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SERIALISED NOVELS IN THE POLISH ÉMIGRÉ PRESS IN THE USA, 1881–1918*

Abstract

This article discusses serialised novels published before 1918 in the Polish émigré press in the United States of America. These works were a popular feature of dailies and weeklies, but the periodicals' regular financial difficulties meant that it was books published several years or indeed several decades earlier in Europe which were most often serialised. Consequently, most of the works that appeared in the periodicals failed to reflect contemporary literary trends while also overlooking subjects relevant to the everyday lives of Poles abroad. Still, the prevailing patriotic and historical themes complemented the values that many editorial boards subscribed to.

Keywords: Poles in USA, Polish émigré press, history of press, serialised novels, Polish novels, dime novels

I

Serialised novels are almost unheard of today's periodicals, yet they were a regular feature of weeklies and dailies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹ Historians and literary scholars have rarely analysed the content of émigré publications in the period under discussion here. There have been some monographs and articles examining

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¹ Wojciech Chojnacki, 'Czytelnictwo, piśmiennictwo i działalność wydawnicza polskiej grupy etnicznej w USA w latach 1870–1939', *Przegląd Polonijny*, iv, 2 (1980), 116.

particular newspapers. Janusz Albin and Iwona Marciniak analysed the yearbooks of *Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy*, which was available in Poland for the periods 1884–7 and 1891–1900, while Danuta Pytlak discussed *Ogniwo*, which appeared between 1909 and 1911. More recently, Daniel Kiper, for example, has discussed literary texts that appeared in the Chicago-based *Zgoda* between 1881 and 1907.² A broader overview is available in Karen Majewski's 2003 monograph that discussed the writings of Polish émigrés in the USA.³ Matthew Frye Jacobson, meanwhile, dedicated a chapter of his book to comparing Jewish, Polish and Irish writing in the United States.⁴ Janusz Dunin also wrote about pulp fiction and serialised novels, although his study primarily focused on works published in the partitioned Polish territories.⁵

In the context of Polish émigré publications, serial fiction was particularly popular in the United States. In contrast to the politically-focused periodicals appearing in Western Europe, US-based publications offered more general content. It was there that several periodicals with a literary profile emerged, such as *Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy* that was published in Chicago between 1884 and 1912, or *Dzień Święty*, which appeared in the same city from 1882 to 1912 and boasted that it did not print immoral works.⁶ The majority of texts were published in the main section of periodicals. Only a few, such as the New York-based *Obywatel* or *Ameryka* that came out in Toledo, had supplements dedicated to novels or published excerpts of novels on separate sheets. The Chicago-based weekly *Zgoda*, published by the Polish National Alliance, serialised novels in the separate women's issue that was started in 1900.

² Daniel Kiper, "Zgoda" i spór. Z dziejów polskiego pisma w Ameryce (1881–1907) (Lublin, 2019), 143–64; Albin Janusz and Marciniak Iwona, 'Chicagowski Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy na tle działalności księgarskiej i wydawniczej Władysława Dyniewiczza', *Ze Skarbcza Kultury*, 42 (1986), 93–163; Danuta Pytlak, 'The Link: Polish Positivist Influences in the Immigrant USA (on the basis of Chicago's monthly *Ogniwo*)', *Anglica* (2003), 99–107.

³ Karen Majewski, *Traitors & True Poles. Narrating a Polish-American Identity 1880–1939* (Ohio, 2003).

⁴ Mathew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows. The Diasporic Immigration of Irish, Polish and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge–London, 1995), 94–137.

⁵ Janusz Dunin, *Papierowy bandyta. Książka kramarska i brukowa w Polsce* (Łódź, 1974).

⁶ The two publications merged in early 1913 and were subsequently published under the title *Rodzina Polska*.

The emphasis was often laid on the educational role of the novels serialised in a given periodical. *Polak w Ameryce* from Buffalo issued an appeal to the editors of Polish-language periodicals published in the US, stating: “Let us give our people ... wholesome novels that do not in any way violate their moral principles but nourish them intellectually instead”.⁷ Full of praise for the writings of Jules Verne, *Dziennik Chicagoski* noted how in contrast to other French novels, his texts were moral and pure, thus also safe for younger readers.⁸ In the Philadelphia weekly *Jedność*, meanwhile, the section with novels was initially titled ‘A Guide to a Christian Life’ [Przewodnik do życia chrześcijańskiego].⁹

Other virtues of the published texts were mentioned less often. Promoting Adolf Wilhelm Ernst von Winterfeld’s new comic novel, *Dziennik Chicagoski*, noted that the work was chosen for publication, not because of any literary qualities but because it would entertain readers. At the same time, the publication warned that German humour could be less refined and cruder than Polish humour.¹⁰ In 1918, the Cleveland-based *Wiadomości Codzienne* explained why it had opted to publish a work titled *Smutna historia dwojga ludzi* [The Sad Story of Two People]:

Perhaps it will not be as absorbing as previous texts, but what is certain is that each reader will learn more from it, that it will sow more noble seeds in readers’ hearts and souls; all that is necessary is to get into it, digest each sentence and commit it to memory. It is the story of two simple souls: A city girl whose spirit has been maimed on the city streets and a hardy, steely peasant who is true and just, although she mocks his background, calling him a ‘boor’. Read this novel attentively, not for sensation but to educate yourselves and to ennoble your own souls.¹¹

Of course, the emphasis on the prevalence of morality and educational values over the entertainment offered by literary texts did not necessarily reflect the genuine motives for publication. However, any such discrepancies could only be traced by comparing the mission

⁷ The appeal was republished by other periodicals including *Naród Polski*, iv, 9 (28 Feb. 1900), 2.

⁸ *Juliusz Verne*, *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xvi, 71 (25 March 1905), 8.

⁹ *Jedność*, i, 1 (1 March 1895), 2.

¹⁰ ‘Nowa Powieść’, *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xvi, 12 (16 Jan. 1905), 4.

¹¹ *Wiadomości Codzienne*, iii, 60 (19 March 1918), 4.

statements of weeklies or dailies with the information contained in editors' private correspondence or memoirs.

Novels provided the Polish-American press with a flexible material that could readily be given more room, shortened or moved to the following issue, hence the numerous references to delays or breaks in the publication of particular works. For example, "for reasons out of editors' control", the serialisation of the novel *O własnych siłach* [Under Your Own Steam] in the Chicago-based *Reforma* was abandoned in 1891.¹² Julian Łętkowski's *Dobrana Para* [The Ideal Couple], published in *Kurier Nowojorski* in 1897, was paused for a certain time because an election campaign meant a lack of space.¹³ The content of particular novels was also subject to modifications. For example, the Winona-based *Wiarus* started to print *Leśny Młyn nad Czernają* [Forest Mill on the Czernaja River], which might have been familiar to some readers since it had been published previously in the Milwaukee *Przyjaciel Ludu*. This periodical went out of business during the serialisation. It was subsequently published *in extenso* in the Buffalo-based *Echo* and *Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy*. However, *Wiarus* decided that only the opening and conclusion of the work were interesting enough to merit being published in full, with the less engaging middle section abridged.¹⁴ In order to complete its serialisation in *Zgoda* in 1881 more quickly, Stanisław Sz wajkart's *Lila. Powieść osnuta na tle stosunków społecznych w Galicyi* [Lila: A Novel Based on Social Relations in Galicia], was shortened.¹⁵ Meanwhile, *Kurier Polski* proclaimed proudly in 1898 that unlike other émigré periodicals that published abridged versions, it would serialise Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Krzyżacy* [Knights of the Cross] in full.¹⁶

The source material also contains indications of debates on whether and, if so, how longer texts should be published. In the first issue of *Zgoda* from 1887, readers were informed that the editorial board was in possession of an interesting manuscript of a novel on the 1863 uprising written by a Paris-based correspondent. However, in light of recent investments in expanding the periodical format, the

¹² *Reforma*, i, 11 (10 Oct. 1891), 4. The author could not be established.

¹³ *Kurier Nowojorski*, viii, 42 (30 Oct. 1897), 4.

¹⁴ *Wiarus*, xiv, 23 (8 June 1899), 1.

¹⁵ *Zgoda*, i, 23 (26 April 1881), 2.

¹⁶ *Kurier Polski*, xi, 196 (5 Aug. 1898), 2.

publication was considered too risky.¹⁷ Perhaps this information was intended to gauge how much interest readers might have in work. The periodical repeatedly addressed the question of whether it should feature serialised novels. In 1908, for example, one of the arguments in favour of founding a Polish National Alliance periodical was that the weekly *Zgoda* did not make room for literary works.¹⁸ By contrast, Alina Zaslawska, outlining in 1909 the mission of the women's edition of *Zgoda*, stated that one of its most important functions was to provide 'suitably selected' novels.¹⁹ The fact that neither readers nor editors could agree on the form that the periodical should take became a running joke. In the humorous piece 'Redaktorskie kłopoty' [Editorial Difficulties], two contradictory sentences were presented as an illustration of typical complaints:

Dear Sir! I like periodicals for the novels, yet instead of a proper romance story, you publish some kind of memoirs and reviews that merely bore readers, and furthermore: I would advise you, Gentlemen, to abandon the novel column because it is not really something for us. Over in Galicia, they can write dishonest romance stories for dames. But our periodical should focus in its columns on economics and politics, rather than fairy tales.²⁰

Also noteworthy was the issue of readers' comfort. The opening issues of *Wiarus* each year summarised the excerpts of novels published until that point so that new readers could read subsequent segments. For example, the first issue of 1901 discussed the beginnings of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* [published in Polish as *Chata wuja Toma*],²¹ while in 1908, one reader, Bronisława Karwowska, suggested in a letter to the editors of *Zgoda* that the publication should:

appear in a format of half the size (book size), as was the case until July [1908], and were periodicals to serialise novels, as they do in Europe, then it would be easy to turn them into episodes, and newspapers would be doubly beneficial: we would read ourselves and in addition, promote reading.²²

¹⁷ *Kurier Polski*, vi, 1 (5 Jan. 1887), 1.

¹⁸ *Kurier Polski*, xxvii, 21 (21 May 1908), (men's edition), 1.

¹⁹ *Kurier Polski*, xxviii, 9 (4 March 1909), (women's edition), 1.

²⁰ 'Redaktorskie kłopoty', *Kurier Polski*, vi, 13 (30 March 1887), 5.

²¹ 'Początek naszej powieści', *Wiarus*, xvi, 1 (3 Jan. 1901), 1.

²² *Zgoda*, xxviii, 4 (28 Jan. 1909), (women's edition), 2. The issue was also addressed in the subsequent 5th issue of 4 Feb., 1.

Dziennik Chicagoski, meanwhile, recommended that anyone who did not like reading serialised novels could cut out the fragments and piece them into a whole.²³ This was common practice among poorer readers who could not afford their own books. Few periodicals sought to make this task easier by, for example, printing excerpts on half a page and including separate pagination so that it would be easier to have the pages bound. However, the majority of émigré weeklies and dailies treated novels as a core part of their publications. This was perhaps influenced by the fact that some of the more popular works were later published in separate volumes, securing additional income for the editorial offices. This was the case, for example, with *Straszna przygoda na zamku Szamotulskim. (Opowiadanie ze starych kronik)* [A Terrible Adventure at Szamotuły Castle – A Tale Based on Ancient Chronicles], published separately by the printworks of the Milwaukee-based *Kurier Polski* in 1894.²⁴

Such volumes were also offered as prizes for paying for a full subscription on time. In an attempt to trigger readers' guilt, *Zgoda* noted that:

barely one hundred readers have as of now paid in advance for a year's subscription to *Zgoda*, which means that we must wait another fortnight to start reprinting [J.N. Rayski's] *Krwawa Zgoda* [Bloody Agreement]. We cannot understand our readers' indifference, as having written so enthusiastically about this novel's beauty, they are now so indolent as to not even pay for a periodical that in return would offer them a book with over 200 pages.²⁵ This was also the case with another novel by the same author, *Bożenna. Siostra Miłosierdzia. Zdarzenia z naszych czasów w trzech częściach* [Bożenna, Sister of Mercy: Events From Our Age in Three Parts], which was sold as a separate volume at a price of \$1.50.²⁶

This work was even subject of scathing reviews in the competing periodical *Kurier Polski*:

Bożenna, a former sister of mercy, worn down by the struggles of the battlefield, finally married Radwan and bestowed upon the lucky man "marital-patriotic kisses". This is the ending of Rayski's novel, which was published over nine months in *Zgoda* and whose single literary merit is

²³ 'Nasze nowe powieści', *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xv, 201 (26 Aug. 1904), 2.

²⁴ *Kurier Polski*, vii, 156 (2 July 1894), 4.

²⁵ 'Do Czytelników', *Zgoda*, vi, 35 (31 Aug. 1887), 1.

²⁶ *Kurier Polski*, v, 275 (21 Nov. 1892), 1.

that it did not drag on for ten years. The author wrote the novel in 1870 and had to wait twenty years to find a publisher willing to publish such nonsense – the [Polish] National Alliance.²⁷

II AUTHORS AND GENRES

Some newspapers did not even feature the names of the authors of the published novels, while others even included the translators' names alongside those of the author. Works by Polish authors formed a significant majority – among cases where the author could be established – of the novels published in the Polish émigré press in the United States.²⁸ The most frequently published author during the period under discussion here was Józef Ignacy Kraszewski. The immense popularity of his works was undoubtedly not only down to the quality of his literary talent but also the quantity of writing he produced. Summarising Kraszewski's impact as a writer, Zdzisław Leitgeber recognised that his most outstanding achievement was to teach several generations of Poles to read in their native language. Leitgeber found that Kraszewski's classical novels of manners were less impressive than his historical novels. While he in no way matched Sienkiewicz's genius, he paved the way for the future Nobel Prize winner.²⁹

²⁷ *Kurier Polski*, v, 109 (7 May 1892), 2.

²⁸ For the purposes of this article, a list of 500 works published between 1881 and 1918 in the following periodicals was compiled: *Ameryka* (Toledo, 1889–1918), *Dziennik Chicagoski* (Chicago, 1890–1918), *Dziennik Narodowy* (Chicago, 1898–1918), *Dziennik Polski* (Chicago, 1895–6), *Echo* (Buffalo, 1889–1903), *Gazeta Chicagowska* (Chicago, 1884–5), *Gazeta Polska* (New York, 1893–5), *Głos Polek* (Chicago, 1902, 1910–16), *Jedność* (Philadelphia, 1895–8), *Kurier* (Toledo, 1890–4), *Kurier Nowojorski i Brooklyński* (New York, 1890–8), *Kurier Polski* (Milwaukee, 1888–1918), *Lud* (Buffalo–Chicago, 1896–1905), *Naród Polski* (Chicago, 1897–1918), *Niedziela* (Toledo, 1911–14), *Nowe Życie* (Chicago, 1890–8), *Obywatel* (New York, 1895–6), *Orędownik* (Trenton, 1901–3), *Orzeł Biały* (New York, 1892), *Praca* (Milwaukee, 1893), *Prawda* (Detroit–Bay City, 1887–1913), *Reforma* (Buffalo–Chicago, 1894–1901), *Reforma* (Chicago, 1891–2), *Słowo* (Milwaukee, 1893–5), *Sztandar* (Chicago, 1894–1902), *Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy* (Chicago, 1884–1912), *Wiarus* (Winona, 1886–1918), and *Zgoda* (Chicago, 1881–1918). Given that many émigré publications have not survived to this day or are available in incomplete collections, this list is for orientation purposes only.

²⁹ Zdzisław Leitgeber, 'Najnowszy powieściopisarze polscy 1863–1910. Józef Ignacy Kraszewski', *Zgoda*, xxx, 3 (20 March 1911), (men's edition), 18–19.

Indeed, Henryk Sienkiewicz, the second-most popular novelist published in the émigré press, was written about in flowery language. There was great interest in any news relating to his life, travels and works, as well as in indications of his popularity among non-Poles, with his translators even becoming the subject of titbits.³⁰ In 1897, both *Kurier Polski* and then *Sztandar*, described Sienkiewicz as the most famous living Polish writer.³¹ The articles depicting Sienkiewicz's fame resound with the hope that interest in literature will translate into support for the Polish cause worldwide and perhaps even improve the chances of restoring independence. The high regard in which Sienkiewicz was held among émigrés in the US was evident, for example, in events that took place during the convention of District I of the Polish Falcons of America in 1907 in Trenton, NJ. Representatives of the movement demanded the removal of activists representing South Brooklyn for writing an 'immoral' letter that defamed the author of *The Knights of the Cross* and *Quo Vadis*. The accused appealed to the Complaints Commission, which determined that they could be readmitted to the organisation if they were to remove a certain comrade Kozłowski from their ranks, who was believed to have been the culprit behind the controversial text.³²

Other male authors who were often serialised included Bolesław Prus, Karol Miarka, Walery and Władysław Łoziński, Zygmunt Miłkowski (who more commonly published under then pen-name Teodor Tomasz Jeż) and Adolf Dygasiński. Texts by female Polish authors were few and far between, with Maria Rodziewiczówna, Emma Puffke (née Kurowska), and Eliza Orzeszkowa appearing most often.

The same surnames were regularly featured in recommended reading lists that were occasionally put together by journalists and in the catalogues of émigré libraries. In 1891, *Reforma* published an inventory of the holdings of the Polish collections of the Chicago Public Library. Novels outnumbered other types of publications (520 works), with books by Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (46 titles) most numerous among them. Besides him, there were numerous works by Jan

³⁰ 'Tłumacz Sienkiewicza', *Sztandar*, v, 23 (10 June 1897), 1 (reprinted after *Kurier Polski*).

³¹ *Ibid.*, v, 22, 1897/8 (3 June 1897), 1.

³² *Zgoda*, xxvii, 4 (23 Jan. 1908), (men's edition), 5.

Zacharyasiewicz (26), Zygmunt Miłkowski (14), Zygmunt Kaczkowski (12), and Adam Bełcikowski (10), while Paulina Wilkońska, with fourteen, had the highest number of books among female authors. The author who compiled the list noted that the younger generation of writers was represented by Henryk Sienkiewicz, Michał Bałucki, Kazimierz Chłędowski, Hajota (a pen-name used by Helena Janina Pajzderska), Marian Gawalewicz, Bolesław Prus, the Łoziński brothers, Edward Lubowski, Marennowa (Waleria Marrené), Zofia Mellerowa and Walery Przyborowski. The prevalence of older works was explained by the library collections being put together some time ago.³³ In 1911, *Dziennik Chicagoski* listed the names of authors recommended for young readers, mentioning: Feliks Bernatowicz, Henryk Rzewuski, Józef I. Kraszewski, Józef Korzeniowski, Józef Dzierzkowski, Jan Zacharyasiewicz, Maria Rodziewiczówna, Bolesław Prus and, with some minor caveats, Henryk Sienkiewicz. The compiler of this list recognised that while it lacked contemporary writers and the abovementioned authors' books were not very popular at libraries, the selection was the most suitable in educational terms.³⁴

The names mentioned in the previous paragraph rarely appear alongside each other in today's literary history textbooks. Polish émigré periodicals during the period discussed here featured authors from various literary epochs with little concern for chronology. It was common for the same periodical to publish works that form part of today's contemporary school curriculum alongside pieces that have not stood the test of time and are, at best, familiar only to specialists. The criteria determining whether something would appear in the novel section were certainly not very strict. It is worth remembering that the mission statements of the majority of editorial boards made reference to preventing the Polish population from losing its sense of national belonging and to upholding traditional values. Thus older texts were ideally suited to this aim. According to M.F. Jacobson, the particular selection of works for publication that emerged was a result of the structure of Polish émigré society in the United States. For example, a large proportion of Jews who emigrated to the United States were members of the intelligentsia, which meant that a particular style of literature and set of key themes soon emerged. Most Polish

³³ *Reforma*, i, 13 (Chicago, 24 Oct. 1891/92), 3.

³⁴ *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xxii, 21 (26 Jan. 1911), 4.

migrants, however, were of rural origin, meaning that classical texts in the Romantic tradition prevailed.³⁵

One consequence of selecting such texts was that the émigré publications in the US were far behind their European counterparts when it came to keeping up with the latest literary trends. For example, in 1901, the Chicago-based *Dzień Świąty* published the novel *Klara czyli zwycięstwo cnoty* [Clara, or the Victory of Virtue] by Father Christoph Schmidt, who died in 1854, with Janusz Dunin highlighting that this was one of the most widespread examples of street literature [*literatura kramarska*] in Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century.³⁶ In turn, the novels of Józef Korzeniowski (1797–1863) were published in *Kurier Polski* between 1896 and 1898, and in the women's edition of *Zgoda* in 1907. Daniel Kiper has noted that between 1881 and 1907, it was texts written in the Romantic, rather than Positivist, spirit that prevailed in *Zgoda*. However, he also points out that this periodical was keen to publish Positivist novellas by authors largely unknown today.³⁷ The dearth of contemporary authors was evident even in the most ambitious periodicals published by Polish émigrés in the USA. According to Danuta Pytlak, subjects relating to Poland and patriotism in the Positivist spirit dominated, for example, in the Chicago-based *Ogniwo* (which was published by Helena Staś between 1909 and 1911), even as other literary tendencies prevailed in the partitioned Polish lands.³⁸ It should also be noted that the large majority of periodicals discussed here did not target elite audiences; thus, the apparent anachronism of the novels published there was not necessarily a significant failing. This was also why the periodicals rarely featured literary criticism or discussions of the texts published in Polish of the common kind in the press coming out of Cracow or Warsaw. The general news focus of most of the US-based periodicals meant that they rarely included reviews or in-depth analyses of authors' writing style and the motifs featured in work, but instead tended to inform readers of publications they might find useful, such as dictionaries or songbooks. Daniel Kiper has similarly assessed the content of *Zgoda*, arguing that its editors made little effort to shape readers' tastes

³⁵ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, 95, 112.

³⁶ Dunin, *Papierowy bandyta*, 115 f.

³⁷ Kiper, "Zgoda" i spór, 145, 148.

³⁸ Pytlak, 'The Link: Polish Positivist Influences', 100 f.

when it came to novels. The periodical did not follow literary trends and fashions around the world, nor did it have an extensive literary criticism section. The publication of longer works was treated as something that supplemented educational and patriotic endeavours.³⁹

According to Karen Majewski, the literary efforts of Polish émigrés in the US are indicative of attempts to create a new, Polish-American identity.⁴⁰ However, the vast majority of works published in the press before 1918 were written by authors living in Europe. If a periodical did decide to print a piece by an émigré writer, then it was usually by a publisher, editor or other regular collaborators involved with a given publication, as was the case with Alfons Chrostowski, Czesław Łukasziewicz and Stanisław Osada. Female émigré writers faced even more significant difficulties. The discrimination faced in the world of émigré journalism became the subject of Helena Staś' 1910 novel *Na ludzkim targu* [In the Human Market].⁴¹

Given the conditions outlined above, texts discussing the lives of Polish émigrés were not common.⁴² This does not mean, though, that there was little interest in such works. *Sztandar*, for example, noted that the Warsaw-based *Ateneum* would be publishing Zygmunt Słupski's novel *W raj* [In Paradise], which described the lives of Poles in the USA.⁴³ By contrast, the thriller *Król morderców* [King of Murderers], written by the émigré journalist Stanisław Dangel-Langowski and published in *Ameryka* in 1895, was set in the Wola district of Warsaw.⁴⁴ The novel did not make a positive impression on a reviewer writing for the Toledo-based *Kurier*, who noted:

A star is born in the world of Polish writing – and, God willing, may it burn out as soon as possible. Dangel-Langowski, alias Sawicki among many aliases, has written the novel *Król morderców* for *Ameryka*. From the very outset, it is easy to imagine what tasty morsel he has prepared for our people. The opening sees the author introducing us to a gang of bandits,

³⁹ Kiper, "Zgoda" i spór, 143 f.

⁴⁰ Majewski, *Traitors & True Poles*, 8.

⁴¹ Danuta Romaniuk, 'Dream or Reality? Polish American Serial Fiction during the Cultural Transition, 1900–1939', in Patricia Okker (ed.), *Transnationalism and American Serial Fiction* (New York–London, 2012), 180 (fn. 4).

⁴² D. Kiper has also produced similar findings. See Kiper, "Zgoda" i spór, 162 f.

⁴³ *Sztandar*, vi, 10 (10 March 1898), 2.

⁴⁴ *Ameryka*, ix, 29 (13 July 1895), 5.

whose ringleader he makes the hero [!] of the novel. This comes as no surprise. Every author writes about what he knows best.⁴⁵

An exception was the adverts and information that appeared in *Zgoda* regarding the life and work of Jan Nepomucen Rayski, who was its Paris-based correspondent. Perhaps the editors were motivated by the author's role in the 1863 uprising, thus his involvement with the periodical earned it some prestige. *Zgoda* used Rayski's oration at the funeral of the tribunal chairman Laurens Desassarts to heap praise on the author, while also providing information about his works published in *Zgoda*:

We do not believe that we are committing an indiscretion by taking this opportunity to inform our readers that immediately following the conclusion of the current novel being serialised in the column, we will start publishing Mr Rayski's novel *Krwawa Zgoda* [Bloody Agreement], which was written specially for the Alliance's periodical. It will be a folk tale, a patriotic one, which aims to prove to the Polish people that they owe their emancipation neither to Prussians nor Muscovites, but to their compatriots.⁴⁶

There were relatively few stories set in US-American realities. One such example was the novel *Marjorie* by Joanna Gould and translated by Zofia Hartingh, which appeared in *Kurier Polski* in 1893. This novel tells the story of the eponymous orphan whose fate became entangled with the Civil War.⁴⁷ Daniel Kiper also stresses that general history, including the history of the United States, appeared very rarely, whereas the Polish past enjoyed great popularity.⁴⁸

Works in English, French and German were most commonly translated into Polish, with books in other languages, including Russian, rare. This particular selection of languages could be ascribed most probably to the availability of works. Serialised contemporary international novels were often considered to be of inferior quality. One *Dziennik Chicagoski* journalist noted as part of his discussion of cinema and the mechanisation of life that "the novel has been industrialised: what fills columns abroad are mass-produced products that have

⁴⁵ *Kurier*, v, 28 (11 July 1895), 4.

⁴⁶ *Zgoda*, iv, 52, 1885/86 (10 March 1886), 3; 'Do Czytelników', *Zgoda*, vi, 12 (23 March 1887), 7. On the popularity of J.N. Rayski see also: Kiper, "Zgoda" i spór, 162.

⁴⁷ *Kurier Polski*, vi, 25 (30 Jan. 1893), 3.

⁴⁸ Kiper, "Zgoda" i spór, 152 f.

nothing to do with creativity and art”.⁴⁹ Perhaps another reason for the limited interest in non-Polish-language writing was that including a work by an author whose background was deemed unsuitable could result in attacks by competing publications. This situation could also result in some fairly comical mistakes. The Chicago-based daily *Telegraf* responded to accusations by *Wiara i Ojczyzna* by outlining the background of one of the authors it had published:

The novel is by the world-famous Hungarian novelist Jokay [Mór Jókai]. The author of the *Przegląd* [Review] column declared Jokay a Jew and his novel tendentiously immoral. Neither is true. Jokay is not a Jew and never has been; the author could just as brazenly lie and state that Kościuszko was a mason and Copernicus an anarchist...

However, following this correction, *Telegraf* published an equally untrue theory regarding the origins of another author published by the competition:

While we do not like throwing stones in a glass house!... we must inform the esteemed *Przegląd* writer that Jul[es] Verne, author of a novel currently being published in *Dzien Chicagoski* and begun under the editorship of Father Domagalski, is a Jew and a Polish Jew at that. Verne's real name is Joel Olszowicz and he comes from the Płock region, in the Kingdom [of Poland], which he left as a child and emigrated to France, where under his adopted surname, he became a famous writer.⁵⁰

In turn, during the conflict between the editorial offices of the Chicago-based periodicals *Dziennik Polski* and *Zgoda*, the former levelled the accusation at its competitor that Łuskina, author of a novel published in the latter, “might be an outstanding writer [...] but he was not familiar with the spirit of the Polish nation, he did not trace exactly the currents that are flowing through our society [...], because he was not a Pole but a Muscovite, [from] a nation whose soul has always glorified physical force”.⁵¹ In response, *Zgoda* pointed out that the writer's widow, a popular Polish painter and journalist, lived in Cracow.⁵²

⁴⁹ ‘Teatr mechaniczny’, *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xx, 94 (22 April 1909), 6.

⁵⁰ ‘W obronie własnej’, *Telegraf*, i, 8 (9 June 1892), 2.

⁵¹ *Dziennik Polski*, ii, 122 (23 May 1896), 2.

⁵² *Zgoda*, xv, 22 (28 May 1896), 1. Włodzimierz Łuskina (1849–94), a Polish painter and engineer. Student of Jan Matejko who also studied at the Cracow School

It should also be stressed that the larger periodicals sought to publish both Polish and international works in later years. From mid-1904, there were attempts in *Dziennik Chicagoski* to print two novels in parallel, one Polish and one in translation. *Naród Polski* adopted a similar strategy in selecting works.

It was rare to find any details regarding how novels were translated and prepared for print. Before beginning serialisation of Jules Verne's *Le Testament d'un excentrique* (published in Polish as *Testament milionera chicagoskiego* – literally 'The Will of a Chicago Millionaire', and in English as *The Will of an Eccentric*), the editors of *Dziennik Chicagoski* decided to explain to readers why they had commissioned a new translation rather than use the existing Polish version by Michalina Daniszewska. Both Verne's original and the translation that had been published in the Warsaw-based weekly *Wieczory Rodzinne* in 1900, were said to contain numerous, albeit minor, factual errors regarding the city of Chicago. These were, for example, mistakes regarding the names of streets and neighbourhoods (for example, Smith Side instead of South Side), while the text also mentioned a clock on the tower of the city hall that in reality did not exist. While such details were inconsequential for European readers, they would be glaring errors for residents of the city where the story was set. *Dziennik Chicagoski*, therefore, decided to base the translation on the English-language version that had appeared in *Hearst's Chicago American*, where such mistakes had been corrected. The translator working on the new Polish version was also said to be familiar with US-American realities.⁵³

The majority of the serialised novels discussed here were not commissioned (or translated) for a particular publication but had appeared earlier in periodicals based in the partitioned Polish lands or in series published there. The US-based periodicals often featured older works, written by deceased authors, which was the simplest and cheapest solution. According to K. Majewski, a side-effect of this phenomenon was that it hindered émigré authors from making their debuts because

of Fine Arts. In 1876, he married Wiktoria Grek, with whom he had a daughter. He collected material for the novel *Wielki rok* during a visit to France, with his conversations with officers resulting in a spy scandal that saw him arrested in 1892. See Michał Niezabitowski, 'Włodzimierz Łuskina – zapomniany malarz krakowski', *Krzysztofor*, xvi (1989), 21–5.

⁵³ 'Testament Milionera', *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xi, 183 (6 Aug. 1900), 4.

they would expect to receive royalties and were thus less profitable for publishers than reprints.⁵⁴ This does not mean, though, that this practice was generally accepted among émigré communities. Discussions regarding the damage done by plagiarism continued throughout the period discussed here. For example, in 1887, *Polak w Ameryce* accused the newly-founded Buffalo-based illustrated weekly *Dzwon* of reprinting its texts and images from a Warsaw-based publication.⁵⁵ *Zgoda* defended the new periodical, declaring that

the publication of Kraszewski's best work *Stara Baśń* [An Ancient Tale], like the translation of Polish writers' works into English, shows that the editor is indeed taking excerpts from Polish periodicals, but this does not mean *Dzwon* commits plagiarism of any European publication – indeed, the idea of familiarising Americans with works by our writers is a beautiful one, and it should inspire admiration, encouraging others to recommend the periodical.⁵⁶

The journalists at *Zgoda* were less optimistic about *Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy*, another periodical with a literary focus. In 1896, they compared Władysław Dyniewicz's activities in the book world to piracy, and his cheap reprints meant, they claimed, that neither honest book-sellers nor authors themselves could earn a living.⁵⁷ Elsewhere they wrote that the publishing novels without the permission of authors who were still alive was proof of the moral failings of certain Polish publishers.⁵⁸ *Kurier Polski w Paryżu*, based in Paris, also expressed a highly critical opinion of *Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy*, which was then reprinted in the Chicago-based *Zgoda*:

There are no original works whatsoever in *Tygodnik*, there are only reprints of novels that have been well-known in Poland for ages. The publisher has already collected the proceeds from over one thousand subscriptions and more are forthcoming. This is thus rather profitable speculation, particularly given that the publisher does not pay a penny for the novels featured in the periodical.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Majewski, *Traitors & True Poles*, 43.

⁵⁵ 'Nasza prasa', *Polak w Ameryce*, i, 16, 1887/88 (24 May 1887), 2.

⁵⁶ 'Nasza prasa', *Zgoda*, vi, 22 (1 June 1887), 4.

⁵⁷ 'Dom Związkowy a p. Dyniewicz', *Zgoda*, xv, 5 (30 Jan. 1896), 1.

⁵⁸ Grzymała [pseud.], 'O moralności w ogóle a etyce dziennikarskiej w szczególe', *Zgoda*, xv, 16 (16 April 1896), 4.

⁵⁹ *Kurier Polski w Paryżu*, iv, 23 (1 Dec. 1884), 8; *Zgoda*, iii, 42, 1884/85 (24 Dec. 1884), 2.

The publisher of *Polak w Ameryce* was described in similar terms.⁶⁰ The accusation that Władysław Dyniewicz made a living from publishing others' novels was not without merit. Analysis of his output as a publisher shows that the majority of works he issued were literary pieces.⁶¹

In turn, *Zgoda* responded tetchily to the accusations of *Dziennik Chicagoski* that it published articles from other periodicals without crediting them. It wondered whether Jules Verne had permitted *Dziennik Chicagoski* to publish his works.⁶² In response to a reader's letter, *Zgoda* explained that it features "only original novels – nothing reprinted, nothing by an unknown author, no incomplete works. We do not return manuscripts".⁶³ Meanwhile, Alfons Chrostowski, writing from New York for *Nowe Życie* complained that his novel *Hurkowa Katem*, written for *Gazeta Polska* using the pen-name Józefat Wieczorek, had been reprinted in *Kurier Nowojorski i Brooklyński* without authorisation. This was particularly troubling, he stated, given the reputation of the periodical: "Since *Kurier* is an anti-progressive publication that promotes religious fanaticism and intolerance, I hereby protest the illegal appropriation of my work. I do not want to be associated in any way with a periodical that promotes principles similar to those of *Kurier*".⁶⁴

In order to counteract such practices, publications later included the remark "reprinting prohibited". This was the case, for example, with Alfons Chrostowski's novel *Niewolnik polski* [The Polish Slave] that appeared in the Pittsburgh-based *Jutrzenka* in 1894. Over time, it became common practice to add a note stating that a periodical had commissioned a given work. In 1904, the Polish version of Jules Verne's *Captain Antifer – Przedziwne przygody majstra Antifera* – featured a note stating that the translation was produced exclusively for *Dziennik Chicagoski*, while in 1912 the serialisation of Jan Ogiński-Kontrymowicz's *W promieniach sławy* [In a Blaze of Glory] bore the remark "exclusively for this periodical". Presumably, though, such notes had a limited impact.

According to Daniel Kiper, *Zgoda* was pressured by resolutions passed by the Polish National Alliance to restrict reprints of works

⁶⁰ *Polak w Ameryce*, ix, 257 (10 Feb. 1896), 4.

⁶¹ J. Albin and I. Marciniak, 'Chicagoski Tygodnik Powieściowo-Naukowy', 42, 114 ff.

⁶² *Zgoda*, xi, 14 (6 April 1892), 1.

⁶³ *Zgoda*, i, 39 (16 Aug. 1881), 4.

⁶⁴ *Nowe Życie*, iii, 22 (28 May 1892), 4.

without the knowledge and permission of the author. These measures meant that the periodical lost readers to less scrupulous competitors.⁶⁵ Efforts to increase the quality and legality of novels serialised in periodicals were accompanied by more significant support for authors and translators. The impoverished widow of the recently deceased W. Łuskina, author of the novel *Wielki Rok* [Great Year] that was published in *Zgoda* in 1896, received \$25 for the serialisation, while she was also promised a percentage of the income from a planned book version.⁶⁶ In a report by the Polish National Alliance from 1900, other similar measures were mentioned, meaning that the help promised previously was not simply a one-off.⁶⁷

The accusations levelled at the émigré press that it tended to publish older works did not apply in the case of Henryk Sienkiewicz, whose huge popularity meant that efforts were made to publish his texts as soon as possible. In 1897, *Kurier Nowojorski* boasted that it was serialising *The Knights of the Cross*, which appeared simultaneously in the Warsaw-based *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* and Poznań's *Dziennik Poznański*.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, the Chicago-based *Ludzie* noted that it had to pause the serialisation of Sienkiewicz's *Na polu chwały* [On the Field of Glory], as it was waiting for further instalments to arrive from Europe.⁶⁹ According to an article in *Zgoda*, translated from the German periodical *Aus fremden Zungen*, it was necessary to publish Sienkiewicz quickly because the author was always finding fault with his own work and had developed a tendency to delay the printing of manuscripts in order to incorporate corrections.⁷⁰

The most common literary genre that appeared in the periodicals discussed here were historical novels. This resulted from both the educational value attributed to it and the popularity that this form enjoyed among readers. In 1897, *Sztandar* recommended:

Read, Young Alliance Members, read the works of our national writers passionately, but also read carefully and consciously, even be prepared to read one work several times in order to digest its principles and put

⁶⁵ Kiper, "Zgoda" i spór, 157.

⁶⁶ *Zgoda*, xv, 18 (30 April 1896), 1.

⁶⁷ *Zgoda*, xix, 2 (11 Jan. 1900), 4.

⁶⁸ *Kurier Nowojorski*, viii, 32 (21 Aug. 1897), 2.

⁶⁹ *Lud*, viii, 35 (16 Sept. 1904), 3.

⁷⁰ 'O Henryku Sienkiewiczzu', *Zgoda*, xxiii, 42 (20 Oct. 1904), (women's edition), 1.

them into practice. In this respect, we recommend the works of our most prodigious novelist J.I. Kraszewski, and, in particular, his historical novels, first and foremost among them *Resurrecturi*.⁷¹

In 1915, one reader of the women's periodical *Głos Polek* demanded the serialisation of a historical novel.⁷² In 1907, the women's edition of *Zgoda* featured a guidebook for readers that largely consisted of praise for the works of Sienkiewicz. The author of this supplement argued that although Sienkiewicz's historical novels offered lessons in patriotism, only his social romance pieces offered insight into the so-called 'soul of the nation'.⁷³

Thrillers and crime novels might have appeared less frequently in émigré periodicals than historical novels and morality tales, but they certainly provoked more emotional responses among critics and readers. At the same time, they were not always taken seriously as works of literature. *Kurier Nowojorski i Brooklyński* offered a humorous warning to its readers, claiming that a promising young writer was preparing a six-volume novel, *Tajemnice polonii nowojorskiej* [Secrets of the New York Polish Diaspora], that featured three murders and four acts of seduction per volume.⁷⁴ But several years later, the periodical published A. Chrostowski's similarly-titled novel *Tajemnice Polaków w Nowym Yorku i okolicy* [The Secrets of Poles in New York and its Environs]. The editors had to defend the reputation of the serialised novel in the face of criticism from rival publications:

The remarks of Mr [Antoni Alfred] Paryski in a recent issue of the Toledo-based *Ameryka* regarding Mr Chrostowski's novel are as mendacious as they are malicious. This is so because Mr Paryski had the novel in his hands, read it and offered Mr Ch. \$25 cash and twenty copies of the book once it appeared. This novel is not just a complete work but also one of the author's best pieces.⁷⁵

In 1906, in an appeal to female readers to be judicious in selecting their reading material, *Zgoda* stated that low-quality English-language periodicals and their Polish equivalents

⁷¹ *Sztandar*, iv, 1, 1896/97 (7 Jan. 1897), 1.

⁷² *Głos Polek*, vi, 42 (21 Oct. 1915), 4.

⁷³ 'Co i jak czytać?', *Zgoda*, xxvi, 12 (21 March 1907), (women's edition), 1.

⁷⁴ *Kurier Nowojorski i Brooklyński*, i, 18, 1890/91 (20 Dec. 1890), 8.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, viii, 13 (3 April 1897), 4.

feature sensational romances that bear no resemblance to reality whatsoever and instead merely serve to poison readers' nerves, arousing malevolent instincts in them. Reading such jeremiads kills the soul, warps words and provokes an urge to imitate the imaginary knights and heroines of such scandalous texts. Such periodicals do not reckon with readers but stupefy and ruin them.⁷⁶

In his reflections on the subject of madness, which he wrote having visited a psychiatric institution in Milan, Włodzimierz Zagórski noted that owing to an urge to imitate, some people should avoid reading sensationalist novels and thrillers.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the Cleveland-based *Wiadomości Codzienne* warned when launching the serialisation of a new work that they had initially planned to publish a piece called *Parasol św. Piotra* [St Peter's Umbrella], but it was ultimately decided that the Polish people required different subject matter, something "that would speak more to the heart and reason, that would ennoble its pride and draw attention to its relations to the Fatherland, the homeland, the Motherland and its right to its native soil".⁷⁸ A novel that was said to meet these criteria was the anonymous work *Król chłopków. Powieść historyczna z czasów Kazimierza Wielkiego* [The King of the Peasants: A Historical Novel From the Times of Casimir III the Great].⁷⁹

Despite the existence of such opinions, some émigré periodicals nevertheless featured thrillers and crime novels. The works of Arthur Conan Doyle appeared in *Dziennik Chicagoski* and *Naród Polski*. Their popularity with readers is evident in the fact that in 1904 the former mentioned the great interest in *Study in Scarlet*, published in Polish as *Szkarłatna sprawa* in 1893.⁸⁰

A book against which all of the above accusations of immorality and sensationalism were levelled was the translation of George Füllborn's *Barbara Ubryk die unglückliche Nonne von Krakau* (published in Polish as *Barbara Ubryk czyli tajemnice klasztoru karmelitów w Krakowie* – Barbara Ubryk, or: The Secrets of the Carmelite Convent in Cracow). This story

⁷⁶ 'Czytajcie dobre pisma i książki', *Zgoda*, xxv, 7 (15 Feb. 1906), (women's edition), 1.

⁷⁷ *Ameryka*, iii, 15 (28 Dec. 1889), 2.

⁷⁸ *Wiadomości Codzienne*, i, 54 (20 Dec. 1916), 3.

⁷⁹ In fact, this was a reprint of Kazimierz Gliński's 1914 book: *Mąż krwawy. Powieść historyczna z czasów Kazimierza Wielkiego*.

⁸⁰ 'Nasze nowe powieści', *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xv, 201 (26 Aug. 1904), 2.

was inspired by a scandal that took place in 1869 in Cracow when it was revealed that one of the city's convents was holding a mentally ill nun captive.⁸¹ Some researchers consider this to be the novel that inspired the trend for serialisation in the partitioned Polish lands.⁸² Around the world, the press took an immediate interest in the case of the mad Carmelite nun, often using it as a pretext to criticise Catholicism and the institution of convents.⁸³ Barbara's experience was often used to support claims that there were many more such cases. There were fictionalised accounts of this story that consciously increased the levels of drama through devices such as making the heroine younger or adding a romantic element. The first edition of Füllborn's book (published under the pen-name Dr Rode) was published by Jan Breslauer in Warsaw the same year as the scandal came to light. It first appeared in the Polish émigré press in the US in 1898 in the Chicago-based *Nowe Życie*. This serialisation itself caused a scandal and after some time, arrest warrants were issued for the periodical's editor Stanisław Osada, its publishers Jan Niemczewski and his wife J.R. Niemczewska, and the typesetter Dziegielewski. Charges were pressed for violating postal legislation that forbade the distribution of immoral material by mail.⁸⁴ Niemczewski was seriously ill and thus did not face trial, while his wife, who was sentenced to thirty days' prison and fined one dollar, was pardoned so that she could care for her spouse.⁸⁵

The controversy surrounding the supposedly immoral novel was ultimately, alongside the publishers' indisposition, a key factor in the collapse of *Nowe Życie*. Stanisław Osada continued to publish further instalments of the novel in the Buffalo-based *Reforma*. He justified his behaviour by stating that he now omitted the most controversial

⁸¹ Rene Kollar, *A Foreign and Wicked Institution? The Campaign against Convents in Victorian England* (Eugene, 2011), 59–87.

⁸² Anna Gemra, "Kwiaty zła". *O powieści zeszytowej XIX i XX w.* (Wrocław, 1998), 5; Natalia Budzyńska, *Ja nie mam duszy. Sprawa Barbary Ubryk, uwięzionej zakonnicy, której historię żyła cała Polska* (Kraków, 2020), 235. The author incorrectly states that it was written by Adolf Rode.

⁸³ In 1869, a brochure published by Charles Wesley Alexander (1837–1927) appeared in Philadelphia under the title: *The Convent Horror or, the True Narrative of Barbara Ubryk, a Sister of the Carmelite Convent at Cracow*.

⁸⁴ *Dziennik Chicagoski*, ix, 125 (1 June 1898), 4; *Wiarius*, xiii, 22 (9 June 1898), 1.

⁸⁵ *Kurier Polski*, xii, 128 (30 May 1899), 1; *Wiarius*, xiv, 23 (8 June 1899), 1.

fragments and had not been responsible for everything that had appeared in *Nowe Życie*. He also demonstrated that the novel had been published without difficulties in Europe. The judge hearing the case, Grosscup, emphasised that the book's overall message was nevertheless harmful, and the USA maintained different standards to the Old Continent.⁸⁶ This, however, did not mean that US-American readers were unable to acquaint themselves with the controversial work. A four-volume edition of *Barbara Ubryk* was still being advertised in the weekly *Ameryka* in 1900. The promotional material stated: "The book was printed in Germany, but the Jesuits bought the entire print run and burned it. Currently, only five copies of the old edition are available and it is hard to come by at any price".⁸⁷

Some journalists saw US press legislation outlawing the distribution of immoral content by post as a more favourable equivalent of European censorship. This argument was presented in *Zgoda* in 1898, which emphasised that such a system of barring such content from the marketplace was more effective than those in place in Germany or Russia.⁸⁸ *Dziennik Chicagowski* noted in 1908, however, that "it is possible to deceive the authorities here for some time by wrapping a package in paper and twine, but only for as long as it takes for one of the more conscientious Polish citizens to inform the postal authorities about a particular weekly".⁸⁹ The editors of Polish periodicals in the USA were accused of publishing unsuitable material on a fairly regular basis. For example, A. Wielowiejski of the Cleveland-based *Jutrzenka* was arrested for this reason in 1896.⁹⁰

In some cases, generally acclaimed works also fell afoul of postal regulations. Lev Tolstoy's novella *The Kreutzer Sonata* was to have pride of place in the women's edition of *Zgoda* in 1909, with the periodical having already primed readers in previous issues by publishing information on the writer's life and works in articles such as 'Tolstoj jako filozof' [Tolstoy as a Philosopher] and 'Kobieta w dziełach

⁸⁶ *Dziennik Chicagowski*, ix, 282 (5 Dec. 1898), 4, and 286 (10 Dec.), 8; *Sztandar*, vi, 49 (8 Dec. 1898), 1.

⁸⁷ See, for example: *Ameryka*, xiv, 5 (3 Feb. 1900), 3; *Reforma*, viii, 5 (3 Feb. 1900), 4.

⁸⁸ 'Zła prasa', *Zgoda*, xvii, 12 (24 March 1898), 1.

⁸⁹ 'Notatki reportera', *Dziennik Chicagowski*, xix, 119 (20 May 1908), 8.

⁹⁰ *Kurier Polski*, ix, 238 (6 Oct. 1896), 2.

Tolstoja' [Women in Tolstoy's Writings].⁹¹ The periodical was forced to suspend serialisation, however, after two instalments, with the editors explaining:

There are strange laws in America. Everyone is free to do what they want, you can be whatever kind of person you please, worse than an animal even, yet it is forbidden to speak or write about such behaviour, it is impossible to point out wrongdoing and guide the masses onto a better path. We felt compelled to make these remarks as we have to suspend publication of Tolstoy's novel because publishing such works in America is not permitted since a novel depicting the realities of married life is said to have negative influence, according to many, on family life.⁹²

The decision to suspend publication must have provoked protests among the female readers as subsequent issues featured letters of complaint.⁹³ The editors offered assurances that the issue would be raised with the Women's Section of the Polish National Alliance. Ultimately, though, the serialisation of Tolstoy's novella was not resumed.

Even less common in émigré newspapers were works with the more unusual subject matter, such as fantasy literature. With the launch of the daily *Dziennik Związkowy*, subscribers received the opening section of the French novel *Le Docteur Oméga* [Polish: *Dr. Omega, czyli Fantastyczne Przygody na Marsie* – Dr Omega, or Fantastic Adventures on Mars] by Arnould Galopin. The advertisement promoting it in *Zgoda* praised the novel, stating:

Everyone will be fascinated by the novel as it describes how to reach Mars, the adventures of travellers, the planet's lands and sea, and the lives and customs of its strange inhabitants, what they eat, and other such wonderful things. Who knows, perhaps science will soon solve the problem of aviation and we will be taking a trip to Mars or the moon, just as we now travel from our homeland to the US to earn a crust.⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Zgoda*, xxviii, 30 (29 July 1909), (women's edition), 2.

⁹² *Zgoda*, 32 (12 Aug. 1909), (women's edition), 2.

⁹³ *Zgoda*, 35 (2 Sept. 1909), (women's edition), 2.

⁹⁴ *Zgoda*, xxvii, 33 (13 Aug. 1908), (men's edition), 2.

III DIME NOVELS

Serialised novels appearing in periodicals that were subject to quality control by the editors of largely conservative publications were generally considered suitable reading material, even if it did not always constitute the most ambitious literature. They were juxtaposed with the dime novels that contemporary moralisers considered one of the most socially harmful phenomena of the age. According to J. Dunin, A.A. Paryski in Toledo, Ohio, and W. Dyniewicz in Chicago specialised in publishing pulp fiction.⁹⁵ Such publications had an equally poor reputation in Europe. Anna Gemra argued that the commonplace practices of plagiarism, omitting information about authors or using pseudonyms, were inevitable because such works were written (or more often translated) at the behest of publishers.⁹⁶ Hence *Dziennik Chicagowski*, which often published Sherlock Holmes stories, stated that what differentiated such “artistic crime novels” from pulp fiction was that the former could educate decent detectives while the latter only offered instructions on how to become a criminal, murderer or thief.⁹⁷

In 1909, *Zgoda* also featured an article on the detrimental impact of lousy literature, including novels about “European bandits, American cowboys or affairs and scandals in Cracow families”. Such books were said to be particularly harmful to women and children. Were young boys to read such stories, they would supposedly end up committing the kinds of crimes that the protagonists of dime novels excelled in. The influence of such literature was apparently evident in the actions of those involved in the lynchings that had become a regular occurrence in the US. In the case of women, such novels would apparently lead to them abandoning their husbands and children, resulting in divorce and scandals. The leading authors in this genre were from France, Germany and the United States. Those from the US, in particular, were seen as mainly profit-hungry and unconcerned by the consequences of their actions. The anonymous author of the *Zgoda* article assured readers that Polish novelists dabbling in such works were few and far between while mentioning some of the most famous works in

⁹⁵ Dunin, *Papierowy bandyta*, 265 f.

⁹⁶ Gemra, “Kwiaty zła”, 30.

⁹⁷ ‘Śladem zbrodniarzy’, *Dziennik Chicagowski*, xviii, 237 (9 Oct. 1907), 6.

this genre: *Blada hrabina* [The Pale Countess], and *Okropności Syberji czyli Tajemnica dworu cesarskiego rosyjskiego* [The Horrors of Siberia, or: The Secret of the Court of the Russian Tsar].⁹⁸

In 1892, *Ameryka* issued a warning against The Anglo-Polish Publication Co., which had supposedly been founded by Jews. The company was said to publish scandalous romance literature similar to that which appeared in the US-American Dime Libraries to “corrupt our young generation...”.⁹⁹ A lack of Polish roots was an accusation that was often levelled against one of the company’s owners, Nikodem K. Złotnicki. The editors of *Sztandar* disliked him and often referred to him as Nuchim Korngold de Złotnicki.¹⁰⁰ According to Halina Karnicka, prior to leaving Zamość for the United States in 1890, Złotnicki did in fact use the surname Korngold, which he then changed to avoid doubts over his origins.¹⁰¹ The Chicago-based *Reforma* saw the activities of this enterprise differently and was more than happy to include advertisements for its publications. The periodical even received copies of the first volume of the romance story *Okropności Syberji czyli Tajemnica dworu cesarskiego rosyjskiego*¹⁰² to distribute to its readers.

Ameryka reported on another case relating to The Anglo-Polish Publication Co. in 1904:

Some cunning Chicago Jew published the sensationalist novel *Hrabina Żebraczka* [Countess Beggar] in Cleveland and sold it as a serialised novel throughout America via agents. The agents promised wonderful gifts to anyone who bought the whole series and they even collected money for several or several dozen issues in advance from many people. After a few months of this con, the volumes stopped appearing, and the salesmen vanished into thin air...¹⁰³

The abovementioned novel was authored by the German Paul Walter, who used the pen name Guido von Fels, and came from Glatz (now Kłodzko in Poland). The majority of its Polish translations,

⁹⁸ ‘Złe książki’, *Zgoda*, xxviii, 46 (18 Nov. 1909), 1.

⁹⁹ *Ameryka*, vi, 17 (27 Feb. 1892), 1.

¹⁰⁰ *Sztandar*, vi, 2 (13 Jan. 1898), 1.

¹⁰¹ Halina Karnicka, ‘Polacy w całym świecie’, *Polacy Zagranicą*, vi, 7 (1935), 13.

¹⁰² *Reforma*. Chicago, i, 30 (27 Feb. 1891), 2; and 32 (12 March 1891), 3.

¹⁰³ *Ameryka-Echo*, xvii, 49 (3 Dec. 1904), 5.

including the earliest from 1901, were published anonymously.¹⁰⁴ In 1908, there were warnings against immoral Jewish agents who supposedly sold serialised novels and distributed “some colourful weekly from Cracow” among youths living in Polish districts of US-American cities.¹⁰⁵

Correspondence from Baltimore published in *Dziennik Chicagoski* in 1905, meanwhile, warned of agents of a German-American business who were attempting to convince Poles to buy poor-quality and badly-translated dime novels. The author of the letter also stressed his compatriots’ moral duty to reject such offers. “If we also consider that this publishing house is run by Germans, our enemies, it is certainly baffling that our people allow German agents into their homes. Germans, the Hun, can go and live off his *Freunde*”.¹⁰⁶ A.A. Paryski in Toledo also attempted to publish serial fiction, and he advertised the start of the publication of a romance thriller titled *Za mogiłą* [Beyond the Grave].¹⁰⁷

IV READERS

Reading novels was believed to be a pastime enjoyed mainly by women.¹⁰⁸ Describing the different kinds of its readership, *Kurier Polski* noted that women were primarily interested in novels and humoresques. These were, it claimed, the first things they turned to when reading periodicals.¹⁰⁹ *Sztandar* published an informative imagined conversation between a husband and wife on the subject of a municipal library’s new acquisitions, with both of them agreeing that women are keener to read fiction while men reach for serious works on national and social movements.¹¹⁰ *Naród Polski* presented

¹⁰⁴ Anna Gemra, ‘Zapomniane bestsellery: powieści zeszytowe Guido von Felsa z Glatz’, in *Śląskie pogranicza kultur*, iii (Wrocław, 2014), 141.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Notatki reportera’, *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xix, 119 (20 May 1908), 8.

¹⁰⁶ *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xvi, 202 (30 Aug. 1905), 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Reforma*, i, 33 (19 March 1891/92), 1.

¹⁰⁸ A. Gemra cites opinions that less educated women were the target audience of serialised novels. After the Second World War, when this form disappeared, this readership then supposedly turned to television series. Cf. Gemra, “*Kwiaty zła*”, 5.

¹⁰⁹ *Kurier Polski*, ix, 194 (15 Aug. 1896), annex, 1.

¹¹⁰ ‘Pogadanka domowa po kolacji’, *Sztandar*, vi, 44 (3 Nov. 1898), 2.

women's interest in reading novels as a sign of the times. The periodical argued that representatives of the fairer sex who were once denied an education now offered proof of their love of the written word. At the same time, it complained that women tended to read superficially and uncritically.¹¹¹ In 1915, *Zgoda* stressed that while it was reprehensible for women to neglect their domestic duties as a result of reading sensationalist novels, which was a symptom of "the shallowness of their tastes and their spiritual laziness", reading suitable books (such as historical novels) in their spare time was a most commendable activity.¹¹² According to this perspective, men also read novels, although in their case, this was not just something they did for pleasure but as an additional part of their activism. A depiction of a family presented in *Zgoda* in 1909 stated that "the father, director and employer in this small state refreshed his mind by reading novels after work".¹¹³ In its women's section, *Naród Polski* included statistics that had supposedly been collected by a famous British literary critic. He was said to have argued that the majority of contemporary novels had plots that attacked the institution of marriage, including depictions of it as something that was anachronistic, while encouraging divorce and free love, mocking the values that marriage represents or presenting it in scandalous terms. What was also interesting, it was claimed, was the fact that women were the ones producing this controversial content.¹¹⁴

The particular sensitivities regarding women's morality that were evident in the 1900s and 1910s resulted from the roles that were imagined for them in émigré society. As Danuta Romaniuk has noted, women were supposed to be guardians of traditional values, caring for the home and raising children according to models that had been imported from the Old World, even if these models were not entirely suited to the new realities across the Atlantic.¹¹⁵

What most disturbed Polish journalists was the influence of books' supposedly unsuitable content on women. Reviewing the first issue of the Cracow-based periodical *Szkoła Postępowa*, a journalist from

¹¹¹ *Naród Polski*, xi, 4 (23 Jan. 1907), 7.

¹¹² 'Czytanie w kółku domowym', *Zgoda*, xxxiv, 35 (2 Sept. 1915), 2.

¹¹³ *Zgoda*, xxviii, 7 (18 Feb. 1909), (women's edition), 1.

¹¹⁴ 'Kobiety o małżeństwie', *Naród Polski*, xi, 31 (31 July 1907), 7.

¹¹⁵ Romaniuk, 'Dream or Reality?', 167–70.

Dziennik Chicagoski emphasised that areligious upbringing and the dissemination of sensationalist scrawls and novels apparently led to “unscrupulousness in business, trade and political circles, and even in state institutions, as well as to crime”. Such phenomena were said to be particularly widespread in Germany.¹¹⁶ In 1911, meanwhile, “the apotheosis of criminality in crime thriller novels” was mentioned alongside alcoholism and human trafficking as one of the greatest threats facing young people and ‘the dark masses’, i.e. groups incapable of independently choosing reading material, in the contemporary age. A supposed upshot of this phenomenon were child gangs imitating their favourite heroes.¹¹⁷

An extensive article about the harmful influence of bad literature on children appeared in *Zgoda* in 1900. The author warned that such books “weaken the national spirit, efface the final traces of faith, extinguish good intentions and pave the way towards all kinds of lawlessness; and ultimately they open the door to suicide”. He also stressed that Poles essentially do not need foreign books because they have their own that describe events from various historical periods that at the same time “inculcate faith and noble sentiments”. An example of such supposedly harmful literature was the *Arabian Nights* [*Baśnie tysiąca i jednej nocy*], in particular the version of them prepared by the French Orientalist Antoine Galland and published as *One Thousand and One Nights* [*Tysiąc nocy i jedna*].¹¹⁸ What is particularly interesting is that the periodical had carried an advert promoting a twelve-volume edition of these tales published by A.A. Paryski’s publishing house in Toledo several years earlier.¹¹⁹

In the abovementioned cases, it was not a case, of course, of forbidding reading but about imposing proper controls over the reading material that young people turned to. The Milwaukee-based *Kurier Polski* reproduced an article from the theological periodical *Przegląd Teologiczny* titled ‘Czytanie książek’ [Reading Books]. It called for those raising children to exercise greater control over what children were reading. The author claimed that it was necessary to forbid

¹¹⁶ ‘Uwagi’, *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xvii, 82 (11 April 1906), 4.

¹¹⁷ *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xxii, 173 (27 July 1911), 4.

¹¹⁸ Czytelnik polski [pseud.], ‘Szkodliwy wpływ złych książek’, *Zgoda*, xix, 15 (12 April 1900), 236.

¹¹⁹ *Zgoda*, xvii, 12 (24 March 1898), 6.

excessive reading, while novels should not constitute the only reading material because young people should be familiarised with more important matters. The article also warned against relying on booksellers' recommendations.¹²⁰ Remarks on bringing up young people published in *Zgoda* in 1909 included the opinion that "[r]eading novels does offer an education in aesthetics, but very careful choices are necessary".¹²¹ Having books at home did not guarantee a suitable education. The article 'Jakie książki powinny znajdować się w domu polskim' [The Books that Should Be in a Polish Home] stressed that thick tomes were often bought for decorative purposes or chosen on a whim. That is why, it argued, in many homes it was possible to find only those novels that booksellers had cunningly positioned in their window displays.¹²²

The numerous reports that appeared in the émigré press on murders and attacks perpetrated by young non-Polish people who had supposedly become debauched after reading bad literature in a way supplemented the theoretical reflections on educating young people. For example, in 1895, *Jedność* presented a sensational report from London about two boys aged 11 and 13 who murdered their mother having read 'a crime novel'.¹²³ The Milwaukee-based *Kurier Polski* mentioned in 1892 the 16-year-old Harry Slater, whose attempt to chloroform a woman at night imitated a Nick Carter novella.¹²⁴ Meanwhile, the article 'Czytanie złych książek' [Reading Bad Books] described the tragic story of the 19-year-old Benjamin Rush of St Louis who came off the rails because of "rapacious romance stories, crime novels and similar novellas which today are not short either authors or readers".¹²⁵ In the same issue, a similar reason was given for the crimes of the 16-year-old Albert Sharrart from Dungeness, WA. He turned to crime "as a result of reading works of so-called crime literature".¹²⁶

In 1898, several newspapers mentioned the 15-year-old Samuel Henderson who murdered the 5-year-old Percy Lockyer, supposedly

¹²⁰ *Kurier Polski*, v, 90 (15 April 1892), 2.

¹²¹ *Zgoda*, xxviii, 28 (15 July 1909), (women's edition), 1.

¹²² *Zgoda*, 22 (3 June 1909), (women's edition), 2.

¹²³ *Jedność*, i, 21: (26 July 1895), 2.

¹²⁴ *Kurier Polski*, v, 197 (20 Aug. 1892), 1.

¹²⁵ *Kurier Polski*, v, 283 (1 Dec. 1892), 1.

¹²⁶ *Kurier Polski*, v, 301 (22 Dec. 1892), 1.

under the influence of sensationalist novels that he had read.¹²⁷ In 1905, a teenager James A. Logan was sentenced to life imprisonment for a similar crime. The 17-year-old had been trouble-free and was getting good grades at high school, but then lousy literature was said to have driven him into a debauched, vagabond life, leading him into ever deeper trouble until he finally stole a revolver and shot dead a certain Delia Tracey during an attempted robbery.¹²⁸ Reporting on such events was not unique to the Polish émigré community in the United States. J. Dunin lists examples of fears being incited in readers in the partitioned Polish lands that pulp fiction had inspired crimes committed there.¹²⁹ Such stories also served to maintain the belief that it was desirable to raise young people in the traditional Polish style. As *Kurier Polski* stressed, “Polish children reading Polish books and periodicals will become demoralised less easily”.¹³⁰

It was also believed that novels could negatively influence young girls, albeit in different ways. *Naród Polski* cited the views of “sensible German feminists” on raising children that showed that becoming engrossed in novels can lead female readers to develop unrealistic expectations regarding men and then make it more difficult for them to find a husband.¹³¹ An example of a girl who was far too dedicated to reading was Cecylia Walewska, the heroine of the novel *Uspokojona* [The Becalmed Woman]. She:

reads the latest [Paul] Bourget novel and enjoys it. She laps up every word. She feels as if she had allowed the maestro to operate on her mind and he reels out thought after thought from it. During the more striking passages, she sinks ever deeper into the sofa, tugging at the pleats of her billowing Japanese dressing gown, and as she reads, she repeats in a whisper entire passages.¹³²

Furthermore, her love of reading inspired her to write her own, unsuitable literature. She was punished while at finishing school for writing a novel, *Tajemnicza rodzina* [The Secret Family], where the central

¹²⁷ *Ameryka*, xii, 4 (22 Jan. 1898), 8; *Dziennik Chicagoski*, ix, 13 (17 Jan. 1898), 1.

¹²⁸ *Dziennik Chicagoski*, xvi, 76 (31 March 1905), 1.

¹²⁹ Dunin, *Papierowy bandyta*, 196.

¹³⁰ *Kurier Polski*, viii, 201 (24 Aug. 1895), 2.

¹³¹ ‘Panny i małżeństwo’, *Naród Polski*, iv, 8 (21 Feb. 1900), 5.

¹³² *Nowe Życie*, iii, 36 (3 Sept. 1892), 5.

protagonist, a priest, had seven children.¹³³ The women's periodical *Głos Polek* also wrote about books producing expectations of men, but without mentioning any negative consequences.¹³⁴

V

CONCLUSIONS

Many studies on the Polish émigré press in the United States of America before the First World War repeat the claim that it tended to be conservative, religious and focused on maintaining national identity. Therefore, it is unsurprising that novels published in émigré periodicals between 1881 and 1918 were marked by similar tendencies. However, it seems that the ideological motives for this were less significant than financial factors. Serialising works by dead authors or those living in Europe who were unable to demand payment for their works were, of course, cheaper and less troublesome. The financial difficulties faced by editorial offices and complaints about subscribers getting behind on their payments were a common theme in the émigré press. It can therefore be assumed that all possible measures were used to reduce costs. It was also much easier for editors to express their views or seek to influence readers' opinions by using other people's texts, including column pieces or commentaries on current affairs. The difficulty in accessing a broad range of contemporary literature certainly could have reinforced conservative attitudes among Poles living in the USA. However, content analysis of periodicals cannot establish the degree or extent of the correlation of these factors.

A further indication of the role serial fiction played in the ideas held by the editors who published them is perhaps evident in the fact that they believed that it was predominantly women who were interested in such content. Except for individual titles such as *Ogniwo* and *Głos Kobiet*, most Polish-American publications prior to 1918 were aimed at men rather than women. It can therefore be assumed that less significance was attached to material intended for the latter. Thus the selection of such works could have been more arbitrary and dictated by ease of publication to a greater extent than was the case with articles aimed primarily at men.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ 'Czym mężczyzna zdobywa kobietę?', *Głos Polek*, v, 24 (11 June 1914), 5.

While reading promotion was one part of editors' mission, this did not mean that they necessarily promoted local writers. In the case of authors from the Old Continent, too, few attempts were made to seek out the latest works; instead, there were primarily reprints of texts that had already been published in the Polish lands. It is not possible, however, to establish far-reaching conclusions regarding the mentalities, living conditions and interests of Polish émigrés based on an analysis of texts written primarily by writers living in Europe who focused on historical subjects and who wrote their works often several years or even several decades before the reprints appeared in the Polish-American press. Focusing solely on the less numerous contemporary texts that were written with the American-influenced perspective in mind would, however, mean losing sight of the typical traits of the serialised novels that appeared in the Polish-American press in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. What becomes evident is how even a methodologically sound selection of the corpus of texts to be studied can profoundly impact research findings.

Indeed, the fact that longer literary works published in émigré dailies and weeklies rarely reflected the realities of the lives and concerns of Polish emigrants could indicate how this form of publication was still in its infancy at the time. After 1918, there was a significant improvement in quality as, for example, works on current issues written by local writers started to appear more frequently. Perhaps this was a result of a shift in interests among the US-based Polish diaspora? Poland regaining independence might have influenced the sentiment that Polish national identity was no longer under threat, and thus Poles living outside the country's borders could focus to a greater extent on local problems. These are some questions that could benefit from further research.

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