regular readers of books (over six books annually), however without a diversified selection of titles (40% read the classics only, while others also chose popular fiction). The poor diversity of books was

accompanied by a low intensity of reading other types of text: an average interest in the press and use of the Internet below the average.

The one aspect that stands out in the declarations of people who read the classics is the fact that Polish authors prevail over the foreign ones. Home-grown authors accounted for two thirds of the books mentioned by the readers. The most popular author was Henryk Sienkiewicz, the 19<sup>th</sup> century writer of historical fiction with adventurous settings and patriotic messages. His works were mentioned by almost 2% of adult readers, especially the *Trilogy* and, less frequently, *The Teutonic Knights*. In addition to Sienkiewicz, a considerable number of other writers whose works are also classics were mentioned, such as Bolesław Prus and Eliza Orzeszkowa. However, none of these reached any significant readership. The foreign classics were seldom a choice for the wider audience. A dozen or so readers mentioned a total of twenty names only, including for example Cervantes, Dostoyevsky, Hugo, Balzac, Bulgakov, and Tolstoy.

Firstly, such a choice of literature focuses on the most notable, primarily Polish authors of the classics, which somewhat resembles the set readings required at the various levels of education. It seems very likely that reading such literature, which rarely goes beyond secondary school titles, and which is also commonly considered the compulsory experience of a cultured citizen, is treated as a form of self-education, catching up with personal gaps to improve one's erudition, and a method to recall knowledge from school. It appears to be the case especially for the older readers and people with an ambitious approach to their own education (with secondary education) who nevertheless lack some schooling and perform work which does not require a long educational track. The school-like choice of authors could also be an effect of poor literary knowledge – a reader looking for a valuable book (or needing such a book when faced with such questions from the pollster) recalls those authors which he/she remembers as having a good reputation. Another incentive to seek school readings in the adult years could be an attempt to recall the times of one's youth, to enjoy a sentimental journey back to the old days, or to compare how the same content reads today.

Such motivation on the part of the reader is no longer related to cognitive purposes or the search for a better cultural status. These readers reach for books rather for pleasure and for the enjoyment of reading. The realist stories of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which are the majority of titles indicated, have many attributes which encourage such a choice of literature. These books offer very engaging plots of romance, adventure and intrigue, written in a relatively easy language. As such they are close to popular literature in the way they address the emotional needs of readers while being easy to understand on a basic level without much abstract interpretation.

Such pleasure from reading seems to be the key decision-making factor in the case of the adventure stories of Sienkiewicz in particular, and could be the case also for the books of Kraszewski, Orzeszkowa, Hugo and Balzac. Such a conclusion can be drawn from the declarations of those respondents who combine the classics with older and newer popular literature containing similar plots (for example, a 65-year old female resident of a small town who reads Nora Roberts, Lisa Jackson, Henryk Sienkiewicz, Rodziewiczówna, and Orzeszkowa). It is possible that the older respondents still have the habit of reading high literature for the feeling of romance or adventure, filling in for the popular literature that was rarely available during the communist reign in Poland.

In general, the rather low share of high literature (5% of all readers) is concentrated on the major authors who are known from school and relatively easy to read. Such authors are perceived as being valuable or enjoyable by a specific group of readers comprising the older

generations and most likely people with low cultural capital, as may be implied from their level of education and professional status.

The study shows that young people do not read the classics, either the set readings for school or the wider choice of important literature beyond the school curriculum, unless they have higher education and work in a profession that requires such an education. It seems that the young generation does not treat the classic literature as a source of pleasure or as an important indicator of one's high culture (a social and intellectual marker).

Surprisingly, the classic titles appear to be a negative indicator of the intelligentsia (people with a good education and a profession that requires such an education), as they avoid the classics even more than the rest of society because they believe that the knowledge of the classics gained in school is sufficient for the rest of their life.

#### HIGH LITERATURE READERSHIP IN 2010 – ELITE HEAVY READERS

Contemporary high literature, comprising books published after the Second World War and valued by literary critics, is a slightly more frequent choice than the pre-War classics (7% of the readers). However, the social profile of its readers is very different.

The readers of contemporary high literature stand out for their high level of education. Half of these readers have higher education while the rest completed secondary schools (with some exceptions) and include students of universities/colleges as well. It seems that secondary education is the threshold past which people start reaching for this type of literature. The readers with higher education usually work in professions that require such an education, for example as managers and specialists.

The elite nature of the readers who choose contemporary high literature, and in particular their education and profession, implies that they represent the group of intelligentsia. This means that, unlike the readers of the classics, their reading behaviour is a result of their high cultural capital. In that context, it is even more interesting to see which authors and titles they named.

The results show that the readers of contemporary high literature choose Polish and foreign authors alike. The list of Polish writers rarely included authors writing during communist times, but rather more frequently those who started their careers after the political transformation and those published in the past twenty years. The older authors included Tadeusz Konwicki, Marian Brandys, and Hanna Malewska. However, none of these was recalled by more than one reader in the study. It should be recalled that in the previous study phases the writers of the communist era were also rarely mentioned, with the actual choice of names being different every time. This study proves that none of the authors writing in 1945-1989 stands out as particularly interesting for modern readers, however the literature of that period has not been forgotten either.

The high literature of more recent times which was recalled by a somewhat greater number of readers included, first and foremost, Kazimierz Kutz, with his book *Piąta strona świata* (*Fifth Side of the World*), Antoni Libera, Dorota Maślowska, and several other writers. In these cases as well, specific authors or works were rarely repeated over the subsequent study phases, with each phase providing new names and titles interchangeable with previous ones. An interesting point of reference is the *Nike* literary awards, because more than half of the listed authors were finalists or winners. Such a correlation could prove either the impact of the prize on the choice of literature or the good sense of the jury in selecting authors who were already at the heart of Polish contemporary literature.

The foreign writers of contemporary high literature who the respondents named in-

cluded several names which have not been known in Poland for very long, like Orhan Pamuk, Jonathan Littell, Victor Pelevin, and Carlos Zafón. However, most attention was given to writers already known for decades: Umberto Eco, Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel García Márquez, Vladimir Nabokov, Milan Kundera, Albert Camus, Ken Kesey, Joseph Heller, and William Golding. These are the classics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: Or at least such was the name given them in *Literatura XX wieku (20<sup>th</sup> Century Literature)*, a series published in Poland by one of the leading dailies, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The similarity between the names listed by the respondents and the choice of books in the series (which included almost all the authors mentioned by the respondents) could be explained by either *Gazeta Wyborcza* being a strong opinion leader or by the good judgement exercised by those who selected the 20<sup>th</sup> century classics for the series. In particular, the book which opened the series was a well-considered choice: *The Name of the Rose* by Umberto Eco, who is the most popular contemporary writer of high literature, according to this study. Furthermore this book is unique in that it was not only mentioned among the most popular titles in 2004, when the series was published, but also in almost every survey in recent years. Umberto Eco has become almost an icon of contemporary high literature in Poland.

In general, with regard to high literature in the period analysed, where foreign literature is concerned readers feel the need to improve their knowledge of the post-War literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, while in the case of Polish books they like to stay in touch more with the current releases.

The choice of the contemporary high literature provides a reasonable explanation for why poor education and the accompanying lack of knowledge of the world of culture is often a strong barrier to reading such literature. Without a doubt, readers must not only feel a need to reach for good books but also must have the appropriate competencies. Firstly, they need a good knowledge of the literary world above the average level and of a different kind from readers of the classics. The latter readers limit their choice of literature to a dozen or so writers who are commonly known to everybody following primary school at least. On the contrary, the more contemporary authors require knowledge that exceeds the basic school curriculum and covers literature from the last decades, or at least requires a general familiarity with current events in the world of literature.

Contemporary high-art literature requires different skills for interpretation than do the novels of Sienkiewicz and Balzac: the reader needs to confront complex narration, inconsistencies in plot, ambiguous messages, autothematism, and defects in the portrayed reality. At the same time, the books of contemporary literature that were the most popular in the declarations (including foremost among them *The Name of the Rose*) are quite often intended to heighten the emotional commitment of readers even though they may not be the easiest to read. These books use patterns found in popular literature (Eco, Llosa, Pamuk, Márquez), or are very close to it (Zafón, Süskind), touch on scandalous and difficult topics (Libera, Maślanka, Süskind), or play games with the author's private life (Tokarczuk, Stasiuk).<sup>18</sup>

It seems that reading such books is associated with a relatively high cultural capital and is a way of displaying the resulting competencies and needs. However, interest in this literature depends not only on one's ambition but results from seeking the emotions that reading evokes. The reader declarations that show similar types and topics in popular literature and high literature support the thesis that some readers seek similar emotions in the latter as

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18 The return of plots to Polish prose in the 1990s is discussed in, for example, Przemysław Czapliński: *Wyzwania polskiej prozy...* [Challenges of Polish Prose...]. See above.

in the former (as in the case of the 19<sup>th</sup> century classics). Following are several examples of groups of books chosen by readers in 2010: a set of historical and detective books (“*Milennium*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *Angels and Demons*, *The Genesis Secret*, *The Name of the Rose*, action, detective, historical, thriller, poetry”) and a set of romantic books (“*Love in the Time of Cholera*, *Zielone drzwi* [*Green Door* by Grochola], Jane Austen”).

This readership study supports the thesis which John Barth proposed in *The Literature of Replenishment*, an essay where he stresses the connection between post-modern writers (including the majority of the above-mentioned authors from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) and their modernist fathers and pre-modernist grandfathers. Barth points out that the post-modernist writers do not reject the formal and mental achievements of the modernists but try to combine them with the ability to spark the interest and emotions of a wider group, as the classic authors did in the times of realism.<sup>19</sup> This echoes what the study demonstrates, namely that there are only two types of high literature that have a following large enough in the Polish sample of two thousand respondents to exceed the number of five titles: 19<sup>th</sup> century realist novels and the books of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, post-modern works in particular. The former type is popular partially thanks to formal education in schools while the latter is buoyed by the intellectual fashion for new writers. However, in both cases the literature clearly ensures that readers get emotional plots along with many other incentives and attractions.

The context of broader readership is also an interesting aspect in the case of readers of contemporary high literature. They are usually intensive users of all textual forms. Half of the readers seek out more than six books every year, and over a quarter of them declared that they had read at least 24 books every year. Three quarters of those respondents bought books, with five or more books bought by 40% of them. Only 15% of the readers of contemporary high literature restricted themselves to that genre only. Almost one half listed a popular fiction work, with one respondent naming even the three different genres of popular fiction. However, half of the readers chose books other than fiction, in particular documentary texts and knowledge books (scientific works and popular science books). As such, these readers are very comprehensive and like to combine fiction with nonfiction, and demanding books with popular literature.

The unrestricted use of various textual forms confirms that these readers are engaging not only with books: 90% use the Internet, and 94% read the press (including 54% of regular readers). This implies that they have many opportunities to read longer texts: 96% of them declared they had read a text longer than 3 pages in the past month.

Such correlation between the readership of high literature and the multitude and variety of texts chosen seems natural because the skills required for such readers are acquired on the basis of a certain amount of reading experience. Such experience appears to be an important enabler because otherwise readers with poor literary experience would deem such works strange or difficult to understand. Paraphrasing Jauss, such works would exceed the reader’s horizon of expectation and as such would not be accepted.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, it appears reasonable that habitual readers feel good in the textual world and have broad experience with both easier and more difficult types of texts.

It is not surprising that such a comprehensive readership combining contemporary high literature (both fiction and nonfiction) with scientific, popular science and popular fiction

19 J. Barth: *Postmodernizm. Literatura odnowy* [Post-Modernism. Literature of Replenishment]. In: *Literatura Na Świecie*, 1982, book 5–6, pp. 260–276.

20 H. R. Jauss: *Historia literatury jako wyzwanie rzucone nauce o literaturze* [The History of Literature as a Challenge for Literary Science]. In: *Pamiętnik Literacki* 1972, No. 4, pp. 271–307.

books confirms the long-term observations concerning the literary style of the intelligentsia, according to studies from the past decades.<sup>21</sup> It seems to be a persistent model of readership among the well-educated social groups.

At the same time, the easy fusion of interests in both high culture and popular culture is a cultural style very particular to the contemporary intelligentsia. The results showing a rise in the incidence of such a comprehensive choice of literature are often explained as a result of changing values and new means of manifesting high cultural competencies – the more sophisticated taste of readers who enjoy works of high artistic or cognitive value only, is being replaced with a wider range of interests, an open approach to various forms of communication (often associated with the ability to reach beyond one's community and show an interest in others), and the skill of synthesizing content from various areas of culture.<sup>22</sup> Such mixed levels which accompany these on-going changes are also observed in the literature itself: the boundaries between different textual forms of various artistic levels are becoming blurred.

However, as only 13% of readers with higher education and 15% of managers and specialists are interested in contemporary high literature, the intelligentsia-like model of readership is in no way a defining feature of today's intelligentsia.

## 5. CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENT LITERATURE – RISE OR DECLINE?

The *children & adolescent* category is based mainly on its customary use in the literature, and as such is wide. The category covers all books which today are perceived as being of interest to less-than-adult readers. It includes both works aimed at younger readers (according to the profile chosen by the author or the publisher) and others which were created for adult readers but in actual practice or in time attracted the younger generation, causing the *children & adolescent* tag to become associated with them by readers, publishers, bookshops and librarians alike.

Before we give a detailed description of the readership of children & adolescent literature, it must be stressed that it is not exactly the same as book reading by children and adolescents. The children & adolescent literature data provided by this study is a special case in that the study sample barely contains any people who are not already adults (older teenagers are only a fraction of the sample). Therefore, the information derived from the study is incomplete and limited in terms of the readership among children and adolescents. However, as such the results provide a good picture of how children & adolescent literature functions among adults.

The specific nature of the responses given concerning children & adolescent literature provides a good rationale to include also responses from book buyers.

### CHILDREN & ADOLESCENT LITERATURE IN 1992-2000 - THE DARK AGES FOR DISNEY

The early 1990s was a period of the dynamic development of many genres which record-breaking numbers of readers and buyers found attractive. The same trend could be observed

21 S. Siekierski: *Czytania Polaków w XX wieku* [Readings in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Poland], Warsaw 2000. ISBN: 832350041X, p. 37, pp. 165–166.

22 R. A. Peterson, R. M. Kern: *Changing Highbrow Taste: from Snob to Omnivore*. In: *American Sociological Review* 1996, vol. 61, No. 5, pp. 900–907.

in the case of children & adolescent literature, however to a limited extent only. In the 1992 survey, books for the younger generations had a surprisingly big share in total book purchases: almost 1/4 of book buyers indicated such literature. However, shopping was not followed with reading, as only 9% of readers indicated this genre. The explanation for this gap seems obvious at first glance: As most of the respondents were adults, they were not the target of children & adolescent literature, but acted only as buyers who purchased the books for their children and teenagers. However, the later surveys demonstrated that the gap between buying and reading does not follow any fixed model. Rather, in 1992 special circumstances occurred that prompted the respondents to buy children & adolescent books, but not to read them. These special circumstances must be investigated in the wider context of the book market of that time.

The offering dedicated to adolescents was rather scarce in early 1990s. There were neither frequent debuts of new Polish authors nor translations of foreign works for adolescent readers. What the young had at hand was mainly the literary classics or books close to becoming such – the same stories that used to entertain their parents or even grandparents and great-grandparents. It is not surprising that the list of the most popular books which were bought and read contained no adolescent literature at all.

The situation was different in the case of children's books. The market offering was re-invigorated. Prior to 1989, children's books were illustrated by reputable artists (often from the Polish school of illustrators, held in high regard internationally) but not exactly in the way that would be attractive to the youngest generations (dark, cold and gloomy colours, with shapes and textures similar to graphics for adults). After 1989 they were replaced with merry, colourful, multi-shaped products of popular culture, often made of unusual materials. The new offering was rather uniform, with fairy tale classics and stories derived from cinematic productions and TV series for children, and with graphics similar to Disney films. Such novelty appealed to the Polish audience.

According to the declarations, 3% of book buyers indicated the Disney series and 1% of them Andersen's tales. This proves how attractive the new offering was and that books for the youngest generations made up a significant share of purchases. Such a focus on books for the youngest children provides a good explanation for the gap between book buying and reading in the early 1990s. That there is a greater number of buyers than readers is an obvious expectation and a stable trend.<sup>23</sup> Also, the early 1990s still predated the launch of the widespread social campaign *All of Poland reads to Kids (Cała Polska czyta dzieciom)*. Regardless of how often books were read to children then and later, such reading was seldom considered an important cultural practice or children's books an important work of literature.

The years that followed up until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were not the best time for children & adolescent literature. Subsequent studies show a declining readership after 1992 (only 7% of readers) along with a drop in book shopping observed each year (from 24% in 1992 to 9% in 2000).

Certainly, the interest in children & adolescent literature was not sparked by the monotonous and limited choice of authors and titles which the respondents observed. Literature for adolescents was dominated by adventure classics (Verne, Curwood, Cooper, Haggard) and children's books by classics dedicated to the younger generations.

The readership data reflects the book market of the times, which was similar to the one

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23 Such a result was obtained in the 2010 study when children's literature was treated separately from adolescent literature.

from the beginning of the decade. According to publishing market reports, there was a period of deceleration in this segment as observed at the end of the 1990s and at the turn of the century. It seemed that the demand for children & adolescent books had reached the maximum level beyond which young people were 'stolen' by other media. However, the reality was different: great changes were around the corner.

#### CHILDREN & ADOLESCENT LITERATURE IN 2000-2008 - *ALL OF POLAND READS TO KIDS*, AND WHOLE WORLD READS *HARRY POTTER*

The readership reports reveal the first symptoms of recovery in 2000 – children & adolescent literature rose by several percentage points according to the respondent declarations. The study carried out two years later showed even greater changes, both in the readership and in book shopping. The causes of the changes are not difficult to guess. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, two significant events took place, one touching children's literature and the other books for adolescents.

The famous campaign *All of Poland reads to Kids (Cała Polska czyta dzieciom)* was launched in 2001 by ABCXXI Foundation. Both the slogan itself, which has become one of the most recognised readership statements, and numerous promotional efforts by the Foundation brought the issue of readership among the youngest generation to the attention of the general public – it served as a reminder of this clear duty which all aware parents have.

Along with the social campaign, the literary offering dedicated to children was changing. After 2000 the market offering became more diversified. New publishing houses opened with a focus on books of high artistic value, and children's classics from the communist era in Poland were re-introduced to the market. Also, many new authors and graphic artists made debuts in the area of children's literature, and last but not least new translations of valuable titles for children appeared on the market.

Even though it was one of the cultural occurrences marking the revival of interest in children & adolescent literature at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, such diversification in the market offering had limited impact on the choice of literature mentioned by the respondents in this study. The respondents continued to name mainly Brzechwa and Tuwim, Andersen, Perrault and the brothers Grimm, Lindgren and Jansson, Milne and Burnett.

In spite of this, more titles were declared by book buyers, including writers who had made debuts on the Polish book market in recent decades, for example Roald Dahl and Anne Mazer. However, as in the case of readers, the buyers recalled primarily children's classics. In fact two of the classic writers, Julian Tuwim and Jan Brzechwa, made it to the list of the most popular purchases in 2002. If it was a result of the campaign launched by ABCXXI Foundation, then the choice of Tuwim and Brzechwa shows that parents did not seek out new titles but rather literature which they had known for years.

The choice of children's books listed throughout the last two decades implies that changes are particularly slow in the area of children & adolescent literature. When choosing books for their children, parents tend to read what they had liked in their own childhood. More frequently than in the case of other types of literature, such behaviour causes a similar set of titles to be repeated in the choices of the next generations (unless the continuity is interrupted, as was the case with children's literature from before World War II, which was not re-published in the communist era, and which sparked no interest among parents when re-released after 1989 because – as they were not familiar with it – it stirred no sentiment in them).

Certainly, there is a group of parents who follow the latest releases on the market of children's literature and use the full offering available. However, this group is barely vis-



ible if at all in this study. Perhaps this is due to the group's being very small, as proven by the low number of copies which are released by publishing houses dedicated to ambitious children's literature.<sup>24</sup>

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century could be called a good time for children's literature. However, for adolescent literature it was a splendid time thanks to the breakthrough brought about by the *Harry Potter* series. The fascination with Rowling's works is clearly visible in dedicated surveys of adolescents as well as in this survey, which covered mainly adults.

*Harry Potter* entered the list of the most popular books many times. 2% of book readers mentioned it in 2002, and 3% in 2004. The wave of interest was somewhat weaker two years later, but the series continued to have a strong following even though it was not mentioned among the most popular titles. In 2008, the books returned again with 1% of readers declaring they had read them. Perhaps the changing popularity reflects the changing social function of *Harry Potter* among adolescents as well as adults, who are the majority of our respondents – Rowling's works are considered *cross-over* literature which can be interesting for children and for older readers alike. The very high readership of Rowling's series, which was observed in the initial years of its availability on the market and when its cinematic version had its premiere, was certainly a result of interest which adults demonstrated towards the cultural phenomenon of *Harry Potter*. Perhaps the series reached not only the old fans but also people who wanted to find out why these books were successful and whether they were worth all the fuss. It is likely that the 2006 study was conducted after the first wave of curiosity had been satisfied and only the loyal fans continued to read the new books in the series. The improved results of 2008 could be an effect of the very last volume of the series being published, tempting readers to find out the end of the *Harry Potter* story. Certainly, it was also a great event within popular culture.

The unusual scale of *Harry Potter*'s success made publishers more interested in adolescent books and promoted the expansion of the book offering dedicated to adolescents. However, the expanded offering has barely been reflected in the reader declarations, perhaps due to the fact that the readers are mainly adults who, if they choose adolescent literature at all, tend to reach for works which are significant for the culture (like *Harry Potter*) or certain titles and authors which they had long known and wanted to return to out of sentiment for their childhood. Respondents continued to recall the older and newer classics for adolescents. The most recent authors of adolescent literature who made their debuts in the 1990s reached readers rather slowly and to a limited extent only. However, the declarations indicated, for example, Budzyńska, Stone, Burgess (2004), Meg Cabot, Gaarder (2006), and *High School Musical* (2008).

However, a clear change in the choice of literature was observed in 2010.

#### CHILDREN & ADOLESCENT LITERATURE IN 2010 – THE VAMPIRES

In 2010, the level of interest in children & adolescent literature was similar to previous years – 11% of readers mentioned this genre, including 4% mentioning books for children and 7% books for adolescents. The same share for children & adolescent literature was declared by book buyers as well, except for that the proportions were reversed: 7% of buyers mentioned children's books and 4% books for adolescents. It seems that adolescent litera-

24 E. Gołębiowski, K. Frolow: *Rynek książki w Polsce 2008* [The Book Market in Poland in 2008]. Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 9788361154075.

ture follows the same model as popular fiction in its entirety, namely its readers do not collect books of this genre at home, while books for children have a better chance of being treated as a compulsory purchase.

Further analysis of the data concerning this type of literature will be divided into two separate categories: books for children and adolescent literature. Such a division is reasonable because of the very different reading behaviours of the readers: the respondents (who are at least fifteen) mentioned reading children's books only as part of their childcare duties, while adolescent literature is read more for pleasure by both adolescents and adults.

#### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

In 2010, children's books were the reading choice of women mainly (6% of female readers and 1% of male readers). The results imply that women not only read books to children, but are also more likely to try to convey the image of an active parent when responding to the survey questions. Children's books were recalled usually by female readers 30-39 years of age, with a lower share of twenty-year-olds. As expected, this age group features mothers of very young children.

It is more surprising to see the level of education and the place of residence of the readers. The most frequent readers of children's books have primary education only and live in villages, while such reading behaviour is never mentioned by holders of university/college diplomas and almost never by residents of the biggest cities. Also, women who mentioned children's books were not heavy readers, as few of them read more than 6 books annually and almost two thirds indicated books for children only.

Certainly, such results do not imply that only the uneducated residents of villages read books to children and not much beyond these.<sup>25</sup> Rather, the results show how differently children's books function. Perhaps people who read a lot for school, work or pleasure tend to recall such readings more when asked about readership in the past year. Children's books are mentioned by female respondents who cannot say much about other books, but are able at least to recall books related to their parenting.

This study does not indicate how often Poles read to children, as the CBOS research of 2001 and 2007 does.<sup>26</sup> There is significant information stemming from this study, however. Reading is considered an important component of child rearing also by those parents who do not read much or at all for themselves (or perhaps only talk about reading when faced with a pollster). According to the CBOS study, which investigated reading books to children, between 2001 and 2007 the share of people declaring that they read to children every day increased but the share of people able to recommend an interesting children's book dropped. It might be a symptom showing that the rising importance of such a social standard as reading books to children is causing not only improved readership but also more frequent false responses given in studies. Such a trend is interesting because, as Izabela Koryś has already mentioned in the first part of this Report, such standard behaviour is expected to weaken rather than strengthen, causing the number of false responses to be lower.

25 The 2001 and 2007 surveys by CBOS which inquired about reading books for children demonstrated a contrary situation: books are read to children more in cities and among families of well-educated people (see M. Falkowska: *Cala Polska czyta dzieciom?* [All of Poland reads to Kids?]. Warsaw 2001. Available on the Internet at <[http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2001/K\\_12L\\_01.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2001/K_12L_01.PDF)> and J. Szczepańska: *Czytamy dzieciom?* [Do We Read to Children?]. Warsaw 2007. Available on the Internet at <[http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2007/K\\_132\\_07.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2007/K_132_07.PDF)>.

26 Such information can be found in the CBOS survey: in 2001, 62% of parents who had small children read books to them several times a week vs. 70% in 2007.

The above correlations observed in the reader declarations are not as strong or do not occur at all in the case of shopping for children's books. Women are also the majority of buyers, however the difference between the two genders is not as big as in the case of the readers of children's books (8% of women vs. 4% of men). There is no clear correlation between the declared buying of children's books and the age of the respondents (except for the fact that teenagers do not buy books for children), the level of education or the place of residence. Some of the correlations have ceased to exist because people no longer declare that they buy books for children as a back-up response, as in the case of the question about book reading – respondents do not feel the pressure to confirm the fact of buying books. The weaker correlations with age and gender imply that mothers read to children, remember having done so and are able to recall it, unlike buying books, which is not directly related to that social role.

The choice of children's titles listed by readers is not very rich and, like in the previous years, contains mainly the classics for children with few new contemporary works. Such books appear to have a minor following. Perhaps parents who closely follow the market of children's books are also those who read a lot for themselves and do not mention children's books in their responses.

#### ADOLESCENT LITERATURE

In 2010, books for adolescents were more important for women than for men. Adolescent literature was selected by every tenth female reader and by a mere 2% of male respondents. As expected, girls were most interested in the literature dedicated to adolescents. However, some interest was observed also among twenty- and thirty-year-olds. No clear correlations were revealed with other social variables. The social structure of buyers was also similar: adolescent literature shows up in the purchases of women rather than men and teenagers rather than older respondents.

The choice of authors and titles named in 2010 is very interesting. The results imply that the new market offering of adolescent literature has finally reached a wider audience.

The most popular writer was Stephenie Meyer, the author of *Twilight* and its three sequels about vampires. Her books were selected by 3% of readers, who were mainly women of various ages. Certainly, the love story of a vampire and a girl was appreciated by teenage girls first and foremost (10% of readers 15-19 years of age in this study and 15% of fifteen-year old girls according to a different school study).<sup>27</sup> However, 4% of 20-year old and 2% of 30-year old women were interested in the series as well, and there were even a few older readers. Meyer's series garnered the attention of 1% of all book buyers.

Like Rowling, Meyer's works became a success thanks to the merger of typical problems portrayed in adolescent literature with speculative fiction. Similarly to *Harry Potter*, *Twilight* is a three-in-one product: a romance story with horror and suspenseful action. However, in the case of this series the *romance* factor is prevalent, as confirmed by the majority of (women) readers.

In 2010, Stephenie Meyer even won out over the author of *Harry Potter*, who had been unchallenged before in popularity. The latter was ranked second among the most popular writers of adolescent literature, with almost 1% of declarations from readers and buyers of books. In addition, the group of *Harry Potter* readers also included respondents of various ages, as was the case with Meyer: teenagers, twenty-year-olds, and even one man of sixty years.

27 Z. Zasacka: *Gimnazjalni czytelnicy książek i ich wybory lekturowe* [Books and Reading Among Students of Post-Primary Schools]. EBIB 2011, No. 4. Available on the Internet at <[http://www.nowyebib.info/images/stories/numery/122/122\\_zasacka.pdf](http://www.nowyebib.info/images/stories/numery/122/122_zasacka.pdf)>.

Other adolescent books indicated by readers included several sub-genres which have become popular after the success of the two bestsellers described above. From the group of speculative fiction with adventure plots readers and buyers selected Paolini (*Eragon, Eldrest, Brisingr*), Trudi Canavan (*The Novice*), Gordon, and Williams (*Tunnels*). In the group of vampire romance books (or other love stories with supernatural characters), the readers selected *The Mortal Instruments* and *The Vampire Diaries*.

Another type of adolescent literature that was quite common in 2010 was drama stories for adolescents, including the most popular sub-genre called *girl literature*. Adolescent drama stories were chosen primarily by teenage girls, rarely by older women and never by men. The readers listed a few authors from older times: Lucy Maud Montgomery, Kornel Makuszyński, Edmund Niziurski, Małgorzata Musierowicz, and Ewa Nowacka. However, there were also relatively new writers: Heidi Hassenmüller, Jana Frey, Ewa Nowak, Thea Beckham, Anna Onichimowska, and Marta Fox.

Adventure classics were the choice of a few readers only.

Such results are similar to the 2010 readership research which covered students of post-primary schools (*gimnazjum*): again Stephenie Meyer and Joanne Rowling were the most popular writers, with the latter being in second place. The research also revealed that these readers were interested mainly in speculative fiction for adolescents and *girl literature*.<sup>28</sup>

In summary, the readership study demonstrates major changes that could be observed in the children's literature market in the past twenty years. The rise and decline of children & adolescent literature in the declarations of book readers and buyers reflects the ups and downs in the history of this segment: the wave of new children's books at the beginnings of the 1990s and the later success of their publishers (Egmont in particular), the stagnation that followed by the end of the 1990s and the improvement in the next decade. The study results were not influenced much by the expanding offering of new titles for children and adolescents that appeared in the last decade. It covered books for small children mainly, and this could be an effect of the study methodology and a symptom of a limited readership for new publications. Changes in the offering dedicated to adolescents are marked more clearly in the study, with most indications pointing to the recent bestsellers (Rowling and Meyer).

The study does not confirm whether the expanding offering of adolescent literature was followed by an increasing size in the group of adolescent readers. Nor was this confirmed in the aforementioned research of students in post-primary schools. The success of *Harry Potter* demonstrated that a bestseller for adolescents can be created and that the attention of the younger generations can be drawn to one book – however, it applies to the group of those who had already been readers beforehand rather than to people who never approach books. On the other hand, without such a new offering available on the market, the group of adolescent readers would certainly experience a decline as they seek entertainment in the other media which are also expanding.

## 6. SCHOOL READINGS

In addition to books expressly named as such by respondents, set readings for school are works included in the curriculum of secondary schools and declared by teenagers. Such books were mentioned by 44% of adolescent respondents, including 55% of readers. At first glance, the results seem rather low. However, the study questions did not ask about set readings for

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28 Ibid.

school directly. Some of the adolescent readers could omit such books and focus on literature which they had read for pleasure, even though they do read books required in school. As such the results do not show how many young people read books for school but how many thought about set readings for school when confronted with the question about book reading in general. Also, the group of adolescent readers who mentioned set readings for school and the group reading books for pleasure were more or less equal in number. Such a situation confirms the results which were obtained in the research of students in post-primary schools (*gimnazjum*): for adolescents both readings for school and books read for pleasure are important<sup>29</sup> - contrary to the common notion that the younger generations do not like to read at all and that good readership results are due to set readings for school only.

This study confirms the above research in one more aspect: adolescents living in villages are particularly diligent readers of school literature. Perhaps they are less inclined to rebel against school duties and the traditional choice of literature. On the other hand, adolescents from villages declared more set readings for school (and even recommended them, according to the research in post-primary schools) because they seldom read for pleasure and therefore have less contact with adolescent and popular literature.

The readers of school literature are also the most frequent users of libraries. Adolescents generally use school and public libraries more than the other age groups, however in the case of set readings for school they stand out even more clearly from the rest of the respondents - only 8% have not used libraries. It demonstrates the significant role of libraries in access to literature required in school and explains why set readings are rarely declared in purchases (less than 2% of book buyers and only 7% of teenage readers). In such a case, other sources become popular. The required readings for school are available not only in school or other libraries, but can also often be found in home collections and legally downloaded from the Internet (if the copyrights have expired), including enhanced versions available from, for example, [www.wolnelektury.pl](http://www.wolnelektury.pl).

## 7. WHARTON AND COELHO - POPULAR METAPHYSICS

There are several reasons why Wharton and Coelho deserve a category dedicated to two authors only. The first reason is a bit technical perhaps. Both writers are hard to classify or fit into any of the recognized categories. There is no place for them in popular fiction or documentary literature, because both write books on the borderline of fiction, essay and autobiography. Such comprehensive work is quite frequent in contemporary high literature, however that genre does not fit either because of the way Wharton's and Coelho's books are perceived by readers: literary critics consider them to be representatives of popular culture, as is also the perception of common readers.

A shared category for both writers was not created only because of the lack of other categories, but also due to the many similarities they share. Their books feature narratives that touch on the most dramatic events in one's life, such as death, suicide, old age, death of relatives or friends, or war. Both write about personal transformations, lifetime values, the sense of life and its broader meaning. Also, their stories provide a background for discovering responses to the fundamental questions of life, and such responses are formulated quite explicitly as aphorisms. Certainly, there are differences too. Wharton's books feature

29 Z. Zasacka: *Nastolatki i książki - od czytania codziennego do unikania* [Teenagers and Books - from Reading to Daily Avoiding]. In: *Edukacja* 2012, No. 2, pp. 20-35.

autobiographical references while Coelho uses a discourse of reflection and aphorisms derived from parable-like stories. As such both writers try to provide an explicit answer to the fundamental question: how to live?

Also, both authors have achieved great literary success in Poland. They are easily noticeable on bestseller lists, and this readership study confirms their ranking as well. William Wharton was ranked among the most popular writers from 1994 to 2000, and then again in 2004, the year which followed his latest books and was the time of one of the last visits of the author to Poland. Paulo Coelho exceeded 1% of reader declarations in 2000, and since then his popularity has been slowly but steadily rising (1% in 2000, 2002, 2004; 2% in 2006; 3% in 2008 and 2010). In both cases, readers' fascination with their works is considerable and relatively long-lasting. When their years of popularity are compared, it appears as though they have changed places: when Wharton's popularity started declining, Coelho's began rising.

In addition, for both authors young people are an important group of readers. There is evidence for that in both this study and in separate research of adolescent readers. Wharton was among the most popular authors for students of post-primary schools (gimnazjum) in 2003, and Coelho in 2010.<sup>30</sup> Coelho's popularity among the younger generations is confirmed also in the readership study of 2010. Teenagers (5%) and twenty-year-olds (6%) were the groups most interested in Coelho's works, with the older age groups taking much less notice. This is not surprising because the search for the meaning of life is something characteristic of younger people who are still in the process of forming their identity. In 2010, Coelho was chosen more frequently by women than men, and by people with secondary and higher education rather than by the poorly educated respondents.

The life questions which both writers attempt to answer may seem overly general and cliché, but they are at the same time very universal. In that context it is rather difficult to explain the unique reaction of the Polish audience to the works of Wharton and Coelho. The popularity of Wharton's *Last Lovers* was not part of a global trend but a unique phenomenon.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, while Coelho's following is a worldwide phenomenon, major differences are observed among various nations,<sup>32</sup> with Poles being particularly sensitive to this Brazilian writer.

Such a situation has perhaps been caused by the highly effective promotional efforts which surrounded both authors in Poland, but there must be other reasons as well. Promotional campaigns can yield a lot only if there is fertile soil for them. As Wharton's and Coelho's popularity cannot be explained by anything obvious like special references to Polish issues or history, the reasons must be concealed within expectations towards literature and the more general needs which they fulfil.

The study phases in 1992 and 2000 asked about the most important values found in books. The earlier study, which was conducted during the period of fascination with western popular literature, indicated ludic values while the later study highlighted cognitive needs, including the need to understand the meaning of life and the social world that surrounds us. As the early 1990s are considered a very unique period for the readership in Poland, the later study is most likely showing a more typical model of the needs of Polish readers.<sup>33</sup> The needs

30 Ibid. See also: *Gimnazjalni czytelnicy książek...* [Books and Reading Among...]. See above.

31 Especially that his latest books were prepared mainly for the Polish market.

32 For example, see J. Trávníček: *Čtenáři a interneti obyvatelé České republiky a jejich vztah ke čtení (2010)*. Brno 2011. ISBN 9788072945153.

33 In the Czech Republic, answers to that question mentioned mainly ludic values.

seem to be connected with the image of the writer as a spiritual guide – a very important model noticeable in the Polish literary tradition and supported by the set readings in school.

This model is derived from high literature, but that genre has been greatly transformed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and ambitious writers of contemporary times are rarely the source of answers to the fundamental questions of life (they are liable rather to expose more questions and doubts than provide answers and ready solutions, and tend to play with the literary form). Contemporary high literature is read by only a few well-educated people, as described above. The group of readers who are willing or at least capable of facing the challenges of that literature is rather small. The Polish readers seem to look for something beyond just entertainment, but at the same time are reluctant to put too much effort into reading while receiving overly ambiguous messages. This may be the reason for the widespread interest in writers who attempt to be spiritual guides while offering rather easy messages.

Last but not least, neither Wharton nor Coelho have any major competitors among the other popular writers in Poland. The closest genre to their philosophical and cognitive literature is the classic fantasy. However, there is a rather big group of people who approach classic fantasy with negative feelings and will never read about dragons and elves regardless of any in-depth existential message conveyed in such books.

# MAIN TYPES OF LITERATURE CHOSEN BY BOOK READERS AND BUYERS – NONFICTION

## CHAPTER IV

### 1. DOCUMENTARY LITERATURE – RULERS, TRAVELLERS, SAINTS AND MARTYRS

Documentary literature comprises several types of nonfiction genres: biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, interviews and reportages. The common feature is a story of actual events that are depicted from the perspective of particular people who participated in those events. As such, documentary literature communicates knowledge about the world described based on the personal experience of the author or of the main characters of the story.

#### DOCUMENTARY LITERATURE IN 1992–2008

Documentary literature was one of the genres enjoying a dynamic growth of interest in the early 1990s, with 21% of readers selecting such books. However, two years later the level of interest dropped to 11% of readers. Another decline was observed in 2000 with only 5% of readers declaring they had read documentary literature. However, 2000 was the beginning of a breakthrough. In the initial years of the new decade, the popularity of documentary literature started rising again to reach and even slightly exceed the level of the mid 1990s.

The social structure of readers was analysed in selected study phases only: 1996, 2002, 2004 and 2006, when a relatively large number of readers declared they had read documentary literature. The analysis demonstrated several correlations that were relatively stable. Documentary fiction was selected mostly by older readers above 60 years of age, people with at least secondary education, and residents of the big and biggest cities. The gender of readers was not a clear factor: some of the studies indicated more readers among women while others showed an equal number of women and men. Differences in the age structure have not followed any clear model over the subsequent years, such as the group of readers becoming younger or older. However, changes that occurred in the selection of titles show a clear and distinguishable process which mirrors changing areas of interest, namely a shift of focus and an avoidance of certain subjects.

The sudden popularity of documentary literature in the early 1990s was stimulated by books that were written by politicians and which evaluated the social and political events of the communist era in Poland. At least 1% of readers mentioned autobiographies of former



communist leaders: *Przerwana dekada (The Broken Decade)* by Edward Gierek and *Stan wojenny. Dłaczego... (Civil War – Why?)* by Wojciech Jaruzelski, to name a few. It is interesting that such a high level of popularity among book readers and buyers alike was not achieved by the books of communist dissidents which were published in the same time, like *The Road to Freedom* by Lech Wałęsa.

It seems that in the initial years after the political transformation people were more interested in what former rulers had to say rather than their political opponents. However, this is not surprising. Figures of authority have always been an object of fascination for people, and such books were written by those who had controlled the reality of life in Poland for many years. Their perspective, which was not necessarily identical with the official propaganda before 1989, enabled the general public to understand better how their previous world was ruled. However, the former political dissidents had many secrets to reveal too, and could show a backstage view of important events from the past. Let us remind ourselves of the common principle of popular culture: testimonials by people who are perceived negatively (or at least ambiguously) appear more attractive than stories of heroes. The stories of political opponents, which after 1989 provided the new official version of history and the new language of authority, were becoming boring for readers. The analysed readership study was conducted less than one year prior to the parliamentary elections of 1993, in which political parties rooted in the socialist system actually won. As such, the study results could be reflecting the accumulating nostalgia for the old political system and the growing disappointment with the transformation.

The high popularity of politics of the former communist era and the current affairs have not lasted long. The books mentioned above quickly dropped from the list of the most popular titles, however they continued to appear in a few declarations from time to time. Newer books concerning the Polish and world politics also appeared but none has been popular enough to cause a widespread interest.

Documentary literature concerning contemporary politicians was rarely the choice of book readers and buyers because the politicians did not appear distinctive, fascinating or shocking enough to make a wider group of respondents interested in finding out more about them in newspapers, television or on the Internet. Apparently, the political stage is not appealing and does not have an impact on the readership of books that describe the political scandals, turns of events, wars and downfalls which Poland and the world experienced in the past twenty years.

The only important ruling figure who managed to draw a significant number of Polish readers was Pope John Paul II. However, in his case the political role is secondary to the function of a spiritual leader surrounded with an aura of sanctity. The fascination with Karol Wojtyła follows a different kind of documentary literature that concerns saints, religious leaders and people from the Church, added to which is the unique attribute of the Pope as being the most famous Pole of contemporary times. While the interest in politics and politicians was high especially in the early 1990s, the fascination with Karol Wojtyła, and the broader religious context, was a phenomenon of the second half of the recent decade – after the death of the ‘Polish’ Pope and during his beatification.

The increased popularity of books following the death of a personage was also present in the case of Ryszard Kapuściński, who was both the author and the main character of his documentary works. However, this famous writer and traveller was enjoying a growing popularity while he was still alive. The first wave of interest in his works was observed in 2004, after the publication of his *Travels with Herodotus*, a well-promoted book which was nominated for the *Nike* literary award in Poland. Four years later, after his death, Kapuściński’s reportages and essays became an important part of the most popular documentary literature.

The rise of his works follows a broader 'fashion' for travel literature. The first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a great expansion of that genre. Many Polish authors of travel books started their careers and blossomed. Their success was soon reflected in the results of this readership study. From 2012 the respondents were mentioning Wojciech Cejrowski, Wojciech Jagielski, Jacek Pałkiewicz, and Marcin Bruczkowski.

The rising interest in information about foreign countries, and in areas outside of western culture, can be linked with the popularity of another documentary genre which was present in the respondent declarations throughout the last decade: memoirs and confessions of people, and women in particular, from countries which Poles consider exotic. And these are not just memoirs, moreover, but rather stories of suffering women from Africa and the Middle East, such as *Desert Flower* by Waris Dirie and *Burned Alive* by Souad. Books such as these have been appearing in this study since 2000.

It seems as though at the turn of the century, readers' focus shifted from politicians to saints, travellers and martyrs. This fluctuation of interest explains the initial decline and later rise of documentary literature. The lowest point occurred after the decline of topics related to politics, just before the expansion of the market for travel books, publications on John Paul II, and religious literature.

The level of interest in politics, travel, and the people of the Church (and the Pope in particular) was experiencing clear ups and downs, unlike the two other types of documentary literature which are also mentioned in the respondent declarations: biographies, memoirs and reportages concerning historical figures and events, and books about the life of living personalities in culture, science, literature, art and the media (also referred to as *celebrities*).

In the case of historical publications there is one prevalent sub-genre, even though various eras and places were of interest to readers. The most frequent choices included memoirs, biographies and reportages related to World War II, in particular those written from the Polish perspective. There is no leading author that would stand out among others or that was mentioned in every study phase, however certain names and titles do recur: *Five Years in Concentration Camps* by Stanisław Grzesiuk and *Czarne krzyże nad Polską (Black Crosses over Poland)* by Stanisław Skalski. There are also works by Kamiński, Moczarski (*Conversations with an Executioner*) and other memoirs from the Holocaust or the Siberian camps. It seems that the film *The Pianist*, by Roman Polański, influenced the readership of *Europe, Europe*, a book which started appearing in the respondent declarations after 2002.

Joanna Chmielewska was one of the popular living authors of both biographies and autobiographies mentioned by the respondents. As her literary style centres on a satire of the current reality, her autobiography provided a similar type of content to her fiction stories. In a few study phases book readers and/or buyers also mentioned Głowacki's *Z głowy (Off the top of my head)*. In addition to the above names, other authors were also mentioned, including writers such as Zaorski and his book *Ręka, noga, mózg na ścianie (Arm, Leg, Brain on the Wall)*, actors such as Kucówna and her book *Zatrzymać czas (Stop the Time)*, biographies of the painter Frida Kahlo, a book by Sting, the Polish footballer Boniek with his book *Prosto z Juventusu (Straight from Juventus)*, and biographies of aristocrats such as Princess Diana and Princess Grace Kelly.

#### DOCUMENTARY LITERATURE IN 2010

In 2010, with 14% of reader mentions, documentary literature was slightly more popular among readers than in the previous years. However, it is hard to judge until future studies whether such a rise was incidental only or rather the beginning of a longer trend and a

symptom of documentary literature becoming more important for contemporary readers.

As in the earlier years, the older generations (above 60 years of age), followed by pensioners, showed the most interest in documentary literature. This genre was also popular among people with secondary education and, surprisingly, good financial standing, which rarely coincides with such a large number of older respondents. Neither the gender of the respondent nor the place of residence has been an important differentiator. The followers of documentary literature came mainly from the group of regular book readers rather than occasional readers. The 2010 results are similar to those from previous years, however this time the level of education (secondary) was a clear factor, while the place of residence was not as important.

The topics of books that readers selected in 2010 seem similar to those of earlier years. As the 2010 sample was slightly bigger and there were more respondents declaring they had read documentary literature, it was possible to analyse the results in greater detail. The study revealed that in 2010 readers were interested more in travel books (4.5%) and historical texts (4%), but slightly less in famous figures related to religion (3%), or culture, art and science (2%), with the least interest being shown in current politics (less than 1%).

Wojciech Cejrowski was the leading reporter and the only author of documentary literature who managed to reach more than 1% of readers. The respondents mentioned several books from this writer, with the top works being those devoted to his adventures with a legendary tribe untouched by the modern civilization: *Gringo wśród dzikich plemion* (*Gringo Among the Wild Tribes*) and *Rio Anakonda* (*Rio Anaconda*). Ryszard Kapuściński was less popular than in 2008, with over 0.5% of readers. In addition to these two most famous Polish travellers, readers mentioned an array of other writers who described the world to Polish readers (including Wojciech Jagielski, Beata Pawlikowska, and Jacek Hugo-Bader).

Polish writers prevailed in the results for travel literature, and only a few foreign authors (women in fact) were mentioned. These included Elizabeth Gilbert (*Eat, Pray, Love*), Corinne Hofmann (*The White Massai*), and Frances Mayes, with the former two mentioned by a few respondents only. Also, exotic stories about suffering women seemed to continue their popularity in 2010.

There were no surprises in the choice of documentary literature on history. Although there were a few books mentioned about older eras, the 20<sup>th</sup> century appeared to be the most interesting time for respondents. There is no single leader in this kind of literature, even though several titles were repeated: Fiedler's *Dywizjon 303* (*Squadron 303*), Wańkiewicz's *Monte Cassino*, Szpilman's *The Pianist*, and Skalski's *Czarne krzyże nad Polską* (*Black Crosses over Poland*). Wartime stories prevail, in particular stories and events experienced by Poles. As regards biographies, the respondents often recall their main subjects rather than the names of the authors or actual titles.

According to reader declarations, documentary literature dedicated to religious topics included mainly biographies of John Paul II (approx. 1% of readers, with no single title standing out) and, to a smaller extent, texts related to important figures of the Church in Poland, such as Stefan Wyszyński, Jerzy Popiełuszko and the nun Faustyna. Foreign documentary literature concerning saints included father Pio.

In the group of famous people from the arts, culture and the media whose biographies appealed to Polish readers in 2010, almost only Polish names were mentioned, including many popular writers, such as Grochola, Chmielewska, Twardowski and Mrożek.

The political world in 2010 had a negligible share in the choice of literature, just as in the previous years. The figure of Lech Wałęsa has not aroused much interest, regardless of the many discussions around his political vetting. Neither has this study demonstrated an increased interest in Lech Kaczyński, even though several biographies of him were released on the market between the fatal crash of his aircraft (10 April 2010) and the month of this

survey (November). An interest in the world of politics could be detected in two books only. The observation drawn from the previous study phases has been confirmed: Poles do not express their interest in politics and politicians by reading books.

The overall choice of documentary literature clearly shows that Poles prefer books by Polish authors and/or works presenting the world from the perspective of a Polish character. This type of literature is twice as popular as foreign books. The dominance of the former type is clear in the case of all the themes mentioned above.

Furthermore, the readers of documentary literature fall into a socially diversified structure. The whole of documentary literature attracts various readers. The internal differences stand out even more when the literature is broken into specific themes. The choice of literature depends a lot on the gender, age and level of education. The older age groups read documentary literature dedicated to religion. The level of education is an important factor differentiating readers of religious, historical and geography books. Religious literature appeals more to people with poor education, while the two latter types of books are more attractive to those with a higher level of education. However, the factor of gender is the most interesting. Documentary literature garners a similar level of interest among women and men alike, with clear differences arising in the choice of topics. Men liked books about war more, a factor which gave them a preponderance in the readership of biographies, memoirs and reportages on historical issues. On the other hand, women were almost the only readers of biographies of religious figures. The choice of readings depended also on the gender of the author and/or the main character of a biography, memoir or reportage. Stories told from the female perspective were read almost exclusively by women, for example the persecuted women from Africa and Middle East, women's memoirs from wartime, confessions of female drug abusers, reportages by female travellers, or lives of famous female writers, artists and celebrities. The world of men is common both to women and men alike, while the world of women is theirs exclusively.

## **2. ENCYCLOPAEDIC LITERATURE – WHAT REMAINS AFTER WIKIPEDIA; AND GUIDES - PSYCHOLOGISTS AND ANGLERS**

Encyclopaedic literature and guides include texts that facilitate access to knowledge. It is a rather wide and varied category which comprises two types of books, each with a distinct definition and associated with different reading habits. The first type is dictionaries and encyclopaedias, which can be distinguished based on the unique ordering of content (usually sorted alphabetically). Such ordering is intended to facilitate data searches, however it also hinders a more comprehensive vantage. Such books are usually associated with the need for advice or the verification of certain information rather than the need to read. In particular, such books are used for schools and for scientific purposes. The second type of books is guides, which sort information depending on real-life practices and show methods of deploying knowledge into specific actions and behaviours.

### **READERS AND BUYERS OF ENCYCLOPAEDIC LITERATURE AND GUIDES IN 1992-2008**

Encyclopaedic literature and guides have a relatively stable share in the overall readership that book readers declared in 1992 – 2008. Only minor fluctuations could be observed. This type of literature did not experience a great boom in the early 1990s. Its popularity among readers was even lower in 1992 and 1994 than in later years. It captured the most

attention in the mid 1990s and at the turn of the century. In other years its popularity was slightly decreasing. In the most recent years, encyclopaedic literature and guides had a stable level of 14% of readers, which again dropped in 2010.

Furthermore, respondents far more frequently declared that they had bought such books than had read them. In the past twenty years of this study, this type of literature has always been the top choice of buyers. However, such popularity among buyers has been declining slowly over the years, even though it remains high. In 1992, 37% of all book buyers declared they had bought encyclopaedias, dictionaries and guides, and 30% in 2000. From 2000 to 2008 these kinds of books attracted 29-25% of buyers, with only 18% in 2010.

The fact that readers devoted much less time to encyclopaedic literature and guides than buyers resulted most likely from the fact that such books are not classified as readings *per se* but rather associated with use, advice, and the search for information. The frequent choice of such books among buyers proves that everybody wants (or wanted) to have them at home, on the shelf or at hand to be able to use them freely to find the needed information.

Overall, the group of readers that mentioned encyclopaedias and guides does not stand out on account of any social attributes. The only statistically significant correlations were related to the low level of interest among the youngest generation and people with the lowest education.

The titles which the readers and buyers of encyclopaedias and guides named show a relatively permanent presence of several types of books: the popular encyclopaedia (often referred to as the PWN encyclopaedia), foreign language dictionaries, thematic encyclopaedias related to certain practical areas or hobbies (e.g. *Encyclopaedia of Health*, *Encyclopaedia of Rock Music*), regulatory codes and collections of laws and social rules, cookbooks, health guides, psychology guides and travel guides. The obtained data shows hardly any fluctuations in the popularity of the respective types. Based on the titles named and the comments of the authors of the study reports, an increasing popularity of psychology guides, which started in the mid 1990s, could be very cautiously implied, with the most frequently mentioned book being *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* by Murphy.

#### READERS AND BUYERS OF ENCYCLOPAEDIC LITERATURE AND GUIDES IN 2010

In 2010, a slight decline in the readership of encyclopaedic literature and guides (10% of readers) and a clear drop in purchases (18% of buyers) was observed. The falling interest in this type of literature is not a surprise because the knowledge available on the Internet is successfully competing with it.

Considering that the interest in encyclopaedic literature and guides is very volatile, this process requires an in-depth monitoring. To that end, the 2010 study distinguishes two different types: encyclopaedias and dictionaries vs. guides.

#### READERS AND BUYERS OF ENCYCLOPAEDIAS AND DICTIONARIES IN 2010

The separation of encyclopaedias and dictionaries from guides enabled the discovery that the former draw far less attention than the latter. Encyclopaedias and dictionaries were mentioned by a mere 2% of readers and 6% of buyers. It appears that this type of literature is no longer attractive for either reading or, what is more significant, shopping. The titles mentioned by the buyers of encyclopaedias and dictionaries show mainly dictionaries. It seems that encyclopaedias have a hard time competing with Internet sources.

The social profiles of both readers and buyers of encyclopaedias and dictionaries do not differ depending on social variables. Perhaps this is a truly universal type of literature which every reader needs from time to time.

#### READERS AND BUYERS OF GUIDES IN 2010

In 2010, 8% of readers and 12% of book buyers indicated guides. As such, guides were more popular than encyclopaedias and dictionaries.

The interest in guides is similar between men and women with no clear correlations with the level of education. Only two social variables were important, but to a limited extent only: the place of residence (guides were more popular among villagers) and age. Guides are a very rare source of reading for teenagers, but a very popular one among fifty-year-olds. Perhaps the former are not interested in health guides or cookbooks yet. Teenagers could read psychology guides, but instead they tend to look for solutions in high literature (see the sub-chapter “Practical and Magical – Psychology Books”). The choice of literature among fifty-year-olds implies that the many problems that occur at their age cause them to reach for guides. Their declarations show the simultaneous use of medical guides (especially for the older generations), and professional guides (especially for the younger generations).

Among the various types of guides, respondents selected psychology guides (3% of all readers) and to a slightly lesser extent medical and cooking guides (2% each). Several readers indicated topics related to childcare, economics, technology and IT, and travel guides. There were a very few mentions of hobby books, animals, hunting, sailing and fashion.

The choice clearly depended on the gender of respondents. Women were interested in the most popular types of guides that are also the prototype of the entire genre: psychology, cooking and health (especially diets). Men were for the most part the only readers of guides related to technology, IT, construction and economics. In addition, men were the main group indicating guides related to hobbies rather than professions, for example books about animals, travel, hunting, etc.

The social variables of buyers are slightly different than in the case of readers of guides. The age of the respondents was a major differentiating factor. The youngest respondents declared a very low level of interest in guides. Guides were the most popular for the oldest generation (especially pensioners), unlike in the case of readers.

The topics appealing to buyers of guides were slightly different than in the reader group. The most popular were medical and cooking guides, with psychology guides ranking the lowest. The significant share of health guides was most likely associated with the fact that there were many pensioners among the buyers of guides.

### **3. SCIENTIFIC AND POPULAR SCIENCE LITERATURE - HISTORY AND THE REST OF THE WORLD**

The category of scientific and popular science literature covers books that offer knowledge but do not meet the criteria for documentary literature or encyclopaedic literature and guides. Scientific and popular science literature encompasses strictly scientific and specialist readings as well as easier books which popularise scientific topics. The category is new and has not been researched in the previous study phases. As such it is elaborated based on 2010 data only.

## READERS OF SCIENTIFIC AND POPULAR SCIENCE BOOKS IN 2010

In 2010, every tenth reader declared they had read scientific and popular science books. This type of literature was much more important for men, of which there were three times more than women. The level of interest was clearly correlated with the level of education – the respondents with higher education were the most frequent readers of this type of literature. However, the broadly defined category of scientific and popular science literature is not as elite as, for example, contemporary high literature, in the case of which secondary education seems to be an almost absolute threshold to become a reader. Readers of scientific and popular science books do include people after preparatory occupational schools and primary schools. The place of residence was a significant factor as well. Residents of big and the biggest cities read more scientific and popular science books than residents of smaller cities and towns. Furthermore, readers of this literature feel comfortable using other texts, too: there are many Internet users and regular readers of the press within that group.

The choice of scientific and popular science books seems highly diversified. This could be due to the individual nature of readers' interests in such texts, and the diversity of personal needs related to hobbies, educational pursuits or occupations. The individual nature of the choices within this literature and their high resistance to following mainstream trends are also evidenced in the results of the previous study phases, which demonstrated that scientific and popular science books could rarely be found among the most common books. However, respondents do show certain inclinations towards specific topics or themes. One topic has attracted a lot of attention: history (see the sub-chapter "Love, Adventure and Politics - History Books"). History books were listed by almost one third of all readers of scientific and popular science literature in 2010. In previous years, the only common readings falling within this genre have almost always been history books as well. Perhaps the decisive factor for such a wide interest in history is not so much educational or professional purposes (there are only a limited number of jobs which require a deeper knowledge of history), but rather the fact that historical tales are very attractive and the emotions connected with historical events easily appeal to the general public. The value of such attributes of historical tales for readers (emotional narration and descriptions of significant and moving events) is confirmed in the unique titles of scientific and popular science books on history which were published in the past twenty years and which reached the status of common readings, namely: *Sensacje XX wieku* (*Sensational Actions of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*) by Wołoszański (even the title suggests an action story) and *Rising' 44* by Davies (concerning an event which stirs the emotions of Poles).

Scientific and popular science books in other areas seem to lack the power to gain the interest of readers. However, approximately 1% of readers mentioned two other topics: psychology and business & law. The former type covered popular science books mostly, which implies reading for pleasure. The latter type included more textbooks, which shows the readers' need to improve their level of knowledge in that field. These are all topics which were deemed important by the readers of scientific and popular science books. Books on physics, technology, biology, philosophy, culture, or sociology were read on rare occasions only, even among people with a good education.

#### 4. ESSAYS AND JOURNALISTIC BOOKS – THE DISCREET CHARM OF REFLECTION

Essays and journalistic works include books that describe politics, social life, and culture, both historical and contemporary, however without focusing on the facts as much as on

their interpretation. This type of literature concentrates on reflection, and sometimes polemics and discussion – the authors often touch upon disputes and controversies.

#### READERS AND BUYERS OF ESSAYS AND JOURNALISTIC BOOKS IN 2000-2008

This category has been surveyed in this readership study since 2000. Thus, the data on how such books function in society is available for the last decade only. The charm of reflection or even polemics does not appeal to a wide community of book readers. The share of essays and journalistic books in overall book reading and buying was rather minimal in most years. At the beginning and end of the last decade, such publications were interesting for 1-2% of readers and buyers, with a slight rise in the middle of the decade. 2006 was the best year for essays and journalistic books, achieving a score of 4% of readers. The category had the most buyers in 2004, when 6% of buyers indicated essays and journalistic books.

The improved popularity of this genre in 2004 was partially due to the series *Literatura XX wieku (Literature of the 20th Century)*, published by *Gazeta Wyborcza* daily. 1% of buyers bought *The Captive Mind* by Czesław Miłosz, an essay that was part of this series. As in the case of other books from the series, the act of purchasing did not necessarily lead to the act of reading.

Another popular author of journalistic books, who managed to draw 1% of book buyers in 2006, was Tomasz Lis. Two of his political essays were the most popular: *Co z tą Polską? (What About Poland?)* and *Polska, głupcze (Poland, You Idiot)*. However, Lis did not manage to garner a level of readership similar to that of purchases, even though, unlike *The Captive Mind*, his books did appear in the respondent declarations.

The political reflection from various perspectives (sophisticated, historical or contemporary) that the texts of Czesław Miłosz and Tomasz Lis contain are also the prevalent type of reading in the pool of the remaining works which book readers and buyers named, for example *Syndrom PRL-u (The PRL Syndrome)* and *Rządy zbirów (The Thug Rule)* by Pająk and Żochowski, *Stupid White Men* by Moore, and *Fear* by Gross.

In addition to the above, topics mentioned also included religion, for example *Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness: Being Christian in a Non-Christian World* by Cook and Baldwin, and culture broadly defined, for example *The Other* by Kapuściński, *The Da Vinci Hoax* by Carl Olson and Sandra Miesel, *Born to be Riled* by Clarkson.

Furthermore, there were periods during which these types of books reached above 1% of buyers, but not readers. Obviously, such books are considered worth buying but not necessarily worth reading.

#### READERS AND BUYERS OF ESSAYS AND JOURNALISTIC BOOKS IN 2010

In 2010, essays and journalistic books were the object of interest for 2% of book readers and 2% of book buyers. This level of interest has remained rather low. Most readers were people with higher education, residents of cities, regular readers and buyers of books. As such the readers were an elite group of people, resembling the readers of contemporary high literature.

Several books mentioned in the previous years were also named in 2010: *Co z tą Polską? (What About Poland?)* by Lis, *Fear* by Gross, and books by Clarkson. New titles included books that reflect upon religious matters, such as *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins. It seems that, compared to 2004-2006, the declining level of interest in essays and journalistic books is connected with the falling popularity of books reflecting on political issues. In 2010, the latter had a similar share to books on religion, transformations in civilisation and culture.



## 5. TEXTBOOKS – A NECESSARY EVIL

The textbook category includes books that respondents classified as textbooks and books for “studies,” “school,” “learning,” or “training.” In this case, the respondents usually did not provide authors, titles or topics. As such descriptive terms do not cover all of the literature that respondents bought or read for educational purposes, this literary category allows us to discover how respondents use the various descriptions of their educational needs. The various descriptions are so frequent and unique that an analysis of their use in the declarations of readers and buyers seems insightful. Even with its imperfections, the textbook category shows how Poles classify educational books vs. other readings and purchases.

Based on the responses to the question about the number of books read, it appears that the respondents are not likely to refer to the use of such books with the term *reading*. Textbooks were mentioned by a mere 2% of all readers and, interestingly, by only 6% of students who read books. It would be too radical to say that students in Poland do not use textbooks. Rather, they do not associate *learning from textbooks* with *reading or browsing through books*. The group of people who read textbooks and named their titles was very small and thus cannot be described in greater detail. In the case of book buying, however, things are very different.

Perhaps textbooks are not the best books for reading, but they are certainly good books for buying. While textbooks are one of the smallest categories in term of the readership, it is one of the largest in terms of book shopping. Such great attention paid to textbooks is not surprising considering that they are not only a compulsory purchase for a major part of the population, but they also make up a relatively high share of expenses.

The social profile of people who buy books for educational purposes is very clear. Firstly, textbooks are purchased mainly by those who need them: students and parents. In the case of the latter, the more children in a household, the more textbooks are bought. Textbooks were mentioned by 25% of buyers with one child, 36% of buyers with two children, and 83% of buyers with three and more children. Such popularity among bigger families could be associated with the greater likelihood of having at least one child in school. Also, bigger families need to buy more textbooks, and such an expense might be an important financial issue that causes books for school to be associated directly with book buying.

Furthermore, buyers of textbooks stand out because they rarely declare buying any other books: only ¼ of them buy books other than textbooks, and they tend to choose encyclopaedias, dictionaries, guides and children’s books. It seems that people who read for pleasure and buy books for personal use do not buy textbooks as frequently. Such a conclusion could be drawn from the fact that buyers of textbooks made up 16% of the overall group of people who buy and read books, and 51% of the group of those who buy books but do not read them. Also, there are slightly more buyers of textbooks among certain social groups that do not read much, such as people with poor education and villagers. Therefore, if textbooks bought for compulsory educational purposes are subtracted from the overall pool of purchased books, book buying becomes even more elite than the basic analysis of shopping behaviours indicated before (in the first Part of this Report).

# MAIN TYPES OF LITERATURE CHOSEN BY BOOK READERS AND BUYERS – THEMES

## CHAPTER V

### 1. LOVE, ADVENTURE AND POLITICS - HISTORY BOOKS

Books on history are a special category that requires a wider explanation because it is not homogenous and has a separate place in the literary classification system of this Report. It is the only hybrid category encompassing both fiction and nonfiction. However, the need to create the category resulted directly from the answers provided by the respondents. The high incidence of *history/historical* as a term used by the respondents to describe their choice of literature in general and specific books in particular left no doubts that history is an area of special interest for the respondents, with 18% of readers mentioning it in 2010. Many respondents limited their description to “history books” without giving any more details as to the type of content. Other responses show that this term could mean both fiction as well as nonfiction. As the study authors wanted to investigate the level of interest in texts on history and therefore to include all types of works mentioned, a new collective category was created encompassing all books on history, whether from the scientific, popular science, documentary or fiction-like perspective.

Fiction stories were the most popular among the three main types of history texts, followed by popular science and scientific books, with the least interest being shown in documentary books (autobiographies, biographies, memoirs, or reportages). The respondents were more interested in the history of Poland than that of the world. Among the various historical eras, the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and World War II in particular) appealed the most to the readers and received more indications than all other eras combined.

The overall reading public of historical literature is an internally diversified group, because each of the main types of history books has a different kind of following. Therefore, the following description of history literature chosen in 2010 is divided into historical fiction, scientific and popular science books, and documentary literature, with reader profiles analysed for each of the types separately.

#### READERS OF HISTORICAL FICTION IN 2010

Historical fiction means fiction stories “presenting the world from a time which the au-

thor and its readers treat not as contemporary but as a closed era of the past.<sup>734</sup> Such a definition requires a certain time limit that separates “a closed era of the past” from contemporary times. It was decided that this time limit would be 1989. Certain stories describing actions which took place not long ago, relatively speaking, could also be treated as historical stories, if the length of time that had lapsed since then were a significant factor shaping the reception of such a story (for example, a contemporary detective story with the plot occurring in the communist era in Poland). Historical stories are not works which present the world in part as history and in part as speculative fiction, nor works in which characters are only investigating historical times.

The readers of historical stories were mainly older people, while the results do not show much influence from the level of education or the gender of the readers.

In the case of this fiction only, the respondents chose more Polish authors than foreign ones. However, this might be due to the popularity of Henryk Sienkiewicz, the 19<sup>th</sup> century writer who wrote stories of adventure and love interweaved with descriptions of dramatic and glorious moments from Polish history. The interest in his works has been clearly in decline, from 10% in 1996 to 2% in 2010, yet it is still enough to make 1/4 of all history books chosen by the respondents. The context of readings among which the respondents mentioned the books of Sienkiewicz allows certain conclusions to be drawn as to the basis of a common connection between them. Certain respondents mentioned Sienkiewicz along with books that suggest an attempt to recall or supplement their own knowledge of literary classics. For example, one reader mentioned the *Trilogy* next to Reymont's *Peasants* and *The Promised Land*, and other works of Balzac and Hugo. Other readers included titles and descriptions that clearly indicate a concern with Polish history, for example “Żeromski, Sienkiewicz, about the priest Popiełuszko” and “Sienkiewicz, the history of Poland.” It seems that the vision of Polish history that Sienkiewicz described in his works, with its patriotic content, is important for these readers. Sienkiewicz is often mentioned along with popular literature, for example “Alistair MacLean, *Where Eagles Dare*, *The Guns of Navarone*, Henryk Sienkiewicz *The Knights of the Cross*, *The Deluge*, books about World War II.”

Both the patriotic/Christian content and the wartime/adventure narration which are the features of Sienkiewicz's works return in the books mentioned by respondents of other Polish writers from before World War II and after it during the communist era in Poland, namely Przyborowski, Kossak-Szczucka's *Krzyżowcy (Crusaders)*, Bunsch, and Gerhard.

Polish contemporary literature was not mentioned in this context. The latest historical books of popular literature were the detective stories by Marek Krajewski. In his unique use of history, Krajewski pays great attention to a detailed recreation of everyday life as it had been in the past.

Day-to-day existence was also the focus of historical books which the respondents classified as contemporary high literature. However, there were very few of them in that category. This ambitious style, full of reflection, which developed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was mentioned only once with Hanna Malewska's *Apokryf rodzinny (Family Apocrypha)*. From contemporary Polish literature of that type, readers mentioned only Kazimierz Kutz and his *Piąta strona świata (The Fifth Side of the World)*. These two works mentioned above have a lot in common. Both describe historical transformations, in particular during the last century, told as a saga of many generations. It appears that the few books chosen from Polish

34 J. Sławiński et al. (ed.): *Słownik terminów literackich* [Dictionary of Literary Terms]. Wrocław 2002. ISBN: 83040461565.

contemporary historical stories (both the more ambitious ones and the more popular ones, if Krajewski is included) show that the everyday and intimate life of an individual can be used as background for investigating the meaning of greater historical processes.

Foreign historical books were a rare selection and different from the Polish literature. There were fewer classics mentioned, with only a few *cloak & dagger* books such as those by Alexandre Dumas and Paul Feval. Not many books with adventure or action plots were indicated either, with a few titles only like MacLean's *The Guns of Navarone* and Follett's *Needle*. This set of popular fiction also included love stories. Respondents declared they had read romances set in various historical eras: the Scandinavian Middle Ages (Frid Ingulstad's *Ingebjørg Olavsdatte*), the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the USA (Wilbur Smith's *Courtney*), and Eastern Europe during the unsettling first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Paullina Simmons' *Tatiana and Alexander*). As in the case of the Polish literature, popular stories prevail over the few works of greater cognitive and artistic ambition. The latter include Jonathan Littel's *The Kindly Ones* and Ken Follett's *The Pillars of the Earth*. However, the prime spot belongs to Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* – at least a few readers name it every year.

The respondent declarations listed a few historical novels which could be considered high literature, however the overall choice of historical fiction shows that it comprises mainly popular stories with plots of adventure, war, action, mystery and romance. This function of the literature is evidenced in both the choice of works mentioned by the respondents and the broader literary context with which the respondents associate the mentioned works. Historical stories of war and action plots are an addition to other action stories, while historical romance is chosen along with other love stories. In addition, a principle governs the choice of historical stories with adventure plots. The respondents tend to name older books that were written at least tens of years ago. A basic familiarity with the literary market is enough to allow one to notice the insufficient offering of new and attractive titles in that genre. This might be caused by the fact that popular stories set in a historical context share a readership with other types of works that provide similar literary values. It applies especially to those types of fiction that have been left outside the current category of literature thus far, namely action stories with historical mysteries to be solved and fantasy literature.

The former type (with Dan Brown's works being the obvious example) addresses such a need by providing historical riddles, which used to be the specialty of historic writers of novels such as Alexandre Dumas, *père*. Fantasy stories are connected with historical literature through plots that are set in exotic worlds resembling the reality of the past times. Clear parallels are also noticeable within specific types of genres. Considering the most popular authors named by the respondents, the most interesting case is the similarities between Sienkiewicz-like historical stories and Tolkien's heroic fantasy. In both cases, the reality is dominated by big wars and adventurous plots are used to convey moral messages. The respondents who mentioned the two genres in the form of Sienkiewicz's *Trilogy* and Tolkien's trilogy certainly derive similar emotions from both. However, there are clear differences too. The main difference is the fact that the patriotic values so obvious in the case of Sienkiewicz and his successors are replaced with more universal messages in the case of fantasy literature. This difference becomes even more significant in the context of the age of readers: historical stories are more popular among older respondents while fantasy is more popular among the younger ones. There appears to be a transformational process occurring between the generations.

In the area of fantasy, historical literature also includes romance-type books which combine history and either fantasy, like Magrid Sandemo, or supernatural love stories, like Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*. In the latter case (similarly to historical romance) the love story is set in dramatic and exotic conditions.

The above comparison of the readership of historical stories with other types of fiction rather than with overall literature on history reflects the fact that the readers themselves have put historical fiction in such a context in most of their declarations. Readers liked fiction stories most: 65% of them mentioned other fiction books in addition to historical stories. On the other hand, history books rarely accompanied historical documentaries and, even less frequently, popular science and scientific books. The historical context in which the respondents place their fiction books was not similar to the choice of historical nonfiction (no focus on the 20<sup>th</sup> century or World War II).

The data obtained shows that people who look for knowledge about history in documents or scientific and popular science books, and other readers who simply like to read stories from old times, are groups displaying different social profiles, reading habits and historical focus. However, it does not prove that historical fiction is not a source of knowledge about history for its readers. It is likely that readers reach for historical fiction for its unique storytelling, just like in the case of fantasy, and use it as an easy source of certain knowledge about history in terms of both the course of certain events in the past and, for example, everyday life as it had been lived in previous times.

#### SCIENTIFIC AND POPULAR SCIENCE BOOKS ON HISTORY IN 2010

Historical books from the genre of scientific and popular science literature include works that, on a various level, concern political and social history, everyday life in the past, and historical culture. As in the case of historical fiction, the year 1989 was chosen as the time boundary.

The overall readership of historical literature from the scientific and popular science genre (4% of all readers) was different from that of historical fiction. Men and well-educated people (half of them with higher education and the rest with at least secondary education), and especially managers and professionals, were the main groups of readers. Similarly to the case of historical literature in its entirety, the single largest group was pensioners, however there were more younger respondents than for historical fiction. Users of scientific and popular science texts related to history also read a lot, as did the readers of historical fiction. Half of the former were heavy readers but, unlike the latter, they focused on nonfiction. In addition, half of the readers who liked historical literature of a more scientific character also mentioned at least two texts on history. This shows that their interest in this field goes beyond just an incidental encounter with history.

The choice of books includes comprehensive synthetic works on history, for example Paweł Jasienica's *The Commonwealth of Both Nations: A Tale of Agony*, works analysing particular events in history, for example Norman Davies' *Rising '44*, books which merge historical facts with dramatic narration, for example Wołoszański's *Sensacje XX wieku (Sensational Actions of the 20th Century)*, and strictly scientific works. Readers are interested not only in political history, as with Stéphane Courtois's *The Black Book of Communism*, but also in history seen from different points of view: social, economic, cultural and the everyday life of people, as with Błażej Brzostek's *PRL na widelcu (People's Republic of Poland – How to Eat)*, Paul Halpern's *The Pursuit of Destiny*, or Zygmunt Kubiak's *Wędrówki po stuleciach (Travel Across Centuries)*. The choice of scientific and popular science books related to history was clearly dominated by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and World War II in particular. Attention was also given to topics related to communism and the history of the previous political system in Poland.

The science-inclined readers of history books stand out not only with their reading practices but also with their comprehensive interest in texts, which include the press and the

Internet. The majority of them are regular readers of the press, including mainly social and political dailies and magazines with national coverage (the dailies *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, *Dziennik*, *Gazeta Prawna*, and the weeklies *Polityka*, *Newsweek*). Similar areas of interest are shared by Internet users, of which there are many in this group. They use the Internet to read news from Poland and the world.

This readership seems to follow a clear model. The readers of scientific and popular science books on history are mostly people who are obviously interested in social life and politics and combine their interest in history with a close observation of contemporary affairs.

#### HISTORICAL DOCUMENTARY LITERATURE IN 2010

Documentary literature includes texts from various genres: biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, and reportages. As such they are nonfiction works written from a more personal perspective than in the case of scientific literature. With the year 1989 again being the time boundary which separates the past from the present, documentary books related to history describe events that occurred prior to 1989 and people who died before that year.

As with the case of scientific texts, the readers of such books (3% of all readers) are mainly men, managers and professionals. However, they do not have the same higher education as the readers of scientific and popular science books and are not, as the latter are, heavy readers. Also, this reader group comprises many pensioners.

The choice of literature included almost solely works concerning the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially World War II, and, to a lesser extent, the later communist era. There were famous titles mentioned, such as Fiedler's *Squadron 303*, and Szpilman's *The Pianist*, along with other less popular books. Memoirs were the prevailing genre but a few biographies (Cardinal Wyszyński, Che Guevara) and reportages (Wańkowicz's *Monte Cassino*) were named too. The highest level of interest pertained to biographies of Poles and Polish historical events, with less attention paid to world history (such as the biography of Che Guevara, or Armin Scheiderbauer's *Adventures in my Youth: A German Soldier on the Eastern Front 1941-45*).

The readers of historical documentaries were more interested in fiction than the readers of scientific literature, and often combined documentary literature with fiction stories under a single theme (for example Fiedler's *Squadron 303* and MacLean's *The Guns of Navarone*).

#### READERSHIP RELATED TO WORLD WAR II

The history of World War II was a topic of interest for Polish readers (almost 5% of all readers) and therefore this Report devotes more attention to it. This sub-chapter encompasses the entire group of WWII titles which the respondents named and analyses the readers' perceptions of that dramatic period in the world's history. At least three distinct perspectives on World War II can be distinguished in the choice of literature.

The first perspective is relatively rare compared to the others. It treats war as a background setting for action, espionage and adventure stories of the more manly type, like in Follet's *Needle* and MacLean's *The Guns of Navarone*. Traces of such plots can be found also in the memoirs and popular science books that the respondents mentioned, but it is not the main perspective in such works.

The second perspective on the events of 1939-45 that can be derived from the respondent declarations focuses on political reflection. However, in this case the main object of interest is the political attitude of the key players in WWII towards Poland. This perspective can

be found in Williamson's *Poland Betrayed*, Davis' *Rising '44*, and Ivanov's *Powstanie Warszawskie widziane z Moskwy* (*The Warsaw Uprising as seen from Moscow*).

The most frequent perspective associated with the largest number of mentioned titles is one which focuses on the terror caused by this most immense war of modern times. This perspective could be observed with various intensity in most of the stories, memoirs and scientific books that described the experience of groups and individuals suffering from World War II.

The choice of titles mentioned in the respondent declarations allows us to distinguish not only certain perspectives on World War II, but also specific events and themes that the readers found particularly interesting.

The single event that garnered the most attention was the Warsaw Uprising, with books about it selected by almost 1% of all readers. There must have been several factors which led to such popularity for this event. Firstly, the Warsaw Uprising has a special place in the national mythology and has been supported with a long-lasting tradition of annual celebrations. Only recently it has been strengthened further by the opening of a new and attractive museum. Also, the Warsaw Uprising was 'lucky' in terms of the number of good books that were written about it by splendid and famous authors like Władysław Bartoszewski and Norman Davies. In the case of the latter, shortly after its publication in 2006 his *Rising '44* was selected by 1% of readers – it is the only strictly scientific book with such a result in this readership study.

Another event of the WWII period that respondents deemed important (with less than half the number of titles mentioned for the Warsaw Uprising, however) was the Katyń massacre. It is surprising that none of the readers who mentioned a book on Katyń gave the actual name of the author or the title of the book. Such a lack could be attributed to the fact that the market is full of books on this topic, but neither are the authors famous nor did the titles cause such a widespread response as in the case of the books devoted to the Warsaw Uprising. One of the works that is certainly remembered and easy to recall is the film by Andrzej Wajda.

The readings which describe the terror of World War II also include books on the holocaust. However, it seems that readers were under the influence of the cinematic productions of the time: *The Pianist* and *Shindler's List*. Furthermore, only one reader named the book by Jan Gross which focuses on the guilt of Poles regarding the Jews – the widespread discussion on his books was not followed with their widespread reading. Other historical topics which appeared in the respondent declarations include the September defeat, the Polish Home Army (AK), and the life of Poles fighting in other countries and displaced from Poland.

The readers of WWII books were interested mostly in works devoted to the history of Poland, however these included many books written by foreigners: *Powstanie Warszawskie widziane z Moskwy* (*The Warsaw Uprising as seen from Moscow*), *Poland Betrayed*, *Rising '44*. It seems that the foreign perspective on Polish history is particularly appealing to Poles.

Last but not least, the titles mentioned included one book that encompasses virtually all perspectives on the WWII period of value to Polish readers. This book is *Rising '44* by Norman Davies. Firstly, this work concerns an event of special importance for Poles. Secondly, it combines a respect for the courage of the insurgents, a tale of wartime terror as recalled in the many memoirs which the book cites, and a political analysis which unmasks the unreasonable behaviour of the allies of Poland. Thirdly, the book is written from the perspective of a foreigner and as such it is perceived as a more credible point of view. Therefore, the extraordinary interest in this book does not result from the successful promotional campaign alone.

## 2. *HABEBAMUS PAPAM* - "WE HAD THE POPE." RELIGIOUS BOOKS

Religious literature is defined broadly in this study and includes the collection of sacred writings which provide the fundamentals of a faith and other texts dedicated to believers of various religions, theology works (also written from the perspective of an atheist), religious studies, books devoted to analysis or the history of religious institutions, and biographies of figures which are recognised by their faith or activity in one of the churches. The study phase of 2010 introduced a new limitation: only nonfiction books were classified as religious literature.<sup>35</sup> However, this change does not hinder the comparison of the latest study with the previous ones. Fiction stories which used to be classified together with religious literature are rare among the contemporary readership. The statistical results are not much impacted by the lack of data on the popularity of religious fiction.

### READERS AND BUYERS OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE IN 1992-2008 - BIBLE, SIENKIEWICZ AND WOJTYŁA

There have been no major fluctuations of interest in religious literature over the past two decades. However, certain changes were noticeable, with the level of readers ranging from 5-10% and buyers from 5-9%. The early 1990s were the time of highest interest in religious books. The sudden expansion of the book market could have been a factor, just as in the case of other literary categories. The next peak was observed in the middle of the recent decade. It was clearly associated with the death of Pope John Paul II – an event that ignited both a fascination with his figure and religious publications alike.

The choice of religious literature has not been very diversified over the past twenty years. In addition to the Bible, which has always been on the list of the most popular books, there are three distinct groups of works.

The first group is a unique type of fiction story which combines evangelization with historical and adventure plots. A prime example is *Quo Vadis* by Henryk Sienkiewicz, and similar novels by Lloyd Douglas. However, the popularity of such books has been clearly declining with no substitutes replacing them within this genre. If fiction were included in the *religious literature* category, the only novel mentioned among the most popular ones would be Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, a work of rather iconoclastic character.

The need to combine evangelization with the explicit personality of a prominent figure and an interesting story is addressed by the second type of religious books, which have a considerable following too. These are biographies of Pope John Paul II. However, only *Świadectwo (Testimony)* by Cardinal Dziwisz achieved the status of a popular book (1% of readers in 2008). Nevertheless, religious literature appeared in all study phases, even though the respective titles came from various genres. It is surprising that with the figure of Karol Wojtyła being so popular there has been no single author that would shape the perception of the Pope among the greater public. In 2008, it seemed that Stanisław Dziwisz would play that role. Being the closest colleague of the Pope, he appeared well suited to the function of intermediary between the Pope and readers interested in him. However, the popularity of *Świadectwo (Testimony)* was not long lasting.

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35 The decision to omit fiction from the *religious literature* category was made because no convincing criteria could be found that would allow one to distinguish which stories with religious plots are chosen mainly for such plots (if *Quo Vadis* by Henryk Sienkiewicz is religious literature, then *The Name of the Rose* should be, too? And what about Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*?).



In addition to books telling stories about the Pope, readers were also interested in books written by John Paul II himself. At least 1% of readers found one of his works particularly appealing: *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. Readers and buyers alike considered it one of the most popular books in 1994, shortly after it was published, with a considerable following noticeable also in the next study. Another of his books, *Memory and Identity*, published just before his death, was bought by 1% of buyers in 2006. However, such a high level was not achieved among readers. The two books were published during the period when respondents declared they had bought religious books more frequently than they had read them. The publication by the Pope must have been a significant event, and Poles reacted to it quickly. However, their enthusiasm has not lasted long, or perhaps dissipated right after the book was purchased.

There are two likely explanations why the Pope's books are more important for the buying public than for the readership. Firstly, it was somewhat of a *'flash in the pan.'* Journalists were often writing about the Polish Catholics worshipping the 'Polish' Pope without knowing much about his teaching. Many people felt obliged to improve their knowledge and bought books by Karol Wojtyła, even though their commitment to read them faded soon afterwards. At the same time, the books of the Pope were treated not like readings but more as a cult object. Perhaps they were bought for the same reasons people buy pictures of the Pope – as a sort of a relic or a symbol of religious devotion.

Hagiographic literature and books describing miracles and supernatural healings were the two other types of religious literature. However, no titles were mentioned which could be found among the most popular books, even though this literature has been present in the declarations of book buyers and readers for a very long time. Texts of religious reflection and books on theology were also mentioned (apart from the books by John Paul II). Respondents rarely mentioned books on non-Christian religions.

#### READERS OF RELIGIOUS LITERATURE IN 2010 – THE NEVER-ENDING STORY OF KAROL WOJTYŁA

In 2010, religious texts were selected by 5% of both readers and buyers of books. This could indicate that a decline is beginning, following the peak of interest which occurred upon death of Pope John Paul II. It is also possible that the level of interest is reflecting the level of religiousness, which has been falling in recent years.<sup>36</sup>

However, the interest in religious literature, even with the relatively low level revealed by the current study phase, is still enough to secure a relatively significant place for religious matters in the overall readership. After all, it is one of few thematic categories which, due to its significance for readers, deserved a separate category in this study.<sup>37</sup>

The choice of literature which readers recalled in 2010 was not a significant departure. The only religious title which achieved at least 1% of mentions was the Bible. The continuing interest in the figure of Pope John Paul II was confirmed – 2% of all readers mentioned

36 J. Czapiński, T. Panek (ed.): *Diagnoza społeczna 2009. Warunki i jakość życia Polaków. Raport* [2009 Social Diagnosis. Conditions and Quality of Life in Poland. Report]. Warsaw 2009. Available on the Internet at <[http://www.diagnoza.com/pliki/raport/Diagnoza\\_raport\\_2009.pdf](http://www.diagnoza.com/pliki/raport/Diagnoza_raport_2009.pdf)>, including previous issues.

37 This category is so well defined that CBOS included it, even though it was not available on the checklist, see <[www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K\\_067\\_11.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2011/K_067_11.PDF)>. By way of comparison, a similar study in the Czech Republic did not treat religious literature as a separate category at all, see J. Trávníček: *Čtème?...* See above.

books related to him. The nature of such interest was diversified. Few works of Karol Wojtyła himself were mentioned (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope* was mentioned by a single respondent only). More readers chose biographical books. Approximately 1% of the readers were interested in books about other saints or important people from the Church, with the most attention paid to Poles such as St. Faustyna, Jerzy Popiełuszko and Stefan Wyszyński. Father Pio was the only foreign saint whose biography was mentioned. His figure could be associated with the common interest in miracles and supernatural healings that was addressed by other books too, for example Tardif's *Jesus Lives Today!* Unlike biographies, texts related to the history of the Church and scientific interpretations of the history of religion had few followers. A small group of more or less serious texts appeared which were devoted to moral, theological and social reflection. Among them was the simple lecture on morality entitled *ABC życia duchowego w pytaniach i odpowiedziach (ABC of Spiritual Life - Questions and Answers)* by Jacek Hadryś, as well as more complex texts such as *Jesus from Nazareth* by Pope Benedict XVI and *The God Delusion* by Richard Dawkins. Non-Christian literature included only Midrash, which was mentioned by one respondent.

In order to better understand religious literature in the social context, the choice of literature selected by the respondents can be supplemented with data on their social profile. In this case, the social profile was very explicit (see Table XXV). The readers of this literature come mainly from the group of people above sixty, pensioners, and with a low level of education. Also, there were more women, residents of smaller towns and people dissatisfied with their financial situation.

Obviously the readers of religious books come from social groups that are associated with the highest level of religiousness.<sup>38</sup> It confirms the intuitive notion that one's interest in such books results primarily from one's faith. Faith could be an important factor because the readers of religious literature are rarely regular readers of books: only 1/3 of them reads more than six books annually and only 1/3 reads anything beyond just religious literature. Furthermore, older people and those with poor education represent social groups of low overall readership (and religious literature is the choice, and usually the only choice, of 1/3 of all readers above 60 years of age who have primary education only). This implies that religious books, and indirectly faith, play a special role in sustaining readership in those social groups. The biographies of Pope John Paul II and father Pio, stories about miracles, and the Bible, are selected by people who otherwise read little or nothing at all. As such, religious literature could be a significant factor sustaining their connection with the textual world.

However, the opposing group of readers who report the least interest in religious literature also deserve reflection. They include younger generations, residents of big cities, and people with better education. This data supplements the results of *Social Diagnosis*,<sup>39</sup> which demonstrated low religiousness in these social groups - they not only pray and participate in religious practices more rarely, but also seldom treat religion as an area where they might find knowledge.

Such a correlation is not as straightforward as it seems at first glance. These social groups include people with the highest interest in knowledge, and who are heavy readers and users of a great variety of texts. It would not be surprising if they included religious topics in their readings, especially considering the fact that a majority of them must consider themselves

38 Let us remember that, according to *Diagnoza społeczna 2009* [2009 Social Diagnosis], the most religious people are women, older generations, pensioners, villagers, and people with poor education.

39 J. Czapiński, T. Panek: *Diagnoza społeczna...* [...Social Diagnosis]. See above.

as believers<sup>40</sup> and that they all live in a country where religion bears a strong influence on social life. One would expect them to show a more reflective type of religiousness, and that they should be capable of reflection upon religion from an independent perspective.

Last but not least, there are two more types of books that fall outside the *religious literature* category, even though they are connected with it and provide a point of reference for it.

The first type is esoteric literature that describes supernatural forces in a way that no religion does. An obvious question arises whether religious literature should be placed in opposition to books that depict spiritual life in an unorthodox way. However, such competition is not a serious one. The interest in esoteric literature has been marginal for years, and stayed the same in 2010. The latest survey showed that esoteric books attracted a mere 2% of readers, with a narrow choice of titles.

The second type of literature that deserves a mention in this Report is fiction with religious plots. As described above, it was not classified within the *religious literature* category. Such fiction has a unique character today. In addition to single mentions of Douglas' *The Robe*, readers indicated Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Dan Brown's works and the speculative fiction of Jacek Piekara and Maria Kossakowska. Clearly what the last three authors have in common is a negative image of the history and theology of the Catholic Church, with a touch of parody in the case of Piekara and Kossakowska. As such, the choice of fiction with religious plots shows some dissent from religious institutions, in particular the Catholic Church, and their religious messages.

### 3. THE POLISH PERSPECTIVE – GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVEL BOOKS

The literature classified as “travel and geography books” include reportages from trips, scientific and popular science books in the field of geography (including atlases and albums), and travel guides.

#### READERS OF GEOGRAPHY & TRAVEL BOOKS IN 2010 - EMOTIONS AND REFLECTION

In 2010, travel & geography books attracted 5% of readers. The most popular types of these books were reportages (over 70% of all readers of travel & geography books), followed by travel guides (which, most likely, many respondents do not treat as books for casual reading), and scientific and popular science texts (where specialist knowledge appealed to a small community of professionals and hobbyists).

The social profile of the readers of travel & geography books was not clear. The only attribute that stands out in this case is the financial situation. Travel & geography literature was most popular among people who are satisfied with their financial situation and who declared a relatively high income.

Perhaps the positive financial situation of the readers of travel & geography books suggests that they have the opportunity to travel. Similar implications arise from the fact that the most popular type of travel books were stories in the form of reportage, which began to be prevalent in the last decade (see the sub-chapter “Documentary literature...”) – during times of easy travel (with open borders, cheap airlines and the fierce competition of cheap

40 It is relatively high also in the case of social categories associated with the lowest levels of religiousness, see J. Czapiński, T. Panek: *Diagnoza społeczna... [..Social Diagnosis]*. See above.

travel agents). Also, the period in which interest in travel & geography literature was rising (the second half of the recent decade) overlaps with a period of revival in Polish tourism (especially to foreign destinations).<sup>41</sup>

The causes behind this situation are not hard to guess. People who travel must feel the urge to find out more about the places they have seen or that they want to go to, and compare their own experience with the experiences of others (in terms of a specific country or region visited and the travel itself). Tourism could also promote an interest in the rest of the world and stimulate the search for knowledge about its resources and diversity. The fact that there are more opportunities to travel strengthens the need to read reportages rather than weakening it. Such a need was the force driving the first readers of Ryszard Kapuściński's books during the times of the communist reign and closed borders in Poland – the need to see places (even with somebody else's eyes) that are beyond one's reach.

Considering the various reasons why contemporary Poles are interested in travel reportages, Polish readers should have rather high expectations towards their authors. After all, they are not only readers who already have their own experiences as tourists, but who also have a lot of sources at hand where they could find knowledge about the world – from weak channels on TV to thousands of travel blogs on the Internet. A simple description of visited places would not have the power to draw such attention. The interest of the general public was addressed by writers who were capable of offering more literary attractions. Details follow in the analysis of authors that readers selected in 2010.

Polish writers prevailed over foreign ones. Wojciech Cejrowski was ranked the most popular reporter with 1% of all readers mentioning him, especially his *Gringo wśród dzikich plemion* (*Gringo and the Wild Tribes*) and *Rio Anakonda* (*Rio Anaconda*). The second most popular writer was Ryszard Kapuściński with approx. 0.5% of readers mentioning him. Books by other Polish writers were mentioned too, for example Wojciech Jagielski, Beata Pawlikowska, and Jacek Hugo-Bader. Foreign authors of travel books included Elizabeth Gilbert, Corinne Hofmann and Frances Mayes, with the first two achieving a considerable popularity (approx. 0.5% of all readers).

The choice of authors, and in particular the popularity of Cejrowski and Kapuściński, suggests that one of the most effective methods for drawing the attention of readers is an adventurous plot set in a world full of threats and the unknown. Reportages seem to substitute the vanishing classic fiction with travel and adventure plots by restoring its unique adventurous character and creating a suitable model for the main character.

In addition to travel books with adventurous plots, recent years have also seen travel books with plots similar to drama and romance. Their popularity is proved in the considerable following of Elizabeth Gilbert's works, which tell a story of personal initiation, internal development and becoming mature, beginning with an unhappy marriage and ending with a happy one.

The attraction of the plot is connected with the unusual experience of the reporter, who is also the main character of the story, and its setting in very exotic and remote terrains.<sup>42</sup>

41 J. Łaciak: *Uczestnictwo Polaków w wyjazdach turystycznych w 2010 roku* [Foreign Travel of Poles in 2010]. Warsaw 2011. Available on the Internet at <[http://dms.msport.gov.pl/app/document/file/552/Uczest\\_POL\\_2010.pdf?field=file](http://dms.msport.gov.pl/app/document/file/552/Uczest_POL_2010.pdf?field=file)>, including previous issues from 1996–2009 (same author).

42 Readers are interested in the types of tourism which they can rarely experience. The author portrays himself as a character who leaves the usual surroundings, the sort of a safety bubble created by travel agents, to encounter foreignness without any protection. According to Eric Cohen's classification, such a character is the explorer: see K. Podemski: *Socjologia podróży* [Sociology of Travel]. Poznań 2004. ISBN: 8323213623.

From the anthropological point of view, these stories show the entry into the world of the Other, where hardly any understandable principles apply – it was an important attribute of many of the mentioned books. Following the path of Kapuściński, Cejrowski, Hugo-Bader and Jagielski also depict themselves not only as travellers in an unknown world but as people who reached to its depths to such an extent that they gained an exclusive knowledge entitling them to understand and to transmit the perspective of the inhabitants of that world<sup>22</sup>. It seems that readers want not only a story of adventure or romance and exotic descriptions, but also to experience a sense of depth which will enable them to reach beyond just titbits from a trip.

The image of the author is one of the particular factors which decides the popularity of reportages. Certainly, it would be best if the author were a celebrity - a figure known from the press or the radio, with an explicit and recognisable lifestyle, like Martyna Wojciechowska and Wojciech Cejrowski before their first publications.

According to the reader declarations from 2010, the lack of one component in such an image could compromise the chances of an author becoming popular on a wider scale. Fewer readers were interested in writers who were not so emotional and exposed to the public, but rather attempted to depict more of the complexities of the world, for example local customs or the political situation in a region (e.g. Jagielski and Hugo-Bader). More sophisticated literary forms were not good for high popularity either, as shown in the case of Tokarczuk and Stasiuk. Few readers were touched by writers of light, merry, comedy-like stories which lacked a serious message, as in Bruczkowski's *Bezszenności w Tokio* (*Sleepless in Tokio*).

Last but not least, the Polish authors of reportages were particularly popular. It seems that readers in Poland are interested in exotic lands, but seen from the Polish point of view, through the glass of our culture and filtered through a Polish perspective on the world.

#### 4. PRACTICAL AND MAGICAL – PSYCHOLOGY BOOKS

Psychology and pedagogy books, and especially nonfiction that touches on psychological and pedagogical issues, were mentioned by 5% of readers.

Among the titles mentioned by readers in 2010, guides were the prevailing genre, for example *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* by Murphy. The runner up was texts that combine guides and popular science with an easy psychological message as a source of practical advice, as in the case of Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, Cialdini's *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, and Gardner's *Multiple Intelligences*. Strictly scientific texts were mentioned a few times only.

Psychology books mentioned by readers can be divided into several thematic groups. Most books readers mentioned fall into the category of child development and upbringing (2% of all readers). Other psychological topics were not as frequent. A few readers mentioned books on social psychology or combining psychology and economics – information and advice helpful in trade and on the job market. These books included William Cohen's *Break the Rules* and Robert Kiyosaki's *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*. Two respondents mentioned guides on mental or physical health. Two others listed books addressing specific issues from psychopathology.

It is interesting that in such important area of psychological advice as romantic relationships one book only was mentioned: Grey's *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*, an absolute classic of this genre. It is hard to judge whether the topic is embarrassing to mention or that such guides are really not so popular today.

A considerable group of psychology books (1.5% of all readers) were non-specialist guides that provide universal advice and promise to solve the problems of readers regardless of

their context. The most popular book in this category was Murphy's *The Power of Your Subconscious Mind* (almost 1% of readers). This book appeared in the previous study phases too. Its unique popularity seemed to prove that Poles are attracted more by guides that provide magical advice than by practical ones, and which offer the hope of liberation from ambiguous forces of the human mind rather than proposing hard work to solve problems. Murphy's special use of the term '*prayer*' suggests that this may be the area towards which the vanishing readers of religious literature are moving.

The social profile of readers of psychology books is described below. 6% of female readers and 4% of male readers indicated psychology literature, which confirms that women are more interested in psychology even though men have not abandoned that field either. However, each gender seems to read different types of books. Women (especially young women in their twenties) are the most prevalent readers of books on children. The few titles related to the job market and economics were selected by men only. It appears that women care more for the home and children while men care for issues related to their profession, which seems to follow the cultural stereotypes.

The level of interest in psychology literature was also correlated with age, including the two strongest factors causing the low readership of psychology books. The youngest respondents (15-19 years of age) and the oldest ones (above 60 years of age) were rarely readers of psychology books. In both cases, the obtained data correlates with the fact that in recent years there were no psychology guides dedicated to either of these age groups. None of the most famous and popular titles are limited as to the age of their audience, however the specific choice of issues (occupation, marriage, parenthood) targets them towards the middle age groups. It is also possible that the older generation is less inclined to seek professional advice (even in the form of a book) when they encounter emotional or life problems. At the same time, teenagers do not like direct recommendations. It seems that they tolerate such advice and warnings as are incorporated into a literary narrative, as in fiction stories or documentary literature. Drama literature for adolescents and Coelho's works are the texts that address the issues experienced by teenagers.

Psychology books, either guides or other types of literature, are interesting mainly for readers between their twenties and sixties, with the largest group being the twenty-year-olds: adults who still have many serious life choices to make.

The interest in psychology literature depends on age and gender as well as other social variables, such as the level of education, profession, and place of residence. Such books were most important for readers with higher education, residents of the biggest cities, and managers and professionals. This audience seems quite elite. This is interesting because high reading competencies are not required in the case of readers of this literature (and they are not among the group of the most heavy readers). The titles mentioned include mainly guides, i.e. books that are written in a language that is easy to understand. The audience of this literature stands out rather because of its attitude towards psychological aid. The readers come from a social group that has the habit of seeking professional help in such areas as mental health and, to be more specific, child rearing and dealing with the job market. Young well-educated people with good professions, living in big cities, are also more inclined towards the modern and post-modern social models that are associated with '*therapeutic culture*.' They see reflection on one's personality and life as being a valuable behaviour.<sup>43</sup>

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43 M. Jacyno: *Kultura indywidualizmu* [The Culture of Individualism]. Warsaw 2007. ISBN: 9788301150723.

## 5. BODY CARE AND PLEASURES – HEALTH, COOKING AND SPORTS BOOKS

The category of “body” themes covers nonfiction books that touch on various areas of the corporeal nature of the human being: health and fitness, appearance, and the experience of various senses (especially taste).

### READERS OF BODY BOOKS IN 2010

Books about the body were of interest to 5% of all readers. The majority of them were women and only one fourth were men. The study data confirms the stereotype that women are more focused on health, cooking and appearance. The other social variables seemed less important. A statistically significant correlation was observed in the intensity of reading books about the body: their readers rarely read six or more books annually (only 30% of them mentioned other literature than books about the body). A relatively large group of readers (one fourth) said they have not read any text longer than 3 pages in the month prior to the survey. However, the readers of this literature did not stand out with any negative or positive features in terms of the readership of the press or use of the Internet compared to the overall group of book readers. As such, the respondents who mentioned textbooks, guides, encyclopaedias on health, appearance and cooking are not intensive readers of books or of any longer texts. However, they have contact with texts of various formats, like the press and the Internet, and know how to use it in a practical way for their own purposes.

Health was the single most important aspect among the various areas concerning the corporeal nature of the human being. Books on health were mentioned by 3% of all readers. Respondents often described such books by stating the main theme only, and providing very general information that they had read books about health, guides on health, and health encyclopaedias. A few respondents mentioned medical literature that they had read for work or books from specific fields of medicine, such as human anatomy. Books on herbal medicine were mentioned, too. There were many women among the readers of health books, similarly to the case of other texts related to the human body. However, in the case of health issues there were also many older people – 40% of the readers were sixty and older.

Two types of books on the body are also related to medicine (though not closely), and each was mentioned by almost 1% of readers. The first type comprises books about pregnancy and infant care, for example *Małe dziecko. Pielęgnacja, żywienie, wychowanie, leczenie* (*Small Children. Care, Diet, Upbringing, Health*) by Jolanta Zdżienicka. It is not hard to guess that their readers are mainly young women, although a few men mentioned such books as well.

The second type of books related to medicine is devoted to healthy diet, nutrition and weight loss. These include *Trennkost selbst kombinieren* (*Diet without Combinations*) by Ursula Summ and books by Ducan. The books were selected solely by women, from various age groups but generally less than sixty.

Books devoted to weight loss diets and healthy nutrition are not the only books about eating. 1% of readers also mentioned cookbooks, sometimes even specific titles, such as *Francesca's Kitchen* by Peter Pezzelli.

Other themes related to the human body appeared in a few responses only. They included books about body massage, sports, appearance and Kama Sutra.

It seems that Poles consider their bodies to be an object calling for care and anxiety. Aesthetics and pleasure are associations ranked much lower by the respondents.

## 6. ECONOMY & LAW BOOKS

Books related to the fields of economics and social sciences, which the category of “economics, law and business management” covers, have one thing in common: they are used during studies, training courses and for advice (e.g. popular magazines) because they are readily associated with the promise of financial success and a professional career. This assumption is a common stereotype.

The social profile of the few respondents (2% of all readers) who mentioned these books seems to confirm such associations. It shows that the readers are in fact people who have already managed to achieve such personal objectives, at least to some extent. The readers came from the group of well-educated people (6% with higher education, 2% secondary education, and none from lower levels), the employed, working in positions that usually require higher education and have a good social reputation (mainly managers and professionals, private entrepreneurs and to a lesser extent staff employed in administration and the services sector), who are satisfied with their financial situation and generate the highest income in their households. Furthermore, these readers included more men, young people (at least in their twenties but especially in their thirties) and childless respondents. These topics were also more interesting for residents of big cities rather than small towns. The readers of law, economics and business management literature were more frequently Internet users, book buyers and regular readers of the press, especially national dailies and magazines on social life and politics.

The titles mentioned by the respondents included several guides (Napoleon Hill, Kyo-saki's *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, Cohen's *Break the Rules*), scientific books which could be used as textbooks (*Economic and Monetary Union* by Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* by David Landes, textbooks on commercial law, EU law, insurance), and works describing the economic dominance of the richest countries set in a quasi-detective plot (*Confessions of an Economic Hit man* by John Perkins). Readers often provided only general information about the topic of a book. They indicated mainly guides and textbooks, with books being only a minor addition that perhaps served them to find more information about a given topic.

Furthermore, while economy & law literature included many books used for educational purposes, few of the respondents declared themselves as being students. It seems that people who already have jobs and are beyond the age of school/university education needed to improve their knowledge in the above fields.

## 7. TECHNICAL AND IT BOOKS

Technical (and IT) books were mentioned by a minor group of respondents (2% of readers and 1% of buyers), and men only. These are the sole types of books that women omit.

Half of the titles mentioned were books on IT, including those for advanced computer users (e.g. programming) and beginners alike, such as *ABC użytkownika komputera (ABC of Computers)*, and *Praktyczny przewodnik po Internecie (Practical Guide to the Internet)*. Other technical books were mainly textbooks for technical studies and guides (e.g. for cars and motor bikes).

## 8. NATURAL HISTORY BOOKS

The small group of books related to nature (2% of readers and 3% of buyers) included guides on animal husbandry (mainly pets) and plant cultivation, for example *Poradnik ogrodnika (Guide to Gardening)*, popular encyclopaedias on natural history and a few scien-



tific books related to the environment (e.g. bioethics, environmental philosophy). As such this category covers books which address two functions: hobbies (people interested in gardening or pets) and, less often, in-depth knowledge on natural history (perhaps for educational or professional purposes).

The books were mentioned by a very unique group of respondents: mainly men and the unemployed. These topics were of interest also to people with poor education.

# TELL ME WHAT YOU READ AND I'LL TELL YOU WHO YOU ARE. DIFFERENT READER PREFERENCES DEPENDING ON SOCIAL POSITION

## CHAPTER VI

The above analysis of the choice of literature focused on the respective types (genres and topics) that respondents mentioned, with supplemental information on the social profile of readers. This chapter shows a reversed perspective and focuses not so much on books but rather on their readers. The main objects of interest are the reading preferences characteristic of the various social groups.

### 1. EDUCATION

The level of education is a factor that discriminates readers in terms of the frequency of reading and the type of book chosen. Every level of education is associated with very specific preferences of readers. However, such preferences seem the most distinctive in the case of readers with higher education. This analysis starts with them. Readers with higher education declared an above-average interest in many types of literature, such as contemporary high literature (fiction), essays and journalist works, scientific books and popular science publications, books on psychology and economics, and to a lesser extent technical books and travel books. It is easy to notice that this is a *highbrow* literature that requires relatively high reading competencies and is associated with aesthetic and cognitive needs beyond the ordinary. Perhaps such a choice of literature reflects the professional needs of the well-educated readers who improve and deepen their specialist knowledge (this purpose is served by scientific and popular science books especially, and such topics as psychology, law, economics, pedagogy, and IT are associated with *highbrow* professions), the unique motivation of the well-educated readers to read books in their free time – the need to expand one's knowledge without any professional reasons associated with it (this purpose is served by popular science books and, among others, historical books), the need for one's own reflection and the use of books for more than just knowledge or entertainment but also for observing the opinions of other people and various interpretations of aspects of life (essays and journalist works), and the well-developed need for aesthetical experience (contemporary high literature).

Using the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu in search of a method for how the institutional markers of cultural capital (related to education) are transposed into competencies (reflect-

ed in the choice of literature), the group under analysis seems to show the most obvious sign of such competencies: a predilection for high culture (which is deemed highly valuable and at the same time difficult to approach and therefore elite).<sup>44</sup>

However, this is true to a limited extent only. After all, the types of literature which are associated with *highbrow* culture in this Report and which well-educated readers selected much more frequently than the average, are not the ones which set the main trends in readership (the main types of *highbrow* books, such as scientific and popular science books, essays, and high literature, were chosen by mere 25% of the respondents from this category). The above types are clearly second to popular literature. Readers with higher education are interested in popular literature on the same average level as the entire population. This means that popular literature is the main literature for them, as well (approx. 40% of readers with higher education selected at least one of the three main genres of popular fiction and did not avoid the lighter types of nonfiction, such as documentary literature or guides).

This is not the profile of a snobbish intelligentsia that focuses on highbrow culture and avoids everything associated with popular culture. Rather, these readers are comprehensive in their choice of literature – perhaps an effect of the post-modern reluctance to stay within any cultural framework or, especially, to follow the division of high and low culture.<sup>45</sup>

It seems likely that the characteristic features of the literature which well-educated readers choose should be looked for not only in the proportions between highbrow and lowbrow books, or high literature and popular literature, serious and light, but also in other areas such as, for example, the subtle differences within the mentioned categories, especially within the broadly defined category of popular literature.

A certain correlation can be observed, however with caution (due to the small data available): in the choice of popular fiction the well-educated readers tend to prefer books which satisfy the generic criteria of popular literature and at the same time are original enough, touch on unique social phenomena or are so aesthetically sophisticated that they cannot be fitted into the *popular literature* category (for example, Pratchett in speculative fiction, or Larsson in action & detective stories). This aspect shows how well the competencies related to high cultural capital are manifested in a modern way – such a choice of literature demonstrates no snobbish attitude (it shows an affirmation of popular literature) while confirming good literary taste (manifesting a preference for original and valuable works).

Of course, the situation is not so straightforward: well-educated respondents also read works which, while they are still on the borderline of high culture and popular culture, are the reverse of Pratchett's and Larsson's books. An example is the books of Paulo Coelho. In this study, these were recalled almost exclusively by people with higher or secondary

44 P. Bourdieu: *Dystynkcja. Społeczna krytyka władzy sądenia* [Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste]. Warsaw 2005. ISBN: 8373830901.

45 There could be many social reasons for such a change. Some of them, for example the vanishing gap between the respective social categories, improving tolerance for diversity, weakening divisions between the social groups of adults and teenagers, are indicated by Peterson and Kern, see R. A. Peterson, R. M. Kern: *Changing Highbrow Taste: from snob to omnivore*, in: *American Sociological Review* 1996, vol. 61, No. 5, pp. 900–907. It is also important that the slogan *cross the border – close the gap* (L. Fiedler) between high and low culture, which played a significant role in literary critique in the early years of post-modernism, has become a common way to describe contemporary culture and repeated in various interpretations of contemporary literature and art. The fact that the contemporary Polish intelligentsia is truly resistant towards any rigid cultural framework is confirmed in the statements of people of culture, as demonstrated by Mirosław Duchowski and Elżbieta Sekuła, see M. Duchowski, E. Sekuła: *Gust estetyczny* [Aesthetic Taste]. In: W. Burszta et al.: *Kultura miejska Polsce z perspektywy interdyscyplinarnych badań jakościowych* [Urban Culture in Poland from the Perspective of Interdisciplinary Qualitative Studies]. Warsaw 2010. ISBN: 9788361587330.

education, and in fact more frequently by the former. Such works seem to aspire to high culture: the messages they convey are made to appear significant and original. However, many literary critics treat them with disdain, regarding them as popular literature and not of the highest grade (naive, simplistic, lacking artistic and intellectual values).<sup>46</sup> The choice of such works appears as the most risky step in terms of the cultural battle for prestige. The reading of an average love or detective story could be simply treated as using popular culture solely for one's pleasure, with full awareness of the popular nature of such books. However, the reading of Coelho is associated with the risk of being judged a person incapable of differentiating between texts of low and high quality – a gullible person.

The division into high and low literature is not the only way to describe the choices of the well-educated readers. This study provides one more significant way to divide literature: historical vs. contemporary or traditional vs. modern. In this division, both the preferred books as well as those avoided are equally significant. The well-educated readers tend to choose books that were published relatively recently, and even more markedly avoid books published in historical times (prior to 1945). This interest in contemporary books can be explained easily because it follows the role of the intelligentsia – a group of people who know where to find the latest information and are knowledgeable about contemporary cultural movements. These are the people who are the co-authors and pioneers of the present time. However, the avoidance of historical literature is not as easy to explain. Their choice of literature skips the classics almost entirely. People of the intelligentsia do not read works that are the set or extra readings for school as often as people with lower education. The lack of such literature proves that they reach beyond the school curriculum and towards more personal areas of interest and individual choices of literature. It is not clear why such individual choices include contemporary literature only, without any of the classics that are not covered within the school curriculum. Perhaps there is no such cultural pressure that would make well-educated readers reach for the literary classics (beyond school). There is also a different explanation. It is possible that the meaning of the term *classics* has shifted: a cultured man or woman is ready to read *classics*, but to them this means literature published after World War II (such as Eco, Marquez, Nabokov, etc.).<sup>47</sup>

The division to traditional vs. modern can be observed in the literary choices of well-educated respondents based on topics rather than on the date of publication. Among the very few literary categories which the well-educated respondents do not like, there is at least one which deserves a closer investigation: books on religion.

Readers with higher education who chose this literature are quite a rarity in this study. It follows the traditional vs. modern division in two ways. The lack of interest in religious books can be readily associated with a level of religiousness below the general average.<sup>48</sup> The literary

46 The connection between the attitude towards Coelho and cultural capital/social prestige is described maliciously by Mariusz Cieślak in a review of one of Coelho's books: "For anybody of an average literary knowledge it is embarrassing to laugh at Paulo Coelho. After all, it is as easy as having a laugh at Doda Elektroda, Jola Rutowicz and, in politics, the Kaczyński brothers," M. Cieślak: *Popreligia i ćwierćfilozofia* [Pop-Religion and Quarter-Philosophy]. In: *Rzeczpospolita*, 6 February 2009.

47 Jean Hebrard uses the example of France to point to the changes in the literary classics required in schools (older layers of tradition were skipped from time to time). Perhaps a similar phenomenon of tossing older books from the pool of literature required for the intelligentsia is even stronger in the case of erudition beyond just the school, see the interview with Jean Hebrard [in: P. Rodak (ed.): *Tekst, książka, lektura. Rozmowy: Le Goff, Chartier, Hebrard, Fabre, Lejeune* [Text, Books, Reading. Discussions with Le Goff, Chartier, Hebrard, Fabre, Lejeune]. Warsaw 2009. ISBN: 9788323505747.

48 J. Czapiński, T. Panek (ed.): *Diagnoza społeczna 2009...* [...Social Diagnosis]. See above.

habits of the well-educated readers are an effect of the quicker and more intensive process of their secularisation.<sup>49</sup> However, the difference in religiousness between the well-educated and the non-educated Poles is not as profound as the difference between their interest in religious literature. Even the fact of having no religious attachments would not necessarily explain why religion is not a topic for cognitive research. It seems that this search for knowledge is not characteristic of the Polish intelligentsia, as it avoids hagiographic literature and books which convey simple interpretations of moral principles (popular among people with lower levels of education), and the omission is not replaced with more unorthodox literature concerning religion. There are a few books that respondents mentioned which discuss issues of religion (Dawkins) or its place in the contemporary world (Holownia), but their share in the overall readership of well-educated respondents is negligible. It implies that religion has a unique place on the intellectual map of the contemporary intelligentsia in Poland – this group lacks the need for reflection. This phenomenon could be related to the perception of the Catholic Church in Poland as being locked in tradition, reluctant towards discussion and not friendly to well-educated people, as journalists dedicated to religion describe it – and the Church provides the key point of reference for this kind of cognitive research.

Furthermore, in terms of the traditional vs. modern division there is one more common feature in the avoidance of religious literature and literary classics by well-educated readers. It could be called “national.” The literary classics which respondents mentioned were limited mainly to the great Polish novels of the 19th century, and especially to the books of Henryk Sienkiewicz. At the same time, religious literature was limited to books about the ‘Polish’ Pope and Polish figures of the Catholic Church. Sienkiewicz’s novels and Polish hagiography are the least frequent choice for well-educated readers. Such a choice of literature (or lack thereof) resembles a rejection of certain elements of the Polish cultural tradition which are rooted deeply in national symbolism and the highly emotional imagery created on the borderline between Catholicism and patriotism.

It does not imply that the well-educated readers are not interested in national themes, such as the history of Poland. Certain historical events which they perceive as crucial were given their attention, however only if packaged and served to readers appropriately. A good example is the Warsaw Uprising. The books of the well-educated readers included Davies and, for example, *Powstanie Warszawskie widziane z Moskwy* (*The Warsaw Uprising as Seen from Moscow*). The considerable interest in this part of Polish history, which the overall group of readers demonstrated, is maintained by special social rituals and has been revived by the opening of the new Warsaw Rising Museum, which is considered a modern and interesting facility. Also, in the case of well-educated readers it might be important that the Warsaw Uprising was the object of scientific studies (especially works written by foreigners), which makes this event an interesting topic for discussions and research. Last but not least, the Warsaw Uprising is traditionally considered to have been an uprising mainly of the intelligentsia.

In addition, in the case of well-educated readers the scientific point of view on history seems to be strongly correlated with an interest in contemporary social and political life. However, this aspect can be observed more in the readership of the national dailies and weeklies than of books (see the part of this Report written by Izabela Koryś). The readership of such press is above the average for the entire population (perhaps this vaguely resembles

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49 Secularization is often treated as a traditional marker of the Polish intelligentsia, for example by B. Skarga in his article *Inteligencja zamilkła* [The Silent Intelligentsia]. In: *Gazeta Wyborcza* 14–15 January 2006.

the historical social commitment of the intelligentsia in this part of Europe),<sup>50</sup> especially in the case of readers of books providing historical reflection.

It is also interesting that the well-educated readers avoid children's literature. It is obvious that children are read books more frequently in the families of people with higher education. The lack of children's literature in the respondent declarations is not the result of any avoidance, but rather the more restrictive definition of *reading*: it means certain forms of activity only and not just any contact with books. For them, reading to children is more a part of childcare activities than a reading experience.

To summarise our knowledge about well-educated readers in Poland, it should be added that although a number of literary preferences were identified which distinguish them as unique users of literary culture, none of the differences identified is strong (in absolute numbers). Considering the open-minded character of the modern and "anti-snobbish" choice of literature, perhaps the search for a unique style of reading which distinguishes well-educated readers should focus on an entirely different indicator, such as the diversity and multilevel nature of their readings, rather than on potential trends and preferences or the avoidance of specific literary genres. Perhaps people of the intelligentsia stand out due to a comprehensiveness of genres and literary themes – a more complex model of literature – rather than to the choice of any particular titles. To verify such a thesis, a group of readers was selected from the well-educated pool who mentioned only one type of literature (genre or topic), and another group of those who demonstrated a more complex choice of literature. It turned out that the diversity of literary choice increased with the level of education. However, the differences between readers with secondary education and those with higher education were not significant (56% of well-educated readers indicated only one type of readings, 61% of readers with secondary education, 72% of readers with preparatory occupational education, and 74% of readers with primary education). Again, this factor was not too strong.

A special category of readers can be distinguished: people whose choice of literature is particularly diversified. They usually have higher education or are college/university students but they are only a minor part of all readers with such a level of education. This category encompasses readers of contemporary high literature: only 12% of these mentioned solely one type of literature.

The reading habits of this group are a perfect example of the method of expressing high cultural competencies considered very characteristic of contemporary times, called "omnivorousness." This term signifies to a diversity of cultural choices, their wide range and different levels (including low-to-high levels of culture).<sup>51</sup> The fact that the readership of high literature is the best predictor of literary omnivorousness proves that the practical sign of one's high cultural capital is still an interest in products of high culture. However, today it is not combined with the avoidance of less sophisticated works, but rather to the contrary, with a readiness for a wider array of varied cultural encounters.

The correlation between one's higher education and the type of readings (which implies high cultural capital) seems very unilateral in the group of well-educated readers: people who choose books in a manner which can be deemed an expression of their high cultural competencies often have higher education, but at the same time such competencies are rare in the overall group of

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50 Such unique meaning of the intelligentsia in Central and Eastern Europe is described by Tomasz Zarycki, see T. Zarycki: *Kapitał kulturowy. Inteligencja w Polsce i w Rosji* [Cultural Capital. Intelligentsia in Poland and Russia]. Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 9788323504641.

51 J. López-Sintas, T. Katz-Gerro: *From exclusive to inclusive elitists and further: Twenty years of omnivorousness and cultural diversity in arts participation in the USA*. In: *Poetics* 2005, vol. 33, no. 5–6, pp. 299–319.

all holders of higher education. Perhaps this is a symptom of the devaluation of higher education caused by the very high rates of enrolment that can be observed in recent times.

The readership model connected with higher education describes social values and aspirations that are related to participation in culture, and this is the reason why this Report devotes so much space to it. The attributes of the readership in the other education-related categories are described more briefly.

When compared to the current and future representatives of the intelligentsia, readers with secondary or post-secondary education (but not students any more) did not set apart or avoid any specific types of literature as clearly as the well-educated readers did. Their interest was average in the case of the higher types of literature which the well-educated readers liked so much, for example contemporary high literature (fiction), scientific and popular science books, essays, or books on psychology, economics and geography. On the other hand, they were interested on an average level in those genres that the well-educated readers avoided, such as religious literature and books for children.

However, this does not imply that readers with secondary education ranked near the national average for all literary categories. The secondary level of education is correlated with above-average interest in literary classics, documentary literature, romance & drama, and action & detective books. Such choice of literature suggests that these readers treat books mainly as a source of interesting stories. The first two of the above genres seem to show an ambitious approach to such literature. Documentary literature and literary classics are a good choice for those readers who are not knowledgeable about the modern world of literature but still want to read a book of a certain aesthetic or cognitive value.

The secondary level of education seems to be connected with an average range of needs and literary preferences, and last but not least with reading for pleasure, especially in the case of various types of narration-style literature. Compared to well-educated readers, these readers exhibit a more limited choice of books when they use them for professional purposes, education, or training (assuming that the study data justifies such conclusions). Also, these readers are not as interested in contemporary high literature that requires special cultural competencies.

However, there is no clear line of division between readers with higher education and ones with secondary education: there is no type of literature important for the former that would be totally rejected by the latter. Such rejection occurs in the case of readers who have preparatory occupational and primary education.

People after preparatory occupational schools clearly differ from those who completed the secondary level of education: the former declare that they read half the number of books the latter do. The differences in readership between the two categories do exist but are not big. The major difference is related to the level of interest in contemporary literature and the latest publications. People with preparatory occupational education tend to select such books much more rarely. Also, their interest in contemporary high literature, psychology and economics books is below the national average. The conclusion to be drawn is that they avoid literature with more difficult narration, and do not use books to find information or advice in the field of human relationships or the job market.

However, as the share of particular types of literature declines, other types of literature are on the rise. This is the case with religious and children's books, which play a major role in the readership of people with preparatory occupational education, and an even greater role for people with the primary level of education (but who are not students any more).

The literary choices of the latter (the lowest level of education) are largely the reverse of people who have higher education. Their interest in most types of nonfiction is much below the national average (including guides, scientific books, documentary literature, and books

on psychology, economics and travel). They read a little more fiction, however. They are barely interested in more ambitious genres (and not at all in contemporary high literature), but their level of interest is just a little lower than the average in the two main types of fiction: romance & drama and action & detective stories. Their interest in speculative fiction is much below the national average.

Such preferences show clearly that the literary choice becomes limited as the level of education becomes lower, with no distinct or typical areas of interest appearing for the groups with lower education. And even if such a distinct choice of literature appears, the correlation can be easily explained by older age (interest in religious books) rather than by the lower level of education, or by the mechanism of the purposeful expansion of the meaning of *reading* in order to find broader answers to the questions which the pollster asks (children's books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries seem to be used for that purpose). Except for single incidents, there are hardly any types of literature which the well-educated readers avoid but which are popular among readers with lower education, like the former folk literature: simple entertainment for readers of low cultural competencies (the *Harlequin* series could have played that role some time ago but the interest in them is minor today). Such a conclusion does not confirm what sociologists say about contemporary Poles, for example, to quote Paweł Śpiewak: "lower classes [...] do not follow the fashions of the 'higher classes' but create their own and unique lifestyle, have their own music, their own books, their own cult films, their own dress code."<sup>52</sup> Śpiewak could be right in the case of other areas of culture, but not in the case of contemporary readership. It seems that nowadays people who have lower cultural competencies hardly read at all, and look for the experiences which used to be provided by light literature in TV, the press and the Internet, rather than spur the development of any literary genres that would be dedicated or unique to them.

## 2. GENDER

Women read more books than men. This is a recurring conclusion from the readership studies covering the cultural region of Poland. As described in the previous part of this report, 2010 was no different. Gender makes a difference not only in the overall interest in book readership, but also in the selection of specific titles. Such differences could be important for an understanding of the function of books for both genders, the reasons why women prevail as readers, and what social impact it could have.

In this study, the most distinctive difference between men and women was observed in the level of interest in fiction. Not only did women read more novels, but they were also interested in all types of fiction (both women's love stories and more manly genres like action stories, as well as speculative fiction, popular and serious books, adult and adolescent literature). On the other hand, men reached for fiction stories less frequently and chose selected genres only: action stories, speculative fiction and high literature. However, even in those genres men did not read more than women.

Such asymmetry could be associated with a broader principle that applies to many cultural choices: women adapt men's behaviours easily and eagerly, but not the other way around. Therefore, men avoided certain fiction genres associated with women but women did not avoid more manly genres. The analysis of changes occurring in the past twenty years in the readership of the most manly type of fiction, namely action & detective stories, shows a

52 H. Domański, A. Rychard, P. Śpiewak: *Polska jedna czy wiele* [Poland: One or More]. Warsaw 2005. ISBN: 8374360593, p. 146.



dynamic growth of the women's share in the reader group: in 1994, 5% of women and 10% of men were interested in action & detective stories, while in 2010 there were 10% of each.

The gender-related differences in the readership of fiction could also show a different attitude of men vs. women to the key literary aspect: narration. Women who read more fiction and accept all types and versions of it seem to be very receptive to the idea of a story by itself, to be attracted by a certain course of events. On the other hand, men seem to need a special incentive: a connection with specific needs of men, such as the adrenaline-filled action plots which most action & detective stories or speculative fiction books offer, or benefits beyond the pleasure of emotional commitment to a story, as in the case of high literature which in addition to the pleasure of experiencing an original piece of art also plays a peculiar function in society: it improves the social prestige of the reader and is a sign of high cultural capital.

Beyond just fiction, men's share among the readers of narrative works was higher whenever a story was based on true facts rather than fictional events, as in the example of documentary literature, travel and historical books. Perhaps women are able to appreciate the experience of narration itself (in fiction, narration tells a fictional story which, however, can stir emotions and cause reflection too) while men appreciate narration only as a tool for the depiction of facts.

Women's inclination towards narration-based stories can be easily explained by reference to theoretical concepts and research which indicate that narration is more important for women's cognitive behaviours (e.g. among the two modes of thinking which Bruner distinguished, namely paradigmatic and narrative, women tend to use the latter).<sup>53</sup> The study results provide proof that women live in a more narrative world of culture, and this could be explained as an effect of their cognitive predilections (if the narrative form reflects women's mode of thinking, then they seek contact with narration) as well as the cause of their cognitive predilections (the more frequent contact of girls<sup>54</sup> and women with narrative stories could promote narrative-like thinking in them).

With the prevalence of women in the area of fiction, men, by contrast, should be expected to read more nonfiction. The asymmetry is not true on all levels. Nonfiction is clearly less important for female readers, but when all respondents are considered (not only people who read books), the share of women interested in nonfiction is not significantly lower than the number of men. Both genders differ in their preferences for specific nonfiction books. Women read as much as or even slightly more than men when it comes to documentary literature (after all, it features the narrative style), essays (perhaps women are more interested in the opinions of others and different interpretations of life) and guides, encyclopaedias and educational books (which constitute the types of literature focused on the practical use of knowledge). Men clearly dominate in the field of scientific and popular science books. Popular science shows men's skill in abstractive thinking (combined with Bruner's paradigmatic mode of thinking), more focus on professional readings (some of the scientific books indicated by the respondents are most likely those related to professions), and their high level of interest in history, especially the wartime (historical books, related to World War II in particular are a significant share of the entire popular science literature mentioned by them).

The analysis of the preferences of men and women can be supplemented with information about specific topics selected by the respective genders. They not only prefer differ-

53 See for example: C. Gilligan: *In a different voice*, Honrard 1982. ISBN: 0674445449; J. Kaufman: *Narrative and paradigmatic thinking styles in creative writing and journalism students*. In: *Journal of Creative Behavior* 2002, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 201–211.

54 Girls are more often the audience of narration, according to T. Maruszewski: *Pamięć autobiograficzna* [Autobiographic Memory]. Gdańsk 2005. ISBN: 8360083045.

ent areas of science (women prefer psychology and pedagogy while men prefer economics, technology, IT and natural history). There are also differences that result from the lifestyle and social roles typical of men and women. The social world which the choice of literature represents is clearly divided into women's vs. men's zones which could be described by opposing the *home* or *intimate world* with the *public world*.

Politics seems to be more important for men.<sup>55</sup> This can be seen most clearly in the more frequent choice of social and political press and press on the Internet. Such a preference is not as clear in the case of book readership. However, the political inclination of men could be observed in selected types of literature such as scientific and documentary books on history (which were related mainly to political history) and war & espionage action stories (which stand out due to their quick pace of action, brutality, and plots related to the global politics).

Men also read more books about economics, law, and business management, including guides on these same subjects, and this shows their higher concern for professional life and the fact that men more often perform jobs related to such fields of knowledge (and of high social prestige).

Women selected more books related to emotions, home and family. Such a division could be observed in fiction too – not only were women almost the only readers of romance & drama stories, but they also preferred action & detective books concerning crime that touches everyday life and of a somewhat private character, i.e. detective books similar to drama stories. Women's interest in the private areas of life and the home was visible even more in the choice of nonfiction literature. Women read more books about children (in addition to books for children) or cooking and more often reached for psychology and pedagogy guides. Some of the topics chosen by women (especially pedagogy) could result from their commitment to family life, as well as from women's professions (which imitate home to some extent).

As a summary of the readership of both genders, it can be concluded that the comparison of the choice of literature leads beyond just the general conclusion that women read more than men. Also, specific areas of prevalence can be identified: two areas related to two functions of literature. The first area is the readership of popular fiction, and this area is very important in the overall readership. Women's style of reading seems to be the prototype of reading for pleasure and in free time. In his *The Rise of the Novel*, Watt explained this correlation with large amount of free time which women of the middle class used to have in the period analysed by him. Today, the explanation is not obvious because a time-based comparison of men and women does not show a clear advantage for the latter.<sup>56</sup> In addition, women are still employed less frequently than men and the function of *primary breadwinner* is not a good stimulus for readership, as described in the first part of this Report. Certainly, the two genders have different preferences as to the choice of entertainment.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps this is related to women's predilection towards narrative thinking which has been transferred from one generation to the next in our culture. Whatever the reason, women's love for fic-

55 The lower interest in politics among women was demonstrated in public polls too, see: TNS OBOP: *Kobiety i mężczyźni o różnych sprawach* [Women and Men about Different Matters]. Study report, Warsaw 2000. Available on the Internet at: <<http://www.obop.pl/archive-report/id/315>>.

56 CBOS: *Czas wolny Polaków. Komunikat z badań* [Free Time in Poland. Study Report]. Warsaw 2010. Available on the Internet at <[http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2010/K\\_133\\_10.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2010/K_133_10.PDF)>. CBOS: *Co Polacy robią w czasie wolnym? Komunikat z badań* [What Poles do in Free Time. Study Report]. Warsaw 2006. Available on the Internet at <[http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2006/K\\_124\\_06.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2006/K_124_06.PDF)>.

57 Men watch television, listen to music and radio, go out to pubs and do sports more often than women, who rather do housekeeping, read books (12 percentage points of difference), do crossword puzzles, visit relatives/family and invite them over, TNS OBOP: *Kobiety i mężczyźni o różnych sprawach* [Women and Men about Different Matters]. See above.

tion stories have survived many transformations of social life and as such must be caused by something more than just the economics and customs of the times.

Another area where women's readership prevails is in practical books on life which help to deal with non-professional issues of daily life, such as cooking, health, social relations, and child-rearing. Men need less knowledge for everyday life or seek less of it in books and more in, for example, equipment manuals (not considered books) and advice available on the Internet.

Men have at least an equal or greater share in the readership of books which this study shows as more characteristic of the intelligentsia. Certain types of such literature are closer to men and others to women. In the case of the latter, this includes essays and books on psychology, while the former prefer books on economics, and scientific and popular science literature. The level of interest is equal between the two genders in the case of high literature. It seems that the readership of high literature depends very strongly on personal preferences that could be associated with one's cultural capital. As such it is barely correlates with any other factors, such as the taste or needs of the genders.

Last but not least, women's prevalence in book reading does not necessarily mean that they use this area to gain a cultural advantage or cultural assets important in social life. Rather, the choice of books follows the cultural models which Bourdieu described in his *Masculine Domination*.<sup>58</sup> Women do read more but their readings, such as the disdained love stories or cookbooks and parent guides required on daily basis, are considered insignificant or at least non-prestigious. In the more prestigious areas men not only catch up with women, but often exceed them. The conclusion is that the differences in the scale and quality of readership between women and men reflect the known gender gap.

### 3. AGE

Considering the many anecdotes surrounding the cultural needs and taste of various age groups, it is not surprising that age, like gender and education, is one of the strongest factors leading to diversity in the choice of literature. The differences resulting from this factor were even bigger because of two reasons. Firstly, the members of the respective age groups were at various stages in the life cycle and their choice of literature reflected the needs and areas of interest characteristic of those (adolescence, youth, maturity and old age). Secondly, the age group members belonged to various generations: they lived through the stages of life in very different circumstances, had different experiences, encountered various cultural models in adolescence and afterwards. The following description of the varied readership practices reflects both of these potential sources of correlation.

The first age group consists of the youngest respondents (15-19 years of age). It is a very unique group with a distinct readership model.

The unusual nature of this readership results from the proportions between fiction and nonfiction in this group. Fiction literature was mentioned by 82% of teenage readers and nonfiction by a mere 23%. Fiction clearly dominated far above the average for the overall population. Several factors caused this asymmetry.

The intensified readership of fiction is likely the effect of school. The respondents were in their school years and it is the only period in life when fiction is a set reading for almost the entire age group. However, although such compulsoriness largely predetermined the readership and the way young people think about reading (55% of teenagers spontaneously

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58 P. Bourdieu: *Męska dominacja* [Masculine Domination], Warsaw 2004. ISBN: 8388164678.

listed school readings when asked about book reading in general), it was not the only factor influencing their interest in fiction. On a smaller but significant level (42% of 15-19-year-old teenagers), the respondents declared novels that can be assumed to be of their own choice.

Furthermore, young people read adolescent literature (which addresses the specific needs of their age) more frequently than older generations, especially speculative fiction for teenagers (mentioned by 10% of them) and "girl literature" (6%). However, they chose popular literature even more often, although it was not dedicated to them specifically. They read speculative fiction for adults (10%) on an equal level with speculative fiction for teenagers and were interested in the popular version of philosophy presented by Coelho (5%). The most popular type of fiction was action & detective stories (16%). In the popular fiction genre, the teenage group clearly avoided romance & drama stories: literature dedicated to their age group prevailed with works more closely resembling everyday life. Teenagers rarely read high literature for adults (except for the set readings for school). Of course, the teenage group included less people who knew how to choose interesting highbrow books and how to deal with the challenges they pose.

The infrequent choice of nonfiction is as obvious as their choice of fiction. It results partially from the fact that they almost never recalled the nonfiction books with which they certainly have very frequent contact (school textbooks). It seems that the question about book reading does not apply to such type of texts and that they perceive them more as educational aids than readings.

This should not however apply to other types of nonfiction. Nonetheless, teenagers mentioned these rarely too. The low interest in nonfiction can be explained with several factors. Firstly, there is the Internet, and young people tend to seek knowledge on the Web rather than in books. The other significant factor is the specific offering dedicated to teenagers: there are few nonfiction books intended exclusively for teenage readers, matching their needs well and not classified as an "educational aid." Thirdly, the borderline between teenagers and adults is more difficult to cross in the case of nonfiction because scientific books or even popular guides for adults require a higher level of maturity than action books or speculative fiction.

Also, the readership reflects the clear break between the adolescent age and early adulthood (around twenty years of age). Changes which occur then in the various areas of life are represented in the choice of literature too.

The obvious nature of school requirements and the developmental needs of teenagers leads these to be focussed primarily on the adolescent stage of life rather than on a definition of their generation. The unique feature of teenage readers that deserves a mention is their predilection for speculative fiction. If speculative fiction for both teenagers and adults is taken into account, it will show that they have contact with the supernatural world more often than any other age group. Teenagers will be the generation reared on speculative fiction and the readership of that genre is likely to increase in the future.

Teenage readers have certain unique features. On the contrary, the older age groups are not such distinct readers. Certainly, age is a factor causing diversity in the choice of literature, but the decline or rise of the respective types of literature is rather smooth across the age groups and the differences between them are not big. If a boundary had to be drawn between clearly distinct readership models of younger and older generations, then it would be around the age of 40. This is the age (between the thirties and forties) where the popularity of many types of books becomes either above or below the overall average, depending on whether it was rising or declining with age.

In the case of fiction, such a borderline is especially visible in speculative fiction, which was preferred by readers below forty years of age. Twenty- and thirty-year-olds were more frequent readers of speculative fiction for adolescents, and of Coelho's books, which

found the most followers among the group of the youngest adults (20-29 years of age). Twenty- and thirty-year-old women also declared that they read books for children. The respondents who were forty and older reported more interest in romance & drama stories and literary classics. The middle age group (40-49 years of age) stood out with an above-average interest in contemporary high literature.

In nonfiction, the younger readers were more interested than the older ones in educational books, and books on psychology, technology, IT and economics. The older readers used documentary literature and books on history, religion, and health more frequently.

Some of these differences can be easily explained with the needs characteristic of the respective stages of life. The age of 20 to 39 is the time when people experience parenthood (and women mostly show this in their choice of literature: they read books to children and read psychology books about child-rearing), when their own education is followed by the education of their children (associated with the readership of educational books), and when a professional career is pursued (economics, psychology and pedagogy literature may be related to a profession). This age group liked Coelho's advice and philosophy, literature providing psychological guidance, and speculative fiction with stories about personal initiation. Such characteristic choice of literature reflects the needs that are related to the extended period of adolescence when one builds one's own personality, defines one's own place in life and develops a hierarchy of values.

On the other hand, some books chosen by the older respondents could be associated with the needs of older stages of life. The intensified interest in history and documentary literature can be linked with their tendency to look backward more than into the future, and to use the experiences and biographies of others to reflect on and summarise their own life. The choice of books on health reflects the accumulating health issues. The older age is also associated with more interest in religious literature (especially people in their sixties or older).

However, some of the differences in literature which the readers before and after the age of 40 chose can also be explained by the varied experiences of the generations. People who were before the age of forty in 2010 had spent their youth (when one's identity and taste is developed) after 1989. Older generations had already been more developed when the post-communist era in Poland started.

This difference seems important for the level of interest in certain fiction genres, and speculative fiction in particular. In 2010, the borderline of increased interest in speculative fiction was at the age of forty. However, it was at the age of thirty in 2002. In view of the above, it may be said that today's thirty-year-olds who grew up in the 1990s were the generation that spent its youth in times of the expanding genres and types of speculative fiction. Such encounters with speculative fiction then could be decisive for the level of interest in the later years of adulthood.

Speculative fiction could be a successful competitor to other popular fiction genres in the case of the younger generations. Such a relation could occur between, for example, speculative fiction and historical fiction (perhaps it was not a coincidence that Tolkien's books became widely popular while Sienkiewicz's works declined). The younger generations like adventure plots set in exotic worlds, and tend to choose fantastical works rather than historical ones.

The different experiences of the generations could also be the reason why the older generations are interested more in the 19<sup>th</sup> century classics. Not only could it result from the shift towards tradition that can be observed in older age groups, but also from the habitual use of classic novels as popular literature (this was typical of the communist era in Poland, when little popular literature was published).

It is interesting that contemporary high literature was selected more by middle-age readers than by the younger generations. It could mean that the cultural pressure to read ambitious literature has more influence on the older generations.

The differences between the generations seem important also in the case of nonfiction, especially in the religious inclinations of the older generations and the interest in psychology and economics among the younger ones. As said before in the description of the well-educated readers, such topics can be explained easily by the division between traditional vs. modern. The lack of interest in religious literature among young people could be related to the withdrawal from certain elements of the Christian tradition and the on-going process of secularization. At the same time, their interest in psychology and economics can be easily associated with professional needs and the individual need for reflection on certain aspects of one's life.

#### **4. PLACE OF RESIDENCE**

Like the other social variables mentioned above, the place of residence is decisive for the frequency of reading and the choice of literature: the smaller the place of residence is, the lower the intensity of reading. There are several exceptions in addition to this general rule, as Izabela Koryś demonstrated previously. The following is a description of how the place of residence overlaps with different choices of literature.

Let us start with the residents of metropolitan areas (with a population over 500,000). Their comprehensive choice of literature (with many regular readers) followed a clear pattern. The residents stood out as solid readers of nonfiction, especially scientific and popular science books, guides and books on psychology and economics, which were chosen more often than the average. The metropolitan readers were below the average in fiction as a whole, but liked speculative fiction more than the other genres. They also read romance stories and barely mentioned any set readings for school, books for children, books on religion, or older literature (including literary classics).

The metropolitan readers can be described well using reference to the division into traditional vs. modern, as already said before. They clearly avoid everything old and traditional. Many books preferred by the metropolitan readers seemed to help them to deal with the modern world. Their choice of literature was rather practical and serious. Unlike the overall average, they did not look for much entertainment in their readings but were focused on knowledge and practice (scientific books, guides, economics, psychology, IT).

Inhabitants of big cities (population 100,000 – 500,000) did not have such a clearly defined taste. In terms of nonfiction, they chose similar books to the metropolitan readers but less frequently. They were interested on an average level in all the same genres and literary themes that the metropolitan users preferred. They chose more books only in the field of psychology. On the other hand, they did not avoid other types of literature as often as the metropolitan readers did. Within the group of books avoided by the metropolitan readers, they did not like older literature only. It seems that the readers from big cities follow a slightly muted version of the pattern of readers from the biggest cities.

Residents of medium cities (population 20,000 – 100,000) stayed close to the overall average for the respective literary categories. Their readership would be a good marker of the national level if not for one significant factor. They were very interested in high literature, especially contemporary literature and the latest releases (in particular popular fiction stories). In general, they read less than the readers from bigger cities did, especially in nonfiction, however they read more ambitious fiction. They were also interested in contemporary literature, in particular the latest books, and did not avoid older titles.

Inhabitants of small towns (up to 20,000) read less. They were interested in many types of literature but always below the national average (for example, popular fiction, contemporary high literature, guides, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, and least of all scientific and

popular science literature). However, they had certain preferences. They especially liked romance & drama stories (older women) and old books, including literary classics. Religious books were an important choice for them. They seemed to prefer the traditional over the modern. However, the interest in older literature was not accompanied by an avoidance of more contemporary titles.

The last category of readers is residents of villages. They rarely declared themselves to be regular readers or read one book per year. It was expected that they would mention few titles and that, in their case, many types of literature would be on a level below the average. Such expectations proved correct, however the level of readership was below the average on a statistically significant level only for a few types of literature.

They were not strong followers of fiction. Their interest in high literature (older and contemporary) and popular literature was below the average.

They mentioned fewer types of nonfiction (guides, essays, journalist works, and least of all scientific and popular science literature). This shows that villagers do not have the habit of using books for the primary functions they provide: reflection, intellectual effort, cultural prestige (high literature, essays), entertainment (romance), and help in daily life (guides).

However, villagers had their own preferences, just like the above-mentioned inhabitants of towns and cities. Their choice of literature demonstrated the significant role which set readings for school play for them. Young villagers mentioned set readings for school much more often than other teenagers. Textbooks were mentioned by villagers more frequently too. Such a result is confirmed in other readership studies that covered villagers and teenagers.<sup>59</sup> It could show either the better discipline among young people from villages (the greater authority of schools) or a stronger association between readership and young age and school. The high readership among young people compared to the overall level of readership in villages is particularly important because it brings hope that the cultural gap is vanishing slowly: in terms of their participation in culture, the younger generations from villages did not differ from young people from towns and cities as much as the older generations did.

The fact that villagers associate reading with children and adolescents is evidenced in the fact that women from villages declared frequent readership of children's literature. Such frequent mentions of children's books could also result from infrequent reading for their own purposes (when faced with the pollster, the respondents recalled reading to children).

Villagers read contemporary literature less frequently than the average, but together with residents of small towns were the leaders in books published before 1945. The first result can be explained with the lower share of popular fiction and some types of nonfiction in their readership. On the other hand, their focus on older books seems to be less an effect of the adults reading literary classics (villagers read them below the average) and more a result of the prevalence of older books among the set readings for school, the traditional role of children's books which are particularly popular among female villagers (though it is not only in villages that these are traditional readings), and the strong position of religious literature (especially the Bible) in the readership in villages.

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59 Katarzyna Wolff emphasised the importance of educational literature for the readership among villagers, K. Wolff: *Książka w społecznej przestrzeni polskiej wsi* [Books in the Social Space of Polish Villages]. Warsaw 2008. ISBN: 9788370096892.

# FREE READING. TWO DECADES OF READING IN FREE POLAND.

## CHAPTER VII

Without a doubt, in terms of the *Social Reach of Books* the last two decades were not a monotonous period at all. Rather to the contrary, it was a period of intensive transformations: the market offering was changing and Polish readers developed new methods to take advantage of it.

At the beginning, there was a sudden expansion in the choice of books. It was the time when Western popular fiction took the prime spot and the Polish readers welcomed it with open arms. Two types of popular fiction were particularly attractive: romance & drama (especially the *Harlequin* series) and action & detective stories (especially Ludlum, Follett, Forsyth and MacLean). Such fascination with pop culture was supplemented with a few speculative fiction books (Masterton, Sandemo) and after 1994 with William Wharton. Alexander Solzhenitsyn deserved a special place among the literary choices of the time. He was the only political dissident whose works were banned in the communist era in Poland but who managed to reach 1% of the Polish audience after 1989.

Polish literature lost out against the great number of new texts from abroad, even though Polish writers used to be the primary choice in 1980s. This decline touched on Polish contemporary fiction in particular. The comprehensive choice of foreign detective and love stories pushed Polish works beyond the safe niche it had held, with the sole exception of Joanna Chmielewska, whose humorous detective stories remained popular. The Polish classics managed to survive much better on the new market. Both in the 1980s and the 1990s the literary classics of Sienkiewicz, Krasiński, Prus, etc. continued to be popular even beyond the group of students. In the early 1990s, the list of the most popular authors included writers of romance stories published between the world wars whose works were rarely published in the communist era in Poland (such as Rodziewiczówna, Mniszkówna, Fleszarowa-Muskat, and Dołęga-Mostowicz).

Also, a few new authors from Poland appeared on the market. Their works were both written and published after 1989. These were not fiction but documentary literature (in particular the books by Edward Gierek, Jerzy Urban, and Wojciech Jaruzelski), and the popular theology of Pope John Paul II (*Crossing the Threshold of Hope*).

Such unique new areas of literary interest that were observed in the early 1990s declined



in the second half of the decade. The greatest drop in popularity hit the Polish classics of romance, which had been revived after almost one hundred years of absence from the market, and memoirs of the former communist leaders, which in a sense closed the door on the previous political era in Poland. Also, foreign action stories were declining slightly and reached a stable level that later continued until the middle of the next decade. Women were not as interested in the *Harlequin* series or the whole romance literature as they used to be. The interest in the Polish literary classics was falling more slowly. At the turn of the centuries, the readership of the Polish canon of classic books was much lower, the best example being Sienkiewicz, whose popularity dropped from 8-10% to 6% in 2000, with this trend continuing afterwards.

The authors who were losing their popularity would be gradually replaced with new works which readers found fascinating. However, this process was very slow. The group of the most common works was vanishing, and the absence of the former most popular authors who used to reach at least 1% of readers was not filled by any new appearances at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Certainly, there were bestsellers and new phenomena observed on the market then. As could be noted in the subsequent study phases, the bestselling authors of the late 1990s were not remembered well enough by the general public to reach at least 1% of book readers. For example, Jonathan Carroll, whose popularity peaked in the 1990s, could not be found on the list of the most common books. Nor did Andrzej Sapkowski reach a big enough group of readers then, even though he was completing his saga about *Wiedźmin (The Witcher)*. The second half of the 1990s was also a time of global bestsellers: *The Bridget Jones's Diary* (1997) and *The Alchemist* (1995). Such literary phenomena have not been detected in the readership study until the turn of the century.

As such, the 1990s were not the best time for fiction. Its share in the overall readership was rather small. On the other hand, specialist literature was on the rise. Dictionaries, encyclopaedias and set readings for schools were on a stable level. It seemed that the readership was becoming more practical.

However, the new millennium brought a change. After the turn of the century, new appearances on the literary market could finally be observed next to the declining genres. Every survey in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century revealed new bestsellers.

As early as 2000, the year of the literary crisis, certain symptoms could be noticed in the readership of popular fiction books, even though their overall share was very low then. After years of persistent promotional efforts, Paulo Coelho reached the list of the most popular authors and with year-by-year increases he has been staying on the list ever since then. If Coelho's works, which provide popular reflection on the meaning of life, can be assumed to address similar needs as William Wharton's books had in the 1990s, then this literary niche experienced a very smooth exchange, a sort of succession of generations. Wharton's works, which were becoming dominated by autobiographical, nonfiction and melancholic plots, were losing popularity, while Coelho's works which were more spectacular, optimistic, contemporary and which were supplying modern messages, replaced the former.

In 2000, Stanisław Lem was one of the newcomers in the group of the most popular writers. It was the early symptom of a rising interest in speculative fiction observed in the early years after 2000. However, this rising interest was not driven by science fiction but rather by the youngest genre in this group: fantasy. Two events were crucial factors in its development. First and foremost, the stunning cinematic production of *The Lord of the Rings* ignited a sudden interest in Tolkien's works. The creator of Middle-Earth has travelled a long road from being an old classic (as the author of set readings for school) and guru to a dedicated but small community of followers, to becoming a pop culture star, and from a literary niche

to the contemporary mainstream. The film also helped bring speculative fiction into the focus of the wider public.

The other event which drove the interest in speculative fiction in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century occurred in the genre of adolescent literature. It was the unexpected but tremendous success of Joanne Rowling's *Harry Potter*. The story promoted its literary genre as a whole and contributed to a small revolution in the readership among the younger generations: speculative fiction for adolescents left the literary margins and within a few years became the mainstream. *Harry Potter* was like a revelation of the many opportunities that result from merging adolescent literature with fantasy, and demonstrated to other writers and publishers alike that a bestseller can be dedicated to adolescents too.

After the success of Coelho, Tolkien, and Rowling that marked the start of the last decade, and the regrouping of popular fiction, the time had come for the two principal genres of fiction: romance & drama literature and action & detective stories.

In 2004, Helen Fielding entered the list of the most popular writers in Poland. The interest in her book, which had already been a bestselling novel from the start of the decade, was rising rather slowly in Poland to finally reach 1% of readers in 2004. The result was achieved after the premiere of the cinematic version of this novel which told a love story about a thirty-year old woman from London. Fielding's success was the beginning of a wider phenomenon: the rise of the modern love story. The new trend also helped Polish writers: the list of the most popular titles then included novels by Katarzyna Grochola, Janusz Wiśniewski, and Małgorzata Kalicińska.

In 2006, the time had come for action stories: 6% of readers mentioned Dan Brown's works, especially *The Da Vinci Code* (again, not earlier than its cinematic success). His popularity has been continuing ever since then. The good standing of this genre was confirmed in 2010 when Stieg Larsson's *Millennium* was published.

The last decade also saw a steady rise in Polish speculative fiction, with Sapkowski being the leader (his novels depict worlds similar to and somewhere between Tolkien's and Pratchett's) and the trendsetter for the other Polish authors of this genre. Like Sapkowski, the popular Polish writers of speculative fiction (Piekara, Kossakowska, Pilipiuk, Ziemiański) created novels that were clearly intertextual, contained social satire and featured innovative language.

The obvious changes in the area of fiction were accompanied by a dynamic development of certain documentary genres: travel reportages, and books of and about Pope John Paul II. In the case of travel reportages, the works of Kapuściński in particular and later Cejrowski enjoyed a sudden rise of popularity, especially after 2005. As regards Pope John Paul II, the popularity of Stanisław Dziwisz's *Świadectwo (Testimony)* peaked quickly but did not last for very long.

Last but not least, in the last two years of the study contemporary high literature started appearing on the list of the most popular books, even though the few books mentioned followed popular culture models (Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, Süskind's *Perfume*).

It is easy to notice that the history of readership in the last twenty years can be divided into two decades, each standing out with its own distinct features. The two decades had a different type and rhythm of transformation occurring in the readership of popular fiction.

The 1990s were a time of more global changes. They started off with a revolution: an extensive and in-depth makeover of the book market and of areas of interest for Polish readers. This revolution was not caused by single books or authors but by the emergence of whole literary genres which had not been available before, and all these new genres became available at once in the form of a great number of representative books. It was a sudden change

for the readership, especially in the area of expanding popular fiction, and the dramatic character of the questions which culture-oriented researchers<sup>60</sup> asked then demonstrates this very well. After the global revolution of the early 1990s, the second half of the decade saw a stagnation – equally global and encompassing almost the whole of popular fiction.

Readership in Poland could also be described as a process wherein Polish readers were catching up with the Western public. At first it was a quick and dynamic replenishment of popular fiction from the last decades, followed by a period of adaptation to it, and finally a rising indifference to literary models already known. Furthermore, unlike in Western Europe and the USA, the needs of Polish readers to catch up with and supplement their choice of literature was most likely one of the causes why Poles had a somewhat different literary taste for foreign writers that used to be unknown in Poland, and why their areas of interest did not fully overlap with worldwide literary trends. It could be an effect of precedence: writers of previously unknown types of literature who had been the first widely published authors in Poland had a better chance to pique the interest of the readers in Poland than in the western countries (for example Masterton and Smith). On the other hand, the unique choice of literature in this period could also be an effect of the different cultural experience that Poles had, and the unique functions of the literature that they preferred (for example Wharton).

It seems that the process of the Poles adapting to the great change of early 1990s was finished by the end of that decade. Around the year 2000, like readers in the USA or Western Europe, the Polish audience already had vast experience with popular fiction and even started showing the first symptoms of boredom with the market of the time. This situation made Polish readers ready for novelties in literature. Starting at the turn of the century, the subsequent study phases were showing new literary discoveries and fascinations on the part of Poles. However, this was not like the revolution that followed the political transformation of the early 1990s. The changes were not global and did not transform the whole of the market or literary taste. The list of the most popular authors resembled many local and consecutive changes and minor revolutions occurring within the respective literary genres.

Such changes were often connected with very specific authors: Rowling, Fielding, or Brown. Therefore, the 1990s were a time of popular fiction, within its meaning of a literature of many genres (an intensive readership of many works using a similar model of fiction and written by many largely interchangeable authors), while the last decade was a time of focus on certain grand names: the literary reformers. The audience which by that time had already been accustomed to the basic models of popular fiction started appreciating more those authors who exceeded such standard models and offered new, unexpected and often controversial deployments of the old models. Such writers crossed the readers' horizon of expectations while surprising and moving the readers up to but not further than the point where a text might become overly difficult, strange and incomprehensible for them. Such writers reached beyond the renown of a skilful craftsman and became more like pop stars able to move collective emotions, raise widespread excitement, gain a following and even rouse indignation. These literary pop stars

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60 Hopes and anxieties of the period are exemplified well in the series of discussions about the *Harlequin* series which Ewelina Szyszkowska held in the early 1990s. It was shocking to observe the downfall and destruction of the literary hierarchy that had been in place beforehand (for example, the *Harlequin* series were read by well-educated women who were expected to have much higher literary ambitions). See E. M. Szyszkowska: *Odmiany uczuć. Popularny romans kieszonkowy w Polsce 1990–2000* [Shades of Emotions. Pocket Love Stories in Poland 1990–2000]. Warsaw 2003. ISBN: 8370094244.

were soon followed by literary craftsmen who multiplied the invented models in their own versions of literature.

A clear and dynamic rhythm could be observed as the number of literary pop stars was rising in the consecutive surveys of the last decade. It seems as though the public was living from one bestseller to another. This character of the readership gave Poles a good chance at a more collective experience of literature (as the same book which many people read at a similar time gives an opportunity to share experiences and to discuss it),<sup>61</sup> however this was less and less connected with the literary classics which were declining at that time. The objects of fascination, which could be noticed in the last decade in Poland and were caused by foreign writers, overlapped with similar waves of popularity observed in the USA and Western Europe. Polish readers were living by the same literary rhythm and had similar areas of interest as the global audience.

In the last decade, the rise of literary pop stars and their books was more often achieved with the support of other media. The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century stands out with the strong correlation between literature and cinema/television. Perhaps it is nothing new. For tens of years readership studies have been indicating the impact of cinematic versions of books on the interest in these books. However, until the turn of the century that impact did not seem strong. It is hard to indicate any clear example from the 1990s where a movie would influence literature so much that a book became a bestseller only after its cinematic premiere<sup>62</sup> (or where if a book had already been a bestseller, then the number of readers multiplied after its cinematic premiere).

Unlike in the past, the last decade shows many examples of such phenomena. Also, a clear pattern could be observed in the way the publishing market collaborated with other media to promote a more comprehensive product. First, there is an *event* in the form of a new novel. The new book attracts a great number of readers and is an object of many commentaries and discussions (at this stage, it has not yet reached the 1% threshold of popularity in this readership study and is not on the list of the most common books). The cinematic industry recognises value in the book and creates its version for the movies (or TV series), more often than not in a large-scale cinematic production with stars of the big screen. It is after the movie or TV series becomes successful that the book can become popular on a mass scale, cross the boundaries of the respective social groups and reach at least 1% of the surveyed readers. Or, instead of a new book, it could be a legendary novel (like *The Lord of the Rings*) which moves from a narrow group of devoted followers to mass popularity among other social groups. As such, literature acts like a trendsetter that offers new ideas for use by others and is the source of trends. However, only the cinema and television can make a given story appeal to the masses. Such was the case with *Bridget Jones's Diary*, *Loneliness on the Net*, *Nigdy w życiu (Never in Life)*, *Harry Potter*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *Millennium*, and *The Lord of the Rings*.

The mechanism has not always worked so well, as for example in the case of Polish literature and film. It did not play this role in the case of Henryk Sienkiewicz's works. Two splendid films made based on his novel were produced around the turn of the century: *With Fire*

61 The latter could be observed in the level of interest which certain books raised, and even more in the expectations for their sequels as in the case of multi-volume novels (especially in speculative fiction) which had new and much anticipated parts released every one or two years.

62 There are many examples of books and films for which such an effect could have been expected, as in the case of famous cinematic versions of books from the 1990s: *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Jurassic Park*.

and *Sword* in 1999 and *Quo Vadis* in 2001. However, the period also marked the quick decline of interest in his books. Perhaps film-based promotion was not as important for books that had already been widely popular. It also seems that not even a cinematic production can stop a cultural trend in progress, like the on-going decline of interest in a certain literary genre (historical adventure books) or a writer.

Big screen versions were not the only factor causing the mass popularity of books among Polish readers. There is at least one more type of event that could set off collective emotions in the last decade and lead to the buying and/or reading of certain books. Such an event is the death of famous and important figures of contemporary social life.

This was the case with the death of Pope John Paul II. The growing interest in books by the Pope, about him, and in religious literature in general could be clearly observed in the readership study. An intensified following was also noticed after deaths of Stanisław Lem, Ryszard Kapuściński and the priest Jan Twardowski. However, unlike the interest caused by films, the interest resulting from a death has not always led to high readership. There were cases where the books of deceased writers (or about them) were both purchased and read, but also other cases where the interest in them did not last beyond the purchase (e.g. Twardowski).

A third way to raise the interest of the masses in specific books, which also became an important factor in the last decade, was book collections accompanying dailies and magazines. In the case of the latter, more often than not people made the purchase but did not follow up with reading.

Comparing the readership in the last two decades, there is one more perspective from which to view the changes that occurred: the different position of Polish literature in each decade and the relation of Polish vs. foreign books selected by readers.

The 1990s were like a raid of barbarians against a defending tower. Throughout the decade, popular Polish and foreign authors seemed to have contradictory features rather than similarities. Grażyna Straus described such contradictions well when she commented on the scarce selection of books which achieved the highest popularity rank in 2000: “the assumed threshold was achieved by the *Trilogy* only and by the *Harlequin* series – on one hand, a novel providing the conventional example of tradition and Polish virtues, and on the other one, a series providing an equally conventional example of Western pop culture.”<sup>63</sup> There is an array of *Polish vs. foreign* contradictions between the *Trilogy* and the *Harlequin* series: local vs. global, old vs. contemporary, traditional vs. modern, and last but not least, literary classics vs. commercial rubbish. Such contradictions can be extrapolated easily to the whole mainstream of Polish and foreign literature in the 1990s. The former was dominated by books written in older times (often before 1945) and containing overt references to the national history and tradition. Readers chose not only entertaining books but also books from the group of conventional classics. On the other hand, foreign literature was almost exclusively contemporary and conveyed lifestyle models and images characteristic of global pop culture.

These contradictions vanished in the next decade when contemporary popular literature from Poland appealed to the wider masses. Polish literature was no longer associated with old and serious books. Its literary models were becoming more universal as the Polish authors of popular novels were conquering the market, learning from their Western European and American colleagues, and copying ideas and methodologies from them. However, the local character of Polish popular literature was not lost. Rather to the contrary, its success

63 G. Straus, K. Wolff: *Sienkiewicz, Mickiewicz, Biblia, Harlequiny...* [Sienkiewicz, Mickiewicz, Bible, Harlequins...]. See above, p. 51.

resulted from the adaptation of Western models to local settings and cultural traditions. Such a successful merger could be observed in the case of two literary genres in particular, which were developing dynamically at the time: romance & drama stories and fantasy. In the case of the former, the skilful deployment of foreign inspirations by Polish writers filled the gaps that the literature of the 1990s was experiencing.

Both streams of the most popular drama novels from the 1990s, namely Polish romance classics and contemporary Western love stories, had something in common regardless of the many contradictions. Both genres were novels that depicted a reality far from the contemporary life of Polish readers. This meant that the two genres did not provide the characteristic functions of popular literature (and drama in particular): models of narration about oneself and one's environment, the organisation of one's daily life, and an interpretation of the social reality.

In the case of popular literature of the 1990s, there was a gap which had not been filled in the first decade after the political transformation in Poland, at least in the area of literature: there were no popular novels about the daily life in Poland of that time. High literature could not fill the gap because it described current life in a convoluted manner, focused on the most difficult aspects of contemporary social life, and reached a very limited group of readers. The need for simplistic and easy novels about contemporary life remained and was evidenced in the dynamic popularity of the Polish TV soap operas that appeared in the second half of the 1990s. The soap operas were the first genre depicting the social reality in Poland in an approachable way.

Not until the turn of the century did literature begin to compete in this field, with the impulse coming from abroad: *Bridget Jones's Diary* with its description of a love story set against a very clear depiction of contemporary society. Polish publishers and authors saw an opportunity in this model, as female readers should like a contemporary love story set in a local environment. The hunt for a Polish Bridget Jones began. Helen Fielding described a social background which was close enough to that of Polish women that her narrative model could be used very easily. At the same time, it was different enough that its transposition to a Polish setting would still have an original value. A story about a thirty-year old woman living in a big city, independent, working, torn between different systems of values and cultural patterns, was no longer so exotic for Polish women after the turn of the century. On the other hand, professional, financial, social and mental issues which Polish thirty-year-olds had to face then were not exactly the same as the ones described by the British writer. As such, her book was the perfect starting point for contemporary Polish love stories, such as for example the ones by Grochola and Wiśniewski (and the less popular novels by Sowa and Szwaja).

References to the Polish life in a modern or post-modern society were not the only method used by Polish writers of popular literature to achieve a Polish flavour in literature. Another way was to re-use tradition: contemporary books with references to traditional culture, instead of traditional literature. Such references played a major role in the dynamically developing genre of Polish fantasy. First it was Sapkowski, later followed by Piekara, Kossakowska, Piliipiuk and Ziemiański who used cultural references, inherent to this genre, in order to connect their works with Polish tradition (literary and social stereotypes and associations), as well as topics interesting to Poles (many books contain references to the Catholic Church, for example).

In the context of the whole decade and the changes in readership, it seems that 'glocality'<sup>64</sup> played an important role (e.g. the merger of local traditions with global ones, the devel-

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64 For 'glocality' see T. Paleczny: *Socjologia tożsamości* [Sociology of Identity]. Kraków 2008. ISBN: 9788375710601, p. 110.

opment of foreign models adapted to local settings and, vice versa, and the development of local literary works based on inspirations from abroad). The last two decades are different not only in the specific rhythms and types of changes occurring in the readership of popular literature, and the coordination between areas of interest in Poland and worldwide, but also in the role which Polish literature played, the ability of popular literature to refer to contemporary lifestyles and the use of local traditions.

To summarise the transforming readership of the past twenty years, growth in the overall readership has not always overlapped with periods of the most interesting changes in the available literature or new discoveries on the market of books and authors. An interesting offering (new authors, new trends) is just one of many factors which impact the overall level of readership in Poland, and is rarely the sole decisive factor. Such was the case in 1992 when the new market had a strong impact on the rise of the readership observed then. The revival of fiction at the turn of the century and later (new titles, a high interest in older books) caused a slight improvement in the overall level of readership observed then. However, regardless of the many interesting events occurring afterwards, the overall readership started declining very steeply. It seems that external factors came into play and caused a sudden withdrawal from literature which could not be stopped even by the most interesting books. As Izabela Koryś said in the first part of this Report, there were at least two cultural events which took place then that could be decisive: the expansion of the Internet (a new type of entertainment and source of knowledge) and cable television (new types of fictional and documentary narration).

| Which types of books did you read during the past 12 months? | Respondents | Action and detective stories | Romance and drama stories | Speculative fiction | Classics | Contemporary high literature | Children's literature | Adolescent speculative fiction | Girl literature | Set readings for school |
|--|-------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|----------|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1  | 2           | 3                            | 4                         | 5                   | 6        | 7                            | 8                     | 9                              | 10              | 11                      |
| <b>Total</b>   | 884         | 22                           | 15                        | 11                  | 5        | 7                            | 4                     | 5                              | 2               | 8                       |
| <b>Sex:</b>  |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| men  | 863         | 24                           | 3*                        | 13                  | 6        | 8                            | 1                     | 2                              | 0               | 10                      |
| women  | 521         | 20                           | 24*                       | 9                   | 5        | 6                            | 6                     | 7                              | 3               | 7                       |
| <b>Age:</b>  |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| 15-19  | 118         | 16                           | 3*                        | 10                  | 3        | 2*                           | 3                     | 10*                            | 6               | 55*                     |
| 20-29  | 196         | 22                           | 12                        | 15*                 | 2*       | 5                            | 6                     | 7                              | 1               | 4                       |
| 30-39  | 151         | 27                           | 13                        | 16*                 | 3        | 7                            | 8*                    | 5                              | 3               | 2                       |
| 40-49  | 130         | 22                           | 17                        | 7                   | 9*       | 15*                          | 4                     | 4                              | 1               | 0                       |
| 50-59  | 133         | 20                           | 25*                       | 7                   | 7        | 5                            | 1                     | 2                              | 0               | 0                       |
| 60+  | 156         | 21                           | 21*                       | 8                   | 9*       | 8                            | 1*                    | 2*                             | 2               | 0                       |
| <b>Education:</b>  |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| primary  | 65          | 21                           | 13                        | 13                  | 5        | 0                            | 11                    | 3                              | 0               | 0                       |
| vocational   | 126         | 24                           | 20                        | 7                   | 6        | 3                            | 7                     | 5                              | 1               | 1*                      |
| secondary  | 322         | 24                           | 19                        | 11                  | 7*       | 7                            | 4                     | 5                              | 2               | 3*                      |
| college/university   | 226         | 21                           | 16                        | 12                  | 2*       | 13*                          | 0*                    | 2*                             | 2               | 0                       |
| still in school  | 145         | 14*                          | 4*                        | 12                  | 4        | 3                            | 4                     | 9*                             | 5               | 43*                     |
| <b>Place of residence:</b>                                   |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| village  | 261         | 18                           | 11*                       | 8                   | 4        | 5                            | 6*                    | 6                              | 2               | 14*                     |
| city up to 20 thousand                                       | 124         | 16                           | 22*                       | 9                   | 9        | 5                            | 2                     | 7                              | 2               | 7                       |
| city 20-100 thousand   | 169         | 27                           | 11                        | 13                  | 7        | 12*                          | 6                     | 2                              | 3               | 6                       |
| city 100-500 thousand  | 193         | 25                           | 19                        | 10                  | 5        | 8                            | 3                     | 6                              | 2               | 9*                      |
| city above 500 thousand                                      | 138         | 22                           | 19                        | 18*                 | 3        | 4                            | 1*                    | 3                              | 1               | 2*                      |
| <b>Occupation:</b>   |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| managers/professionals                                       | 116         | 23                           | 13                        | 9                   | 3        | 15*                          | 1                     | 4                              | 1               | 0                       |
| private entrepreneurs  | 36          | 17                           | 11                        | 16                  | 0        | 13                           | 3                     | 3                              | 1               | 0                       |
| administration and services                                  | 173         | 27*                          | 17                        | 15                  | 3        | 6                            | 5                     | 4                              | 3               | 2*                      |
| blue collars   | 110         | 27                           | 14                        | 13                  | 11*      | 6                            | 3                     | 5                              | 2               | 3*                      |
| farmers  | 14          | 6                            | 11                        | 0                   | 11       | 0                            | 0                     | 0                              | 0               | 0                       |
| housewives   | 43          | 13                           | 33*                       | 2                   | 0        | 5                            | 13                    | 9                              | 0               | 0                       |
| pensioners   | 195         | 18                           | 23*                       | 7                   | 8*       | 7                            | 3                     | 2                              | 1               | 0                       |
| students   | 145         | 14*                          | 4                         | 12                  | 4        | 3                            | 4                     | 9                              | 5               | 43*                     |
| unemployed   | 52          | 37*                          | 12                        | 19                  | 5        | 1                            | 10                    | 8                              | 0               | 8                       |
| <b>Internet:</b>   |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| no access  | 181         | 22                           | 19                        | 9                   | 9*       | 2*                           | 4                     | 2                              | 3               | 3*                      |
| access but no use  | 49          | 14                           | 22                        | 5                   | 15       | 5                            | 6                     | 14                             | 0               | 0                       |
| use  | 655         | 22                           | 14*                       | 12                  | 3*       | 8*                           | 4                     | 5                              | 2               | 10*                     |
| <b>Read texts longer than 3 pages:</b>                       |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| yes  | 715         | 23*                          | 17                        | 11                  | 5        | 8*                           | 3*                    | 5                              | 2               | 8                       |
| no   | 164         | 15*                          | 11                        | 9                   | 5        | 1*                           | 9*                    | 4                              | 2               | 13*                     |
| <b>Read the press:</b>                                       |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| no   | 119         | 20                           | 13                        | 9                   | 8        | 3                            | 1                     | 4                              | 2               | 13*                     |
| yes - occasional   | 422         | 19                           | 15                        | 11                  | 5        | 6                            | 4                     | 4                              | 3               | 2*                      |
| yes - regular  | 343         | 25                           | 17                        | 11                  | 5        | 10*                          | 5                     | 6                              | 1               | 2*                      |
| <b>Read books:</b>   |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| 1-6  | 625         | 17*                          | 14                        | 9*                  | 4*       | 5*                           | 4                     | 5                              | 2               | 9                       |
| 6 and more   | 259         | 32*                          | 19                        | 17*                 | 8        | 11                           | 5                     | 5                              | 1               | 7                       |
|  |             |                              |                           |                     | *        | *                            |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| <b>Book buying:</b>  |             |                              |                           |                     |          |                              |                       |                                |                 |                         |
| yes  | 480         | 20                           | 15                        | 13*                 | 4        | 10*                          | 5                     | 5                              | 3*              | 9                       |
| no   | 404         | 23                           | 16                        | 8*                  | 7        | 4*                           | 3                     | 5                              | 1*              | 8                       |

The aggregate scores do not sum up to 100 because readers could choose multiple genres or none.

\* p = 0.05

TABLE 1. INTEREST IN FICTION GENRES VS. BOOK READER CATEGORIES, 2010 (PERCENT)



| Which types of books did you read during the past 12 months? | Respondents |     | Documentary | Guides | Dictionaries and encyclopaedias | Scientific and popular science | Textbooks | Essays and journalist literature |
|--|-------------|-----|-------------|--------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
|  | 1           | 2   |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| <b>Total</b>   | 884         | 14  | 8           | 2      | 10                              | 2                              | 2         |                                  |
| <b>Sex:</b>  |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| men  | 363         | 13  | 7           | 2      | 16*                             | 2                              | 2         |                                  |
| women  | 521         | 14  | 8           | 2      | 5*                              | 2                              | 3         |                                  |
| <b>Age:</b>  |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| 15-19  | 118         | 8   | 0           | 1      | 2*                              | 3                              | 1         |                                  |
| 20-29  | 196         | 12  | 8           | 2      | 13                              | 5                              | 2         |                                  |
| 30-39  | 151         | 12  | 8           | 6      | 9                               | 2                              | 2         |                                  |
| 40-49  | 130         | 15  | 7           | 1      | 10                              | 0                              | 3         |                                  |
| 50-59  | 133         | 13  | 15*         | 1      | 13                              | 1                              | 6         |                                  |
| 60+  | 156         | 21* | 7           | 3      | 9                               | 0                              | 2         |                                  |
| <b>Education:</b>  |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| primary  | 65          | 8   | 6           | 7      | 6                               | 0                              | 1         |                                  |
| vocational   | 126         | 14  | 11          | 3      | 9                               | 0                              | 2         |                                  |
| secondary  | 322         | 18* | 9           | 2      | 9                               | 2                              | 1         |                                  |
| college/university   | 226         | 15  | 9           | 2      | 16*                             | 2                              | 5*        |                                  |
| still in school  | 145         | 6*  | 2*          | 2      | 5*                              | 6                              | 2         |                                  |
| <b>Place of residence:</b>                                   |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| village  | 261         | 14  | 3*          | 4      | 8                               | 3                              | 1*        |                                  |
| city up to 20 thousand                                       | 124         | 14  | 5           | 0      | 9                               | 2                              | 4         |                                  |
| city 20-100 thousand   | 169         | 14  | 9           | 1      | 7                               | 1                              | 4         |                                  |
| city 100-500 thousand  | 193         | 14  | 9           | 4      | 12                              | 2                              | 3         |                                  |
| city above 500 thousand                                      | 138         | 12  | 14*         | 0      | 15*                             | 1                              | 2         |                                  |
| <b>Occupation:</b>   |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| managers/professionals                                       | 116         | 19* | 10          | 0      | 14                              | 2                              | 5         |                                  |
| private entrepreneurs  | 36          | 22  | 13          | 0      | 10                              | 0                              | 7         |                                  |
| administration and services                                  | 173         | 9*  | 9           | 2      | 17*                             | 2                              | 1         |                                  |
| blue collars   | 110         | 14  | 7           | 4      | 6                               | 1                              | 3         |                                  |
| farmers  | 14          | 32  | 6           | 0      | 19                              | 7                              | 0         |                                  |
| housewives   | 43          | 14  | 11          | 2      | 5                               | 0                              | 0         |                                  |
| pensioners   | 195         | 19  | 7           | 5      | 9                               | 0                              | 3         |                                  |
| students   | 145         | 6*  | 2*          | 2      | 5*                              | 6                              | 2         |                                  |
| unemployed   | 52          | 12  | 11          | 0      | 5                               | 4                              | 0         |                                  |
| <b>Internet:</b>   |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| no access  | 181         | 11  | 7           | 2      | 6                               | 0                              | 2         |                                  |
| access but no use  | 49          | 24* | 5           | 2      | 6                               | 0                              | 0         |                                  |
| use  | 655         | 14  | 8           | 2      | 11*                             | 3                              | 3         |                                  |
| <b>Read texts longer than 3 pages:</b>                       |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| yes  | 715         | 14  | 7           | 1      | 11*                             | 2                              | 3         |                                  |
| no   | 164         | 14  | 9           | 6      | 4*                              | 1                              | 2         |                                  |
| <b>Read the press:</b>                                       |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| no   | 119         | 14  | 2*          | 2      | 4*                              | 1                              | 4         |                                  |
| yes - occasional   | 422         | 12  | 8           | 2      | 9                               | 3                              | 2         |                                  |
| yes - regular  | 343         | 16  | 9           | 3      | 13*                             | 1                              | 4         |                                  |
| <b>Read books:</b>   |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| 1-6  | 625         | 12* | 9           | 3      | 8*                              | 1*                             | 2*        |                                  |
| 6 and more   | 25          | 19* | 5           | 1      | 14*                             | 3*                             | 4*        |                                  |
|  | 9           |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| <b>Book buying:</b>  |             |     |             |        |                                 |                                |           |                                  |
| yes  | 480         | 15  | 8           | 2      | 11                              | 3*                             | 3*        |                                  |
| no   | 404         | 12  | 7           | 3      | 8                               | 1*                             | 1*        |                                  |

The aggregate scores do not sum up to 100 because readers could choose multiple literary themes or none.

\* p = 0.05

TABLE 2. AREAS OF INTEREST IN NON-FICTION VS. BOOK READER CATEGORIES, 2010 (PERCENT)

| Which types of books did you buy during the past 12 months? | Respondents |     | Action and detective stories | Romance and drama stories | Speculative fiction | High literature | Children's and adolescent literature | Set readings for school |
|---|-------------|-----|------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
|   | 1           | 2   | 3                            | 4                         | 5                   | 6               | 7                                    | 8                       |
| <b>Total</b>  | 553         | 12  | 8                            | 7                         | 6                   | 11              | 2                                    |                         |
| <b>Sex:</b>   |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| men   | 229         | 16* | 4*                           | 10                        | 6                   | 8               | 1                                    |                         |
| women   | 325         | 9*  | 11*                          | 6                         | 6                   | 13              | 2                                    |                         |
| <b>Age:</b>   |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| 15-19   | 73          | 0   | 0                            | 0                         | 0                   | 17              | 7                                    |                         |
| 20-29   | 110         | 10  | 9                            | 10                        | 7                   | 9               | 0                                    |                         |
| 30-39   | 113         | 18* | 3*                           | 13*                       | 6                   | 12              | 2                                    |                         |
| 40-49   | 87          | 10  | 7                            | 2                         | 14*                 | 11              | 1                                    |                         |
| 50-59   | 82          | 19* | 15*                          | 2*                        | 3                   | 9               | 0                                    |                         |
| 60+   | 89          | 12  | 13*                          | 9                         | 5                   | 7               | 0                                    |                         |
| <b>Education:</b>   |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| primary   | 42          | 16  | 4                            | 0                         | 0                   | 13              | 0                                    |                         |
| vocational  | 66          | 5   | 8                            | 0                         | 4                   | 16              | 0                                    |                         |
| secondary   | 186         | 17* | 11*                          | 8                         | 7                   | 8               | 0                                    |                         |
| college/university  | 166         | 13  | 8                            | 12*                       | 10*                 | 9               | 1                                    |                         |
| still in school   | 94          | 2*  | 2*                           | 5                         | 1*                  | 14              | 6                                    |                         |
| <b>Place of residence:</b>                                  |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| village   | 147         | 10  | 5                            | 3*                        | 6                   | 15              | 2                                    |                         |
| city up to 20 thousand                                      | 84          | 11  | 8                            | 5                         | 0*                  | 6               | 0                                    |                         |
| city 20-100 thousand  | 109         | 17  | 8                            | 8                         | 11*                 | 11              | 2                                    |                         |
| city 100-500 thousand                                       | 121         | 10  | 7                            | 8                         | 6                   | 12              | 2                                    |                         |
| city above 500 thousand                                     | 92          | 14  | 13*                          | 14*                       | 5                   | 6               | 1                                    |                         |
| <b>Occupation:</b>  |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| managers/professionals                                      | 101         | 14  | 7                            | 7                         | 14*                 | 10              | 1                                    |                         |
| private entrepreneurs                                       | 26          | 27  | 2                            | 18                        | 4                   | 12              | 7                                    |                         |
| administration and services                                 | 100         | 10  | 8                            | 7                         | 8                   | 8               | 0                                    |                         |
| blue collars  | 62          | 21* | 5                            | 7                         | 2                   | 18              | 0                                    |                         |
| farmers   | 8           | 0   | 0                            | 0                         | 0                   | 0               | 0                                    |                         |
| housewives  | 29          | 15  | 13                           | 3                         | 4                   | 11              | 3                                    |                         |
| pensioners  | 102         | 11  | 14*                          | 9                         | 4                   | 8               | 0                                    |                         |
| students  | 94          | 2*  | 2*                           | 5                         | 1*                  | 14              | 6                                    |                         |
| unemployed  | 33          | 12  | 12                           | 6                         | 5                   | 10              | 0                                    |                         |
| <b>Internet:</b>  |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| no access   | 100         | 10  | 10                           | 6                         | 2                   | 7               | 1                                    |                         |
| access but no use   | 28          | 13  | 11                           | 7                         | 5                   | 19              | 0                                    |                         |
| use   | 426         | 12  | 7                            | 8                         | 7                   | 11              | 2                                    |                         |
| <b>Read texts longer than 3 pages:</b>                      |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| yes   | 448         | 13  | 8                            | 8                         | 7                   | 10              | 2                                    |                         |
| no  | 100         | 9   | 6                            | 6                         | 3                   | 14              | 1                                    |                         |
| <b>Read the press:</b>                                      |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| no  | 76          | 6   | 4                            | 5                         | 4                   | 7               | 3                                    |                         |
| yes - occasional  | 235         | 8*  | 8                            | 7                         | 4                   | 13              | 1                                    |                         |
| yes - regular   | 242         | 17* | 9                            | 8                         | 9*                  | 10              | 2                                    |                         |
| <b>Read books:</b>  |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| yes   | 480         | 13* | 9*                           | 8                         | 7                   | 9*              | 2                                    |                         |
| no  | 73          | 2*  | 1*                           | 0                         | 2                   | 20*             | 0                                    |                         |
| <b>Book buying:</b>   |             |     |                              |                           |                     |                 |                                      |                         |
| 1-4   | 327         | 12* | 9                            | 9                         | 5                   | 9*              | 1                                    |                         |
| 4 and more  | 227         | 12* | 6                            | 5                         | 8                   | 14*             | 2                                    |                         |

The aggregate scores do not sum up to 100 because readers could choose multiple literary themes or none.

\* p = 0.05

TABLE 3. INTEREST IN FICTION GENRES VS. BOOK BUYER CATEGORIES, 2010 (PERCENT)