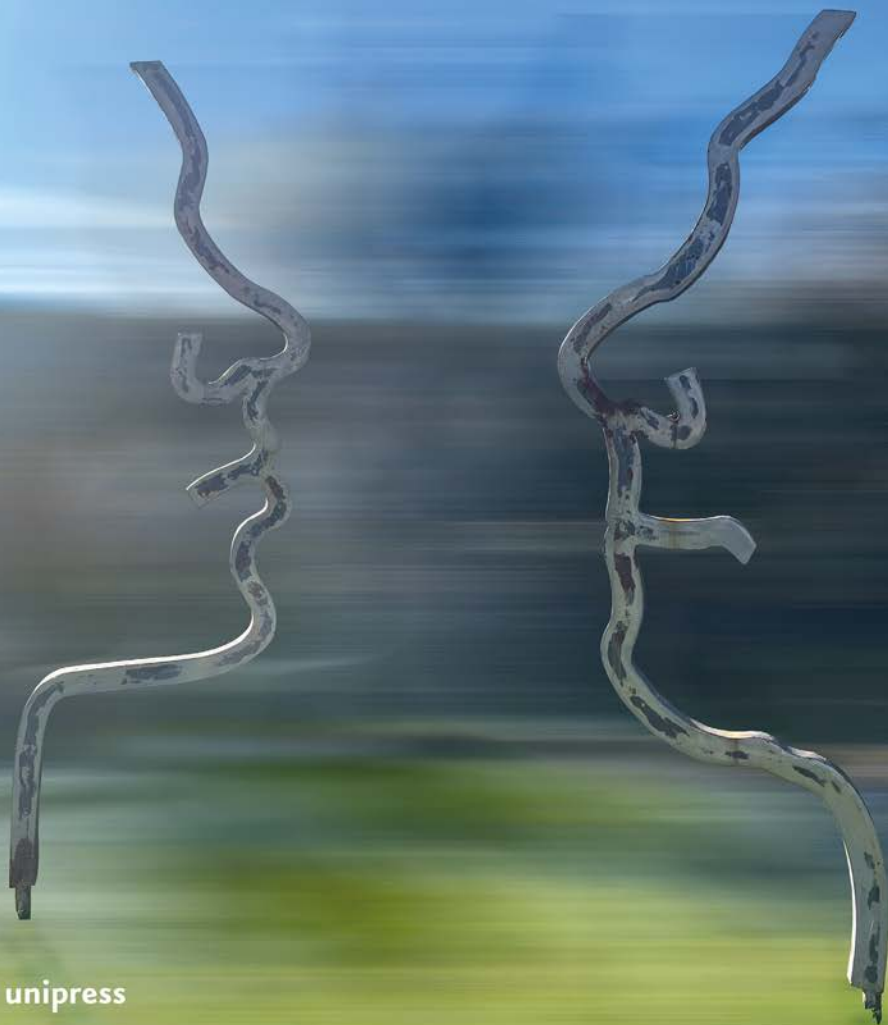


Daniel Pietrek

# **Carl Hanser Verlag as an intermediary of Polish literature in West Germany between 1945 and 1990**



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Mitteleuropäische Studien zur Komparatistik.  
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## Introduction: A brief note on my project

*Lektion der Stille* (The lesson of silence)<sup>1</sup>, a volume of contemporary Polish poetry translated and published by Karl Dedecius in the Munich-based Carl Hanser Verlag in 1959, became a legend and a milestone<sup>2</sup> in communication between the national literatures of Poles and Germans – and for good reason. On that occasion, Karl Dedecius, Tadeusz Różewicz, and the Carl Hanser Verlag publishing house would meet for the first time, albeit not personally and directly. At the time, none of the aforementioned would probably have expected that this publication would turn out to be a legendary literary-historical event, and the beginning of a close relationship between Różewicz, Dedecius, and Hanser's editors which, though marked by tensions, lasted for almost half-a-century. It was by no means a coincidence that this anthology was published by the Carl Hanser Verlag in Munich. The publishing house was and still is one of the most important institutions in Germany with regard to the promotion of Polish literature. Carl Hanser Verlag has published the works of Witold Gombrowicz, Stanisław Jerzy Lec, Bruno Schulz, Adam Zagajewski, Jacek Bocheński, Jerzy Szaniawski Tadeusz Różewicz, Kornel Filipowicz, and Witold Wirpsza, to mention just a few of its most important authors.

The following study aims to describe and analyze this unique testimony of cultural transfer. I focus on the period between 1946 and 1990<sup>3</sup>, which I find well-justified: on January 4, 1946, the Carl Hanser Verlag received a license from the American authorities and – as one of the first publishing companies – could resume its business activities, which had been dormant between 1933 and 1945.

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1 The title was taken by Dedecius from a poem by Tymoteusz Karpowicz “Lekcja ciszy.”

2 *Lekcja ciszy Karla Dedeciusa w głosach krytyki niemieckiej. W 50-lecie I wydania przełożył i do druku podał Marek Zybura.* [Karl Dedecius's *Lesson of silence* in the voices of German critics. In the 50th anniversary of the first edition translated and edited by Marek Zybura], Wrocław 2009, p. 7.

3 The caesura of 1990 should not be treated too rigidly, but it seems that the period between 1946 and 1990 is quite homogeneous, given the dynamic changes in German culture that took place after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The year 1990, on the other hand, was not only a geopolitical turning point, but also led to a new structure of the book market in Germany, related to German reunification, as well as developments and sociotechnological processes in the market itself.

However, I do not merely analyze the reception of the works of Witold Wirpsza, Tadeusz Różewicz, or Stanisław Jerzy Lec in Germany. This book draws a perspective related to cultural transfer from the point of view of the Carl Hanser Verlag and is not intended as a substitute for comprehensive reception studies of the presented authors.<sup>4</sup> Yet, one of my implicit goals is to provide the necessary backdrop for a comprehensive reception study. This is exactly why I meticulously describe and analyze the publishing strategies undertaken by the Carl Hanser publishing house, based on the archival material collected at the site<sup>5</sup>, supplemented by documents found in publicly available literary archives, in particular the *Literaturarchiv* in Marbach.

The decision to publish this monograph in English stems, first of all, from my conviction that my topic deserves a broader international recognition. In fact, the theme of my study is quite universal, and goes far beyond a strictly receptionist rendering of Polish-German influences, as I focus on the phenomenon of cultural transfer for which the Polish-German dimension is only an exemplification. Secondly, while literature which accurately describes individual aspects of the topic is available – most often in Polish or German – no study has attempted to integrate these disparate analyses. Thus, English serves as an intermediary platform, bringing together various Polish and German discourses, synthesizing and unifying them. Thirdly, this monograph is based largely on archival materials collected in the internal archives of the Carl Hanser Verlag publishing house, and its publication in English meets all the necessary formal and legal requirements.

The temporal scope covered by my study is determined by the specificity of the content analyzed and its thematic profile. The year 1945 is a caesura in the history and culture of Poland, Germany, and Europe, but also a global historical

---

4 The reception of Tadeusz Różewicz's work has been addressed from various perspectives in Polish-German comparative studies over the past decades, and the results of these studies are also reflected in this book. However, there is still no comprehensive monograph synthesizing all the phenomena related to the reception of this writer's work in Germany. The present study is, in this context, another element that contributes to an awareness of our reception of this author's work. However, I would like to emphasize that it does not have the ambition of being a comprehensive reception study, because my perspective concerns the strategies chosen by the Hanser Verlag in the context of promoting Polish literature.

5 The publisher's internal archive is not generally accessible and only in exceptional situations does it allow the use of the documentation stored there. Therefore, I would like to sincerely thank the Director of Hanser Verlag – Jo Lendle – for allowing me to conduct thorough research of the publishing house's annals and using the materials found there.

threshold of much more importance than that of World War I.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, not only did the year 1990 bring global changes of a geopolitical nature, but it also entailed such far-reaching changes in the publishing market, political, literary and cultural fields that grasping them would require a separate contextualization. The extraordinary acceleration of technological development after 1990 has practically changed all spheres of literary production: from the way the text is recorded, to the methods and techniques of communication between the most important actors (cultural intermediaries) in the publishing business, the functioning of publishing enterprises and, finally, new mechanisms and patterns of text-reception.

Having said this, I keep in mind that the most interesting and in many ways unique period of the Hanser Verlag's relationship with Polish literature occurred in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and that is the main reason why I focus my analysis on those decades. The second half of the 1970s and the 1980s should be perceived as the consequence of strategic decisions made in the late 1960s / early 1970s. Moreover, after the first pioneering years in the publishing of Polish literature in Germany, other publishing houses appeared on the scene, some of which (such as Suhrkamp) would begin to play a decisive role, or even to gradually occupy a dominant position in the literary field. Therefore, this monograph describes in detail the first two phases of the publishing house's involvement in Polish literature: the first phase I call "In search of the new" and the second phase I describe as "Consolidation and continuation." The third phase – which began in the mid-1980s and has continued to this day (related, for example, to the promotion of the work of Adam Zagajewski) is not analyzed in this study, because it concerns phenomena and processes that are still in progress, involving actors still active in the literary field, and thus requiring a different approach, both methodologically and formal-legally. Thus, my examination of the thirteen-volume edition of Witold Gombrowicz's *Collected Works* in the World Classics series (1983–1997) is the final chord of this book, presenting the more than 50-year-old history of the Hanser Verlag's commitment to promoting Polish literature in the German publishing market.

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6 Winkler, Heinrich August: *Der lange Weg nach Westen. Deutsche Geschichte II. Vom "Dritten Reich" bis zur Wiedervereinigung*. München 2014, p. 116. See also Chapter 2 of the present monograph.



## Chapter I.

### The role and function of publishers in the reception process: Theoretical assumptions

In order to describe the circumstances and reception processes of Polish writers in the Carl Hanser Verlag, it is fundamental to define the relationship between the literary and economic fields for which the German publishing house is an institutional element, binding the two systems: of artistic expression on the one hand, and business activity on the other.<sup>7</sup> This is not possible without an analysis of the already mentioned Carl Hanser Verlag archives, and an important element here is the correspondence between authors-editors-publishers (partially available), as well as correspondence within the publishing house (e. g., between the editorial and sales departments), and the minutes of internal conferences. It is equally important to study the correspondence between the Carl Hanser Verlag and the translators and reviewers of published literature, as it reveals the strategies by which the publisher sought to position Polish authors within the German literary market.

As Paweł Zajas observes in the context of Cees Nooteboom's success in the German book market, theorists often forget to take into account the role of editors in the literary achievements of particular authors – in the case of Nooteboom, these were the editors of the Suhrkamp Verlag:

This strategic “forgetting” is caused by an overly monolithic perspective in describing the process of translation: while the relationship between the author and publisher is often made public in the form of editions of correspondence, the editor's function remains in a historiographical vacuum.<sup>8</sup>

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7 I have already used the theoretical model presented here in my other works on cultural transfer analyzed from the perspective of comparative literary studies. See, for example: Pietrek: “Tadeusz Różewicz und der Hanser Verlag – Bemerkungen am Rande der Veröffentlichung von Formen der Unruhe.” In: Ruchniewicz / Troebst / Zybura (eds.). *In officio amicitiae: Andreas Lawaty dem Grenzgänger und Freund zum 65. Geburtstag*. Dresden 2018, pp. 495–508.

8 Zajas, Paweł: “Redaktor wydawniczy jako tłumacz: O translacji twórczości Ceesa Nootebooma w wydawnictwie Suhrkamp.” *Między oryginałem a przekładem*, 2018, 24 (2/40), pp. 99–100. <https://doi.org/10.12797/MOaP.24.2018.40.06>. [Accessed: 24 Jul. 2024.] All translations from Polish and German into English by the author, unless indicated otherwise. Where texts are particularly important for my argumentation, I provide the original form. I follow the same

Additionally, Zajas mentions an element that drastically limits the possibilities of studying cultural transfer phenomena: “The fact of insufficient source materials is also not insignificant [...]. Archives most often remain a ‘private sphere of publishing,’ making access to data difficult or simply impossible.”<sup>9</sup> Fortunately, this is not the case with the present study which – thanks to the kindness of the management of the Hanser Verlag – is based on the archival material collected and available at the enterprise’s headquarters, thus forming the basis for the analysis of the processes related to the cultural transfer of Polish writers in West Germany. Despite this extraordinary advantage, it should be noted that my project had to face certain archival limitations which German historian Reinhard Wittmann had already highlighted in his monograph on the history of the Hanser Verlag in 2004, stressing that the “archival condition” that forms the basis of his nearly 400-page study “is not easy.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Wittmann points out that “publishers almost never show an ongoing historical interest,” which makes their overwhelmingly dense archives, “quickly turn out to be mere registers of folders with a highly variable density of material on closer inspection.”<sup>11</sup> This is also the case with the Carl Hanser Verlag archives:

The Hanser archive consists of some 1,700 binders of individual department files, and there is no content indexing beyond extensive sorting by category. However, important bundles of documents are missing, such as advertising materials or individual correspondence, especially from the first forty years of the publishing business, between 1928 and 1968. On top of that, Carl Hanser’s private files are available only in very fragmentary form. The archive of technical publishing is as extensive as it is undeveloped. [...] This source situation limited the original concept [of Wittmann’s book] of focusing on the publisher’s relationship with the authors. The aspect of the company’s history in the narrow sense had to recede into the background; business data were not available.<sup>12</sup>

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procedure with regard to the documentation from the archives of the Carl Hanser Verlag. In the Polish original, the fragment reads as follows: “Owo strategiczne ‘zapomnienie’ powodowane jest nader monolityczną perspektywą w opisie procesu powstawania przekładu: podczas gdy relacja autora i wydawcy bywa często upubliczniana w formie edycji korespondencji, funkcja redaktora pozostaje w historiograficznej próżni.”

- 9 Ibid., p. 100. The Polish original of this fragment reads: “Nie bez znaczenia jest również fakt niewystarczającej bazy źródłowej [...]. Archiwa pozostają najczęściej ‘prywatną sferą wydawnictwa,’ przez co dostęp do danych jest utrudniony lub najzwyczajniej niemożliwy.”
- 10 Wittmann, Reinhard: *Der Carl Hanser Verlag 1928–2003. Eine Verlagsgeschichte*. München 2005, p. 7. In the German original, the short sentence reads as follows “Die Quellenlage [ist] nicht einfach.”
- 11 Ibid., pp. 7–8. In the German original, the fragment reads as follows: “Verlage besitzen kaum jemals ein kontinuierliches historisches Interesse. Ihre ‘Archive,’ deren Materialfülle auf den ersten Blick überwältigend anmutet, erweisen sich bei näherem Betrachten schnell als bloße Aktenregistraturen mit stark schwankender Überlieferungsdichte.”
- 12 Ibid., p. 8. In the German original, the fragment reads as follows: “Auch bei Hanser bietet das rund 1700 Ordner umfassende Archiv des Literaturverlags über eine grobe Spartensortierung hinaus keine inhaltliche Erschließung, sondern besteht aus den Ablagen einzelner Abtei-

The archival deficiencies described above fully apply to the present monograph: my goal is to outline the Polish-German cultural transfer on the basis of the available archival material precisely from the perspective of the “publishing house,” situating the enterprise at the center of the described processes. At the same time, however, an archive “constructed” in this way (e.g., without any indexing of the content) has an important asset, which was laid bare by Zajas in his analysis of the Suhrkamp publishing house. The collection of Hanser’s papers in its current form offers an additional academic value: namely, it allows the scholar to study items in their original shape, before they are transformed from a private publishing house’s archive into a form of institutionalized literary archive which has to restrict its content for technical reasons:

The archive in its original state thus makes it possible to reconstruct the logic and structure of the communication and decision-making processes initiated (or abandoned) by the various actors of the publishing field.<sup>13</sup>

The negative aspect of the unprocessed archive is that, in the case of some authors (who are also the subject of my analysis), the amount of preserved archival materials is extremely scarce, or even non-existent, which does not mean, however, that some scattered data cannot be found in other literary archives. Most importantly, the reasons why they are not included in the publisher’s internal archive are, in most cases, mysterious.

Following the works of Georg Jäger and Rolf Parr<sup>14</sup>, I hold the premise that the positions of authors and publishers in the literary field should be framed within the triangle of aesthetic, economic, and legal factors. Applied in this way, the socio-historical perspective combines both foreign and domestic understanding

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lungen. Doch fehlen wichtige Komplexe (etwa die Werbemittel oder einzelne Korrespondenzen) insbesondere aus den ersten 40 Jahren, auch sind Privatakten Carl Hansers nur sehr fragmentarisch vorhanden. Das Fachverlags Archiv ist ebenso umfangreich wie und ein unerschlossen. [...] Diese Quellenlage beschränkte das ursprüngliche Konzept, das Schwergewicht auf die Beziehungen des Verlags zu seinen Autoren zu legen. Der im engen Sinn unternehmenshistorische Aspekt musste zurücktreten, betriebswirtschaftliche Datenreihen standen nicht zur Verfügung.”

13 Zajas, Paweł: “Etnografia produkcji przekładu: (semi)peryferyjne literatury na niemieckim rynku książki.” In: *Teksty Drugie*, 4 (148) / 2014, pp. 295–318, here pp. 298–99. The original quotation reads as follows: “Archiwum w jego pierwotnym stanie umożliwia tym samym odtworzenie logiki i struktury procesów komunikacyjnych i decyzyjnych, inicjowanych (lub też zarzucanych) przez poszczególnych aktorów pola wydawniczego.”

14 See: Jäger, Georg: “Keine Kulturtheorie ohne Geldtheorie. Grundlegung einer Theorie des Buchverlags.” In: Schmidt, Siegfried J. (ed.): *Empirische Literatur und Medienforschung. Beobachtet aus Anlaß des 10-jährigen Bestehens des LUMIS-Instituts 1994*. Siegen 1995, pp. 24–40; Parr, Rolf: *Autorschaft. Eine kurze Sozialgeschichte der literarischen Intelligenz in Deutschland zwischen 1860 und 1930*. Heidelberg 2008.

of who the author is (*Autorschaft*<sup>15</sup>), but also provides information about the author's social status, his or her fees and royalties, and professional and social associations.<sup>16</sup> As already mentioned, therein lies the special role of book publishing as a bonding element between culture and economy.<sup>17</sup> Publishing is given a controlling function in the conversion of the media of the two systems: the binding of values from the system of cultural trust that is transferred into money, which is the medium of the economic system. Book publishers combine this selection transfer in the form of double coding. In this way, a printed book is created, which – on the one hand – has its cultural value (aesthetic, scientific, historic, etc.), and – on the other – a concrete economic value.<sup>18</sup> The cultural value is determined by the institutions of the literary field (critics, academies, publishers, etc.), while the economic value is determined by the market. By applying cultural criteria to economic decisions – and vice versa – the book publisher stabilizes and organizes the mutual alternation of systemic selections. Due to this, book publishing is located in the interpretive zone between two social subsystems.<sup>19</sup>

Jäger (referring to Luhmann) makes the observation that publishing as an organization decomposes decision-making processes: “The decision-making problem must be broken down into individual steps, each of which can be carried out separately and yields decision alternatives that are easier to understand.”<sup>20</sup> Due to the application of the cultural sphere to economic decision-making processes – and vice versa – these areas can be differentiated as follows: The cultural area is taken care of by the editorial department, the economic area by the sales and distribution department. The production department, in turn, is responsible for the transformation of book content into a book-object and, consequently, also for its second encoding through printing. In this way, the roles of the editorial, production and sales / distribution departments are determined by value patterns in the cultural, technological, and economic areas. The resulting decision-making problems can be resolved through program confer-

15 See my monograph: Pietrek, Daniel: *Ich erschreibe mich selbst. (Autor)Biografisches Schreiben bei Horst Bienek*. Dresden 2012, pp. 16–28.

16 Parr, Rolf: *Autorschaft...*, p. 7.

17 See: Parsons, Talcott / Platt, Gerald M.: *Die amerikanische Universität. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der Erkenntnis*. Frankfurt am Main 1990, pp. 549–87.

18 Jäger, Georg: “Keine Kulturtheorie...,” pp. 24–40.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 31. Also, see my already mentioned monograph: Pietrek, Daniel: *Ich erschreibe...*, pp. 15–33.

20 Luhmann, Niklas: *Organisation und Entscheidung*, in Luhmann, Niklas: *Soziologische Aufklärung 3. Soziales System, Gesellschaft, Organisation*. Opladen 1981, pp. 335–89, here: p. 344. In: Jäger, Georg: “Keine Kulturtheorie...,” p. 32. In the German original, the fragment reads as follows: “Ein Entscheidungsproblem muss in Einzelschritte zerlegt werden, die jeweils für sich vollzogen werden können und besser überblickbare Alternativen zur Entscheidung bringen.”

ences, but the final decision rests with the publisher himself / herself.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the publisher combines two roles that simultaneously correspond to the special cultural and social position of the publishing houses as described above, which is “cultural intermediation and commercial activity.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, in addition to analyzing the Polish authors’ position in the field, I focus my attention on the founder of the publishing house, Carl Hanser, as well as his successors.

My understanding of the notion of cultural transfer (in German: *Kulturtransfer*) concurs with the assumptions proposed by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, their rationale is based on economics, which surfaces also on the linguistic level, since – in addition to the term “transfer” itself, they use terms such as “import” and “export” in its definition:

The humanities have always been decisive in the construction of national identity because they fulfill a social mission of preserving memory. One can hardly imagine a national space without the cultivation of the history of literary tradition, the recollection of the concepts of the mother tongue. It would therefore be necessary, especially in this field, to be able to prove that the reference to the foreign has had a decisive effect. The history of the humanities, even if it argues more from a socio-historical than an internal academic perspective, would have to deal primarily with the question of the import and export of impulses or theories.<sup>24</sup>

21 Jäger, Georg: “Keine Kulturtheorie...,” p. 33.

22 Bramann, Klaus Wilhelm / Merzbach, Joachim / Münch, Roger: *Sortiments- und Verlagskunde*. München 1993, p. 99. In: Jäger, Georg: “Keine Kulturtheorie...,” p. 33. In the German original, the phrase reads as follows: “Kulturvermittlung und kaufmännisches Vorgehen.”

23 See: Zajas, Paweł: “Transfer kultury w polu wydawniczym. Archiwum Siegfrieda Unselda a literatura polska.” In: *Pamiętnik Literacki* CVIII, 2017 / 2, pp. 179–206; Espagne, Michel / Werner, Michael: “Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S.” In: *Francia* 13/1985; Espagne, Michel / Werner, Michael: “Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer als Forschungsgegenstand. Eine Problemskizze.” In: *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l’espace franco-allemand (XVIIIe et XIXe siècle)*. Paris 1988.

24 See: Espagne, Michel: “Kulturtransfer und Fachgeschichte der Geisteswissenschaften.” In: *COMPARATIV 10* (2000) / 1, p. 48. In the German original, the fragment reads as follows: “Ausschlaggebend bei der Konstruktion der nationalen Identität sind immer die Geisteswissenschaften gewesen, weil sie einen sozialen Auftrag der Gedächtnisbewahrung erfüllen. Man kann sich kaum einen nationalen Raum ohne Pflege der Geschichte der literarischen Tradition, der Rückbesinnung auf die Begrifflichkeit der Muttersprache denken. Deshalb wäre es speziell auf diesem Gebiet notwendig, den Nachweis erbringen zu können, daß der Bezug auf die Fremde entscheidend gewirkt hat. Die Geschichte der Geisteswissenschaften, auch wenn sie mehr sozialhistorisch als innerwissenschaftlich argumentiert, müßte sich vorrangig mit der Frage vom Import und Export von Impulsen oder Theorien befassen.”

In the process of the acculturation of imported impulses, patterns and ideas understood as a creative process which lead to the acquisition and adaptation of other people's property:<sup>25</sup>

Transfer research [places] an emphasis on the constitutional dynamics of social or humanistic formations and specifically considers the role of reference to the strange elements within these dynamics.[...] It is possible to ask to what extent the importation of new knowledge somewhat changes the context on the receiving side. It is this context of reception that should be privileged in transfer studies. The fact that a German philosopher, such as Hegel or Schelling, is received in France should not be interpreted as a special emanating force of a German source, but as a sign of a specifically French constellation that gives the importation a new and source-independent value.<sup>26</sup>

In this process, publishers as *Vermittler* or *Vermittlerpersönlichkeiten* – “cultural intermediaries” – play a fundamental role.<sup>27</sup> They can be both individuals and groups of individuals, i. e. in the present case, writers, their translators, editors, external reviewers, publishers, but also institutions, such as the Carl Hanser publishing house or other publishing houses, organizations of cultural life, or literary agencies. In a very similar way, the concept of cultural transfer has been very skillfully applied by, among others, Paweł Zajas and Dirk Kemper in their study of the Suhrkamp publishing house,<sup>28</sup> making it possible to study the material elements of this transfer and not just such elusive conceptions as the exchange of ideas.<sup>29</sup> As Kemper points out in his study of the Suhrkamp publishing house, its internal archives mostly show the daily business activities of the enterprise (*Tagesgeschäft*).

Importantly, these activities and their individual elements are often later described in a history of culture or history of ideas, where they are constructed

25 Password in the lexicon: “Kulturtransfer”. In Nünning, Ansgar (ed.): *Grundbegriffe der Kulturtheorie und Kulturwissenschaften*. Stuttgart 2005, p. 125.

26 Espagne, Michel: “Kulturtransfer...,” p. 43. The German version of this extract reads: “Die Transferforschung [legt] den Akzent auf die Konstitutionsdynamik der sozialen oder geisteswissenschaftlichen Gestaltungen und berücksichtigt insbesondere die Rolle des Bezugs auf das Fremde in dieser Dynamik. [...] Man wird sich fragen, inwieweit der Import neuen Wissens den Aufnahmekontext leicht ändert. Gerade dieser Aufnahmekontext soll bei der Transferforschung privilegiert werden. Daß ein deutscher Philosoph, etwa Hegel oder Schelling, in Frankreich rezipiert wird, ist nicht als besondere Ausstrahlungskraft der deutschen Quelle zu interpretieren, sondern als Zeichen einer spezifisch französischen Konstellation, die dem Import einen neuen, von der Quelle unabhängigen und eigenständigen Wert verleiht.”

27 Espagne, Michel / Werner, Michael: “Deutsch-französischer Kulturtransfer im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert. Zu einem neuen interdisziplinären Forschungsprogramm des C.N.R.S.” In: *Francia* 13 / 1985, p. 506.

28 See: Kemper, Dirk / Zajas, Paweł / Bakshi, Natalia (eds.): *Kulturtransfer und Verlagsarbeit – Suhrkamp und Osteuropa*. Paderborn 2019.

29 See: Kemper, Dirk / Zajas, Paweł / Bakshi, Natalia (eds.): *Kulturtransfer...*, p. 11.

post factum, being accessible only from a retrospective position. In the day-to-day operations of the publishing house, no specific publishing game plan or policy was apparent.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, however, this does not mean that the activities of the publishing house took place without a strategy, a larger scheme, and a deeper motivation. I would like to emphasize the difference between retrospectively created, coherent narratives on the history of ideas or culture and the daily activities of the publishing house and the related publishing policy and strategy. As I mentioned above, defining a publishing house as an intermediary and then isolating other cultural intermediaries operating in its field allows us to grapple with the contingent nature of the book production process, from the selection of a given manuscript, the work of translators, readers, editors to the marketing strategies employed.<sup>31</sup> Zajas clarifies these issues in regard to the Suhrkamp publishing house:

What does the archive talk about, while on what subject it remains silent, and why, in the analysis drawn from it, must we not apply a retrospective view of the past, typical of traditional history, ordering facts according to external logic. Instead of flashbacks, I think we should focus more on the problem of contingency and, therefore, an indefinite choice of potential opportunities in the day-to-day operation of the publishing field, and on the role of coincidence in ultimately making this choice.<sup>32</sup>

Keeping in mind the fundamental importance of contingency in intermediation processes, I propose analyzing the activities of the cultural intermediaries listed below.<sup>33</sup>

#### a) *Translators*

Translators, who, in addition to issues related to their proper business of translating the text, also very often act as agents representing authors. This was also the case in Hanser's publishing house. After all, the cooperation between Carl Dedecius and the publishing house went far beyond translation issues. One of the publishing house's most important lecturers, Herbert G. Göpfert, paid particular attention to this element in 1978:

30 Ibid., pp. 6–7.

31 Ibid., pp. 7–8.

32 Zajas, Paweł: "Transfer kultury..." p. 181. The Polish original states: "O czym opowiada archiwum, na jaki temat zaś milczy, oraz: dlaczego w analizie zaczerpniętego z niego materiału nie wolno nam stosować retrospektywnej wizji przeszłości, typowej dla tradycyjnej historii, porządkującej fakty zgodnie z zewnętrzną logiką? Zamiast na retrospekcji winniśmy, jak sądzę, skupić się bardziej na problemie kontyngencji, a zatem nieoznaczonego wyboru potencjalnych możliwości działania w codziennym funkcjonowaniu pola wydawniczego, oraz na roli, jaką w ostatecznym dokonaniu tego wyboru odgrywa przypadek [...]."

33 The proximity of my analysis to Kemper's divagations is due to the nature of the publisher's work and the essence of cultural transfer. See: Kemper, Dirk: Kulturtransfer und Verlagsarbeit..., pp. 8–10.

None of the [foreign-language] authors [...] and none of their books came to the publisher primarily through the mediation of a literary agency; they were all tracked down by the publisher itself, occasionally with the help of intermediaries. This would hardly be possible today. It was not unusual for a translation into German to have a stimulating effect on publishers in other countries, especially smaller ones, so that the publisher was able to perform an additional intermediary function here. There was also a personal relationship with most of the authors, hardly any different from that with the German authors.<sup>34</sup>

Importantly, translators, as well as the final result of their endeavors in the form of printed books, had an impact on the promotion and the reception of writers beyond the sphere of German-language literature. This is exactly what Göpfert means, using the term “intermediation.”

#### b) *Lectors / editors*

In the early 1980s, a long-time lector at Bertelsmann Verlag, Dieter Struss, defined the importance and evolution of this profession within the literary field, not without reason quoting from memory an article from *Time*: “[T]he lector is right after the author, the most important figure of literary life, but at the same time, the most anonymous.”<sup>35</sup> In describing the importance of lectors in publishing, I would like to use two more remarks by Struss, as he experienced and defined the evolution and change of this profession in the publishing business in the 1950s and early 1980s, the period I focus on in my study:

When I actually became a reader in the mid-1950s [...] back then the publishing contract was a maximum of two typed pages. Today’s pre-printed standard contracts are six to ten pages long and govern what is to happen to a given title even after the end of the world. [...] When I started working in the mid-1950s at a large publishing house that published more than 50 titles a year, said publishing house did not yet have a producer, economist, lawyer, PR person or licensing manager. The publishing house did not yet have many of the positions that are taken for granted today, at least in larger publishing houses. I still went by myself every day to the typesetter, printer and bookbinder. Of course, the typesetter still stood at his box and worked with hook and lead. Calculations

34 Göpfert qtd, in Trapp, Claus-Michael / Trzcionka, Karsten / Glawatz, Hermann (eds.), with a historical introduction by Herbert G. Göpfert: *Der Carl Hanser Verlag 1928–1978*. München 1978, p. 159. In the German original, the fragment reads as follows: “Keiner der [fremdsprachigen] Autoren [...] und keines ihrer Bücher ist primär durch die Vermittlung einer literarischen Agentur zum Verlag gekommen, sie wurden alle vom Verlag selbst, gelegentlich unter Einschaltung von Mittelspersonen, aufgespürt. Das wäre heute kaum noch möglich. Nicht selten wirkte eine Übersetzung ins Deutsche anregend auf Verlage anderer, vor allem kleinerer Länder, so dass der Verlag hier eine zusätzliche Vermittlungsfunktion wahrnehmen konnte. Zu den meisten dieser Autoren ergab sich auch ein persönliches Verhältnis, kaum anders als zu den deutschen Autoren.”

35 Struss, Dieter: “Der Lektor oder: ‘Wer bin ich?’” In: Arnold, Heinz Ludwig (ed.): *Literaturbetrieb in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Munich 1981, p. 185.

were based on experience and knowledge of the market. The few licenses that were already for sale at the time were sold by the publisher himself. He also visited major literary critics in person.<sup>36</sup>

Lectors were responsible for decisions typical of their profession: selection, choosing authors who fit the profile of the publishing house, critical reading of the proposed manuscripts, then working on the final version of the text and negotiating with the author on this issue; finally, the lector built and maintained the relationship of the publishing house with the author, where the enterprise often played the role of the patron.<sup>37</sup> As I mentioned above, in the case of non-German-language authors, some of these functions were performed by translators or jointly by lectors / editors and translators. This was the case with the Polish authors published in the Hanser Verlag, which Struss vividly elaborates on in his account:

Due to lack of time, an editor often has to choose between what he edits himself and what he passes on to freelancers. It goes without saying that the manuscripts an editor is most likely to review himself are those in which he is personally involved. Translations and poor manuscripts are the most likely to be passed outside the publishing house. Editing translations is almost always a thankless task. The original can be changed only in the rarest of cases, and if the translation is not good, a new translation (which no one wants to pay for) would be the lesser evil anyway.<sup>38</sup>

A trend that was already evident in the early 1980s and that only intensified in the following decades was the evolution of the lector's function into that of the product manager. However, the more the lector filled and carried out managerial functions, the less time he or she had for activities typical of his or her profession. At the same time, he or she could no longer neglect managerial functions and be in constant and close contact with other departments of the publishing house. Moreover, if he or she could not raise the interest of the sales department in some publications, the department was unable to properly advertise these projects and convince bookstores and the publishing market of their potential value.<sup>39</sup> In order to convince the sales department about the value of the project he or she realizes in the publishing house, the lector must:

- i) Understand and be able to evaluate the technical and cost details of book production.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 187.

<sup>37</sup> See: Göbel, Wolfram: "Produktionsmanager, Ghostwriter oder Macher. Die Funktionsveränderungen im Verlagslektorat." In: Schneider, Ute: *Das Lektorat – eine Bestandsaufnahme: Beiträge zum Lektorat im literarischen Verlag*. Wiesbaden 1997, pp. 12–13.

<sup>38</sup> Struss, Dieter: "Der Lektor...", pp. 191–92.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

- ii) Know if and how its plan can be integrated with the publisher's long-term plan.
- iii) Take the lead in discussing the book project with the typographer, the book layout designer, the image artist, the illustrator, cartographer, cover designer, etc.
- iv) Write advertising texts and provide the advertising and press departments with the necessary incentives.
- v) Finally, motivate the publisher's sales representatives as much as possible.

In addition to a brief description of the most important tasks of cultural intermediaries, this monograph would like to stress the fact that some of the meetings mentioned here generate and have generated written documentation in the form of minutes, letters, and formal plans, which now constitute my analytical material.

c) *The owners of the publishing house and the management of the publishing house*

When recreating the post-war literary field in West Germany, we immediately think of figures such as Samuel Fischer, Carl Hanser, Ernst Rowohlt, and Peter Suhrkamp. These were the owners of publishing houses who ran their enterprises in such a way that economic ability and competence served for them as a means to realize their idea of cultural policy. As Fischer elucidates,

A publisher is a man who is tempted to invest labor and money in intangibles, he wants to be an explorer. He wants to help bring new values to light, to create new values as an organizing businessman.<sup>40</sup>

In the case of Hanser's publishing house, this profile did not change after its founder withdrew from active management of the publishing house in 1976, but was continued by his successors, which will be described in more detail in this monograph and which was of great importance to the Polish writers the Hanser Verlag published. Here, however, we have a situation in which the publishing house as a business developed against the grain, negating the trend we could observe since the 1960s, due to which the market was dominated by global publishing conglomerates, where literature is just one of many product segments. Their goal was not primarily to create cultural value, but to accumulate

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40 Amlinger, Carolin: "Liefen schlucken liefern schlucken. Die Monopolisierung des Buchmarkts setzt die literarische Vielfalt aufs Spiel." In: *JACOBIN*, 13.09.2021. [Accessed: 01.12.2023]. In German, the fragment reads as follows: "Der Verleger, als ein Mann, den es lockt, Arbeit und Geld an immaterielle Werte zu setzen, will Entdecker sein. Er will helfen, neue Werte ans Licht zu fördern, als organisierender Geschäftsmann neue Werte zu schaffen."

economic value.<sup>41</sup> The Carl Hanser Verlag did not succumb to this penchant and remained as one of the few independent publishing houses that are not part of larger conglomerates. Of course, in Hanser as well (as will be discussed in the analyses of each decade), the owner could not ignore the economic calculus, but in the case of some authors (such as Tadeusz Rózewicz) this calculus would play a secondary role.

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In listing the most important “cultural intermediaries” and their interactions in the literary field in the above list, I would not like to narrow my analysis to the activities and transformations within the publishing house exclusively. Once a book hits the market, it becomes a functioning element in the literary field and its reception (which includes questions about its commercial success or lack thereof) is another phase that must be analyzed.

For Perre Bourdieu, the field of power is a space of power relations between actors and institutions that possess the capital necessary to occupy dominant positions in various domains.<sup>42</sup> One of these is the site of struggle between holders of different types of power and varieties of capital, and its numerous actors are always trying to change the rules of the field in a way that suits them best. Obviously, they have different opportunities to influence the situation in that domain and enforce their interests. This relates to their social position in its structure, which excludes certain opportunities and conditions certain positioning.<sup>43</sup> All fields have an essentially similar structure and are homologous, but they differ in the specific form of homology. In each field, different factors come into play, different players are involved, and different rules apply.<sup>44</sup> According to Bourdieu, the literary order represents a real challenge to any form of economism<sup>45</sup>, because it has evolved through a long process of autonomization and presents itself as an economic world in reverse; those who enter it have an interest in disinterest.<sup>46</sup> This is not to say that there is no economic logic to this charismatic economy – the decision to defy economics by drifting into an intellectual and artistic avant-garde and settling there permanently without financial compensation has an economic rationale, and access to the symbolic sphere, on the

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41 Ibid.

42 Bourdieu, Pierre: *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Trans. Susan Emanuel. Cambridge 1996, p. 215.

43 Rehbein, Boike / Saalman, Gernot: “Feld (champ).” In: Fröhlich, Gerhard / Rehbein, Boike (eds.): *Bourdieu-Handbuch. Leben-Werk-Wirkung*. Stuttgart 2009, p. 101.

44 Ibid.

45 Bourdieu, Pierre: *The Rules of Art...*, p. 215.

46 Ibid., p. 216.

other hand, can be exchanged for economic gains sooner or later. This is why book publishers, including the Carl Hanser Verlag, have a special role to play, as they bring together the two systems<sup>47</sup>, culture and business.<sup>48</sup> However, one more aspect that Bourdieu underlines plays an important role:

Because of the hierarchy established in the relationships among the different kinds of capital and among their holders, the fields of cultural production occupy a dominated position, temporally, within the field of power. As liberated as they may be from external constraints and demands, they are traversed by the necessity of the fields which encompass them: the need for profit, whether economic or political. It follows that they are at any one time the site of a struggle between two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle, which favours those who dominate the field economically and politically (for example, “bourgeois art”), and the autonomous principle (for example, “art for art’s sake”), which leads its most radical defenders to make of temporal failure a sign of election and of success a sign of compromise with the times.<sup>49</sup>

Artistic or literary creativity is not disinterested and gratuitous, but is a purposeful act that has an addressee. This includes indirect addressing, which – in addition to the choice of publisher, presentation of the work, etc. – can be seen in its orientation to ask important questions, explore topics and, above all, shape the work of artistic production. Indirect social orientation (*soziale Ausrichtung*) can be seen in all the factors that contribute to the public image of the work and author, a differentiated, i. e. recognizable position or an audible voice in the space of other legitimate possibilities.<sup>50</sup> The question, then, is where and how will a particular writer and his work be positioned within the framework of cultural transfer? What kind of demand should the writer respond to? Indeed, in the case of the reception of Polish prose in West Germany since 1958, two groups of authors can be distinguished: the first characterized itself with its proximity to modernism and absurdism (which, for example, had a huge impact in the case of the reception of Gombrowicz’s drama), and this literature was read because of the “universality of its character.”<sup>51</sup> The second group, however, built their significance on political references to the situation in Poland or divagations in Polish society, culture, history, etc. For example, Gombrowicz fits into this first

47 Parsons, Talcott / Platt, Gerald M.: *Die amerikanische Universität. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der Erkenntnis*. Frankfurt am Main 1990, pp. 549–87.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 343. Also, see my monograph: Pietrek, Daniel: *Ich erschreibe...*, pp. 16–28.

49 Bourdieu, Pierre: *The Rules...*, pp. 216–17.

50 Tommek, Herberit: *Der lange Weg in die Gegenwartsliteratur. Studien zur Geschichte des literarischen Feldes in Deutschland von 1960 bis 2000*. Berlin / München / Boston 2015, p. 34.

51 Nosbers, Hedwig: *Polnische Literatur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1945/1949 bis 1990. Buchwissenschaftliche Aspekte*. Wiesbaden 1999, p. 55. In the German original, the phrase reads “Universalität.”

reception, and his plays and their reception reinforced this way of reading him.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, the late Zbigniew Herbert or the early Adam Zagajewski were read for different reasons. However, such situating of works (to stay with the example of Gombrowicz in Germany) in the 1950s and 1960s and the associated reception success did not guarantee analogous success in the 1980s and early 1990s, as this monograph proves.

Thus, the decision to publish a book or to refuse to publish it, or the decision to engage in the promotion of an author results from many elements that affect each other simultaneously. A very important one – often the most important – is the economic dimension of the publishing market. Equally important is the quality of the proposed text, although the evaluation of this element escapes clear criteria. The final decision is made each time by the most important actors in this process on the basis of economic opportunities and the current situation of the literary field.

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52 For more information, see my study of Gombrowicz's German reception: Pietrek, Daniel: *Szlachcica polskiego pojedynki cieniów. Recepcja dramatów Witolda Gombrowicza w niemieckim obszarze językowym*, Wrocław 2006.



## Chapter II.

### The first decades after World War II: 1945–1968

#### 2.1. The literary field and the publishing market in Germany between 1945 and 1949

It needs to be stressed that the first epoch-making publication of Polish literature in the Carl Hanser publishing house was Karl Dedecius' 1959 anthology of Polish poetry entitled *Lektion der Stille*.<sup>53</sup> Despite the fact that this publication appeared at the end of the 1950s, I will start the analysis of the literary field (while also positioning my analysis within the context of the field of power) from 1945 and briefly describe both the post-war years and the 1950s, regardless of the fact that no Polish title appeared in the Hanser publishing house during this period.

However, analysis of the post-war years and the 1950s is vital to any understanding of certain issues intrinsic to the formation of the literary field in West Germany. These issues include an awareness of its structure and characteristics, the peculiar climate and atmosphere in the culture and literature of the region at the end of the 1950s (and the still ongoing dispute regarding the thesis of the 'restoration character' of the post-war years and the early days of West Germany), the decision of the Carl Hanser Verlag to publish Polish literature, and individual decisions concerning specific Polish authors.

Pierre Bourdieu points out that "[t]he science of cultural works presupposes three operations which are as necessary and necessarily linked"<sup>54</sup> as the corresponding three levels of social reality:

First, one must analyse the position of the literary (etc.) field within the field of power, and *its evolution in time*. Second, one must analyse *the internal structure of the literary (etc.) field*, a universe obeying its own laws of functioning and transformation, meaning the structure of objective relations between positions occupied by individuals and groups placed in a situation of competition for legitimacy. And finally, the analysis involves *the genesis of the habitus of occupants of these positions*, that is, the systems of

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53 Dedecius, Karl (ed. and trans.): *Lektion der Stille. Neue polnische Lyrik*. Munich 1959.

54 Bourdieu, Pierre: *Rules...*, p. 214.