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**Political, Cultural, and Social Factors
in the Transformations of the Children's Book Market in Poland
on the Example of Nasza Księgarnia Publishing House****Introduction: The Children's Book Market in Poland
at the Threshold of Independence**

Children's and young adults' literature emerged as a separate body of writing in Poland in the age of the Enlightenment, but, like elsewhere in the world, it only began to thrive in the second half of the 19th century¹. At the time, Poland, which had been partitioned by Prussia, Austria, and Russia in the 1790s, did not exist as a sovereign state. In the wake of regaining political independence in 1918, Poland launched a long-lasting process of re-integrating its previously divided territory and rebuilding its statehood. The period was marked by the robust development of industry, science, culture, and education. Despite serious economic challenges, the public fervently craved books, an attitude which invigorated the publishing sector. Many publishers offered books for children and young adults, some of which were cheap and of meagre literary and artistic quality². According to *Bibliografia literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży 1918–1939* [*A Bibliography of Children's and Young Adults' Literature, 1918–1939*], 8,617 books for a young readership were published in Poland in the interwar period³. About 300–400 books were released annually, whereof 20% were translations, primarily from English,

1 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, eds. B. Tylicka, G. Leszczyński, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków: Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 2003, p. 225.

2 K. Indrzejczak, *Księgarnia Popularna* [in:] *Słownik literatury popularnej*, ed. T. Żab-ski, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1994, p. 193–194.

3 *Bibliografia literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży 1918–1939*, eds. K. Bogumiła, A. Grefko-wicz, Warszawa: Biblioteka Publiczna m. st. Warszawy, 1995.

German, Italian, Russian, French, and Scandinavian languages⁴. While the number of titles published and their print runs increased year by year, high production costs caused book prices to rise above what most of the public could afford⁵.

At various moments between 1918 and 1939, there were as many as 586 publishing companies in Poland, ninety-four of which boasted a long tradition, having been founded before 1918⁶. Children's books were printed by the publishing houses run by the Arct family, Gebethner and Wolff, the Mortkowicz family, Jakub Przeworski, Alfred Altenberg, by the Ossoliński National Institute, by Księgarnia św. Wojciecha (literally: St. Adalbert Bookshop), and others. This group was soon joined by new publishers, most of which were small or medium-sized companies privately owned by individual proprietors. At the same time, publishing joint-stock companies began to be founded, along with publishing collectives and cooperatives of a new type that had special agendas of their own⁷. The latter included, for example, Spółdzielnia Księgarsko-Wydawnicza Książka ("The Book" Bookselling and Publishing Cooperative), which was an agency of the Communist Party of Poland, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Książek Szkolnych (National Publisher of School Books), and Nasza Księgarnia (Our Bookshop), which was founded by the Polish Teachers' Union (Polish: Związek Nauczycielstwa Polskiego) in 1921 and has been uninterruptedly active till the present day.

Assumptions, Methods, and Aims

The aim of this paper is to show the history and evolution of the Nasza Księgarnia publishing house against political, cultural, and social transformations that affected the development of the children's book market in Poland throughout and at the turn of the 20th century. We try to systematize these processes using the theory of Michael Bhaskar⁸.

4 M. Czarnowska, *Ilościowy rozwój polskiego ruchu wydawniczego 1501–1965*, Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1967, p. 114–115; J. Białek, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w latach 1918–1939. Zarys monograficzny, materiały*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1987, p. 48.

5 J. Białek, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w latach 1918–1939*, op. cit., p. 27.

6 A. Boguszewska, *Projekty graficzne pozapodręcznikowego wyboru książek zalecanych do edukacji elementarnej w Polsce w latach 1918–1945*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2013, p. 67–68. Adam Bromberg reports that there were 560 publishing companies, mainly private ones, in Poland in 1935, see A. Bromberg, *Książka i wydawcy*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1958, p. 9; Józef Białek states that the number stood at 500–600 publishers (see J. Białek, *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w latach 1918–1939*, p. 27), and Barbara Bieńkowska cites 500 publishing companies operating in 1935; see B. Bieńkowska, *Książka na przestrzeni dziejów*, Warszawa: Centrum Edukacji Bibliotekarskiej, Informacyjnej i Dokumentacyjnej im. Heleny Radlińskiej, 2005, p. 235.

7 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 101.

8 Michael Bhaskar, *The Content Machine. Towards a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to Digital Network* (London: Anthem Press, 2013).

Publishing activities, which are part of a broader system of the production and distribution of cultural goods, extensively depend on socio-cultural factors and on embedment in a specific economic and political system. These entanglements are particularly consequential for the children's book market, as the children's book is employed by adults as a tool for exerting social influence on children, and is geared towards implementing cognitive, educational, and socialization goals. In totalitarian systems, the children's book is especially strongly bound to the education system, the state's cultural policies, and indoctrination practices, all of which determine which books are published and what publishing strategies are adopted in this sector.

The history of Nasza Księgarnia, the largest Polish publishing house of children's books founded in 1921, is a good example showing the multilayered factors that impacted the development of the children's book market in Poland throughout and at the turn of the 20th century. The century-long history of the publishing house perfectly embodies the profound transformations which the Polish market of children's and young adults' books has experienced over the last one hundred years. At the same time, it vividly reflects the various factors that always affect the choice and implementation of publishing activity models, in this way providing a suitable starting point for the exploration of the mechanisms at work in the publishing industry as such. Our examination focuses on the factors that determined the operations and the repertoire of Nasza Księgarnia in three crucial periods identifiable in the publisher's history:

1. 1921–1945 – from the foundation till the end of the Second World War, when Nasza Księgarnia operated as a social initiative of the Polish Teachers' Union;
2. 1945–1989 – when Nasza Księgarnia functioned as a state-owned publisher under the socialist People's Republic of Poland;
3. 1992–2021 – when Nasza Księgarnia was a privatized company in the free-market economy.

The aforementioned theory proposed by Michael Bhaskar discusses publishing activity in terms of four notions: filtering, amplification, frame, and models⁹. Bhaskar posits that publishing essentially involves the designing for a specific, selected content (filtering) of such a mode of presentation and distribution (frame) that will enhance its value (amplification) and will serve to manage the readership's attention. All content is made accessible in a certain manner which determines the reception of the content and creates the context for its consumption. Bhaskar, who seeks to construct a model that captures not only traditional editorship, but also its latest, technologically conditioned transformations, views frames as something more than just physical forms and material vehicles for content. He explains that frames also encompass non-material aspect of content reception: "They are contexts, modes of understanding as much as duplicative technologies. Frames are not just delivery systems or packages for content, but content's experiential mode"¹⁰. Thus, it logically follows that "publishers are not just producers of books but constructors of frames"¹¹.

9 Ibidem, p. 84.

10 Ibidem.

11 Ibidem, p. 85.

Bhaskar's approach holds that filtering, framing, and amplifying occur within a particular model and that such models comprise very broadly conceived motivations fuelling and factors circumscribing publishers' operations: "A model of some sort is a *sine qua non* for the production and framing of content. Models are abstract extrapolations, which we use to guide our actions, with both explanatory, predictive and, through those, causal efficacy"¹².

By interpreting publishing activities in the context of thus-defined models, one can produce a lucid and comprehensive account of the evolution of publishing operations. Given this, Bhaskar's approach usefully lends itself as a tool for discussing the effect that political, economic, and social shifts in Poland had on the models of publishing activity, changes in publishing repertoires, and transformations of the editorial form of children's books throughout and at the turn of the 20th century.

Bhaskar's theoretical framework must be adjusted to the distinctiveness of the children's book market, which is governed by specific laws of its own. The children's book market boasts some features unique to this sector. Central among them is the reader/user who finds him/herself in the phase of initiation and, as such, usually does not choose his/her readings independently but relies on the help of adult mediators. Such mediators can fulfil various communicative functions. Some of them focus on spanning children's and young adults' literature available on the market on the one hand and the target readership's demands and expectations on the other. Hence, they perform a neutral function in the process of literary communication (neutral mediators). Others explicitly or latently influence the reading behaviour and choices of young people by subjectively and selectively channelling literary messages for them (interventive mediators)¹³. Additionally, children's books obtain far more support from non-profit social institutions than releases in other sectors of the publishing market and tend to be one of the concerns of the state, which not only adopts legislation and regulations to control the operations of actors in this area of the book market, but also offers them a range of incentives and funding¹⁴.

Our analysis will also be informed by selected elements of the conceptual framework proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in his sociology of culture and theory of the literary field¹⁵. These will be adjusted to the distinctiveness of the children's book market addressed in our argument.

The Interwar Period and the Occupation Years

In the aftermath of World War I, the recovering Polish state faced multiple challenges, not the least of them being the institution of commonly accessible and uniformized

12 Ibidem, p. 97.

13 H-H. Ewers, *Fundamental Concepts of Children's Literature Research: Literary and Sociological Approaches*, New York-London: Routledge: 2009.

14 M. Zając, *Raport o książce dla dzieci i młodzieży*, Warszawa: Biblioteka Analiz, 2006, pp. 15-23.

15 P. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

education, which was regarded as a crucial factor not only in promoting the country's civilizational development but also in constructing national identity. Schools struggled with the dearth of textbooks, teaching aids, and methodological literature suited to the new curricula and schooling programs. In response to these obstacles, the members of the Polish Association of Common School Teachers (which later morphed into the Polish Teachers' Union) decided to establish a dedicated publishing house in the hope of redressing the adverse situation. Their efforts resulted in the establishment of a joint-stock company called *Nasza Księgarnia* (literally: Our Bookshop) in Warsaw in June 1921. Its express aim was to "supply common schools with books, teaching aids, and all other publications and commodities needed by schools"¹⁶. The budding company was envisaged not only as a publisher but also as a book-selling organization. As the company developed, its successive branches were opened in other cities in Poland, including Łódź, Vilnius, Lublin, and Katowice¹⁷.

As this suggests, the idea that informed the publishing house was stirred by patriotic sentiments, and the venture, rather than being profit-driven, was expected to carry out a certain social mission. Its model of publishing activity was thoroughly educational and aligned with a political agenda expressive of patriotic values. This model determined the selection of content to be published and the planning of the publishing repertoire.

Between 1921 and 1939, *Nasza Księgarnia* released 670 non-serial publications¹⁸, with books for teachers accounting for the largest proportion of this output (48.5%). Published in low print runs, works on themes related to educational theory and practice, many of which were translations, undoubtedly promoted the professional development of the teaching staff, but they could not possibly ensure satisfying revenue to boost the company's economic progress. One-fifth of the entire repertoire of *Nasza Księgarnia* was made up of books for children and young adults, and textbooks accounted for slightly more than 17% of its publications. Although the latter titles were modest, they actually formed a lion's share of the company's production in terms of their print runs. Besides, *Nasza Księgarnia* also offered plays for school theatres and publishing and bookselling catalogues¹⁹. In the interwar period, *Nasza Księgarnia* did not release children's' and young adults' magazines, which came to be a thriving area

16 M. Rogoź, *Wydawnictwo „Nasza Księgarnia” – powstanie i rozwój do 1939 roku*, „Ann. Acad. Paedag. Crac., Stud. Bibl. Sci. Pertin.” 2008, no. 6, p. 3.

17 Ibidem, p. 8.

18 The number cited in most sources, including *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej* edited by B. Tylicka and G. Leszczyński (2003), is 454 items. This paper relies on the findings of Monika Olczak-Kardas, who has identified 670 items (655 titles) in the bibliography of non-serial publications of *Nasza Księgarnia*. See M. Olczak-Kardas, *Bibliografia wydawnictw zwartych „Naszej Księgarni” Spółki Akcyjnej Związku Nauczycielstwa Polskiego za lata 1921–1939*, Kielce: Wydawnictwo Antykwaryczne, 2005.

19 M. Olczak-Kardas, *Książki dla dzieci i młodzieży w ofercie wydawniczej „Naszej Księgarni” w latach 1921–1939* [in:] *Działalność instytucji wydawniczych na rzecz oświaty i edukacji w XX i pierwszych latach XXI wieku*, eds. I. Michalska, G. Michalski, Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2014, pp. 71–72.

of its publishing operations after World War II. Before that, the bulletin *Dla szkoły i nauczyciela* [*For the School and the Teacher*] was the only serial publication in its publishing repertoire²⁰.

In this early period, Nasza Księgarnia was not among the leading publishers of children's and young adults' literature. There were some big publishing houses which released far more literature of this kind and possessed greater production capacity (e.g., Gebethner and Wolff, M. Arct). The management of Nasza Księgarnia was its major asset, as its members took care to establish and sustain contacts with teachers and, via them, with students and their parents. This afforded the publisher direct insight into the needs of its target readership, as well as of the adult mediators, who selected and purchased books for youngsters to read. The fact that, in a sense, Nasza Księgarnia's books were published under the patronage of the Polish Teachers' Union increased the publisher's chances of success in the bookselling market²¹. In terms of Bourdieu's conceptual framework and his theory of the literary field, Nasza Księgarnia possessed cultural capital and pursued symbolic profit.

If in the beginning, children's books formed a marginal segment of the production of Nasza Księgarnia, their proportion in the publisher's repertoire remarkably increased in the 1930s. They were mostly authored by Polish writers, with translations only accounting for some 13% of Nasza Księgarnia's publications for children and young adults. This coincided with the publisher's mission of meeting the educational and cultural needs of Polish society. On the whole, the print runs of Nasza Księgarnia releases did not differ from the national average and stood at 1,000 to 5,700 copies²². The record figure for the print run of a children's fiction book published by the company at that time was 30,000 copies²³.

As for designing the frames instrumental for amplification, Nasza Księgarnia launched its first set of both fiction and nonfiction series for a young readership as early as in the interwar period. Generally, almost one-third of all the Nasza Księgarnia titles for this group of readers appeared as part of one or another series²⁴. At the time, the most successful series included *Opowieści przyrodnicze* [*Tales of Nature*] and *Ze świata przyrody* [*From the Natural World*], which were enjoyed and coveted by the reading public²⁵.

Nasza Księgarnia's books for the youngest readers were distinguished by their outstanding cognitive and educational quality, careful graphic design, and, at the same time, relatively low price, which was supposed to make them affordable to

20 M. Rogoż, *Wydawnictwo „Nasza Księgarnia” – powstanie i rozwój do 1939 roku*, op. cit., p. 6.

21 M. Olczak-Kardas, *Książki dla dzieci i młodzieży w ofercie wydawniczej „Naszej Księgarni”...*, op. cit., p. 75.

22 Ibidem, p. 76–77.

23 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, ed. S. Aleksandrak, Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 1972, p. 16.

24 M. Olczak-Kardas, *Książki dla dzieci i młodzieży w ofercie wydawniczej „Naszej Księgarni”...*, op. cit., p. 76.

25 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., p. 14.

the broad public. As a result, the titles released by the teacher-supported publisher found their way into the hands of children from underprivileged backgrounds, whose access to culture was rather restricted²⁶. Thus, the mechanisms of amplification were calculated to further the increase of accumulated symbolic and cultural capital by Nasza Księgarnia, rather than multiplying its financial profit.

Nasza Księgarnia collaborated with reputed authors, such as Helena Boguszewska, Janina Broniewska, Czesław Centkiewicz, Hanna Januszewska, Janusz Korczak, Maria Kownacka, Lucyna Krzemieniecka, Janina Porazińska, and Ewa Szelburg-Zarembina²⁷. Owing to the efforts of its art department, which was headed by the painter and illustrator Michał Bylina from 1931 on, a community of graphic artists committed to art for children clustered around Nasza Księgarnia (besides Bylina, the group included Stanisław Bobiński, Jadwiga Hładki, Tadeusz Gronowski, Karol Mackiewicz, Edward Manteuffel, and others)²⁸. With such collaborators, Nasza Księgarnia was able to put books boasting attractive graphic designs on the market despite technical challenges and a meagre printing infrastructure. At the same time, the publisher managed to keep its selling prices low, and thus achieved one of its chief goals, that is, producing books affordable to the general public²⁹.

This model of operations proved effective, and the pursuits of Nasza Księgarnia began to be applauded in Poland and abroad. In 1932, Nasza Księgarnia was visited by Paul Faucher, the manager of the educational division in the French publishing house Flammarion, who had only words of praise for his host's publications³⁰. The labours of Nasza Księgarnia saw the Polish children's book celebrate its first international success as one of its publications was awarded for its methodological and didactic qualities and visual attractiveness at the International Congress of Education held in Paris in 1937³¹. The publishing program implemented by Nasza Księgarnia was acclaimed as a model one in Europe³². All these accomplishments represented forms of symbolic profit, which the publisher aimed to achieve. With time, it increased so considerably that it legitimized the activities of Nasza Księgarnia, warranted the quality of its publications, and in a longer perspective contributed to the growth of the company's revenue as well.

Close and sustained collaboration with the Polish Teachers' Union helped Nasza Księgarnia burgeon into one of the most recognizable publishing houses of the inter-war period. The buyers and readers of children's and young adults' books released

26 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., pp. 262–263.

27 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., p. 16.

28 H. Boguszewska, *Projekty graficzne pozapodręcznikowego wyboru książek zalecanych do edukacji elementarnej w Polsce w latach 1918–1945*, op. cit., p. 80–81.

29 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., p. 14.

30 M. Rogoż, *Wydawnictwo „Nasza Księgarnia” – powstanie i rozwój do 1939 roku*, op. cit., p. 13.

31 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 102.

32 H. Boguszewska, *Projekty graficzne pozapodręcznikowego wyboru książek zalecanych do edukacji elementarnej w Polsce w latach 1918–1945*, op. cit., p. 82.

by the company could safely assume that they included appropriate content, which gave Nasza Księgarnia an edge over other publishers.

Having attained renown and popularity before World War II, Nasza Księgarnia did not halt its operations under the Nazi occupation. While officially it ran a book-and-stationery store, it was, in fact, involved in underground publishing ventures, disseminated prohibited books, and cooperated with the Tajna Organizacja Nauczycielska (Secret Teaching Organization) to offer support to authors. Between 1939 and 1945, Nasza Księgarnia published about a dozen books, including required school readings, reading primers, and Polish history textbooks. The secret operations launched by Nasza Księgarnia counted among important undertakings of the Polish resistance movement against the occupiers³³.

The activities in which Nasza Księgarnia became involved at this stage attest that the model adopted by the publisher in its initial period prioritized cultural, educational, and social aspects over economic factors and financial revenue.

The People's Republic of Poland (1945–1989)

The political and economic changes which followed World War II profoundly altered the structure of the publishing movement in Poland. In the late 1940s, private publishing companies were gradually eliminated only to be replaced by a centralized publishing system controlled by and accountable to state agencies³⁴. All areas of publishing activity – from the selection of texts for printing to the organization of production, to distribution – were subordinated to the regime's ideological and political agenda³⁵. The key role was assigned to big, state-controlled publishers. In the new organizational model of the publishing industry, respective publishing houses were supposed to specialize in a given type of publication. While this vision was never fully implemented, it effectively promoted top-down programming and control. Children's books were deemed an important propagandist tool, and, as such, they received massive funding and support from the state, which saw their print runs skyrocket to unprecedented heights.

In this new configuration of the publishing market, the publication of children's literature was primarily entrusted to Nasza Księgarnia, which officially restarted its operations in 1945, first as a cooperative and from 1954 on as a state-owned publisher initially accountable to the Ministry of Culture and Art and then to the Ministry of Schooling and Education. At the same time, the publishing house remained under the strong, albeit temporarily fluctuating, influence of the Polish Teachers' Union. Consequently, the model of the publisher's activity changed, as it

33 See M. Rogoż, *Działalność „Naszej Księgarni” w czasie drugiej wojny światowej*, „Ann. Acad. Paedag. Crac., Stud. Bibl. Sci. Pertin.” 2010, no. 8, pp. 75-82.

34 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 103.

35 S. Konddek, *Władza i wydawcy. Polityczne uwarunkowania produkcji książek w Polsce w latach 1944–1949*, Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa, 1993, p. 17.

was protected by the state, did not have to worry about its finances, and had a new role defined for it as the “patron of and a campaigner for the Polish children’s book”³⁶. As the compartmentalization of the whole publishing movement progressed, Nasza Księgarnia also gradually developed its new, specialized profile in conformity with the demands of the day. In the 1950s, the publication of textbooks and, shortly afterwards, of educational literature was taken over by the Państwowe Zakłady Wydawnictw Szkolnych (National Organization of School Publications)³⁷. For its part, Nasza Księgarnia replaced the Polish Teachers’ Union as a publisher of children’s and young adults’ magazines, including *Płomyk* [*Flame*] and *Płomyczek* [*Little Flame*], which had been founded and were popular before the war. The previously existing editorial division for children’s literature was expanded, and at the same time new, independent divisions were set up to handle various publishing segments, such as literature for very young children, Polish literature, translated literature, nonfiction, pedagogical publications, magazines for children and for teachers, and graphic design³⁸.

Nasza Księgarnia held a near monopoly over children’s and young adults’ literature in the state-controlled publishing movement. The number of published titles and the size of print runs systematically increased; while two books were published in the first year of this new phase, as many as forty-one titles were released in the following year, with the figure rising to ninety-two in 1947. The growth trend continued until 1954 when 334 titles were published in almost 15.5 million copies. For several years to come, the figures stabilized at about 200 books released annually, with the first significant drop (down to 166 titles) recorded in 1981, which certainly resulted from the socio-political turmoil and the imposition of martial law in Poland. In the second half of the 1980s, Nasza Księgarnia resumed book production at its pre-crisis level only to see its output again plummet at the onset of Poland’s democratic transition: in 1991, the publisher released 116 titles and one year later as few as 87, with print runs severely curbed in all cases³⁹. Between the mid-1950s and the early 1970s, the publications of Nasza Księgarnia accounted for more than 62.5% of the children’s book market in Poland, with this proportion peaking at over 80% between 1955–1956. In the 1980s, despite the activities of new publishing houses that offered children’s and young adults’ literature among their releases (e.g., the Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza [National Publishing Agency] and the Młodzieżowa Agencja Wydawnicza [Youth Publishing Agency] – both established in 1974), Nasza Księgarnia retained its status as a prominent actor in the production of publications for a young readership, but its share in this sector of the market decreased to 40%. Despite this decline, Nasza Księgarnia continued

36 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., pp. 5–6.

37 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 263.

38 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., p. 68.

39 Cf. *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., p. 66; *Ruch wydawniczy w liczbach 1972–1992*, Warszawa: Biblioteka Narodowa. Instytut Bibliograficzny, 1973–1993.

to be the most important publisher of children's and young adults' books under the People's Republic of Poland⁴⁰.

The leading position enjoyed by Nasza Księgarnia resulted from the political conjuncture. This had both its advantages and its downsides. If Nasza Księgarnia was able to remain entirely independent of the financial model, its economic autonomy came at the price of its subordination to centralized management and vulnerability to ideological pressures. What young readers could obtain was carefully selected and came with permission from censors, whose practices were supposed to instil proper attitudes (aligned with the official ideology) and to foster the readership's socio-political engagement⁴¹. In the first half of the 1950s, Nasza Księgarnia actively assisted in the spreading of real-socialism ideas by publishing titles that espoused and touted this doctrine. The books the publisher put on the market eulogized eminent leaders, such as Stalin (Lucyna Krzemieniecka's *O wielkim Stalinie* [*About Great Stalin*]) and Dzierżyński (Halina Rudnicka's *Łomień gorejący* [*The Burning Flame*]), extolled labor and commitment to the rebuilding of the country (Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa's *Na budowie* [*At the Construction Site*] and Maria Hiszpańska-Neumann's *Jacek i jego rodzina* [*Jack and His Family*]), and praised the progressing industrialization of Poland (Zbigniew Rychlicki's *Węgiel* [*Coal*] and Stanisław Aleksandrzak's *Wielki plan 6-letni* [*The Great Six-Year Plan*]). These books, which were authored by recognized writers and artists, targeted all age groups, and their verbal messages were augmented with skilfully matched visual messages⁴².

Notably, since its very foundation, Nasza Księgarnia has been dedicated to ensuring the literary and artistic quality of its books, which has had a positive effect on the public perception of its publications as extremely rewarding and displaying the highest editorial standards. The repertoire of Nasza Księgarnia was dominated by books by Polish authors, with translations only accounting for a small part of its releases, which was generally typical of the publishing production for children at that time. Between 1945 and 1989, more than 16,000 titles for children and young adults were published in Poland, with the number of copies exceeding 956 million⁴³, yet translations – primarily from English, Russian, German, French, Czech and Slovak,

40 M. Rogoż, *Wydawcy literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży (1945–1989)* [in:] *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży (1945–1989)*, eds. K. Heska-Kwaśniewicz, K. Tałuć, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013, p. 356.

41 For more on the censorship of books for children and young adults during the communist period, see: M. Rogoż, *Polska literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży w okowach cenzury. Oceny wydawnicze książek z lat 1948_1956*, „Roczniki Biblioteczne” 2012, no. 56, pp. 55–81; B. Gawryluk, K. Lajborek, M. Korobkiewicz, *Znamy się od dziecka. Sto lat Wydawnictwa Nasza Księgarnia*, Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia 2021, pp. 95–119.

42 E. Jamróz-Stolarska, *Ilustracja jako komunikat propagandowy w okresie socrealizmu* [in:] *W poszukiwaniu odpowiedniej formy. Rola wydawcy, typografa, artysty i technologii w pracy nad książką*, ed. M. Komza, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2012, pp. 91–104.

43 E. Jamróz-Stolarska, *Serie literackie dla dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce 1945–1989. Produkcja wydawnicza i ukształtowanie edytorskie*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Bibliotekarzy Polskich, 2014, pp. 31–37.

Swedish, and Italian – added up to merely one-fifth of this output⁴⁴. Between 1945 and 1992 (i.e., the year of its privatization), Nasza Księgarnia alone produced over 10,000 titles, published in about 500 million copies⁴⁵. Until 1955, the ratio of Polish and translated books was very unbalanced, and Nasza Księgarnia was the market leader in translations from Russian. As publishing policies changed in the second half of the 1950s, the publisher began to offer increasingly more books translated from other languages, chiefly from English, French, German, and Czech. Nasza Księgarnia was the only Polish publisher to offer works by Tove Jansson, René Goscinny, and Astrid Lindgren, with Lucy Maud Montgomery and Jules Verne being its most-published foreign authors. The group of foreign authors whose works Nasza Księgarnia was eager to publish at that time also included Hans Christian Andersen, Lyman Frank Baum, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Daniel Defoe, Carlo Collodi, Arkady Gaidar, Jacob, and Wilhelm Grimm, Victor Marie Hugo, Rudyard Kipling, Eric Knight, Vladislav Krapivin, Hugh Jones Lofting, Karl May, Alan Alexander Milne, Edith Nesbit, Mary Norton, Jonathan Swift, and Pamela Lyndon Travers⁴⁶. The selection of texts by foreign authors was a serious challenge to the editors of translations because their selections had to comply with the constraining publishing policies imposed by the state. Paradoxically enough, state control contributed to the enhancement of the quality of translations, which were linguistically skilful and contained very few editorial mistakes, if at all. Despite serious restrictions caused by the political, economic, and cultural factors intrinsic to the totalitarian system, multiple copies of well-known and internationally acclaimed books found their way into the Polish book market.

Nevertheless, Polish literature was the core product Nasza Księgarnia offered to its readership. Books for the youngest children were profusely illustrated, with the image being their fundamental element, or at least matching the text in importance. Publications of this kind were the major export merchandise which Nasza Księgarnia sold to foreign markets, and which garnered considerable recognition at international exhibitions and contests. Books addressed to this group of readers were supposed to nurture their emotional and intellectual development, and acquaint them with various literary conventions. Children who could already read and young adults were supplied with the classics and new texts of realistic fiction and fantasy, whereby new Polish authors were recruited through competitions for new children's fiction, which were regularly held every few years⁴⁷. Contemporary literature exhibited a wide range of themes, issues, and genres. While novels of manners and psychological ones dealing with family and school-related matters formed the bulk of Nasza Księgarnia's publications, adventure and travel fiction, memoirs, reportages, and science-fiction texts also enjoyed substantial popularity. The publisher collaborated, on a regular

44 N. Paprocka, *Sto lat przekładów dla dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce. Francuska literatura dla młodych czytelników, jej polscy wydawcy i ich strategie (1918–2014)*, Kraków: Universitas, 2014, chart no. 4.

45 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 263.

46 M. Rogoż, *Wydawcy literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży (1945–1989)*, op. cit., pp. 362–363.

47 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., p. 69.

basis, with a host of outstanding authors from various generations, for example, with Adam Bahdaj, Jan Brzechwa, Wanda Chotomska, Hanna Januszewska, Maria Kownacka, Joanna Kulmowa, Gustaw Morcinek, Małgorzata Musierowicz, Edmund Niziurski, Ewa Nowacka, Hanna Ożogowska, Janina Porazińska, and Julian Tuwim. Nasza Księgarnia also invested a lot of work in the promotion of debuting writers, such as Janusz Doma-galik, Maciej Wojtyszko, and Danuta Wawiłow. At the same time, renowned authors who chiefly wrote for adults – for instance, Marian Brandys, Janusz Broszkiewicz, Józef Ficowski, Anna Kamieńska, Wiktor Woroszyński and Wojciech Żukowski – were invited to pen children’s and young adults’ books for Nasza Księgarnia⁴⁸.

Most of the popular-science books published by Nasza Księgarnia in the time-frame under discussion were also authored by Polish writers. Between 1945 and 1972, more than one thousand types of informational books were published in a total of over twenty million copies. In this way, Nasza Księgarnia continued its pre-war tradition, acknowledging “the significance and role of cognition-expanding and popular-science literature as an important instrument in the process of teaching and educating the young generation of readers”⁴⁹. Such books dealt with broadly conceived humanistic themes, solid sciences, and technology, and were addressed to all age groups. In its knowledge-popularizing pursuits, Nasza Księgarnia collaborated with distinguished Polish scholars and esteemed illustrators. The outstanding quality and the artistic value of these books were confirmed both by their employment in school education and by their increasing exports, which accounted for 20% of Nasza Księgarnia’s total exports in the 1970s⁵⁰.

A considerable part of popular-science books and fiction alike was released in publication series, which to a large extent came to be Nasza Księgarnia’s hallmark undertakings since it was the first Polish publishing house to launch them on such a scale. The publisher released series for all reader groups, and the titles were put on the market as their volumes were sometimes printed in an exceptionally high number of copies. The selection of such a frame for book production for a young readership helped Nasza Księgarnia implement its publishing policy and, at the same time, represented the publisher’s response to the spreading perception of children’s books as an element of mass culture. Between 1945 and 1989, Nasza Księgarnia published twenty-nine series, within which 1,852 titles were printed, amounting to 56.5% of all books released as part of a series in this period⁵¹. The series for the youngest readers included *Lakierowane Książeczki* [*Varnished Books*], *Książeczki z Misiowej Półeczki* [*Books from a Teddy-Bear’s Shelf*], *Moje Książeczki* [*My Books*], and *Poczytaj mi, mamo* [*Read to Me, Mum*], with the latter appearing with some intervals until the present day. Literary classics for children and young adults were released as part of *Złoty Liść* [*Golden Leaf*], *Klasyka Dziecięca* [*Children’s Classics*], and *Klasyka Młodych* [*The Youth’s Classics*] (in collaboration with another publisher). Contemporary fiction

48 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 264.

49 *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., p. 72.

50 Ibidem.

51 E. Jamróz-Stolarska, *Serie literackie dla dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce 1945–1989*, op. cit., p. 51.

was presented to readers within *Klub 7 Przygód* [*The Club of Seven Adventures*], *Biblioteka Młodych* [*The Youth's Library*] (co-published with several other publishers), and *Lista Honorowa Laureatów im. Hansa Christiana Andersena* [*The Honorary List of Hans Christian Andersen Award Winners*]. The most read among Nasza Księgarnia's popular-science series included *Przyroda wokół Nas* [*Nature around Us*], *Nasz Świat* [*Our World*], *Czarodziej w Świetlicy* [*A Wizard in the Common Room*], *Bij się z Myślami* [*Wrestling with Thoughts*], *Biblioteka Młodego Technika* [*A Young Technician's Library*], *Biblioteka Młodego Kosmonauty* [*A Young Cosmonaut's Library*], *W Kręgu* [*In the Circle*] and *Poczty* [*Dynasties*]⁵². The various series published by Nasza Księgarnia were informed by thoughtful conceptions, their titles were carefully selected, and their editorial designs displayed deliberate coherence.

These characteristics were generally shared by all of Nasza Księgarnia's publications, including children's and young adults' magazines, which came to occupy an important position in the publisher's repertoire after World War II, and exerted a considerable influence on several generations of Poles. Aesthetic quality and a careful selection of content characterized the magazines with universal themes for both children and young adults (e.g., *Miś* [*Teddy Bear*], *Świerszczyk* [*Little Cricket*], *Płomyk*, and *Płomyczek*) and popular science magazines (e.g., *Młody Technik* [*A Young Technician*], *Mówią Wieki* [*History's Tales*], and *Poznaj Swój Kraj* [*Know Your Country*]). The average yearly circulation of the Nasza Księgarnia magazines stood at about sixty million copies with that for 1945–1989 amounting to more than 2.2 billion copies. Periodicals for the youngest readership, such as the weekly *Świerszczyk*, definitely had the highest circulation figures. The magazines published by Nasza Księgarnia were relatively cheap because their major aim was to provide the young reading public with age-appropriate reading content, rather than earning revenue. To achieve this goal, the company encouraged almost all well-known children's authors and award-winning Polish graphic artists to collaborate. Magazines were, on the whole, perceived as important tools for teaching and education, essentially complementing school curricula; so much so, that in the immediate aftermath of the war, schools used them to make up for the desperate scarcity of textbooks. As an essential part of their work, magazine editorial teams developed various forms of contact with their readers through correspondence, visits to schools, libraries, and orphanages, numerous social campaigns, and regularly held competitions⁵³.

In this period, Nasza Księgarnia played a decisive role in giving shape not only to the publishing repertoire but also to the editorial model of children's books. Books as formative contributors to socialist culture were supposed to be beautifully edited in order to capture the readers' appreciation. As illustrations were accorded a key role in the publications of Nasza Księgarnia, its art and graphic design department, first headed by Bylina and then by Zbigniew Rychlicki (a winner

52 M. Rogoż, *Wydawcy literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży (1945–1989)*, op. cit., pp. 360–361.

53 M. Rogoż, *Czasopisma dla dzieci i młodzieży Instytutu wydawniczego "Nasza Księgarnia" w latach 1945–1989. Studium historycznoprasowe*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, 2009, pp. 193–98.

of the Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 1982), took a prominent position in its organizational structure. Already established in the interwar period, dedication to the artistic quality of children's books became an indisputable standard of the post-war operations of Nasza Księgarnia. The publisher put a great deal of effort into establishing collaborations with as many Polish illustrators as possible, and maintained contacts with Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts to recruit new talent, without side-lining middle-generation artists at the same time. As a result of all these pursuits, young readers regularly received books with editorial designs developed by Poland's best book artists, members of the Polish school of illustration, such as Bohdan Butenko, Elżbieta Gaudasińska, Janusz Grabiański, Zbigniew Rychlicki, Olga Siemaszko, Jerzy Srokowski, Janusz Stanny, Andrzej Strumiłło, Jan Marcin Szancer, Barbara Truchanowska, Józef Wilkoń, Zdzisław Witwicki, and Bohdan Zieleniec⁵⁴. From the 1960s on, Nasza Księgarnia cooperated with about fifty graphic artists on a permanent basis and with about 150 annually. The fitting strategy and consistency of Nasza Księgarnia's operations created favourable working conditions for artists cooperating with the publisher and inspired other publishing houses to put similar policies in place⁵⁵. Nasza Księgarnia developed a model of the children's book which was characterized by refined graphic craftsmanship, an apt pictorial interpretation of the text, and thoughtful graphic design. The publisher took pains to bring ambitious artistic intents in sync with the printing capacities of the day. These efforts did not go unnoticed and were rewarded with numerous Polish and international distinctions and prizes that Nasza Księgarnia won at a variety of events centred on children's books. These were about 300 in total, including IBA in Leipzig, BIB in Bratislava, the PTWK award, and the Bologna Children's Book Fair awards⁵⁶.

The fact that the publishing activity model in Poland was subordinated to a political agenda affected both Nasza Księgarnia's repertoire and its other operations. Besides its fundamental publishing, commercial, and distributing activities, Nasza Księgarnia was notably devoted to cultural, educational, social, and propagandist undertakings. The publisher organized seminars, symposiums, international conferences of publishers, scholarly conferences, and book exhibitions in Poland and abroad, as well as initiated numerous competitions and publishing directories and catalogues. Nasza Księgarnia was also involved in robust cooperation with schools, libraries, and a range of cultural institutions, in conjunction with which it held numerous fairs and meetings with authors and illustrators. As a result, under the People's Republic of Poland, Nasza Księgarnia was, so to say, a patron of and campaigner for the Polish children's book⁵⁷.

54 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 265.

55 A. Wincencjusz-Patyna, *Stacja ilustracja. Polska ilustracja książkowa 1950–1980. Artystyczne kreacje i realizacje*, Wrocław: Akademia Sztuk Pięknych im. Eugeniusza Gepperta/Instytut Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2008, pp. 42–43.

56 See *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 265; *Pół wieku przyjaźni z dzieckiem i szkołą 1921–1971*, op. cit., pp. 76–77.

57 See *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 266; M. Rogoż, *Wydawcy literatury dla dzieci i młodzieży (1945–1989)*, op. cit., pp. 354–355.

All these endeavours furthered the execution of the publisher's mission and consolidated its position. Since its publishing activity was controlled by the state and served its political system, Nasza Księgarnia could operate with remarkable financial independence. The economic model was clearly secondary and was overridden by social and political goals. Consequently, possibilities proliferated for Nasza Księgarnia to multiply its symbolic profit, climbing to the rank of the major Polish publisher of children's books. At the same time, attentiveness to the quality of production (in terms of content and form alike) and the introduction of new frames (such as a periodical or a publication series) saw it gain recognition and develop an excellent reputation, which would later become the crucial capital of the publishing house.

Towards the end of this period, Nasza Księgarnia possessed immense cultural and symbolic capital, which it was able to exploit after the democratic transition in 1989.

After the Democratic Transition

In 1989, Poland underwent a tectonic systemic and political change, and entered the path of economic transformations toward the market economy, which radically altered the ways and modes of the Polish publishing movement⁵⁸. The decentralisation of management and planning combined with the privatisation of the publishing market drive the massive emergence of new actors in the field. After 1989, the number of publishing organizations increased more than forty-fold, skyrocketing from about sixty to almost 2,500 in 1993⁵⁹. The newly founded publishing companies primarily sought to tap into the publishing boom, hoping for quick commercial success. As censorship, paper quota, and top-down technical constraints were abolished, publishing activities enjoyed autonomy unknown under the People's Republic of Poland, and competitive practices began to thrive, leading to the marketization of publishing operations.

These developments also took place in the sector of children's books. Numerous new publishers came into being, which soon were to prove significant players on the Polish publishing stage. These included companies, such as Siedmioróg, Akapitt Press, Literatura, Podsiedlik-Ranikowski i S-ka, Novus Orbis, Wydawnictwo Zielona Sowa, Prószyński i S-ka, Wilga, and Muza. Additionally, foreign publishers, such as Egmont Poland and Bertelsmann, appeared on the Polish market at that time as well⁶⁰.

The range of publications offered to readers also changed. After the 1989 transition, the Polish market was inundated by imported children's books, which were often released under license, and mostly had subpar literary and aesthetic properties, but boasted superb printing quality. Expected to secure commercial success and maximum

58 See, e.g., B. Klukowski, M. Tobera, *W tym niezwykłym czasie. Początki transformacji polskiego rynku książki (1989–1995)*, Warszawa: Sedno, 2013.

59 G. Jankowicz, P. Marecki, A. Pałęcka, J. Sowa, T. Warczok, *Literatura polska po 1989 roku w świetle teorii Pierre'a Bourdieu. Raport z badań*, Kraków: Korporacja Ha!art, 2014, p. 26.

60 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., p. 105.

revenue⁶¹, they exemplified a general dominant trend in the overall consumption of the period. Specifically, these were mostly artefacts associated with Western culture, which had been unavailable in Poland for long decades, fuelled consumer needs and were in high demand, whether or not their actual worth deserved it⁶². Given this, comic books, Disney-style franchises, richly illustrated nonfiction, and publications impressing buyers with large formats, glossy covers, and/or a glittering colour palette stirred particular interest at the time⁶³.

With the mechanisms governing publishing activity having changed radically, competition was soaring, the readers' cultural expectations were rapidly transforming. Thus, Nasza Księgarnia was faced with new challenges, which were only aggravated by the fact that the financial condition of the oversized company was far from good⁶⁴. The publishing house was afforded some chance of survival and continuation of its more than seventy-year-long tradition by privatization, which took place in 1992⁶⁵ although this stirred up considerable controversy. This necessitated not only organizational and structural changes but also a revision of its operational model and the development of a new publishing identity adapted to the new realities. In most general terms, these mounting pressures forced Nasza Księgarnia to adopt the financial model and take economic factors into consideration across its various activities of filtering, framing, and amplification. At the same time, retaining the old brand name (instead of, for example, establishing a new publishing company) made it possible to tap into the symbolic capital Nasza Księgarnia had collected over previous decades. The recognizability of Nasza Księgarnia and its position as a respected children's publisher gave it, despite all odds, a margin of autonomy vis-à-vis the harsh market laws, and bestowed added value on its publications (amplification). Consequently, the activities initiated in the wake of the privatization were an attempt to take advantage of the previously accumulated symbolic capital by combining the economic and cultural models. Nasza Księgarnia still prioritized the artistic quality of its publications and made sure they stimulated readers' cognitive development while taking production costs and potential profits from sales into account much more than before. At the same time, the publisher tried to monitor the readers' needs and respond to them⁶⁶.

The repertoire of Nasza Księgarnia after its privatization in 1992 has not yet been sufficiently researched, and there is neither a bibliography nor a comprehensive

61 G. Leszczyński, *Literatura dla młodych odbiorców 1990–2006*, "Guliwer" 2007, no. 1, pp. 33–36; see also E. Jamróz-Stolarska, *One hundred years of illustrated books for children in Poland: An analysis of the publishing market in the years 1918–2018*, "History of Education & Children's Literature" 2020, no. XV/2, pp. 331–353.

62 G. Jankowicz, P. Marecki, A. Pałęcka, J. Sowa, T. Warczok, *Literatura polska po 1989 roku...*, op. cit., p. 27.

63 *Słownik literatury dziecięcej i młodzieżowej*, op. cit., pp. 105–106.

64 M. Tokarczyk, *A jednak mi żal...*, interview by Katarzyna Iwanicka, „Guliwer” 1997, no. 2, pp. 11–12.

65 More about privatization of Nasza Księgarnia see: B. Gawryluk, K. Lajborek, M. Kobkiewicz, *Znamy się od dziecka...*, op. cit., pp. 123–131.

66 Ibidem, p. 13.

study of its operations in this recent period. Despite the efforts of the National Library, since 1989, it has been challenging to establish reliable publishing production figures, as publishers notoriously fail to submit mandatory copies of their publications. The catalogue of the National Library (integrated with the Polish national bibliography) and the statistics of *Ruch Wydawniczy w Liczbach* [*Polish Publishing in Figures*] differ substantially on the number of titles they register. For this reason, the data cited below should be understood as approximate estimates.

For this paper, we compared the figures and scope of Nasza Księgarnia's publications recorded in the catalogue of the National Library, whereby we juxtaposed and carried out a preliminary analysis of publications released in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020 (in five-year intervals). The total tally of publications entered into the catalogue in these years stood at about one hundred per year. Yet this figure also comprised books for adults, which the publisher offered along with its children's publications. In our study, we sought to calculate solely the data for children's and young adults' books.

In this way, we planned to capture the most salient directions of change in Nasza Księgarnia's publishing repertoire. We realize that the picture conveyed by these data is incomplete and simplified, but defective though it is, it still reveals certain noteworthy patterns. According to the National Library's catalogue, in the selected years, Nasza Księgarnia published, respectively, 83 (1995), 110 (2000), 56 (2005), 76 (2010), 74 (2015), and 90 (2020) children's titles⁶⁷.

Table 1. The number of publications for children and young adults released by Nasza Księgarnia in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020 according to the figures in the National Library catalogue

Year	Polish literature	Foreign literature	Total
1995	35	42	83
2000	43	61	110
2005	17	37	56
2010	27	48	76
2015	41	26	74
2020	34	56	90

Source: compiled by the authors according to the figures in the National Library catalogue.

A survey of the identified books clearly indicates that the post-privatization activity of Nasza Księgarnia was based on the deployment of the previously amassed capital and the publication of consecrated works. Both Polish and foreign classics of children's literature, most of which had often been published as part of Nasza Księgarnia's series under the People's Republic of Poland, consistently accounted for a large proportion of the publisher's repertoire in each of the studied years. Nasza Księgarnia continued to release the works of, for example, Astrid Lindgren, Tove

⁶⁷ Katalog Biblioteki Narodowej https://katalogi.bn.org.pl/discovery/search?vid=48OMNIS_NLOP:48OMNIS_NLOP [dostęp dn. 10.03.2021]

Jansson⁶⁸, Lucy Maud Montgomery, Alan Alexander Milne, and Jean-Jacques Sempé and René Goscinny, having been associated with these names before and holding the relevant copyright. Symptomatically, Nasza Księgarnia's repertoire still included books that were items on compulsory reading lists at Polish schools (published in dedicated series). This, on the one hand, warranted their literary value and, on the other, in market terms, guaranteed steady demand as the publications were intimately linked to the education system.

As another of its undertakings based on consecrated works, Nasza Księgarnia launched the project to remind the reading public of the *Poczytaj mi, mamo* series for young children and re-introducing its volumes on the market. Co-created by celebrated Polish authors and artists affiliated with the internationally acclaimed Polish school of illustration, the series enjoyed enormous popularity under the People's Republic of Poland⁶⁹. Anthologies containing selections of stories from the series began to be published in 2010. The first volume, *Poczytaj mi, mamo. Księga 1 [Read to Me, Mum: Book One]* (part of the series *Z Biblioteki Wydawnictwa "Nasza Księgarnia" [From the Library of Nasza Księgarnia]*) included ten titles. This publication was inspired by the decisions other publishers, such as Wytwórnia, Dwie Siostry, and Muza, made after 2005 to re-engage young readers with once well-known and beloved works by publishing reprints of books from the time of the People's Republic of Poland. These works were outstanding in terms of their literary and visual quality. So far, eight collections have appeared, with each containing ten stories, and in 2021, Nasza Księgarnia released a jubilee volume entitled *Poczytaj mi, mamo. 15 bajek na 100 lat [Read to Me, Mum: 15 Tales for the Centenary]* to celebrate the one-hundredth anniversary of its foundation.

Despite this project, contemporary Polish literature and new works were becoming an increasingly sizeable and significant part of Nasza Księgarnia's production. Among the noteworthy authors of the period were Marcin Brykczyński, Grzegorz Kasdepke, Marcin Pałasz, Małgorzata Strzałkowska, Agnieszka Tyszką, Natalia Usenko, and Rafał Witek. The publisher's clear tendency was to introduce new titles in the category of young adults' fiction. These were mainly books for girls penned by such authors as Agnieszka Błotnicka, Małgorzata Gutowska-Adamczyk, Agata Hajda, Anna Łacina, Agata Mańczyk, Beata Ostrowicka, and Ida Pierelotkin. As this suggests, besides projects based on literary classics, Nasza Księgarnia has also launched some more risky ventures of introducing new, young authors and previously unknown titles onto the market.

Notably, the publisher's repertoire was expanded by books which themes were bold in comparison with those of the typical Polish publications. In Poland, children's books which feature protagonists who cope with difficult emotions and social issues or break taboos on sexuality, bodiliness, and physiology still provoke a lot of controversy.

68 The works of these authors were published in the respective series of *Klub Przyjaciół Dzieci z Bullerbyn [The Club of Friends of the Six Bullerby Children]* and *Muminki [The Moomins]*.

69 Running since 1955, the series has proved an enormous publishing success and has enjoyed popularity till the present day.

While no such controversial topics were actually found among the Nasza Księgarnia collection that we examined, it nevertheless included, for example, Grzegorz Kasdepke's *Horror! Czyli skąd się biorą dzieci* [*The Horror! Or, Where Babies Come from*] (2010) and Milada Rezkova, Lukáš Urbánek, and Jakub Kaše's *Książka o kupie. Epicka podróż przez ludzki układ pokarmowy* (*Little Big Poop*, 2020). Similarly, so-called difficult themes were addressed in *Tylko bez całowania! czyli Jak sobie radzić z niektórymi emocjami* [*No Kissing! Or, How to Handle Some Feelings*] by Grzegorz Kasdepke (2020), *Nie bój się!: wielka księga strachu (nie tylko) dla cykorków* (*Don't Be Afraid: A Big Book about Fear Not Only for Young Scaredy-Cats*) by Milada Rezkova, Lukáš Urbánek and Jakub Kaše (2020), and *Palmy na biegunie północnym: wielka opowieść o zmianie klimatu* (*Palm Trees at the North Pole: The Hot Truth about Climate Change*) by Marc ter Horst (2020). This book focused on one of the central issues of the modern world. These titles suggest that while Nasza Księgarnia has been relatively conservative, it has nevertheless followed the general tendency of expanding the thematic range of children's books published in Poland by engaging with issues rarely or never dealt with before⁷⁰. This is well exemplified by Paweł Pawlak's *Ignatek szuka przyjaciela* (*Oscar Seeks a Friend*), a book published by Nasza Księgarnia in 2015. Its surprising topic (the protagonist is a skeleton who makes friends with a young girl) was matched by an equally surprising form, as its entire graphic design was consistently black.

Books offered by Nasza Księgarnia in the following years speak to the publisher's inclination to follow reading fads, as illustrated by Richelle Mead's *Vampire Academy* series, published from 2010. This was likely a response to Stephanie Meyer's best-selling and extraordinarily popular *Twilight* saga. In the same year, Nasza Księgarnia also launched the *Wilkołak* [*Werewolf*] series, within which actually only two books were released. Its repertoire was also constantly expanded by including series representing the so-called antipedagogy trend, such as, notably, Jeff Kinney's *Dziennik cwaniaczka* (*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*) and Lincoln Peirce's *Zapiski luzaka* (*Big Nate*). Essentially, popular foreign books as a rule appeared in Poland shortly after their international premieres.

Changes in the pursuits of Nasza Księgarnia, as well as of other mainstream publishers (e.g., Egmont and Wydawnictwo Olesiejuk), in the early 21st century were undoubtedly precipitated by small publishing companies, referred to as the Lilliputians, which began to mushroom on the Polish book market at the time. The Lilliputian publishers differed from medium and big publishers in that, from the very beginning, these companies did not seek to reap large revenue from their sales, and defined their activity, instead, as a "mission" – one whose goal was to put beautiful and wise books for the youngest readership on the Polish market. As a result of their operations, the Polish reading public was offered a varied array of children's books, and the available publishing output was augmented with texts by new Polish and foreign authors, niche editions, and books sporting avant-garde graphic designs.

70 Cf., e.g. M. Nadolna-Tłuczykont, *Tabu w literaturze dla młodego czytelnika* [in:] *Literatura dla dzieci i młodzieży*, ed. Katarzyna Tałuć, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2017, pp. 79–95.

The Lilliputian publishers primarily produced Polish and translated picturebooks, which had been essentially absent from Poland before. These publications attracted a steadily increasing readership, which eventually mobilized several mainstream publishers, including Nasza Księgarnia, to extend their production by publishing artistic picturebooks, a complete novelty in their collections, and books graphically developed by the artists of the Polish school of illustration⁷¹.

From its very foundation onwards, Nasza Księgarnia has always cared about the visual aspect of its publications and was even committed to publishing books for “a more demanding readership”⁷² in collaboration with recognized artists. Income acquired by its more commercial and traditional production enabled the publisher to issue a selection of books of extraordinary artistic quality, despite the high cost and without the need to rely on the financial profit (or even on repaying the costs incurred). Such choice publications were supposed to sell over many years and were not expected to bring quick financial revenue. In their case, thus, the cultural model and a long-term perspective proved dominant. As Bourdieu observes, when publishers begin to exploit their accumulated symbolic capital, the economy oriented to production and experimentation intermingles in their operations with the contradictory economy oriented to utilizing their assets and disseminating consecrated products⁷³. This mechanism is identifiable in the pursuits of Nasza Księgarnia, which exhibited increasing boldness in publishing books aligned with the latest tendencies in the editorship of children’s publications, as its position regarding the realities of the free market was stabilizing.

In recent years, a considerable proportion of the publisher’s production consisted of picturebooks, a genre which has enjoyed increasing appreciation in Poland. The repertoire of Nasza Księgarnia encompasses a range of picturebook types, such as narrative (e.g., Paweł Pawlak’s *Ignatek szuka przyjaciela*), early-concept (e.g., Ewa Kozyra-Pawlak’s *Liczy pieski* [*Puppy Maths*]), Wimmelbooks (the *Rok w...* [*A Year in...*] series), and nonfiction (e.g., a series of atlases by Ewa and Paweł Pawlak). The publishing company continues its venerable tradition by releasing books designed both by recognized artists from the older generation (such as Andrzej Heidrich, Anna Styło-Ginter, and Konstancy Maria Sopoćko) and middle-aged ones (such as Grażka Lange, Piotr Rychel, and Ewa and Paweł Pawlak), as well as by illustrators who have only recently made their mark on the book market (Emilia Dziubak, Nikola Kucharska, Asia Gwis, and Joanna Rusinek). The publisher’s sustained commitment to high editorial standards is reflected in the numerous awards and distinctions its books win at prestigious book-industry competitions, such as the Polish IBBY Book of the Year (Grażka Lange won the main award for her illustrations to Marcin Brykczyński’s *Biała*

71 See K. Biernacka-Licznar, E. Jamróz-Stolarska, N. Paprocka, *Lilipucia rewolucja. Awangardowe wydawnictwa dla dzieci i młodzieży w Polsce w latach 2000–2015. Produkcja wydawnicza. Bibliografia*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Stowarzyszenia Bibliotekarzy Polskich, 2018.

72 A. Tokarczyk, M. Kalinowska, *Zarabiamy na każdej książce*, interview by K. Frołow, „Magazyn Literacki” 2005, no. 2, p. 26.

73 P. Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, op. cit., p. 145.

krowa. Czarny niedźwiedź [*White Cow, Black Bear*] in 2004. An original picturebook distinction was awarded to Ewa Kozyra-Pawlak for *Ja, Bobik, czyli historia o kocie, który myślał, że jest królem* [*I, Bobik, or a Tale of a Cat Who Thought He Was King*] in 2014) and the Most Beautiful Book of the Year prize was received from the Polskie Towarzystwo Wydawców Książek (Polish Book Publishers' Association). Two 2017 distinctions in the category of children's and young adults' books were awarded to *Grzyby. Dziwne fakty z życia grzybów, o których nie mieliście pojęcia* [*Mushrooms: Strange Mushroom Trivia You Had No Idea of*] by Liliana Fabisińska with Asia Gwis's illustrations, and to *Mały atlas ptaków* [*A Small Atlas of Birds*] by Ewa and Paweł Pawlak).

Captured in Table 2, from the corpus of publications we examined, we observed an increase in the proportion of nonfiction in the repertoire of Nasza Księgarnia. This is consistent with and representative of a general trend in the children's book market in Poland, where nonfiction has been garnering steadily increasing popularity. Over the last decade, in line with the global fad, books disseminating knowledge among the youngest readership, many of them published in the picturebook form, have been attracting greater appreciation from the public, which has prompted publishers to expand their production by releasing such titles. Notably, Polish informational books, in particular those that tackle the recently fashionable environmental issues, are conquering international markets, winning multiple awards, and being translated into a number of languages (as exemplified by, for instance, the books of Aleksandra and Daniel Mizieleński and of Piotr Socha)⁷⁴. Among such highly acclaimed books are Nasza Księgarnia's publications, for example, Emilia Dziubak's *Niezwykłe przyjaźnie w świecie roślin i zwierząt* [*Extraordinary Friendships in the Vegetal and Animal World*] and *Rok w lesie* [*A Year in the Forest*].

Table 2. Children's and young adults' books published by Nasza Księgarnia in 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020: Fiction and nonfiction

Year	Fiction	Nonfiction	Total
1995	77	6	83
2000	104	6	110
2005	54	2	56
2010	75	1	76
2015	61	13	74
2020	59	31	90

Source: compiled by the authors according to the figures in the National Library catalogue.

Changes in the publishing production of Nasza Księgarnia attest to a definite extension of frames through the introduction of new editorial forms. This is vividly illustrated by the inclusion in 2015 of colouring and activity books in the publisher's repertoire as entirely novel products which tend to accompany the typical educational

⁷⁴ M. Zając, *Książki edukacyjne w natarciu?*, „Książki dla Dzieci i Młodzieży” dodatek bezpłatny do „Magazynu Literackiego Książki” 2019, no. 5, p. 1.

titles, recasting their content in new modes. This project is perfectly epitomized by a series of informational picturebooks for the youngest readers entitled *Opowiem Ci, mamo* [*I'll Tell You, Mum*]. With its title and logo referencing the well-established and popular *Poczytaj mi, mamo* series, the new project incorporates activity books. For instance, Marcin Brykczyński's *Opowiem ci, mamo, co robią samoloty* [*I'll Tell You, Mum, What Airplanes Do*] with Artur Nowicki's illustrations comes complete with *Samolotowy blok rysunkowy: pomyśl, narysuj, pomaluj* [*An Airplane Sketchpad: Think, Draw, Paint*] by Nowicki.

The immense popularity of some titles and series has also prompted Nasza Księgarnia to introduce totally new merchandise, such as toys and games, linked to their content and protagonists⁷⁵. Jigsaw puzzles, cuddly toys, and board games have augmented the publisher's catalogue of amplification tools. Finally, technological development has also made its imprint on the publication forms employed by Nasza Księgarnia, encouraging the company to launch e-books and audiobooks, with the proportion of such publications clearly increasing in the 2010s. Interestingly, both classics and recent titles of children's literature are being released as audiobooks.

As can be seen, the entire post-privatization period in Nasza Księgarnia's operations has been marked by the combination of the financial and cultural models. Admittedly, the repertoire of Nasza Księgarnia has been essentially based on the venerated classics of children's literature, books featured on the compulsory reading lists of the schools, and popular titles of contemporary international literature, all of them embodying improved editorial standards. However, along with the stabilization of the publisher's economic status and position on the market, efforts have more frequently been invested in projects involving financial risk. Nevertheless, the company can still boast of its considerable symbolic value, such as innovations in and the modernization of the graphic design of publications, the promotion of young Polish authors and illustrators, the introduction of new themes, and the implementation of new frames (, activity books, audiobooks, e-books, and educational toys linked to publications). In this way, Nasza Księgarnia has embraced the latest trends in the editorship of children's books and, at the same time, has to some extent contributed to and spread these tendencies.

Conclusion

The history of and changes in the publishing operations of Nasza Księgarnia, a publisher with a century-long history, make one realize how profoundly the children's book market in Poland has transformed over the last one hundred years. Radical shifts in the political system, comprehensive changes in the economy, and thorough socio-cultural transformations have determined the activities of publishing houses and incisively affected their operations. The history of Nasza Księgarnia clearly falls

⁷⁵ See B. Gawryluk, K. Lajborek, M. Korobkiewicz, *Znamy się od dziecka...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 34–37, 54–58.

into three distinct stages associated with their respective dominant models. The publishing house was founded as a social initiative (the social model), and subsequently functioned as a state-owned publisher (the political model) to finally morph into a private company (the financial model). Nevertheless, these prevalent models have consistently been coupled with the cultural model, manifested in the publisher's unwavering commitment to the quality of publications (in terms of both content and form) and permanent engagement in the promotion of reading habits. The cultural model entailed the accumulation of symbolic capital, which was instrumental for the company's survival in the challenging times of transition and for its adaptation to new conditions.

In line with Bhaskar's theory, the changing political, economic, and socio-cultural conjunctures, coupled with the transforming publishing models, have determined the selection and framing practiced by Nasza Księgarnia. In the first stage of the publisher's operations, selection was subordinated to educational goals; in the second, it was demarcated by ideological constraints; and in the third, it was subject to the principles of the free market and competition. At the same time, throughout these stages, literary classics have invariably been a crucial part of Nasza Księgarnia's repertoire as demanded by the cultural model. The framing typifying the entire period of the activity of Nasza Księgarnia has relied on the careful editorship of illustrated books, with the introduction of new forms of content dissemination both for classics and for recent literature, especially in the last free-market period (book series, e-books, picturebooks, activity books, colouring books, educational toys, and games).

The operations undertaken by Nasza Księgarnia over the one hundred years of its existence are testimony to the publisher's steady development and dedication to adjusting publishing strategies to the conditions of the Polish children's book market. The continual broadening of its product range, the evolution of its repertoire, the monitoring of and catering to the needs of the reading public, the espousal of emergent tendencies in the editorship of children's books, and the sustained commitment to the quality of its publications have all helped Nasza Księgarnia not only survive but also maintain its position as an appreciated and respected publisher. Books released by Nasza Księgarnia win awards and distinctions at multiple competitions, invite interest from foreign publishers, and are sold internationally. The publishing company still enjoys an important position in the Polish publishing market, is recognizable, and its publications are unmistakably associated with high quality by the reading public.

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Political, Cultural, and Social Factors in the Transformations of the Children's Book Market in Poland on the Example of Nasza Księgarnia Publishing House

Abstract

Poland's turbulent history, marked by several changes in the political system, has combined with dynamic economic, social, and cultural factors to profoundly affect the operations of all industries, including the publishing sector. This paper outlines the development of Nasza Księgarnia (literally: Our Bookshop), a publishing house founded in 1921 whose one-century-long history perfectly embodies the profound transformations which the Polish market of children's and young adults' books has experienced from the moment Poland regained sovereign statehood in 1918, through the communist period and the political transition of 1989, to the beginning of the new millennium. The argument is theoretically underpinned by the framework proposed by Michael Bhaskar (Bhaskar 2013), and the operations of Nasza Księgarnia are examined in terms of its crucial notions of framing, filtering, and amplification. At the same time, Hans Heino-Ewers's (Heino-Ewers 2009) model of children's literary communication is applied to highlight the specific role of Nasza Księgarnia as a publisher for children and young adults. These two theoretical tools offer insight into the ways in which political and social changes affected the evolution of the publishing repertoire and the editorial form of the children's book in Poland throughout and at the turn of the 20th century.

Keywords: Nasza Księgarnia publishing house, publishing market in Poland, children's literature, children's publishers, publishers' strategies.