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Antonina Kłoskowska

The Common Reception of Literature As Exemplified by Stefan Żeromski's Works*

Sociology and Theory of Literature

Culture is frequently understood by contemporary humanities as communication, and my empirical analysis also accepts this view. In order, however, to avoid misunderstandings which can influence broader theoretical assumptions, it is necessary to add that this does not implicate the acceptance of pan-semiotic theories which—as expressed by Lévi-Strauss and many of his followers—assume that all social actions and creations, when subordinated to the norms of culture, acquire a semiotic character.

Semiotic culture, as understood here, is therefore only a part of the global culture,¹ and literature is undoubtedly contained in this part. There seems to be no need to discuss here an arguable question of semiotic qualities of other arts.

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¹ Cf. A. Kłoskowska: *Kultura masowa. Krytyka i obrona (Mass Culture: Criticism and Defense)*, Warszawa 1964; chapters "The Classifications of Cultural Phenomena and the Narrower Sense of Culture" and "A Proposition towards the Classification of Cultural Phenomena; A Semiotic Criterion of Culture", [in:] *Z historii i socjologii kultury (Studies in the History and Sociology of Culture)*, Warszawa 1969.

In the last decade sociology has become closer to that theory of literature which considers the communication process to be the true mode of existence of literary phenomena.² Understanding a literary work as a message made some scholars concentrate their attention on the questions of reception rather than on further attempts towards an immanent analysis of the text itself: it turned out that there were limitations to treating the text in a purely objective manner. This point of view, when carried to its particular consequence, allows us to treat most examples of theoretical and critical literary analysis as one form of deciphering the work, as one way of reception.³ Besides this form, expressed in discursive metaliterary analytical text, we can point to many other literary or artistic responses to literature and also to an important and specific category of reception, i.e. to the author's own interpretation concerning different phases of the creation of a work or its final shape.

All these types of reception are a justified subject of research for literary theoreticians, aestheticians or theoreticians of different fields of art where literary works are being transposed. I propose to use the term of critical reception to denote all forms of reception so defined.

Sociological research, on the other hand, comprises the problems of reception among usually much more numerous and differentiated categories of readers who are not professionally connected with literature or whose reading is not caused by their professional roles in the literary world and who usually leave no written trace of their reading. This type of reception will be referred to as the common reception of literature.

In research in this field it is necessary to employ sociological methods and techniques. If, however, an analysis is to reach deeper layers of literary reception, some knowledge of literary theory is needed too in order to conceptualize the research properly and evaluate the results. Similarly, the literary research on critical reception (as pointed out by Michał Głowiński and mentioned above) would gain by applying some technical methods developed in socio-

² Cf. particularly the studies of M. Głowiński, J. Sławiński, and S. Żółkiewski.

³ Cf. M. Głowiński, *Świadectwa i style odbioru (Evidence and Styles of Reception)*, "Teksty," 1975, no 3.

logy. We can therefore state that literary communication is a typical interdisciplinary subject of research which, besides its theoretical, critical and sociological aspects, includes also the psychological one.

So far, Polish research in the field of literary reception has not been organized as a joint venture of specialists from different branches of science. The cooperation, reaching over the border lines of different scientific fields, was usually achieved through temporary consultations and selected readings. The grounds for the analysis presented here are no exception to this rule.

In a situation like this, a sociologist regrets his lack of knowledge in the field of literary theory rather than in the field of psychology. Having a vast empirical material at his disposal, he can assume that the psychological factors are spread almost evenly in all of his categories, that it is not necessary to make use of intervening psychological variables in order to obtain results. He can, nonetheless, assume an interference of psychological—or, more frequently, sociopsychological—factors in individual cases. On the other hand, his insufficient knowledge of literary theory and history, as well as aesthetics, becomes apparent already in the phase of formulating the problems and constructing research methods. There is no justification for sociologists in the fact that literary theoreticians and historians try to construct classifications or topology of critical reception in a speculative and intuitive rather than empirical way. Mutual attempts at cooperation could be profitable for a further development of the border-line problems of both disciplines and they undoubtedly would impart dynamism to them.

Such a cooperation can concern the problems of defining the relationship between critical reception and that of a common reader. This relationship changes in time and depends on the social place and function of literature. Accordingly, it seems proper to recall here H. D. Duncan's concept of five historical types of relation between the artist, the critic, and the audience.⁴ This relation has evolved from the primitive society where audience and critics were one category and the role of the artist was not socially limited to the type in which the artist creates mainly for the broadly

⁴ Cf. H. D. Duncan, *Sociology of Art, Literature and Music: Social Context of Symbolic Experience*, [in:] *Modern Sociological Theories*, New York 1957.

understood category of critics: for organizers of cultural life, patrons, cultural politicians and critics—art experts. According to Duncan, modern times are characterized by two patterns: that of artists oriented towards the critics and audience, without an interrelation between these two categories, in the 19th-century bourgeois culture, and that of both artists and critics oriented towards the audience, without a closer relation between artists and critics, in the contemporary mass culture.

Models created by Duncan are theoretical constructions of the ideal type. They can be useful for ordering the data of historical reality which, however, only resembles them. Particularly the types of “critics” and audience were different in different epochs and societies. In Poland of the 19th and early 20th centuries the audience for whom artists usually created their works was not understood as a category of clients or buyers but as the nation for whom the artists were fulfilling their vocation. On the other hand, the Young Poland epoch was characterized also by writing for a narrow circle of experts and by despising gignamity.

Analyzing the common reader’s reception became more important as the works were meant for broad audiences and particularly when they reached such audiences. Analyses of critical reception, however, do not lose their importance, if only for methodological reasons, because this is where a sociologist looks for the principles of constructing his research methods and criteria for evaluating his results. He considers such analyses necessary particularly when he tries to understand more thoroughly the character of common social reception of literature or of other arts.⁵

This requires a short return to the considerations of the notion of reception. The term itself is a most general one and denotes various forms of reaction to a literary message. The reception research vary therefore from registering declarations about the knowledge or acceptance of chosen messages to attempts at a deeper penetration into the processes of consciousness which occur under the influence

⁵ Recognition of the “critical” reception is not tantamount to its uncritical acceptance. It also can be a form of “misunderstanding a work.” Cf. J. Prokop, *Krytyka jako niezrozumienie dzieła (Criticism as misunderstanding of a Work)*, [in:] *Badania nad krytyką literacką (Studies on Literary Criticism)*, Warszawa 1974. There are, however, different levels of misunderstanding.

of a contact with a work of art. Such processes are denoted by different terms of a narrower scope, all of which could cause some reservations. The frequently used notion of perception is loaded with purely psychological associations, while reception corresponds simply to a very broad notion of receiving. Interpretation suggests taking into consideration only a discursive account of an intellectual analysis of a work. Research concerning the common reception can frequently be reduced to the latter act, though it would be most desirable to remove such a limitation.

The notion of concretization is widely used in the studies by literary theoreticians and historians, which does not mean that Ingarden's theory of the literary work is generally accepted. The term is frequently connected with the criticism of this theory and has to be surrounded by numerous reservations.⁶ Concretization is not, therefore, understood only as filling the indeterminate places or as an object, but as a historically changing process, which depends on the norms of the epoch and the social category of readers, and which reaches almost all layers and elements of a work except, possibly, for its formal structure which undergoes no modification and guarantees its basic identity.

Despite all reservations, the notion of concretization proved to be inspiring for theory of literature and for the sociology of culture. It also enabled to establish connections with other current conceptions of a literary message as co-realized by the sender (writer) and the receiver (reader). Such conceptions are particularly typical of French structuralists and of the semiotic theory developed by U. Eco. Discussing the structure and informativity of the artistic text, Y. Lotman points to a very significant increase of its indeterminateness and at the same time of the informativity between the writer and the reader. Even though Lotman and other Soviet semiologists are concerned with the relation between the artist and his work rather than between the work and its receiver,⁷ their considerations

⁶ Cf. particularly M. Głowiński, *On Concretization*, [in:] *Roman Ingarden and Contemporary Polish Aesthetics*, Warszawa 1975; H. Markiewicz, *Places of Indeterminacy in a Literary Work*, *ibidem*, also other studies of the same author.

⁷ Y. Lotman, *A Structure of a Work of Art*, Moscow 1970; *Semiotyka kultury (Cultural Semiotics)*, Warszawa 1975, particularly the studies by Y. Lotman, B. Uspensky, *O semiotycznym mechanizmie kultury (On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture)*, and A. Piatigorsky, *O możliwościach analizy tekstu jako sygnału (On the Possibilities of Analyzing the Text as a Signal)*.

also open a perspective for the latter type of relation which requires sociological research.

The notion of concretization as a subject for analysis could therefore remain in the sociological research. Because of its equivocal meaning as well as philosophical load which it is best to avoid, I would propose to substitute the term, as yet not too popular among the sociologists of culture, by the term of "re-creation." The etymology of the word points to the active character of the reader's attitude without suggesting that activity applies only to some schematically patterned elements of the work's structure. Recreation can enrich a work, impoverish or modify it. It has, however, to oscillate around the message, if it is to apply to it and is not to constitute a fully independent, more or less successful creation.

In order to learn about the re-creation of artistic messages it is not enough to study literary reception on the level of uncontrolled declarations concerning the frequency of reading and author preferences. And yet mass polls of reading public usually remain on this level when they apply a formalized questionnaire. They have in fact gathered many useful initial data concerning the common reader's reception of literature and particularly the social and demographical structure of the reading public. Their interpretation, however, should always be accompanied by the awareness of methods used and of their limitations (this problem will be exemplified further in the article). Analyses in the field of sociology of literature, employing subtler methods, have almost never dealt with the problem of the common reader's reception, with the exception of Bogusław Sułkowski's work.⁸ Most works covering this field deal rather with social conditioning of works and with a literary picture of social phenomena. They do avoid limitations characteristic of the quantitative methods of content analysis, but they then do not achieve the level of empirical certainty typical of such methods. The studies of L. Goldmann, R. Wilson or P. Bourdieu resemble, as far as the problems dealt with are concerned, analyses made in the field

⁸ B. Sułkowski, *Powieść i czytelnicy. Społeczne uwarunkowanie zjawisk odbioru* (*The Novel and Its Readers: Social Conditioning of Reception Phenomena*), Warszawa 1972.

of criticism, the theory of literature and socio-semiology of the type represented by R. Barthes.⁹

Such studies bring us no closer to the problems of re-creation of literary works than theoretical reconstructions of the virtual reader. They do present, however, quite interesting results of literary reception among sociologists themselves and can be considered as examples of the academic re-creation of literary works. They are of interest for a sociologist specializing in the literary reception but basically they are less helpful in organizing research concerning the common reader's reception than analyses of the theoretical and critical type, as the latter can be an important factor in determining the common reception on a wide scale and on all levels. Their influence is exerted mainly through school which is still the most important instrument in shaping all kinds of reception, particularly the reception of older, classic literature. Literary criticism plays a similar role in the case of contemporary literature, not yet included in school curricula, but its social range is incomparable with the school's influence and its uniformity of interpretations and critical evaluations considerably smaller.¹⁰ Both these factors which are expressions of the "critical reception" of literary messages, affect common reception in an universalizing and stabilizing manner.

If we accept Ingarden's assumption that a literary work has as many concretizations—or re-creations—as there are individual readings,¹¹ then at least on the level of interpersonal verbal relations one can observe a significant standardization of the common reception of literary messages included in the official canon of literary tradi-

⁹ L. Goldmann, *Pour une sociologie du roman*, Paris 1964; P. Bourdieu, *L'Invention de la vie d'artiste*, "Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales," 1975, no 2; R. Barthes' essay on Racine.

¹⁰ Studies carried out in the 1950's among the readers of social and cultural weeklies, where literary criticism appeared and which had a comparatively broad circulation, showed that 56% of the city readers had higher education and 42%—secondary education. Radio programmes on literary criticism reached the broadest circles of the society in a similar proportion. Cf. A. Kłoskowska, *Krzyżowanie się zakresów publiczności czytelniczej (Overlapping Ranges of the Reading Public)*, "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze," 1965, no 4.

¹¹ R. Ingarden, *O poznawaniu dzieła literackiego (On the Perception of the Literary Work)*, [in:] *Studia z estetyki (Studies in Aesthetics)*, vol. 1, Warszawa 1966, p. 9.

tion. And this level is the only one accessible to actual research. Therefore it is essential to know the critical re-creation of literature in order to carry out sociological studies of the common reception of this literature.

The Range of Żeromski's Works in the Literary Consciousness Today

Some problems concerning the common reader's re-creation of literature will now be presented on the example of the reception of Stefan Żeromski's works. His position in Polish culture as well as his place in the school canon of literature make him particularly appropriate for inclusion in the research concerning the system of values and forms in which the contemporary Polish society participates in culture. The present study is a fragment of such research.

Żeromski's works have not ceased to be particularly controversial during all these dozens of years that have passed since they were written, and at the source of such controversies must therefore lie the objective features of these works. The existence of such features cannot be negated by the semiotic, communicational theory of literature which should point out to the character of these controversies in the process of a systematic analysis of the text. A sociologist, on the other hand, should check the scale of changeability of the reactions manifested in the social process of re-creation.

All this makes the research concerning Żeromski's works particularly difficult. Waclaw Borowy stressed in Żeromski's obituary that he was a writer "towards whom one could not be indifferent." This was confirmed by an anthology of literary criticism which covered the 70 years of Żeromski's reception,¹² where we can find numerous examples of contradictory evaluations connected with a strong emotional commitment. This presentation, however, dealt almost exclusively with critical reception, that is with the sphere of literary consciousness of narrow circles of society.

¹² *Żeromski. Z dziejów recepcji twórczości. 1895–1964 (Żeromski. The History of the Reception of His Works. 1895–1964)*. Selection of texts and introduction: Z. J. Adamczyk, Warszawa 1975. The anthology is considered by sociologists as an important document of critical re-creation of Żeromski's works.

Żeromski, as a Polish writer of the partition period, lived and wrote in a social situation characterized by the dominance of such a model of interrelations between the artist and the audience where the audience was understood not as any category of a reading public but as the nation. Many of his statements in which he defined himself leave no doubt that this was how he treated his audience and that he understood his writing as a social mission of a Polish writer. This self-definition and this function were accepted by the cultural policy of different historical periods despite deep social changes that took place during the half-century since his death. Research concerning the common reception of Żeromski's works is therefore justified for numerous reasons.

Sociological studies concerning reading and carried on for many years have already provided us with some general information as to the range of his works in the common reception. These data will be used here but, as it was pointed out before, the results of mass-scale polls and questionnaires have to be treated discriminatively. Moreover, it is impossible to show properly the results of any research without first presenting, even if most generally, its methods, assumptions and hypotheses. Therefore such an introduction has to be provided here as well.

Research concerning the reception of literary works which would not stop at simple gathering of information as to whether a book is or is not known to a given person but which would enter the area of re-creation of a literary message, means touching upon the sphere of values. The question of values and evaluation cannot, moreover, be considered as insignificant even for the most general and superficial reading-public polls.

In the analysis that follows we shall distinguish among three types of values accepted in sociology and cultural anthropology. In Poland it was Stanisław Ossowski who formulated this distinction best when he differentiated among accepted, felt and realized values.¹³ The first category covers what respondents consider to be worthy of admiration, desire, realization; the second category comprises what is in fact desired; the third—what is practically and acti-

¹³ S. Ossowski, *Konflikty niewspólnych skal wartości (Conflicts of Incommensurable Scales of Values)*, [in:] *Dziela (Works)*, vol. 3, Warszawa 1967.

vely realized. In particular cases there can occur variations as to what constitutes the object of reference for these three types of values: from full identity to full discrepancy. For instance, the same book can, for a given reader, be a value that is accepted, felt and realized through actual reading—or his experience can make him point to a different book for each of these types.

One of the initial assumptions of the research, resulting from much sociological experience, is that mass polls and questionnaires which use a limited number of questions and uncontrolled answers can define, with high probability, only the category of accepted values. This kind of knowledge is, of course, important for cultural studies, but the results should not be applied to other types of values without additional control.

The first condition for a potential influence of all literary messages—whatever can be said about the intentional character of the mode of existence of a literary work—is the very accessibility of the book, i.e. of the physical carrier of meanings. This condition was fulfilled in the case of Żeromski's works to a degree higher than ever before. During the thirty years of post-war Poland his books have been published in 8,000,000 copies, which puts him on the 6th place among Polish classic writers. Public libraries, even those located in small towns and in the country, are supplied with his books: maybe to a lesser degree than with the works by Krasiński, yet enough to allow a broad distribution.¹⁴

Another factor—a different, but also an objective one—determining the social range of Żeromski's works is his place in school curricula. The reading list for primary schools includes Żeromski's short stories and two novels. The school duty and inspiration is responsible for some general knowledge of his works, as well as for his inclusion in the category of accepted values. In the introduction to a book called *Lektury obowiązkowe (Books from the Reading List)* and meant to be used by high school teachers and students, its editors say that it will discuss books "which [...] every Pole with secondary

¹⁴ Cf. S. Siekierski, *Współczesne funkcje społeczne literatury klasycznej (Contemporary Social Functions of the Classical Literature)*, [in:] *O współczesnej kulturze literackiej (On Contemporary Literary Culture)*, vol. 2, Wrocław 1973; B. Izdebska, S. Siekierski, K. Siekierycz, *Funkcja księgozbiorów bibliotek gromadzkich (The Function of Book Collections of Rural Libraries)*, Warszawa 1968.

education *must* know. But at the same time [...] every educated person *should* know them".¹⁵ Żeromski is called there the most prominent prose-writer of his epoch and the discussion of his works takes as much space as the discussion of Kasprowicz, Wyspiański, Reymont, and Zapolska put together. This is but one example of how attitudes can be formed and knowledge patterned by the educational system, the results of which can at least in part be defined by sociological research in the field of the common reader's reception.

Mass polls taken in the 1960's and 1970's among large and representative samples, either from the whole country or from chosen populations, show a very considerable relative popularity of Żeromski when compared with other writers. His name is placed between the 2nd and 4th position by rural population asked about their favourite author. Even though the choice was actually made by only 2.8%—4.6% of the respondents, the very proximity to the names of Sienkiewicz, Kraszewski, Prus, and Mickiewicz can be considered a measure of high popularity. Data supplied by a mass-scale representative poll carried out by the Main Statistic Office in 1962 and worked out by Edmund and Elżbieta Wnuk-Lipiński show that almost a million Poles of over 15 years of age place Żeromski among their three favourite authors.¹⁶ It is hard to say whether it is much or little when compared with 25 mln. people that constitute the whole population of this age—but first of all it is not known what such declarations signify in the categories of actual reception.

It is therefore necessary to establish the meaning of the data. They undoubtedly show that the respondents consider books in general and Żeromski's books in particular to be a desirable value, that they include them among the recognized values and also that they obviously know Żeromski's name as the name of a writer. All other statements concerning the actual knowledge of Żeromski's

¹⁵ *Lektury obowiązkowe. Szkice, felietony, eseje na temat lektur szkolnych (Essays on School Compulsory Reading List)*, ed. by S. Balbus and W. Maciąg, Wrocław 1975, p. 5.

¹⁶ Cf. E. and E. Wnuk-Lipiński, *Problematyka kształtowania się potrzeb czytelniczych (Problems of Forming the Readers' Needs)*, Warszawa 1975.

works and the way they are understood require further research which would employ different methods.

Mass statistical data permit us also to state how differentiated are social categories of those for whom reading books in general and reading Żeromski's books in particular constitute an accepted value. It has been found that Żeromski is more popular among women than among men, among urban population than among rural population, among people who live in big cities than among inhabitants of small towns. His popularity is also heavily dependent on the level of education—just as in the case of all data concerning the participation in culture and particularly in its higher spheres. It is, however, astonishing that this differentiating factor is more visible among men at the border-line between the primary and post-primary education. Such an interdependence requires verification which, based on research making use of methods that could check value-related declarations against actual realization, would enable us to penetrate the sphere of felt values and other aspects of the re-creation of a literary message.

Relatively speaking, the most certain way to establish value realization is through data showing public libraries' lending figures. Such research generally confirms the hypothetical conclusions, discussed above, about the writer's greater popularity among women than among men and about his generally lesser popularity in small towns and in the country.¹⁷ The generalization of these conclusions is, however, limited by several factors. First of all, the data concern only a select category of the members of public libraries, whose reading activity is higher than the average, particularly among the inhabitants of smaller towns and peasants, as well as among people of the medium and lower income bracket. The research under consideration did not cover a much more numerous category of rather

¹⁷ Cf. Izdebska, Siekierski, Siekierycz, *op. cit.* K. Ziembicka-Ankudowiczowa, *Biblioteki i czytelnicy w wybranych małych miasteczkach (Libraries and Readers in Selected Small Towns)*, Warszawa 1968; *Czytelnictwo młodzieży wiejskiej (The Reading Habit of Young Countrymen)*, Warszawa 1971; K. Kwaśniewska, *Czytelnictwo kobiet (The Reading Habit Among Women)*, Warszawa 1972. All these books, as well as the work of E. and E. Wnuk-Lipiński, cited several times here, were published by the Institute of the Book and Reading of the National Library.

inactive readers whose contacts with books are incidental, or members of libraries other than the public ones, or finally the proportionally scarce but most active participants of the cultural life who buy books and have their own book collections where the works by Polish literary classics can be found.

Re-creation of Żeromski's Works: Knowledge and Evaluation

All the data discussed so far deal with the statistical and demographic characteristics of the social range of Żeromski's books, and they are useful only as initial materials that characterize literary communication. It is much more difficult to enter the process of the re-creation of Żeromski's works in the common consciousness. The research presented below has only brought us a little closer to it.

The common reception of Żeromski's works constituted here only a fragment of an analysis of cultural values of the working people. Therefore the problem could not be given as much attention as in the case of research directed towards one author or one work. On the other hand, however, such a situation enabled us to see Żeromski's position against a wider background of cultural participation. The reception and re-creation of Żeromski's works constituted here a part of what characterized the value system and cultural knowledge of the environment under consideration.

Workers employed in factories were chosen as the research object, this choice being caused by the need to understand better some aspects of the cultural life of a social category which is basic for our society and for all developed societies of today: that of industrial workers, technicians, technical white-collar workers.¹⁸ Technical education is responsible for well-known limitations to the contacts with the humanities and some students of modern society speak straightforwardly about two separate cultures.¹⁹ Our cultural policy postula-

¹⁸ Industrial workers constitute 42% of professionally active people employed outside agriculture. The working class constitutes the same percentage of the whole society.

¹⁹ Cf. C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and Second Look*, New York 1963; *Literarische und wissenschaftliche Intelligenz. Dialog über die "Zwei Kulturen"*, Stuttgart 1969.

tes, however, that this division between the humanities and technical culture should be abolished. The present educational reform also aims at this, as it broadens general education so that it will reach all categories of young people. So far, however, three fourths of the young people acquire vocational and technical education on the secondary level of schooling. The polled population was representative for such an education.

The main part of the materials used here is based on a study which covered two factories located in a small town. The samples comprised 333 persons in all, mostly men; the age ranging from 22 to 54 years, with young people prevailing. The level of education—particularly in the first factory, connected with the mining industry—was comparatively high. The first sample of 180 persons was chosen in such a way that there would be an equal percentage of blue-collar and white-collar workers, and the percentage of blue-collar workers with secondary education (27.7%) close to the percentage of such workers with higher education (22.2%). This sample was a subject to a more detailed research. The second sample, taken from the field of light industry, served as a controlling one.

As the samples were not representative, the research was not aimed at a full characterization but at finding differences and similarities between the categories of education and professional position as main factors that differentiate a community. The results of this study of cultural participation are not treated as authoritative for the whole of Polish society. The chosen community did not include humanists, there was only a small number of women, who generally show a more lively interest in literature than men, and it was connected with the environment of a small town. Neither did it comprise rural population whose level of education is generally lower. Remembering the above-quoted data about reading and reception of Żeromski's works obtained from the representative samples polled by the Main Statistical Office, we could expect that the population tested here would, as a whole, resemble the country's average as far as the cultural activity is concerned.

The study used different methods from those applied in mass polls, and it had two levels. The first one was a test on the cultural knowledge, and it was to measure the knowledge rather than evaluations and emotional attitudes. The second part of the study, which

consisted of intensive, partly free, recorded interviews, was meant to enter the sphere of felt values. The written test dealt mainly with the canon of traditional Polish culture, with particular stress put on the literature of Romanticism and on the end-of-the-century literature. The tape-recorded interviews discussed the knowledge of chosen elements of this canon against a respondent's interest in the contemporary life and art.

Data obtained for Żeromski do not allow us to discuss the re-creation of his works in the common reception in a manner as detailed as it would be possible in the case of a deep discussion of one, recently read book.²⁰ This, however, was not so desirable here either, as the aim was not to study what some specialists—embroadening and paraphrasing Chomsky's term—call the cultural or literary competence to re-create some new texts,²¹ but to discover if the knowledge was sufficiently fixed to survive a formal situation in which it was acquired owing to a system of social directives or to a passing phase of individual interests (which anyhow are always subjected to some social influence). In other words the study concerned that kind of knowledge which becomes an element of the frame of reference for future cultural choices and evaluations.

Research so devised has one important advantage, namely that it is impossible to simulate such knowledge, as it is frequently the case with evaluation. Neither was there any reason to dissimulate it. If there was no answer to an unexpected question, it was not treated as necessarily signifying total lack of knowledge but as indicating that a given problem does not constitute an active element of the consciousness.

In all countries tests of all kinds usually give results that are shocking for experts in a given field. Also the common knowledge of Żeromski differs from the expectations of literary historians and theoreticians, critics, teachers, and curricula makers.

During the first phase of the test questions dealing with respondents' familiarity with Żeromski's works were asked. Answers were

²⁰ Such a quasi-experimental method was used by Sułkowski, *op. cit.*

²¹ J. Sławiński, *Socjologia literatury i poetyki historyczna (Sociology of Literature and Historical Poetics)*, [in:] *Dzielo — język — tradycja (Work of Art — Language — Tradition)*, Warszawa 1974.

analyzed first of all from the point of view of differences between three types of education: 1) primary and vocational of the basic level, 2) secondary, 3) higher.

The first factor considered were answers to the three questions:

1. Who is the author and what is the title of the book which includes a scene where a pupil of a Russian school in the Congress Kingdom of Poland recites *Reduta Ordon* (*Ordon's Redoubt*)? (In the actual questionnaire the scene was described in a more detailed way.)

2. Where does the character of Dr Judym come from?

3. What titles of Żeromski's works do you know?

Here is the pattern of at least partly correct answers, according to the education category:²²

Education	Primary and basic vocational (76 persons)	Secondary (56 persons)	Higher (40 persons)
Question			
1	5%	36%	38%
2	9%	73%	75%
3	27%	94%	95%

Information on the range of literary works are among the banal data of literary sociology yet they constitute a necessary background for a further analysis of more subtle problems of literary communication.

An analysis of the books named by respondents showed that, as it had been expected, the best remembered titles of Żeromski's works were *Szyzyfowe prace* (*Sisyphean Labours*), *Ludzie bezdomni* (*The Homeless*) and *Przedwiośnie* (*The Early Spring*), that is, those included in the school reading list. This reflection of the reading list was far from completeness in the lower education bracket. A comparison of answers to all three questions shows that a more

²² The results apply to the employees of the first factory under investigation. Absolute numbers are small (8 people with semi-higher education were not included in the table). Data for the second factory show similar regularities, though with somewhat lower results.

lasting knowledge of Żeromski's works is rare below the level of secondary education. It also shows that above that level, among persons who have education other than that acquired in the humanities, it increases only insignificantly—at least by the factors applied here.

Answers to the first question make one really stop and think. *Szyfowe prace* is, for obvious reasons, “the lowest common denominator” for the knowledge of Żeromski's works. This title was the one most frequently mentioned, if we consider the whole group, as an answer to the open question, even though persons with higher education named *Przedwiośnie* and *Ludzie bezdomni* more frequently. The question was purposefully formulated in such a way that it would test not only how well the school knowledge survives but also whether the respondents remembered what could be an emotional and aesthetic experience evoked by the scene with Zygier. A correct answer could be no indicator of such experience (in the past or now) but the lack of answer was considered to be a negative indicator of the lack of such experience during the initial re-creation of this literary work. The scene with Zygier is the climax of the book because of the transformation of the main character. It is also an example of how literature can be used to increase the influence of another literary work: a specific, dramatic presentation of how *Reduta Ordona* was recited can strengthen the emotions connected with reading the poem itself. Also a possible value-oriented attitude towards Adam Mickiewicz's patriotic poem can increase the emotional aspect of the re-creation of this particular fragment of Żeromski's book. The result of the test gives ground to the opinion that for a large majority of the tested population one of the main fragments of *Szyfowe prace* is not a living and permanent value. Much better results were obtained in another group of a lower education average by asking a question concerning the names of main characters, though even here less than a half of young industrial workers with secondary or semi-secondary education could give the minimum of possible correct answers.

To use the name of the main character as a catch-phrase facilitates the process of recalling elementary information about a book. This could be the reason for which the correct answers to the second question were almost twice as numerous as to the first one.

The book, *Ludzie bezdomni*, is discussed in school at a somewhat higher level of pupils' maturity and its motifs are frequently used by mass media.²³ The character of Judym has become a common symbol. The data referred to here show, however, that this is not tantamount to the common knowledge of its literary source, even among people with secondary and higher education. Here again if a respondent did not know or forgot the correct answer, it is considered to indicate that the character of Judym, in all the complexity of its literary picture, does not constitute a felt value for a large part of the respondents. This statement does not refer to the attitude towards values presented by Żeromski, like patriotism or community spirit (materials presented here would allow no statement on this at all)—but it does refer to the presentation of such values through the discussed elements of Żeromski's works.

The written questionnaire, of which the test was a part, included no question about a straightforward evaluation of Żeromski's works. Such questions usually render nothing but a declaration of accepted values and their importance is limited even in this function. There was, however, a question about books which the respondent considered good. Among the authors of such books, Żeromski's name was mentioned by ca. 7% of the respondents in both factories. Considering the fact that the average level of education in the sample was higher than the country's average and that the question was less limiting as it asked about a respected writer rather than a favourite one, the data can be regarded as close to the results obtained by the previously discussed polls carried out by the Main Statistical Office among urban population. These data are again only an indicator of accepted values.

In order to enter the sphere of felt values another research technique has to be applied. A free recorded interview enabled to come closer to this sphere.²⁴ Żeromski's works were again only

²³ At the time of the test, Polish television broadcasted a serial entitled *Judym*. Even though it did not directly referred to Żeromski's work and could even be misleading for symbolic interpretation of the character, yet it brought back the name itself.

²⁴ In this phase of research 39 persons, i.e. 20% of the original sample from the first factory, were taken into account. The respondents were chosen in such a way that they would represent the highest and the lowest results in each education group. The interviews lasted from 0.5 to 2.5 hours.

a part of extensive interviews concerning cultural and practical interests.

Żeromski's reception among the tested population turned out to be so varied that it can be considered as a reflection of his reception in the social consciousness of a much wider scope, not limited to the category under research. However, the „critical” type of reception was not represented here, for although the way Żeromski's works are re-created by people with higher education in the field of humanities resembles this kind of reception, such people were totally absent from the sample.

The negative extreme was represented by persons who were not even familiar with Żeromski's name. No tool applied in the research could trace a fact that they had ever been in contact with his books. Similarly, these people frequently connected other writers' names with nothing but the names of streets. School left only the memory of Mickiewicz's name, yet without an ability to say anything about his works. This category comprised only people with primary education whose school years sometimes coincided with the German occupation.

The second category was much more diversified in its social make-up. The lower levels of education were in majority, but there were also people with secondary or even higher education. They did remember that Żeromski was a writer but could not give answers other than “There are quite a few of his works” or “I probably knew but have forgotten.” The situation was not changed by referring to transmission channels other than school, like for instance to films or TV productions. No trace of the contents of Żeromski's works could be observed in the respondents' reflections.

In the case of the latter category we could speak about losing an important element of the literary tradition, whereas in the case of the former category we should rather speak about the lack of tradition. The latter category consisted of blue-collar workers, as well as white-collar workers and office clerks. Some of them were young people who attended school after the war. We cannot therefore totally reject the influence of their reading or school presentation of Żeromski upon their consciousness, upon shaping for instance their knowledge and moral, ideological (including aesthetic or patriotic) attitudes. Since, however, the respondents were not aware of this, we cannot prove it with the tools currently at our disposal.

The character of the re-creation of Żeromski's works in social experience could be tested only on these respondents who were reflectively aware of their own reception of these works. In many instances it was possible to find out with a high degree of certainty what kind of values Żeromski's works represented for this category and what functions were performed by literary messages in the process of cultural communication under investigation.

The method used here made it possible to base the analysis not only on oral messages but also on such data as intonation, reflection and pauses indicating hesitation or—on the contrary—a fast pace and a determined tone of an utterance. All these features constitute additional, meaningful indicators of attitudes. Despite this diversity of data, not all cases could be unequivocally interpreted through conceptualization applied for this analysis. The view on the common re-creation of Żeromski's literary motifs could not, therefore, constitute a basis for a comprehensive classification and allowed only for a typology which used the notions of values, attitudes and functions.

The first type is represented by an attitude of total rejection of Żeromski. His works are a value which is not accepted and not felt in a positive way. Its realization was carried out only in a situation of compulsion. Such an attitude is exemplified by a young worker who remembers *Szyfowe prace* because, as he puts it: "They really gave me hard time for it in school and I got some F's for it" (8), or a young technician, who graduated from a secondary general-education school and then attended a two-year vocational training school: "I don't care for that... I am bored with it... I don't like utopias... I won't evaluate this" (133).²⁵ Such an attitude is sometimes connected with a limited knowledge of Żeromski's works, but not as a rule. One of the few persons in this group who had an education in the field of the humanities and social sciences made a competent, critical analysis of the ideology expressed in *Popioły* (*Ashes*) and then said: "I don't like Żeromski at all" (151).

²⁵ Respondent number 8 shows little knowledge and interest in literature. Respondent number 133 reads a lot, frequently returns to Mickiewicz's texts, is interested in history and enjoys reading good studies from this field. This comparison shows that a negative evaluation of Żeromski's works can be conditioned by various factors.

The second type is constituted by a category for whom Żeromski's works are not a positively felt value but at the same time this value is by no means rejected. We can differentiate between two sub-types here: a distinctive recognition of Żeromski's works as an accepted value or a lack of distinctive recognition. This type is most numerous in the whole group and it is most frequent among technical and organizational white-collar workers with a secondary education. However, there are also blue-collar workers here, as well as people with higher technical education. Their statements show a matter-of-fact characterization of Żeromski's works.

One element of these statements is a comparison, suggested by the scheme of the interview, between the way history was shown by Żeromski and by Sienkiewicz. This allows us to see more clearly the discordance between the accepted and felt values which sometimes appears in the classic form of admitting: "Video meliora proboque..." The respondents pointed clearly to Żeromski's superiority on the cognitive and ideological level—and then proceeded to admit, sometimes apparently ashamed:

I prefer Sienkiewicz's description. The description itself, the manner of writing, is more fascinating for a reader. (5)

Sienkiewicz wrote for people. (4)

One can find, among the statements both by blue-collar workers and by people with higher technical education, phrases which gain their full meaning only when considered together with the accent which cannot be rendered in writing:

I get tired of the descriptions! [...] It is hard to read Żeromski! (151)

Sienkiewicz is also considered to be a better writer because his works are more picturesque:

I needed no film to feel the contents of Sienkiewicz's books. And only film can do it for some of Żeromski's works. (87)

Sienkiewicz wrote more beautifully. (89)

A young woman with higher education in the field of natural sciences recognizes writing merits of both authors, though she finds them very different. She admits, however, that having seen Wajda's film she tried to read *Popioły* and she "couldn't manage" (144).

The third category, which is the least numerous, considers Żerom-

ski's works to be an accepted and felt value. Here again we find blue-collar workers, white-collar workers and technical university graduates—though not in equal proportions. Positive evaluations are motivated in a very differentiated manner. Young workers, active in different organizations, say they like to read Żeromski, and call upon the ideological and cognitive values of his works and upon their presumed educational functions. “Żeromski knew how to address the society directly” (78). He is called a class-oriented writer, who looked into the future and was connected with his times. These evaluations are formulated together with a declaration of feeling the writer's value, but they are clearly of the sociocentric type. Very personal accents can be found more frequently in the category of people with higher education.

Positive evaluations include clear formulations of one's own standpoint expressed by phrases like: “I like him very much,” “He's to my taste,” “I pay a tribute to him,” and even “He's my type.” Such a standpoint is substantiated by arguments related to Żeromski's way of expressing social problems, his critical and “sharp” outlook, to his realism resembling, according to the respondents, literary journalism, and finally to his style. His works are described as “poetry written in prose” (149), his unique language is pointed to (145), also “Sienkiewicz is easier to read, but Żeromski is good to read” (149). Some respondents preferred books to films—here is an opinion of a person of rural origin who graduated from a technical high school:

Descriptions of nature are felt, are associated with one's own remembrances whereas in films it is already a picture shot by a cameraman. (143)

Controversial opinions on the same qualities of Żeromski's works, so characteristic of the history of his critical reception, can therefore be noticed in the common reception as well. This corresponds to the concept of Żeromski being a writer towards whom one cannot be indifferent. It has to be stressed again, however, that this view is expressed by a small minority. The indifference of the majority seems to be beyond doubt characteristic of the discussed aspect of the re-creation of Żeromski's works in common consciousness.

This can be explained, at least in part, by the functions of

literature in the consciousness of the tested persons—which will be discussed later. It is undoubtedly related to the way of realizing the cultural values represented by Żeromski's works, to the social context of their reception.

General data pertaining to the employees of both factories clearly showed that their contact with Żeromski's works was determined by the school reading list which includes his short stories and three of his novels. An analysis of the recorded interviews show that the school decides not only the range of messages that reach the students and the way of interpretation but also—through the situation of reception—a specific status of literature. The status of the “school reading list” was clearly different for many respondents from “reading for myself.” The functions of the reading—list books were considered to be purely instrumental, closely related to the school's demands and closed in situational limits. The respondents were astonished that they, grown-ups and long liberated from school tasks, were again asked questions about Żeromski. Such an attitude could be encountered particularly among the middle category of education, among people who remembered well and freely interpreted chosen motifs of Żeromski's works. “Do I like to read? If I had to while at school...” (136).

Persons who read Żeromski apart from the school reading list, because of their own interests, were to be found in all categories of education, though most frequently among those who had higher education. No interview showed, however, that it was a matter of the last few months, or even years. Even those for whom Żeromski was a recognized value say: “Now I don't read. I don't return to these books” (147). “I wouldn't always reach for them” (143). When faced with difficulty in explaining the meaning of “glass houses,” a respondent wonders: “Maybe I should read the book?” (148).

Żeromski's works constitute then a rarely realized value of the literary culture. They exist in the consciousness of the population under investigation first of all in the form of unrelated and blurred fragments, remnants of a specific and limited school tradition, not renewed, enlarged and brought up to date in the conditions of a free choice and a greater social, intellectual and aesthetic maturity. There seems to be an obvious relation between the limited functioning of Żeromski's works and their situation as a value rarely realized

and weakly felt. In fact this is most likely a feed-back situation.

This situation does not result from a total lack of literary interests. Owing to a specific living conditions of the employees of the first factory, to their vivid professional and other ambitions, they in fact read more than the country's average.

A comparison with Mickiewicz, and particularly with Sienkiewicz, shows that Żeromski's works are not among those kept on a bedside table. *Livre de chevet* as a channel of a specific, intimate contact with culture is being generally limited because of other attractive communication means, also available at home.

The discrepancy between Żeromski's position in the critical reception and his position in the common reception results, however, from other reasons as well. Some internal qualities of these books are responsible for it, too. The communication theory of culture, which is the common ground for literary sociologists and theoreticians and which treats the literary work as message, does not require the acceptance of the concept of a work's total openness, of the literary work as a totally limitless creation.²⁶ Such a completely open work would cease to be a message. It would be an empty creation.

It is a task of literary experts to prepare a systematic analysis of Żeromski's works which would also show the reasons for potential difficulties of his reception. Such reasons can be defined even if we accept an undoubtedly correct argument that a difficulty is ultimately a relation between qualities of the message and of the reader.²⁷ A sociologist's task is to trace the ways in which a work is re-created in common consciousness and to find factors which condition them. Having established that Żeromski's works function as "reading-list books," we can hypothetically assume a stabilizing and normative influence of school-accepted interpretations as a basic factor of their common re-creation.

²⁶ S. Lem is close to this point of view in his *Filozofia przypadku* (*Philosophy of Fortuity*), Kraków 1975.

²⁷ Cf. S. Morawski, *Sztuka łatwa i sztuka trudna. Szkic wstępnej problematyki* (*Easy Art and Difficult Art. A Preliminary Sketch*), [in:] *O współczesnej kulturze literackiej*, vol. 2.

Functions of the Message

If we treat re-creation as a phase of the process of communication, then a concept of communicational functions becomes a tool for the analysis of this process. The typology of the functions of language communication as formulated by Jakobson is basic here. As it is well known, linguisticians made use also of the achievements of social sciences while proposing such typologies. Jakobson was inspired by a short but apt analysis of the function of the language in the Trebriand community, written by B. Malinowski and included in Ogden and Richard's book. The basis of Malinowski's propositions was clearly empirical and monographic—he observed the islanders' behaviour and listened to their talks after their return from fishing expeditions and during their everyday activities.

A student of literary communication has to rely upon indirect data when defining its functions, namely on the respondents' accounts on books read by them. Such accounts acquired during free interviews were used before for the analysis aimed at defining attitudes and values. Now they will serve as a basis for the characterization of the functions of the message in the consciousness of the community under investigation. This analysis will at the same time serve the purpose of finding the motivations of attitudes defined in the first part of this presentation.

The presentative function is the foremost one in all accounts concerning Żeromski's works. The community treated them as a presentation of the Polish society of the past and reading Żeromski's works was first of all understood as a cognitive process. The stress put on the writer's realism resulted undoubtedly from the school interpretation. This feature was particularly conspicuous in comparisons made between Żeromski and Sienkiewicz, but was also spontaneously stressed while discussing the former writer. A proposition to compare these two writers was avidly accepted by respondents. Answers were particularly extensive here and as they were preceded by some serious thinking, it was not, in most cases, a simple repetition of ready-made school opinions. It was Sienkiewicz's name which enlivened the discussion. Żeromski's realism was understood here not as an aesthetic category but as a cognitive one, as

a principle of concordance with reality. This explains a frequently repeated statement, which was astonishing for a literary historian, that Żeromski's works are written plainly. This statement does not refer to the style but to the way of presenting historical events. Moreover, Żeromski's historical works are frequently called non-fictional or at least less fictionalized than Sienkiewicz's.

Such an interpretative attitude sharpens the juxtaposition of Sienkiewicz and Żeromski:

Sienkiewicz conveys more beautifully as a writer, maybe [he has] larger imagination. Żeromski takes life as it is. (5)

Sienkiewicz presented his plot and times in a very picturesque and adventurous way, but there is plenty of fiction, falseness. Żeromski's way is less picturesque, more monotonous, but he was faithful to history, did not go beyond things. (77)

Żeromski presented historical events in a more real way, he should be the one to believe. (84)

Graduates of high schools recall in their comparisons the formulae of the "strengthening of hearts" and "scratching of national wounds." The essence of many blue-collar workers' statements is similar though they did not use such phrases. All respondents pointed to the differences between the writers in their ways of showing the historical class structure of Poland. They spoke about Żeromski's eye for social injustice, of showing the society "from below," from the point of view of the working classes. Such an interpretation was obviously implanted by school, but it is solidly grounded in the texts and was strongly internalized—of course only by the minority that assimilated Żeromski's works at all.

In order to illustrate how this aspect of Żeromski's works functions in the social consciousness it is worth-while to quote a longer fragment of the statement by a young worker with secondary technical education. Its form, accents and intonation leave no doubt as to its originality as opposed to repeating school clichés:

Żeromski presented such tendencies in a more precise way. In his books we can see an individual hero, not alone but we can see the separateness [i.e. individualization] of these people. In Sienkiewicz's novels everybody believes in one thing only—to fight for the liberation of the homeland [...] but not everyone knows what it's all about, what kind of homeland. And Żeromski presents it in a more personalized way. Shows that everybody has a more precise [different] opinion about this liberated homeland [...] Żeromski enters here the human nature, man's personality, shows individual tendencies of everyone [...], in general, such inner state, inner self-reflection. (135)

The same respondent, when asked about his own literary preferences—chooses Sienkiewicz in spite of all, because he “knew how to write in such a way that you don’t forget the impression for a long, long time.” A similar re-creation of the two authors occurs in the case of a graduate of the geology department, a member of an avant-garde student theatre, who says in his conclusion: “Everything speaks for Żeromski”—and he chooses Sienkiewicz (147). Here we touch upon a crucial problem of the system of values in Polish society. Coming back to the problem of the respondents’ attitude towards national matters (previously discussed in connection with attitudes and values), we can firmly state that they constitute an essential value, generally recognized and probably also felt in most cases. The readers prefer the way Sienkiewicz presents this value to that of Żeromski.

The presentative functions of Żeromski’s works find response in this community because they correspond to its interest in history, which is amazingly high, and in documentary prose. It is, however, recognition rather than emotional response. A left-wing critic wrote about Żeromski in “Lewar” in 1936: “Is it not our present day that speaks to us from these pages in the words of a great writer? Do they not pulsate with living blood of topicality?”²⁸

For the young blue-collar and white-collar workers Żeromski is totally a historical writer. Nawłóć and a neighbouring muddy settlement are for them as historical as Wyrwy and Wyganka. They fully approve of Żeromski’s struggle against social injustice but they are not moved by it as were those for whom he was a spokesman—or an accuser—of their class. This seems to be the character of the contemporary re-creation of Żeromski through the aspect of the presentative function of his works, which was the one stressed most in their common reception.

The second function apparent in the analyzed reception corresponds to Jakobson’s definition of the appellative function—or better: the instrumental function in the modified version of Henryk Markiewicz. It is primarily connected with the interpretation of *Ludzie bezdomni*. Its manifestation was caused more clearly than

²⁸ W. Raduski, *Stefan Żeromski wczoraj i dziś (Stefan Żeromski Yesterday and Today)*, [in:] *Żeromski. Z dziejów recepcji...*, p. 222.

before by a question concerning the topicality of Żeromski's works. Even before the question was asked, however, many respondents talked spontaneously about this aspect of re-creation.

If the presentative function is usually interpreted according to the critical realism (though the term itself is not used), the instrumental function is connected with re-creating Żeromski's works entirely according to the Positivist tradition. Judym is a totally Positivist character, who provides "a recipe for action," even for a reader who recalls the symbol of the split pine-tree. Żeromski is seen as the patron of today's congresses of community activists, as the one who provides weapons for the fight against indifference—Judym is a model of patience (!), persistency, he is motivated by "other people's good" (147).

The re-creation of Żeromski's works, which in this function is realized under the influence of school and social or educational organizations—is one-dimensional. A similar principle applies to the interpretation of the symbol of "glass houses." They are usually described either as old Baryka's illusion or his trick to persuade Cezary to return to Poland—or else as a vision of ideal Poland, the aim of Żeromski himself. In this context the author is sometimes accused of non-critical utopism. These two interpretations very rarely appear together.

Considering the character of the population, it could be expected that the poetic, or aesthetic, or autotelic function will play a limited role in the group's specific re-creation of literature. I understand this function, considered from the point of view of the receiver of artistic communication, not of its sender, as referring to the message itself, experiencing and commenting its specific surplus value, formulating remarks of the meta-textual character on the form of messages.

Reactions of this type rarely appear in the statements, but they are of the unexpectedly diversified character. It is understandable that the poetic function is called upon when it is responsible for the lack of transparency of the text in the case of a reader who expects mostly the presentative functions. This is connected with the previously quoted opinions about the difficulties encountered while reading Żeromski. What is astonishing is the equal frequency of opinions that Żeromski wrote plainly, "was economical with

words"—opinions that were given by respondents of various levels of education. This is to be considered as proof of the lack of realization of the poetic function in the re-creation of the literary message. Only the opinions of two respondents with higher school education, who praise Żeromski's style, raise no doubts. They both belong to the age category of over 40 years, very scarce in the sample.

There is also a striking discrepancy between the critical and common reception of Żeromski as far as the expressive function is concerned. It seems that this function does not exist at all for the population under investigation. Even though expressions referring to the author rather than to his works were used during interviews ("Żeromski wrote, presented, showed...") there is hardly any trace of the writer's personality in the respondents' statements.

Literary critics of different periods and orientations, who quarrelled about the value of Żeromski's works, were almost unanimous about his being a "personal" writer, who identified with his different heroes, about the fact that he filled his books with his own fictitious autobiography.²⁹ No awareness of this was observed in the population under investigation, even among the readers for whom Żeromski was a felt value. Particularly in one case a positive feeling towards Żeromski seemed to be ill-motivated precisely because it did not call upon the expressive function. For the majority, presentative functions seemed to overshadow the artist to the point where the most significant—one would even tend to say: basic—part of his literary communication was not received.

The fact that the expressive function is not realized is connected with the simplifying, one-dimensional interpretation of Żeromski, discussed before. Żeromski's typical ambivalence and manicheism were lost in such a re-creation. Consequently, universal motifs of Żeromski's writing, such as the problems of the sources and power of evil or the dramatic character of moral dictates³⁰ are eliminated.

²⁹ The term used by S. Kołaczowski, E. Krassowska, J. Przyboś in: *Żeromski. Z dziejów recepcji...*

³⁰ A sociologist who is not an expert in the "critical" reception of Żeromski's works wonders how rarely this writer is discussed together with Dostoyevsky. In the collection quoted several times here (*Żeromski. Z dziejów recepcji...*) such comparison appears only in S. Brzozowski's study and in studies by foreigners: C. Backvis and Russian critics.

Scholarly restraint makes us remember, however, that the methods of literary sociology offer no direct access to the experiences that make up the process of literary re-creation. A researcher has nothing more to work on than interpretations, and oral declarations of the respondents, which are frequently clumsy or rough, particularly in rendering emotional and aesthetic experiences. Such accounts are also strongly influenced by the interpretative principles offered or imposed by school, so they are under an influence of a certain type of critical reception. The school's influence is particularly long-lasting because Żeromski is very rarely read afterwards.³¹

Conclusions

The pragmatic analysis of the literary communication presented here aimed at defining the respondents' attitudes towards works by a chosen author and at defining communicative functions observed on the basis of relations which served as an indicator of the way these functions were re-created. The range of the research limited the conclusions which have the form of historical statements and concern only some categories of the contemporary Polish society rather than all of it. According to what was said about the statistical data used here, the results are probably close to the country's medium results for specific categories of education and the typology formulated here can be used for the description of the whole society, even though it will have to be supplemented.

This example of the analysis of communicative functions is only an introduction to a further attempt at a more pragmatic definition of the sources and role of literary values in social life. Similarly, the whole study of the reception of Żeromski's works, as a case study, is a part of the study on the hierarchy of values in Polish society and its participation in culture. Further conclusions are limited to such a restricted point of view.

The data presented here show that the knowledge of Żeromski's works in the population under investigation is faint and clearly differentiated according to the level of education. The elementary

³¹ Among 333 persons under investigation only 2 named Żeromski among authors of books read recently. Sienkiewicz's name was mentioned incomparably more often.

school and the vocational school in its present form did not provide sufficient conditions for a permanent assimilation of literary knowledge. A distinct caesura that separates graduates of such schools from the readers with high and secondary education could, however, be caused also by other factors, such as a different home environment or area of residence. The fact that there are no distinct differences as to the knowledge of Żeromski's works between the graduates of secondary and of higher schools can be considered concordant with the nation-wide poll carried out by the Main Statistical Office in the field of book-reading, at least as regards the technical school graduates. Another observation made by those who analyzed the results of that poll was also confirmed here, namely that different categories of blue-collar workers are differentiated also by the level of their cultural knowledge and that the scale of these differences is close to the differences between the medium results of these workers and the medium results of the white-collar workers. Moreover, there is a distinct inner differentiation within each education category.

When we move from testing the knowledge of Żeromski's works to the analysis of the way his works are re-created in the reception, we find that it is affected by education differences and by the class and socio-professional status of the respondents in a considerably smaller degree. Particularly nothing seems to indicate that with the higher level of education emotional commitment would increase. The attitude of indifference, combined with some knowledge of Żeromski's works, occurs most frequently in the group of high school graduates. This may be purely coincidental, however, and caused by the statistical unrepresentativeness of the group which was interviewed. In any case the attitude of acceptance of Żeromski is as frequent among blue-collar workers who acquired and maintained some knowledge of this writer, as it is among technical school graduates—it is rarer among white-collar workers with high-school diplomas.

Generally speaking, Żeromski's works are rarely a felt value. It is best proved by the fact that hardly anybody reads them after school or at least after the first independent reading outside the compulsory reading list. From the point of view of functions, the literary communication realized through Żeromski's books is very similar in all categories of education. Reception connected with the

presentative function is a source of respected historical and patriotic values, but the readers prefer to look for these values in Sienkiewicz's books. On the other hand, other social values as they are understood in the common re-creation analyzed here appear in the pure form in the works by typical writers of the age of Positivism. The influence of some aspects of Żeromski's works, which were particularly stressed by schools, has diminished because of historical reasons. A contemporary member of the intelligentsia or an intellectual of rural origin is not moved by the history of Andrzej Radek as strongly as Jan Kasprowicz was, and the literal reception of Judym's situation does not evoke such reactions among readers as it did for young Maria Dąbrowska or young Helena Radlińska.

It seems that the intensification of the expressive function could best enlarge the circle of voluntary readers and increase the intensity of experience connected with reading Żeromski's books. This function, as well as the artistic one, would have to be more exposed in school transmission. It is not certain whether the expressive—in the sense of a communication function—re-creation of Żeromski's works would increase the number of his devotees, but it would certainly decrease the number of the indifferent and deepen the experience of people whom Żeromski could never before reach so broadly, despite the fact that the reception of his works is still very incomplete and that he does not acquire a permanent place in the consciousness of the whole society.

Transl. by *Z. Lewicki*