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THE NOVELIZED BIOGRAPHY AND THE BIOGRAPHICAL NOVEL TWO INADEQUATELY DISTINGUISHED GENRES OF THE BELLETRISTIC BIOGRAPHY*

1. Novelized Biography

The biographical tale can be distinguished from the scientific biography, as also from the other genres of the belletristic biography, by way of examining the work's style and composition: it has not been turned into mere and pure literature, and the *par excellence* novelistic mode of narrative is employed only in sparse fragments of the tale. The case is different with the novelized biography. As the name suggests, its belletristic form exhibits far more affinity to that of the novel. Hence, when viewed solely in this aspect, the novelized biography has on frequent occasions been considered as indistinguishable from the biographical novel, as is evident in the approach of I. Stone or

* Division of the biographical literature into scientific and belletristic lies at the methodological cornerstone of the present paper. Three principal genres have been distinguished within the domain of the belletristic (or literary) biography: the biographical tale, the novelized biography, and the biographical novel. The literary productions of L. Strachey, A. Maurois, E. Ludwig, S. Zweig, G. Papini, H. Perruchot, A. Vallentin can be held up as good examples of the biographical tale. In comparison with the other two, this genre is the most documentary and factographical of all, though it also tends to synthesize a great deal, owing to its peculiar mode of narrative in which the person of the author—narrator is undisguised. Also, this genre is the least belletristic of all, hence it lends itself easily to characterization in opposition to the scientific biography. The term "tale" is designated to suggest complete disassociation from novelistic fiction and belletristic forms of narrative, instead stressing the authenticity and prevalence of the form of information transmission over other forms of epic presentation. It also stresses the considerable role played by the narrator, who adopts a frank attitude of an essayist or storyteller.

G. Lukács¹. And yet, these two genres are indeed different in their attitudes to fiction and poetic generalization. These essentials can, however, be discerned only upon close examination juxtaposing the world, as presented by the work in question, to reality, as found to exist beyond literature. Hence, an insufficient knowledge of the historical *realia* (the hero's life, personality, record of achievements, and epoch) or merely a formalistic approach to literature may even lead one into doubting whether there is any sense in distinguishing the two genres. The fact that there exist intermediate types of literature adds still more complexity to this issue, just suffice to cite: A. Maurois, *Ariel ou la vie de Shelley* (1923), I. Stone, *Lust for Life, The Novel of Vincent Gogh* (1934), F. d'Eaubonne, *La vie passionnée de Paul Verlaine* (1960), J. Dobraczyński, *Listy Nikodema (Nicodemus' Letters)* (1952), A. Lanoux, *Bonjour, monsieur Zola* (1952).

By way of example, the following are typical realizations of the structure of the novelized biography: O. Kuznetsova, *Wróg pod mikroskopem (Enemy in Microscope)* (on Louis Pasteur), J. Harrington, *Paul of Tarsus*, books by Catherine Drinker Bowen, Louise Hall Tharps, Madeleine B. Stern, and in Polish literature — J. Parandowski, *Król życia (King of Life)* (on Oscar Wilde), A. Świdorska, *Zygmunt* (on Zygmunt Krasiński), and *Adam* (on Adam Mickiewicz), E. Szermentowski, *Pan Henryk* (on Henryk Sienkiewicz), S. Majchrowski, *Pan Sienkiewicz*.

The novelized biography undertakes to give the reader a close-up picture of the hero's life, as suggestive, accurate and faithful as possible. Consequently, the tendency to base the text on the most extensive sources available is united with the tendency to make ample use of the novelistic technique of narrative. These ambitions of an accurate, hence "scientific", union, a faithful approach to biographical facts and historical and local *realia*, together with the belletristic mode of narrative animating such facts and *realia*, have been gaining popularity especially since 1940, and are termed by the student of the evolution of the modern biography as "the synthetical method"².

¹ I. Stone, *The Biographical Novel*, part of a book by three authors, entitled *Three Views of the Novel*, Washington 1957, pp. 1—16; G. Lukács, *Der historische Roman*, Berlin 1955, chapter entitled *Die biographische Form und ihre Problematik*, pp. 328—352.

² "However, one new school then developed attempted to synthesize the many radical methods and to combine with the extensive research in primary sources after the model of the best scholars. [...] The method was fictional in that it permitted the use of manufactured quotations and imagined details. [...] Finally, they placed much emphasis upon minute description of the scene, with almost incredible labor often expended in the presentation of the pettiest details [...]" (J. A. Garraty, *The Nature of the Biography*, New York 1957, pp. 144—145).

Certain authors, impressed by the results of own research in source materials and giving full credit to the scientific character of their biographies, emphasize their literary texture by means of terms, like "the narrative method", "the chronological method", "biography in the present-tense technique"³. As can be inferred from their own statements, they are wholly convinced about their "objective approach" and they are anxious to have the reader share their conviction.

"The whole work is based faithfully on documents, no resort to fancy has been made, and the facts are related with a calendar-like accuracy. All statements of Krasiński's are authentic (apart from, quite obviously, some conversations of little consequence), and drawn either from his letters or poems; in this latter case, their message rather than their form has been preserved. Descriptions of landscapes and nature mostly are his own or by his contemporaries, only in a few cases they are mine" (A. Świdorska, *Zygmunt. Powieść biograficzna o Zygmuncie Krasińskim* [*Zygmunt. A Biographical Novel on Zygmunt Krasiński*]). Preface).

"I realize that the reader, taking into his hands *Pan Sienkiewicz*, needs, and has the right to demand, an explanation to what extent the events described herein corroborate with facts [...]. Here and there, a commentary has been inserted into the text, but I have tried not to dot my «i's» and cross the «t's», especially when conclusions might seem doubtful. And there were many such moments. I do not think that the method of explaining everything at any price should ultimately be advantageous at all [...]. In my *Pan Sienkiewicz* I put prime emphasis on the facts. While fiction is closely interwoven with reality throughout the text, yet the yarn of events is always genuine. And after all, the word «fiction» should be used in quotation marks for it does not denote any measure of license. This «fiction» is interwoven with the background not only with a view to filling gaps but also to bringing out certain events more distinctly; it serves as a means of retouching and introducing realistic corrections in order to make the genuine chain of events more eloquent [...]. The facts are presented in full light whenever the circumstances are known. During my work, particularly on the initial chapters of the book, I frequently had to do with facts alone, with no accompanying details whatever. Whenever I considered a fact as being significant enough, like the expedition across the Vistula to reach the insurgents' quarters, I had to «round

³ Garraty, *op. cit.*, p. 145: "Yet writers of this type considered themselves highly scientific. Made-up quotations were «used sparingly» and were «always based on fact»".

out» the picture by some circumstantial details, but in doing that I always relied on *realia* of Sienkiewicz's life and his contemporary epoch" (S. Majchrowski, *Pan Sienkiewicz*. Author's Foreword).

"Let me note also that, the belletristic form notwithstanding, nearly all in this tale is truly authentic and based on letters and documents, published or yet unpublished memoirs, and on the reports of persons who remembered Prus and the other characters described in this tale"⁴ (S. Pauszer-Klonowska, *W cieniu nałęczowskich drzew* (*In the Shade of Nałęczów Trees*). Postscript).

Every such declaration, which as a rule is appended to each book representing this literary genre, is supplemented by a list of sources on which the author drew and which, as can be seen from the last excerpt quoted, may also include spoken accounts by the hero's contemporaries. These sources of various description are however specified only in the bibliography, whereas in the narrative proper they are not given away so as not to mar the novelistic illusion. This is a rule even if certain fragments of the text, being literal quotations, are distinguished from the rest by means of quotation marks⁵. The reader cannot but believe the author's faithfulness; and whenever he comes across quotations whose sources are unspecified he can at best wonder over the excerpt's author or source or, in some cases, enjoy recognizing both⁶.

Nonetheless, a source analysis of texts of the novelized biography proves that the declaration on the documentary faithfulness ought to be treated in absolute seriousness. As a rule, authors feel obliged to read a very large proportion of what should be read, visit the localities in which their hero lived, see all the buildings and interiors involved in the story, and get acquainted with the character, landscape and history

⁴ In the absence of universally accepted terminology terms like "tale", "novel" and "belletristic biography" are sometimes confused. The authoress used the term "tale" applying it to a text which, in keeping with terminology adopted in the present paper, should rather be defined as a novelized biography. The same confusion will be repeated in a few subsequent excerpts quoted below.

⁵ "We give no footnotes for these would have to be appended to each sentence almost" (V. Chodusevic, *Derzavin*, Paris 1931, quoted after R. Zimand, *Trzy studia o Boyu* (*Three Studies on Boy*), Warszawa 1961, p. 220). I. Stone offers an interesting description of how he fought to abandon, on literary, aesthetic grounds, the practice of marking quoted excerpts by graphical means in print. His attempts went counter to the scientific editorial usage (*op. cit.*, p. 15).

⁶ "And I dare say that for those of my readers who have an intimate knowledge of Mickiewicz's poetry it might be interesting to try and recognize from which part of what poem this or another image has been taken" (A. Świdorska, *Adam*, Foreword). Although this statement concerns more immediately the transpositional exploitation of the source, it also goes for any literal quotations which are left unexplained by footnotes.

of the regions important in his or her life. In effect, the authenticity of not only facts but the most minute detail is indeed quite impressing. In many cases, it is even admirable: "The mosaic of authentic utterances has been put together in an expert artistic fashion and moulded into a uniform entity, never giving the impression of alien titbits cemented together. It gives one strong and sometimes even profound impressions. Never will the reader realize what enormous labour lies at the cornerstone of this romance — and that invisibility of travail involved is the work's particular asset. [...] Statements from a few different sources are put together, and always in an apposite fashion. For example, when Zygmunt characterizes Cieszkowski (p. 329), his judgment is taken from the letter to Delfina, written on December 30, 1839 [...], and the inserted French phrase *mais pas de sang dans les veines* originates from February 19, 1840"⁷.

The fundamental assumption of the structure of the novelized biography is transmission to the reader of this immediate quality of the picture either by the visual perception of its external image or by mental, "internal" perception, much like the ordinary novel does it, but with the following essential qualification: the hero and the world that surrounds him are not creatures of free-roaming fantasy but rather a reflection of authentic reality.

However, this assumption is in essence quite problematic. It cannot be carried through with ultimate consistency, as is admitted *expressis verbis*, though only in passing, in all the statements of the authors quoted above, who invariably seem anxious to have a "loophole" entitling them to resort to "supplementary" fiction. Furthermore, the aesthetic prudence of such an assumption may also prove doubtful. While disassociating ourselves from the still lingering programme of "generic purity"⁸, from condemnation of the union of truth with fiction as a methodological and artistic bastard creation (which, it has been alleged by many, can make neither a good biography nor a good novel), let us

⁷ From J. Kleiner's review of *Zygmunt* by A. Świdorska ("Pamiętnik Literacki" 1947, p. 345).

⁸ The role played in a concrete literary work by elements of heterogeneity is emphasized by, above all, S. Skwarczyńska and her genological school. For an outline of her profound theoretical approach to the problem of the "generic instrumentation of a work of literature" see *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*, vol. 3: *Rodzaj literacki. Ogólna problematyka genologii* (*An Introduction to the Theory of Literature*, vol. 3: *The Literary Genre. General Problems of Genology*), Warszawa 1965, pp. 178—200. Also compare the historical essays: *Na marginesach „Pana Tadeusza”. Sztuka plastyczna a gatunkowa wieloaspektowość „Pana Tadeusza”* (*Marginal Notes on "Pan Tadeusz". Visual Art and the Generic Multiaspected Nature of "Pan Tadeusz"*), in: S. Skwarczyńska, *Mickiewiczowskie powino-*

nonetheless probe into the possible consequences of a consistent implementation of the programme of the novelized biography.

The part of this programme, demanding that the hero and "nearly all" events be based on source material, finds ample confirmation in the reality: "nearly all" *minutiae* of the mosaic can indeed prove their documentary identity. Now, it seems a doubtful proposition that this alone will be enough to make the overall picture of the mosaic genuine and faithful.

The very problem of selecting biographical material is much more delicate than in the tale which employs a synthetic kind of narrative, relying chiefly on account and information. One sentence or a short passage of the biographical tale contains on the average more biographical material than the text of an equal length but a typically novelistic kind of narrative (dialogue, a little scene, an eye-witness account). Thus, the novelized biography has two directions from which to choose: either a considerable lengthening of the text (which, true enough, in this genre frequently happens to be much longer than in the biographical tale⁹), or else "biographical abridgement", that is an exemplifying kind of narrative, presenting the various life episodes according to the principle *pars pro toto* (in this latter case, there emerges the problem of initiating the reader into this principle for otherwise he will be grossly deceived). The reader usually is bewildered either by the confusing omission of certain matters or, on the other extreme, by the disheartening oscillation between annalistic accuracy and novelistic generalization, or finally by the repetitive, hence artistically ineffective, tedious passages concerned with similar biographical facts, like numerous travels, conversations, etc. At the cornerstone of the classical structure of the novelized biography lies a conflict the intensity of which depends on the kind and

wactwa z wyboru (*Mickiewiczian Elective Affinities*), Warszawa 1957. Cf. also: *Struktura rodzajowa „Genezis z Ducha” Słowackiego i jej tradycje literackie* (*The Generic Structure of Słowacki's "Genesis from Soul" and Its Literary Traditions*), in: *Juliusz Słowacki. W 150-lecie urodzin* (*Juliusz Słowacki. On the 150th Anniversary of His Birth*), Warszawa 1959. Cf. also: T. Cieślukowska, *Pisarstwo Teodora Parnickiego* (*The Literary Production of Teodor Parnicki*), Warszawa 1965.

⁹ A biographical tale as a rule fills only one volume, whereas the other genres much more frequently extend to several volumes. J. Burke, *Immortal Memory*, a presentation of the life of Robert Burns in five volumes; E. Sós, *Aki az égtől elragadta a villámot* (*He who Harnessed the Lightning*), in the Polish edition was abridged to one volume of an "average length" — about 300 pages. From the domain of Polish literature we might cite the examples of the 585-page novelized biography of Zygmunt Krasiński by A. Świdorska, entitled *Zygmunt*, and two volumes of the same author's *Adam*, describing the life of Adam Mickiewicz until his departure from Russia; J. Kleiner in his preface predicts two further volumes still to come.

quantity of biographical material. This is a conflict between, on the one hand, the meticulously informative function and, on the other, the artistic requirements which are a consequence of the adopted novelistic convention. One way of prudently evading this issue, though by no means solving it, is the relatively frequent resort to the technique of tale. On the other hand, a turn to the novelistic kind of abridgement and generalization, while oftentimes advantageous on artistic grounds, jeopardizes the specific informative function which is peculiar to this genre. And after all, both attest to a certain degree of instability evidently inherent in a literary genre which is based on conflicting assumptions.

The problem of transposition also gives rise to some misgivings with regard to the authentic quality of the hero's image. It is a time-tested practice to put into the hero's mouth words which he uttered on a different occasion and under different circumstances, and which are taken at will from his diary, memoirs, letters, a speech, or even from works of literature. All these sources are then made to represent his inner experiences and thoughts on any particular occasion. When this practice gained popularity tens of years ago it could indeed be approved of without serious qualifications. But the modern criticism of a simplified biographism and psychologism, both of which are prone to identify too readily all facts of life with works of art, and the modern theory of the relationship between art and reality prove the fallacy or at least risk involved in such a process if it is accompanied by the author's conviction that he probes into the authentic inner experiences or persuasions of the hero¹⁰. The modern linguistic analysis of situations in which utterances are made and their various differently concretized components also confirms, from the semantic point of view, our scepticism with re-

¹⁰ The formulation "simplified biographism and psychologism" presupposes good sense inherent in that methodological approach, albeit with some qualifications. Says an author who has an intimate insight into the *arcana* of artistic creation: "Modern researchers, concentrating on problems of artistic creation, tend to bypass biography as allegedly failing to elucidate matters of artistic production. I think this attitude is as wrong as extreme biographism tends to be" (M. Jastrun, *Poezja i rzeczywistość* (Poetry and Reality), an essay printed in the volume: *Poezja i rzeczywistość* (Poetry and Reality), Warszawa 1965). J. J. Lipski advocates biographism in literary research, speaking from the position of a modern scholar who takes into account the methodological impulses of contemporary linguistics, logic and the sociology of culture, in his essay *Biografia a interpretacja* (Biography and Interpretation), in: *Z problemów literatury polskiej XX wieku*, vol. 1: *Młoda Polska* (Problems of 20th Century Polish Literature, vol. 1: Young Poland Movement), Warszawa 1965, pp. 180—205. The practice usually followed by the authors of biographies goes in the direction: not "from life to work" but in reverse, yet it is a simple consequence of the opposite and therefore is genetically related to biographism.

gard to the practice of transposition when this, let us repeat once again, is adhered to in quest for absolute authenticity. Let us note that in the relation "work of art — consciousness of the author" transposition has of late been employed by the novelized biography more sparingly and cautiously, whereas it continues to flourish in the biographical novel which makes a conscious use of literary fiction. Instead of direct transposition, one is apt to find a simpler and safer juxtaposition of the hero's personal situation or experience with a literary fragment containing an analogy; the reader is left with the illusion of drawing any conclusions, biographical or concerned with the psychology of literary production, on his own. The remaining sources of transposition are drawn upon by the novelized biography either solely as a convention peculiar to this genre or unwittingly that such a technique might conflict with the postulated authenticity of the hero's image.

Whereas only the more perspicacious and critical reader is aware to the problems of selection and transposition, even a wholly "average" reader will be alarmed by these parts of the authors' declarations which signal, with commendable frankness, the inevitable intrusion of elements of fiction which is inseparable from the novelist technique of narrative. Here is a typical situation: "Slight are the author's additions and supplements which are not based on *realia*; I have tried my best to apply them in a most cautious and sparing fashion" (M. Warneńska, *Wiatr za progiem* (*The Wind Outdoors*), Postscript). The supplements are claimed to have been slight, but which ones and how slight are they? These "loopholes", however limited, for fiction thus conceived as part of the structure of the novelized biography quite understandably are received by the reader without enthusiasm, especially where he has already been assured that "the belletristic form notwithstanding, nearly all in this novel is truly authentic". Once the reader starts wondering over the authenticity of detail there is no knowing where the author drew the line between relevant and fully authentic facts and a concrete detail or interpretation that is "supplemented". Indeed with regard to an authentic personality, especially a "great" personality, one craves to learn even about some "irrelevant detail" to the point of ignoring G. Lukács's blasts against the novelized biography and biographical novel exactly on account of the presence therein of such "irrelevant matter" which, he says, is unscientific in that it does not contribute to elucidating any historical regularities¹¹. However, the average reader's attitude toward this genre of belletristic biography concentrates on the individual personality as

¹¹ G. Lukács: „Es muss gesagt werden: es führt kein Weg von den faulen Äpfeln Schillers zum *Wallenstein*, von dem schwarzen Kaffee, der Napoleonbüste,

approached in his/her unique singularity; fascinated by an authentic hero, "he wants to know not only that this hero is of middle stature, has a swarthy complexion and dark eyes, but also where he works, how he lives, what his youth and the subsequent years were like, and all about his likes, dislikes and views on various matters"¹². This natural human curiosity is left ill-advised by concrete facts whose authenticity may be questioned. The alarm grows stronger whenever it turns out, surprisingly enough, that certain *minutiae*, in which the reader was inclined to see fiction, prove well-authenticated after all. His common-sense views on the borderline between truth and fiction are then completely thrown off balance. Thus it happens that a loyally admitted, wholly permissible and, more than that, even necessary admixture of fiction affects the entire text as a drop of ink which destroys the transparence of a whole glass of pure water. The whole glass of water becomes light blue, the text almost in its entirety becomes unreliable and suspectful. How instructive is the reply of the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson to a remark that a certain book could be believed only in half: but we don't know which half to believe, said he¹³. The two hundred years that have elapsed since have not changed the attitude of the 20th century reader: "In this case despite all assurances that this peculiar «novel» is based on genuine materials, we never know which description and which dialogue is authentic and which is «novelistic». I have the impression that the authoress has accumulated a great deal of credible material. It is a pity these materials have been so wholly immersed in the novel [...]"¹⁴. The reader of a novelized biography probably enters into a closer, more intimate communion with the hero than the reader

der Mönchskutte und den Spazierstock Balzacs zur *Comédie humaine*, usw." [...] „Es wäre aber eine Illusion zu glauben, dass man von diesen einzelnen Lebensstat-
sachen aus zu diesen wirklichen und grossen Zusammenhängen unmittelbar dar-
stellerisch hinaufsteigen könne" (op. cit., pp. 333, 334).

¹² B. Prus, Henryk Sienkiewicz, in: *Studia literackie, artystyczne i polemiki* (Literary and Artistic Studies and Polemics), Warszawa 1950, p. 257. Virginia Woolf had the same view of the matter: "When and where did the real man live; how did he look; did he wear laced boots or elastic-sided; who were his aunts, and his friends; how did he blow his nose; whom did he love, and how; and when he came to die did he die in his bed like a Christian, or..." (*The Art of Biography*, "Atlantic Monthly", April 1939, here quoted after the reprint in the anthology *Biography as an Art. Selected Criticism, 1560—1960*, ed. by J. L. Clifford, London 1962, p. 134).

¹³ M. I. Origo, *Biography, True and False*, "The Atlantic", February 1959. Here quoted after the reprint in J. L. Clifford's anthology (op. cit., p. 210).

¹⁴ Z. Starowieyska-Morstinowa, "Tygodnik Powszechny" 1966, No. 26, the review of the book of T. Weyssenhoff *Ojczyzna z wyboru* (*Elective Homeland*), Warszawa 1966.

of a biographical tale. But on the other hand, the former is less convinced about the authenticity of all information he learns, and the very premises of this literary genre cause that he is not indifferent to this question. Thus, in this point lies the weakness of this genre, so specifically nonhomogeneous in its inner structure, because it attempts to reduce fictional elements to the common denominator of authenticity.

Another serious difficulty, if not inherent contradiction, can be posed by the programme calling for reconciliation of the quest for authenticity with requirements of an artistic structure. In the biographical tale the narrator can always serve as an integrating factor — by way of his own interpretation, particular or generalizing reflective afterthought, sometimes digression, he welds together and models at will the pattern on the biographical record, magnifying these compositional properties of the given work which elevate it to the rank of a work of art. In the case of the novelized biography, while theoretically nothing appears to obstruct the same process, the historical moment of its flourish — the second quarter of the 20th century — went too far in restricting the narrator's role to direct representative narrative which is, according to a naturalistic theory, the most "realistic" and "objective" of all; now these two properties are programmatically very valuable for the genre¹⁵. As a rule, the narrator of a novelized biography is abstract and well disguised so that the reader could relish all the pleasure of direct communion with a great, fascinating personality. Thus the narrator, who is so essential in the biographical tale in that he serves as a subjective unifying factor, lending the story a greater measure of credibility, is completely bereft of this function in the case of the novelized biography.

A "film" of the hero's life must then become the centre of gravity of the artistic endeavour. The word "film" does not enter the scene accidentally. The era of the motion picture has impressed an indelible mark on the composition and mode of narrative of the novelized biography

¹⁵ The method of "contemporizing" narrative, designed to give the reader the illusion of being present in the presented world, is prescribed in modern times by I. Stone. He argues that the reader's capacity for identifying himself more readily with the hero and his life is the main reason for the edge in popularity held by this genre over the scientific biography (*op. cit.*, p. 2). In this connection, he bans all statements from the narrator which might signal the real distance in time (*ibidem*, p. 7). The illusory conviction about the inherent objectivity of the "scenic presentation method" („szenische Darstellung" in the terminology of O. Ludwig and O. Walzel, „personale" and „neutrale Erzählsituation" in the more recent terminology of F. Stanzel, *Die typischen Erzählsituationen im Roman*, Wien—Stuttgart 1955) within the domain of the epic is castigated by K. Hamburger, *Die Logik der Dichtung*, Stuttgart 1957, p. 85.

by the latter's convention of following the film technique¹⁶. By way of example, we might cite E. Ludwig's *Menschensohn*, I. Stone's *Lust for Life*, Malewska's *Żniwo na sierpie* (*Sickle's Harvest*), and books by A. Świdorska. The life of the hero is presented almost exclusively *ad oculos*. Each part and each chapter constitutes not a chain, for this word suggests a close union, but a more or less loosely arranged succession of scenes which are sparsely peppered with quotations, oftentimes of unspecified origin. The scenes are arranged in precise chronological order, which is all the more welcome in view of the fact that dates, places, and other similar "concrete biographical data" are cited here, unlike the biographical tale, very sparingly; all relevant information most often than not must be elicited by the reader from the complexities of the novelistic plot, that is the particular representation of the concrete. This aspect will be referred to later in the present work when we proceed to a discussion of the informative quality of the genre. Immediately more important is the fact that, while assuming a great measure of faithfulness in relating the course of life, the plot easily adopts the appearance of a somewhat amorphous mass, a chaotic and protracted succession of loosely arranged scenes, which are not always properly differentiated innerly as regards their message and emotional and formal quality. This haphazard and somewhat monotonous composition, characteristically compounded by the frequent evasion of any more profound and individualistic analyses of the hero's psyche (the convention of dramatic-behaviouristic narrative is apparently coupled in this case with the anxiety to preserve authenticity), can overshadow the inte-

¹⁶ Analogy to the film technique is frequently raised by critics. J. Kleiner attributes this to the general impact which the motion pictures have had on the novel (*Preface* to A. Świdorska's *Adam*, vol. 2, Warszawa 1956). Earlier findings suggest some concealed affinities, running more deeply and growing out of the identical social and cultural background of the literary biography and the film, whose climax came about in the same historical period as a result of definite cultural and aesthetic demands of the same type of public. Critical remarks are made enumerating such short-comings of the film and the literary biography, like the superficial approach and easy appeal without taxing one's intellect, as also exploitation of human curiosity and easy effects to cater thereto. Critics of the culture-forming role of the motion pictures and the novelistic biography consider both to be an adequate reflection of the inexorable weakness of our age. Cf. W. Mommsen, „Legitime“ und „illegitime“ *Geschichtsschreibung*, München—Berlin 1930. Cf. also J. Huizinga, *Aufgabe der Kulturgeschichte*, in: J. Huizinga, *Wege der Kulturgeschichte*, München 1930, the chapter starting with: „Es wäre ein Schaden für unsere Kultur, wenn die Geschichtsschreibung für die allgemein Gebildeten in die Hände einer ästhetisierenden Gefühlshistorie geriete, die aus literarischem Bedürfnis entspringt, mit literarischen Mitteln arbeitet und auf literarische Effekte zielt“, pp. 33—46, and most especially pp. 43—46.

resting and by no means trivial composition of the authentic life and obliterate the internal development process of the personality, which constitutes an essential artistic asset of any epic work¹⁷. The fact is all the more ill-boding as life itself seldom cares for effects of literary composition, tending toward repetitiveness or "abandoning" certain motifs without fully exploiting them, e.g. the episode of Mickiewicz's meeting with Flora Laskaris. On purely aesthetic grounds, the reader of a novelized biography sometimes feels like regretting that the hero had so many acquaintances, travelled so widely, or created too many works; or, perhaps more properly, regretting that the author was able to lay his hands on so much biographical material. How correctly in this connection G. Lukács combats the popular notion that everything which is authentic enough contributes great artistic value to a work of art¹⁸. Sometimes the reverse happens: on account of shortages in biographical material, various periods of the hero's life must be shortened out of proportion, even with distinct gaps in time, which makes artistic attainment in the construction of the hero's personality and on the more general plane of composition considerably more difficult.

The shortage of material is inevitable with regard to the hero's psychic processes. To a certain extent, this is remedied by the method of transposition which, however, is not always applicable and begins to lose cognitive value in the present period when biographism and psychologism are discredited. Hence, the construction of the hero is frequently limited to the external facts of life and only some generalities concerning his psychic life. This easily results in a one-sided and superficial approach to the personality of the hero, which is at variance with the expectations cherished by the reader: "I recall how disappointed

¹⁷ "As far as this book is concerned, well I am repelled by its form: a thoroughly novelistic form and, I should say, after a somewhat filmic fashion, too; all of it is composed of short snapshots, and it takes some reading before one can grasp with whom and what the author deals, to say nothing of the dates which, after all, are quite important and for which one has to dig long and deep. The novel is usually considered to be the most digestible literary form, but I doubt the justice of that conviction. Good and lucid stories, like the biographies written by Maurois or, in Poland, by Marian Brandys are as digestible or perhaps even more digestible, since they are more translucent and readable" (Starowieyska-Morstinowa, *op. cit.*).

¹⁸ „Es gehört zu den modernen Vorurteile, dass die historische Authentizität einer Tatsache ihre dichterische Wirksamkeit in sich verbürge. Dieses Vorurteil wird verstärkt, wenn es sich um die Aussprüche und die Lebensstatsachen von Menschen handelt, die von den Volksmassen mit Recht geliebt und verehrt werden" (*op. cit.*, p. 336). The profoundly human interest even in the most accidental circumstances of the life of an eminent personality may augment the aesthetic impact of a concrete detail; yet accumulation of details poses a real danger.

I was reading Ludwig's *Goethe* or Maurois' *Child of Sun* or *Byron*. None of these works was a novel dealing with the hero's psychic life, each contented itself to a biography of facts and rumours. For years I had dreamed of a novel which would not be limited to hard facts but would offer a possibly faithful psychological portrait of the artist"¹⁹. "I think that by virtue of such an arrangement of the material the image of the hero suffered: he is represented in a one-sided fashion as being courageous, enduring, severe and even tough [...]. But the magnanimity of Father Beyzym, his ardent love of God and the poor, his deep-running psychic life, are concealed from view and scarcely visible"²⁰.

Also, there are works whose authors preserve painstaking authenticity with regard to the external plot and at the same time do not hesitate to deal with the hero's psyche at greater length. They say simply: "Our method is no deception. The reader knows we are not God, knows we cannot actually be inside John's mind — and knows also [...] that behind our narrative is historical source and historical evidence"²¹. When authors thus appeal to the common sense of the reader they frequently feel free to present the hero's childhood at greater length, whereas when they stick more rigorously to the principle of documentary faithfulness that part of the hero's life is sometimes passed over in silence on account of gross deficiency in existing evidence. However, all in this domain which transcends the strict framework of transposition means venturing into the realm of the novel. Consistent application of the source base tends to obstruct, if not preclude altogether, any serious artistic attainment in this genre which, pressed as it is between the hammer of the trend toward a novelistic "animation" and the anvil of source-based accuracy, has precious little leeway to exercise deeper artistic ambitions. The situation is further deteriorated by the fact that many authors spend all of their creative resources on these two areas of artistic production of which the one gives them the illusion of creating a scientific work, a trend clearly perceptible in the West, and the other is perhaps too automatically identified with a quite separate domain of artistic values²².

Let us now proceed to synthetical conclusions.

¹⁹ M. Jastrun, *Tomasz Mann, czyli o powołaniu artysty* (*Thomas Mann or Some Remarks on the Artist's Calling*), "Twórczość" 1956, No. 1, p. 49.

²⁰ Starowieyska-Morstinowa, *op. cit.*

²¹ This statement was made by C. Drinker Bowen, the well-known author of "synthetical biographies", that is to say novelized biographies (Garaty, *op. cit.*, p. 146).

²² Apart from J. A. Garraty's other remarks on that topic, which have been quoted above, it is a meaningful circumstance that, despite his avowedly

In comparison with the case of the biographical tale, the fusion of the authenticating trend with the literary, novelistic trend modifies the potentiality of the informative function in the following aspects: 1. The anxiety to preserve the illusion of the novelistic picture, the readability and fluency of the narrative not only sterilizes the text from documentary footnotes but also diminishes the employment of quotation marks and the presence of dates, figures and crisp pieces of information from the author. 2. Certain contents are conveyed in a more suggestive, plastic and moody fashion, which makes them engrained in the reader's memory for a longer while; others are suffused and bleared in an overdose of detail, their message "diluted" in the flow of the literary ornate idiom, in the ambiguity of poetical phrases, or on account of shortcomings in composition — most especially its looseness and monotony. In many a case, all these crosscurrents may be encountered in the novel proper, too, but in this genre in which a large amount of accurate and univocal information is considered as prerequisite and therefore expected, these conflicting tendencies assume the proportion of irksome "noise" disturbing information transmission. 3. Part of the content is represented in a manner which leaves one unsure as to the "code" chosen by the author: literal information or a novelistic picture. 4. The informative value of the work can be very doubtful in the light of some contents created in effect of the method of transposition.

These qualifications refer to the informative quality with regard to particular facts. Difficulties in this area tend to increase when the scope of the problem gets bigger, its message more universal and transcending the skeleton of biographical facts, and especially when the author nourishes the ambition of portraying the various historical and social conditionings of the hero's consciousness, life, nature and rank of his

sceptical attitude to the scientific value of the novelized biography, the author nonetheless examines this genre in a work that is not, for all practical purposes, devoted to the belletristic biography. After all, this is a direct sequel to the laxness of Western views on whether the biographical literature, and even history in general, forms part of science or art. This problem is very well elucidated by statements collected by J. A. Clifford in his anthology under the meaningful title: *Biography as an Art*. Another modern scholar, L. E. Halkin, the author of *Initiation à la critique historique*, which won him a prize of the Institut de France, when dealing with biography as a historiographical genre acknowledges the prime theoretical authority of A. Maurois, but lists among other masters of the biographical literature not only L. Strachey but, of all writers, H. Belloc. More poignancy is added to that fact by A. Maurois himself, who in his book *Aspects de la biographie*, Paris 1928, chapter entitled *De la biographie considérée comme la science*, expends considerable energy to prove that "the modern biography" ("la biographie moderne"), by which he really understands the biographical tale, cannot be a scientific work.

creative record. G. Lukács is right to a certain extent when he speaks of the cognitive deficiency of the biographical novel in relation to the grand historical-social-cultural problematics of the epoch on account of the compositional limitation of the novel which focuses attention on the fate of an individual, presented chiefly, if not exclusively, in the aspect of his/her personal experiences. He would be even more right had he referred to the genre presently under consideration. This genre's structure only very reluctantly admits the necessary evil like the author's discursive relation or the fictional element which introduces on a larger scale the typical contents with a view to forming broader novelistic generalizations²³.

This generic weakness of the novelized biography can be offset by the artistic advantages of a novelistic representation only when the author's talent luckily encounters objective aspects of the hero's life, conducive to the poetics of the novel, and also a satisfactory condition of sources, with no great time gaps. More often than not, however, the reader comes across some glaring faults in the composition of the work and construction of the main character.

The present description of the structure of a literary genre has been transformed into outspoken criticism of such. The author of the present paper sees fundamental contradictions in the very premises of this genre, which in effect reduce its informative potential and block the work from attaining an individual construction of eminent artistic value. For a literary genre is not always a "natural form" which evolved in the genetical connection with a definite practical situation of life²⁴. It frequently arises *lege artis*, and then its structure may contain elements which are mutually hardly reconcilable, let alone symbiotic²⁵. This theoretical deliberation is confirmed empirically by the fact that the no-

²³ "Novelistic generalization" in this context has a significance very closely related to H. Markiewicz's views on the essence of literary typification: "fictional reality is at once veristic and representative in relation to the structure of objective reality" (*Realizm, naturalizm, typowość* [Realism, Naturalism, Typification], in: *Główne problemy wiedzy o literaturze* [Principal Problems in the Theory of Literature], Kraków 1965).

²⁴ Cf. S. Skwarczyńska, *Geneza i rozwój rodzajów literackich* (Origins and Development of Literary Genres), in: *Z teorii literatury. Cztery rozprawy* (Four Dissertations on the Theory of Literature), Łódź 1947, and the remarks on the practical and literary origins of literary genres in vol. 3 of *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*, pp. 227–258.

²⁵ In this connection the above remarks on the structure of the novelized biography are to be viewed not only as an attempt to characterize a genre, which has not hitherto been defined and described by genology, but also as a contribu-

velized biography as a literary genre has to-date produced little offspring of a profound aesthetic value and great cognitive assets. This happens to be true despite the more than thirty-year long flourish of this genre in practically all national literatures within the realm of European culture, despite certain achievements in eradicating the formerly rampant erotic thrillers and "schmaltz" which had once reigned supreme in the domain of the belletristic biography, and despite satisfying the popular mass demand for information. The novelized biography is distinctly inferior both to the biographical tale and the biographical novel. It is a common occurrence, however, that the artistic rank of one or another work is elevated by the author by his departure from the pure structure of the genre and leaning toward either one, or at times both, "neighbouring" genres.

2. Biographical Novel

The biographical novel, which usually goes undistinguished from the novelized biography, is nonetheless a separate genre, based on different structural premises, although in the individual construction of individual works these differences are not always intuitively perceptible. Therefore, while studying the existing few theoretical declarations on this subject, one should always be aware of the possibility of confusion ²⁶.

A common trait of both genres, one which is immediately discernible and therefore tends to overshadow the more deeply hidden differences, is the seemingly identical type of narrative, based on the novelistic literary trend. The difference consists in another, considerably freer fashion of utilizing the biographical material which, incidentally, is the consequence of a different artistic endeavour. The novelized biography wants to present a close-up view of the hero's life by way of creating impressions which are similarly conceived as those one gets while doking at a film reportage with a naturalistic type of poetics, which is filled almost exclusively by close-up pictures of the hero's character. The biographical novel exercises the liberties of a modern, more poetic film whose ambition is not at all satisfied in a mere presentation of the visual calendar of the hero's life. The author's endeavours in the latter case are more synthetical and enterprising at the same time, even

tion to a new approach to the evaluation of literary genres. Modern genology may not be quite right in discrediting all attempts at such an evaluation.

²⁶ Above all, this reservation concerns the chapter entitled *Die biographische Form des historischen Romans* in: G. Lukács, *Der historische Roman*, pp. 328—352, and the essay by I. Stone, *The Biographical Novel*, printed in the collective volume: *Three Views of the Novel*, Washington 1957, pp. 1—16.

if he sticks to the sources for as long as possible. The author of a biographical novel, much rather than the author of a novelized biography, exhibits an obvious awareness that "the life of a poet [and the notion of "poet" can be expanded and generalized to include every type of hero — M.J.] is nothing but clay which in the biography can be moulded and burned into any shape. We know how this clay is dealt with by authors of biographies and historians of art. Even when they strive to attain the possibly most objective approach to the subject matter, the softness or hardness of their own hands is impressed forever on the form they sculpture"²⁷. This awareness of the inevitability of adopting a subjective approach to the matter dealt with is properly speaking the cornerstone of the biographical novel. It rids this genre of all illusions as to achieving a scientific truth, and instead equips it to strive to achieve a measure of "poetic truth", that is to say a relatively high degree of accuracy plus the suggestive quality of the general conception of the hero's life and personality. This suggestive quality may be looked upon as a cast within which the whole work is modelled²⁸. By way of example, we might cite the presentation of Copernicus as a genius who developed in the gentle climate of the Renaissance and the Roman Catholic Church (L. H. Morstin, *Kłos panny* (*Maiden's Sheaf*), 1929), and the multiaspected and ambivalent presentation of the personality of Goethe in Th. Mann's novel *Lotte in Weimar*. The hero of Mann not only did justice in its "profound reflection of the character of Goethe and of a genius in general" but also constituted the medium of a novel

²⁷ M. Jastrun, *Poezja i rzeczywistość* (*Poetry and Reality*), Warszawa 1965, p. 13.

²⁸ Long before the flourish of the biographical novel people were aware of the frequent discrepancies between the veristic truth of detail and "the superior poetic truth". The genesis of that problem goes back to the Aristotelian remark on the greater philosophical relevance of poetry than history; it became especially timely in the 19th century, when the historical novel *sensu stricto* emerged and developed. The memory of the sharp perception of the conflict between those two kinds of truth and of the constant recurrence of that problematics in 20th century reflections over the historical novel is recreated by W. Danek, *Małżeństwo powieści z historią* (*Novel and History in a Wedlock*), "Ruch Literacki" 1964, fasc. 1, pp. 1—18. With reference to the origins of the modern biographical novel, let me quote the view of W. von Mohlo, the author of the novelistic trilogy *Schiller* (1912): "[...] dass die Wahrheit einer Gestaltung nicht nur durch äusserliche Treue erreicht wird, sondern nur durch Besitzergreifung der inneren Wahrheit, dass Dichtung nicht Bedichtung, sondern Verdichtung, Weglassen, Zusammenschauen, Konzentration ist". Quoted after: N. Honsza, *Der biographische Roman des 20. Jahrhunderts*, p. 41. The authoress wishes to acknowledge the fact that Mr. Honsza made available to her the text of his Ph. D. dissertation, prepared in 1963 under the supervision of Z. Żygulski.

dealing with "sentiments and creative production, dignity and the downfall of a man growing old", according to a formula devised by T. Mann with reference to his own artistic endeavours focused on *Lotte in Weimar*, which he completed in 1939²⁹. It seems worthwhile to recall also the reportage-like but highly poetic projection of the conditions of development of folklore and humanism, in connection with the vast social life of the old Georgian poet Suleiman in Kapiyev's novel *Poet*.

The authors of biographical novels oftentimes reveal *expressis verbis* their various endeavours toward generalization:

"But above all in this story where truth and probable fiction rub shoulders of one another, my intention was to include what the poet termed «the inner force of life» so that this single episode from Słowacki's life, when read by our contemporaries, should at the same time project a part of the picture of Polish history at the time of the Spring of Peoples, perceived anew in its dialectic movement, its interplay of light and shade", thus M. Jastrun, *Spotkanie z Salomeą* (*Meeting with Salomea*).

"The book has been conceived as a novel on the youth of the great poet, who so strongly identified himself with his motherland, the land which, by its innate properties and atmosphere, moulded his grandeur, the land whose tradition and customs, landscape and nature became engrained on all his creation. And so: the man and his country, two yarns of equal weight", thus J. Chamiec, *Cieęższą podajcie mi zbroję* (*Fetch Me a Heavier Coat of Mail*).

In contradistinction to the novelized biography, the personal factor frequently goes undisguised³⁰:

"The intimate relationship between poetry and astronomy is of long standing. Both assuage man's yearning for the native home of all day-dreaming — eternity. Small wonder that I should have undertaken to write a book on the revolution of celestial bodies", thus Mørstin, *Kłos panny* (*Maiden's Sheaf*).

²⁹ T. Mann, *Lotta w Weimarze* (*Lotte in Weimar*), Warszawa 1958, translated by F. Konopka. Introduction.

³⁰ The subjective approach of the author (in the sense of his attitude to the work of literature as a means of personal expression and "venting his moods and feelings") was very popular in the psychological aesthetics of the early years of the 20th century. In relation to the historical novel this problem is examined in detail by V. Klemperer, *Die Arten der historischen Dichtung*, „Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturkunde und Geistesgeschichte" 1923, vol. 3. A. Maurois attempts to prove that, despite apparent incompatibility, this goes for the biographical literature as well: *Aspects de la biographie*, Paris 1927, chapter entitled: *La Biographie comme moyen d'expression*. Traces of that attitude are also perceptible in: Stone, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

"Drawing quite freely on the works of students of that epoch and of biographers of the poet I spun, against the backdrop of those monographs and studies, my own yarn of daydreaming on the era of Jan of Czarnolas and on himself as I had seen and understood him during the many years when I had been reading his poetic creation", thus M. Jastrun, *Poeta i dworzanin* (*Poet and Courtier*).

"I wanted to present a portrait of Adam, fashioned after my own subjective experience [...]. I overcame my qualms by explaining to myself that Mickiewicz, our common national property, is also the individual property of every Pole, and that includes me, too. Hence, I also have the right to attempt what I have attempted, to the extent of my modest capabilities and my great love for him", thus Chamiec, *Cieęższą podajcie mi zbroję* (*Fetch Me a Heavier Coat of Mail*).

"Saltykov-Shchedrin, the author of many books, did not write this one, even though it contains his words, too.

And so I, neither a countryman of Evgrafovich's nor his contemporary, the inhabitant of landscapes that were strange to him and the witness to events of which he had no inkling whatever, I who never drove up a *kibitka* in front of the Viatka Governor's porch nor lost deceitfully a game of vint to a Petersburg censor nor risked the Russian Emperor's ire by poking fun at the established order of things, did not write a fable about the idealist crucian nor a protocol of the investigation into the case of the forest sectarians nor supplicant letters to an implacable Mamma, I, the other man, the stranger, the author of a tale and its sole legitimate proprietor.

"But then, there is no place in this book for my clime, time and all that I have lived through.

"Let's try a different approach then: his ego and not his, mine and not mine at the same time — the ego of Mikhail Evgrafovich, constructed out of his own evidence and that of his contemporaries, from documents, works, recollections, and ultimately from some guesswork, too; yes, constructed, created, but into that structure, before it even took shape, there creeps my own, the author's ego, binds and identifies itself with that structure, makes no motion on the outside but persists right inside — and sure enough, I am, I really am a nobleman from the Tver' guberniya, and remember the lions' jaws atop the walls surrounding Tsarskoye Syolo and the dusty archives of Ryazan's State Revenue Chamber [...].

"Saltykov-Shchedrin, perhaps not quite the same — and perhaps quite?..." (W. Woroszyński, *Sny pod śniegiem* (*Dreams under Snow*)).

Both assumptions of a *par excellence* novelistic significance — the synthetizing generalization and the author's subjective attitude to the

object of his narrative — must, in what seems an almost simple consequence, lead to exercising the novel's right to fiction however restricted by the need for distinct probability:

"We do not want fiction to pass for truth, nor delude our readers, nor let them down in their confidence. Nonetheless we think that faithfulness in presenting life as a whole, belonging to that time, is rather more important than faithfulness in presenting various details and episodes, irrespective of whether they did occur or just could occur", thus M. Jastrun, *Poeta i dworzanin* (*Poet and Courtier*).

And then, the same author (*op. cit.*, Postscript):

"And here I exercised the right to use fantasy, surprise foreshortenings and understatements, whenever I needed these for a more synthetic presentation of the picture of the epoch, much after the fashion of the theatre or the film".

In connection with their respect for the obligation of playing fair within the bounds of probability the authors, while they speak of their striving to achieve the "superior poetic truth", exhibit an especial predilection for all sorts of biographical gaps (quotation a), information on lost source materials (quotation b), and debatable aspects of their heroes' lives (quotation c).

a) "Yet none of the biographers and historians of literature says anything about what the poet did during his two-month sojourn in Wrocław, for the historical sources keep silent on that point. Here exactly there opens up a vast field for guesswork, and let this gap in our knowledge on Słowacki be freely invaded by imagination [...]. Let imagination be allowed to introduce fictitious side by side with genuine characters", thus Jastrun, *Spotkanie z Salomeą* (*Meeting with Salomea*), Foreword.

b) "*Demosthenes* turned out to be the finest coup. That unfinished, probably destroyed, drama, of which we know practically nothing, not only provided me with a free theme on which to speculate but also filled an incomprehensible gap", thus Chamiec, *Cieęższą podajcie mi zbroję* (*Fetch Me a Heavier Coat of Mail*), Author's Foreword.

c) "Feuchtwanger embraced the opportunity provided by the fact that many of Goya's paintings bear neither signatures nor dates; they are dated differently by different scholars, and he extended this uncertainty as regards chronology to include even some better documented cases thereby binding the work with the artist's life and achieving the greatest possible measure of uniformity in his novel", thus J. Białostocki in his Postscript to L. Feuchtwanger's *Goya*.

A time gap, a work that has been lost, controversial interpretations, all these regrettable elements for authors of novelized biographies, and

all of them, to be sure, having an adverse effect on the novelized biography, in this genre are evaluated quite differently in the aspect of composition and the psychological processes of the author. Says a modern scholar, noting the scarcity of historical material on the life of Copernicus: "One of our eminent writers could not be more correct, I think, in his finding that people whose every day of life is known to us, who either went about that business themselves or were helped out by others so that our imagination should have no puzzles to solve, people whose profiles have been chiselled by history in the minute detail, do not particularly attract the artist's and, in the same degree, the historian's eye" ³¹.

The generic consequences of the poetics of authors of the biographical novel, as outlined above, are based on the right to use fiction. They are nonetheless restricted by the authors' anxiety to preserve a measure of historical and biographical probability which is indispensable in view of the dual aspect of "poetic truth" — the informative generalization and an artistically suggestive approach. And in turn, the presence of fiction provides conditions for: 1. Augmenting the artistic freedom in moulding the principal character, which continues to be the fundamental structural element of the work, and the remaining components of the represented world which, on the whole, is projected here in more aspects and more profuse forms than in the case of the novelized biography. 2. Considerably augmenting the freedom of composition of the plot as also of the whole work, conceived as the supreme entity. 3. Enlarging the informative properties of the work as regards the historical-social-cultural nonbiographical concrete which becomes functionalized in relation to the aspect of poetic generalization. 4. Safeguarding the opportunity, which can be enjoyed only accidentally by the novelized biography, for a real novelistic generalization. 5. Decreasing the strictly factographical quality of biographical informativeness.

In effect of the aforementioned five privileges the biographical novel exhibits none or little of the character of "montage-composition", prepared on the basis of sources, and instead assumes a more individual artistic structure both with regard to the means of expression and the message conveyed ³². And only then does a belletristic biography become

³¹ H. Barycz, Postscript to the book of H. Kesten, *Kopernik i jego czasy* (Copernicus und seine Welt), Warszawa 1961, translated by K. Radziwiłł and J. Zeltner, p. 487.

³² The problem of distinguishing "the content and the form" is frequently evaded, differently defined, yet always looming as inevitable in any literary research. A concise presentation of this problem in the light of modern theory is

a real novel when the reader takes less interest in the authenticity of concrete biographical details than in the suggestive significance of the various scenes and atmosphere, is impressed by their structuralization, and reacts, each in his own peculiar manner, to the alleged correctness or fallacy of a generalization. The biographical novel by its structure tends to undermine the meticulous informative function, which is the foremost programme of the novelized biography, and subordinates it to the generalized informative quality of the function of projection and to the full aesthetic effect of the individual artistic construction of the work ³³.

However, despite the novel's "genologically" guaranteed right to fiction, and despite fiction's frequent victories in the course of reading, the problem of biographical authenticity cannot be completely eclipsed from the realm of the novel, distinguished by the characteristic epithet of being "biographical". For perception of an epic work does not automatically come to an end with the last page of a book; another, reflexive phase of perception then sets in, in which the hero, bearing the name of a historic and usually very important personality, is inevitably juxtaposed with his authentic archetype. The behaviour of critics is evidence that not only primitive readers react in this manner. Even some book reviews which show understanding for the presence of fiction and the author's subjective vision of the hero's personality still demand that the reader be informed of any discrepancies between the real hero and his novelistic image; some go even further, demanding certain supplements to the narrative, a different distribution of emphases in the plot, or a different approach to some facts. The information hunger, coming on top of the reader's purely "novelistic" interests, grows stronger as he becomes less intellectually and emotionally indifferent to the given historical character or, what frequently accompanies his emotional attitude, as his wealth of information concerning this character grows bigger. Hence, the readers' attitudes to the literary presentation of the same historical character may differ, depending on some aspects of life of the individual readers. For example, the reader of another nationality than the literary hero is often less equipped for adopting a personal and individualistic attitude toward the literary presentation, its truth or falsity, but also he can be expected to adopt a somewhat

offered by Markiewicz, *Główne problemy wiedzy o literaturze*, chapter entitled *Sposób istnienia i budowa dzieła literackiego* (*Manner of Existence and Structure of a Work of Literature*), pp. 85—87.

³³ Differentiation of the "generic structure" from the "individual construction of a work", in which the problem of artistic assets can come up for discussion, is cited after Skwarczyńska, *Wstęp do nauki o literaturze*, vol. 3, pp. 175—177.

aloof attitude. And thus, the "average" Polish reader, outside the circle of painting connoisseurs and far from participating in the aesthetic consciousness of van Gogh, will not sense the simplification and primitive outlines given that personality by I. Stone in his *Lust for Life* because he will consider as sufficient the information on the course and climate of van Gogh's life, carried by the book, even if he be conscious of the inevitability of some »novelistic retouching". One is due to become impressed by the poetic charm of the novel on the life of Saltykov-Shchedrin by W. Woroszyński, entitled *Sny pod śniegiem* (*Dreams under Snow*), and, having developed confidence in the author's obvious knowledge and perspicacity, take little stock of the many confusions of details, which crop up throughout the book, and instead direct one's interest to the more general issues concerned with the hero's personality, his *milieu* and epoch. A similar situation is evidenced by the standpoint adopted by a reviewer of J. Tynyanov's book *Pushkin*: "His biographical novels are not solely evidence of the painstaking research into the epoch and its documents, for that is the avowed obligation of every author of a historical novel, not only an illustration to events and a biography related in beautiful words, but above all a splendid, full of perfection and precision, rhyme to the history of the first three decades of the 19th century, the rhyme to an epoch which, through Tynyanov's novels, has turned about face, looked at us, and become part of the present day, as it were"³⁴. That same reviewer finds in the novel and raises "the problem of the relationship between a poet and an absolutist state which kills the poet".

Such a situation of a reader, standing aloof from the biographical accuracy of detail, and thereby adopting the typical attitude of a "novel reader" is seldom exclusive. Normally, although it may sound like a paradox, the attitude of "novel reader" is somehow complemented by the attitude of "biography reader" who, while approving of fiction, is nonetheless determined to have even the most general information on where the fiction ends. Many authors reckon with this attitude, and prepare a set of basic information for their readers. This usually includes a list of fictitious characters, sometimes events, transformations and changes in chronology, compilations and transpositions; further, authors will signal gaps in the biographical material, uncertainties or outright controversies in sources such as entitle the author to propound his own views. Not infrequently, information is cited on sources which have served the author as a basis for

³⁴ F. Nieuważny, *Puszkina i jego epoka* (*Pushkin and His Epoch*), "Nowe Książki" 1961, fasc. 21, p. 1310.

introducing innovations. A case in point, one of admirable, painstaking accuracy and a matter-of-fact approach, is Marguerite Yourcenar (real name: de Crayencour), the authoress of the highly erudite and artistically exquisite novel *Mémoires d'Hadrien* (1951). Fourteen pages in that book, packed tight with the brevier type, are devoted to a list of literature, presented in the form of a systematic rational "state of research to-date", and then go on to enumerate one by one all the novelistic transformations and supplements, thereby casting splendid light on the mechanism of making a book historically and socially representative, typical in a generalized fashion. In this genre, that mechanism is an essential component.

"The figure of Marullinus is historical, but his single most important trait, the gift of clairvoyance, is borrowed from the uncle, rather than grandfather, of Hadrian; the circumstances of his death are fictitious. An inscription tells us that Sophist Isaïos was one of the teachers of youthful Hadrian, but it is by no means certain whether the pupil has indeed made his journey to Athens, as the book would have him do. Gallus is real, but the detail on the final defeat of this figure is cited only for the purpose of bringing out one of Hadrian's most frequently mentioned characteristic traits: perseverance in rancour. The episode of the initiation in the cult of Mithra is fictitious; that cult was at that time already widely popular in the army; it is quite possible, but absolutely unproved, that Hadrian as a young officer might have been tempted to try such an initiation. A similar case is that of *taurobulium* to which Antinous is subjected at Palmyra: Meles Agrippa, Castoras and, in the former episode, Turbo are of course real figures, but their participation in the rites of initiation is absolutely fictitious. Tradition has been adhered to in these two scenes that bloodbath used to form part of the rites of Mithra as also of those of the Syrian Goddess, although some scholars assert that it formed part only of the latter; such a borrowing of rites is psychologically plausible in that epoch when various religions of salvation "infected one another" in the atmosphere of curiosity, scepticism and mystic raptures, so characteristic of the 2nd century. The meeting of Hadrian and Gymnosophist has not been recorded by history; 1st and 2nd century sources were used, describing events of a similar nature [...]. The sorceress from the Isle of Britannia and the sorceress from Kanabos are both fictitious, but they represent the world of magicians and all initiated in the occult arts which Hadrian favoured" (Explanatory Notes)³⁵.

³⁵ M. Yourcenar, *Pamiętniki Hadriana (Mémoires d'Hadrien)*, Warszawa 1961, translated by H. Szumańska-Grossowa. Notes pp. 317—319.

If a similar practice, now gaining in popularity, was to become universally accepted, then the social importance of this genre would be increased considerably. A biographical novel with a commentary from the author, like the one quoted above, would lose none of the attributes of a work of art while being equipped better to cater for very many readers in their pursuit of biographical information. In view of the generally low standards of humanistic preparation of the mass reader, who is so willing nowadays to reach for a literary biography, this would constitute a didactical aspect: it would teach him not only to distinguish the various genres of the literary biography but also to feel at home in the complex problematics of novelistic generalization or, more broadly conceived, the problematics of differences between fictional literature and the literature of authentic fact.

It must be added, however, that the problem of the dividing line between the faithfulness of detail and freedom of fiction is somewhat secondary in this genre in comparison with the novelized biography which makes a point of eliminating fiction and thereby restricting itself to literal rather than general informativeness.

No doubt the scope of novelistic generalization in the biographical novel has limits beyond which it is difficult, and oftentimes impossible, to venture. Despite the large measure of compositional freedom, this genre is somehow contained by the limits circumscribed by the life of the central character, and not only in its diachronism but synchronism as well.

The author may indeed introduce fictitious figures with a view to broadening the horizons of cognition and problems tackled, but if he introduces too many or, worse yet, if he devotes to them too much of his work and links them strongly to novelistic stimuli arousing the reader's interest, the hero may well lose his dominating position and in effect a biographical novel will easily evolve into a novel of customs and morals, or a historical one, or a criminal one, etc. The same problem of the hero's dominance exists in relation to the other components of the depicted world (objects, the local and social background, customs and morals, etc.) and to the extent to which its definite properties are exposed, for example, psychologism, sensation, etc. Obviously, novels like T. Parnicki's *Aecjusz ostatni Rzymianin* (*Aetius, the Last Roman*), J. Iwaszkiewicz's *Czerwone tarcze* (*Scarlet Shields*), T. Wilder's *The Ides of March*, B. Brecht's *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*, M. Jastrun's *Poeta i dworzanin* (*Poet and Courtier*), do not become less valuable because their individual constructions are not wholly congruous with the generic structure of the biographical novel, but they constitute a type of novels written "against the backdrop of biography". The

venturing from one generic structure into another and the phenomenon of "generic instrumentation" bring in effect new distinct, oftentimes more promising, cognitive and aesthetic opportunities which are heralded by the very term of "generic multiplane quality"³⁶. In other words, a typical "pure" biographical novel cannot at the same time make a "great" historical novel of the rank of L. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, M. Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don*, or A. Gołubiew's *Bolesław Chrobry (Bolesław the Brave)*. Further, it is obvious that Malewska's novel *Żelazna korona (The Iron Crown)*, 1935, depicting the long life of Emperor Charles V, cannot portray so many aspects of that epoch through its principal ideologies, conflicts, events and historical figures, as the authoress managed to achieve in her later novel, also of two volumes, entitled *Przemija postać świata (Thus Passes Away the World)*, 1954. It is to be taken for granted, especially if one assumes that even eminent individuals play a relatively modest role in the historical process, that the biographical novel has a smaller cognitive potential as regards the reflecting of the scope and complexity of this process than the historical novel. The latter is not limited by the imperative domination of one principal character who in turn is hampered by the mandatory similitude to the authentic archetype. The G. Lukács' judgment, referred to earlier in the present paper, seems to a large extent correct although it certainly goes to an extreme: its author relied partly on the material of the novelized biography and did injustice to the biographical novel by applying to it the sole criterion of a "great historical novel", a historical-cultural novel-synthesis³⁷. Nonetheless it confirms the view, to-date not quite universally accepted yet, that the biographical novel constitutes a literary genre in its own right, whose structure is different from that of the historical novel (even though the plot most frequently is also put in past history) and whose peculiar poetics is focused on the problematics of the individual, thereby requiring a discreet criterion for evaluation³⁸. In certain cases of an

³⁶ T. Cieślukowska, *Pisarstwo Teodora Parnickiego (The Literary Production of Teodor Parnicki)*, Warszawa 1965. As regards the term and problematics of "generic instrumentation of a work of literature", cf. Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, pp. 198–200.

³⁷ Lukács, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

³⁸ On various views of the relationship between the biographical novel and the historical novel cf. Stone, *op. cit.*, pp. 11–12, and Honsza, *op. cit.*, p. 247. The problem of the biographical novel as seen from the point of view of the historical novel is broached, or at least touched upon, by all modern scholars reflecting upon the latter, for example, M. Wehrli, *Der historische Romans*, "Helicon" III, Amsterdam—Leipzig 1941; J. Hankiss, *Problèmes du roman*

intermediate type, and in the Polish literature notably the novels by S. Strumph-Wojtkiewicz and M. Rusinek's trilogy on General Krzysztof Arciszewski — *Wiosna admirała* (*Admiral's Spring*), *Muszkietier z Itamaryki* (*The Musketeer of Itamarica*) and *Królestwo pychy* (*The Kingdom of Pride*), examination of a work in both aspects, that is as a biographical-historical novel, seems to make very good sense.

Another limitation of the biographical novel, perhaps even more painful because it impairs its *sensu stricto* biographical informative ambitions, concerns the presentation of the achievements of an eminent individual, most especially in the aspect of their broadly conceived genesis and historical importance.

Difficulties as regards the genesis are correctly indicated by Lukács. He dissociates himself from the view professing the mysterious inscrutability of the ways of a genius, and emphasizes the multifaceted bonds between a genius' record and the historical epoch. The individual aspect is hardly distinguishable from the historical one since history, both past and present, manifests itself not only through the general life situation of the individual in question, but also permeates his personal experiences, literature which he reads, etc. In this sense, then, the entire life of a creative artist combines for the genesis of his creative achievement, especially if this achievement is great³⁹: The task of presenting this, hard as it is in a scientific monograph, becomes high impracticable in the biographical novel, what with its belletristic, novelistic mode of narrative and the compositional assumptions, aimed at achieving peculiar proportions. After all, a novel (and even more so a novelized biography) can produce only an inaccurate, and thereby falsified, genesis. More often than not, it is limited to the last link in the process connected with objectivization of the work, tends to stress accidental circumstances and occasions on which such appear rather than the protracted phases in which the artist's successive views and theories are crystallized, stratified and modified by the accumulating experience of his life. Let us supplement this with an artist's subtle reflection on the intimate but hardly tangible bond between the biography and artistic achievement: "[...] speaking of poetry and reality, and postulating their union, I have in mind only a genetical union; I am convinced that at the roots of every poetic initiation the role of life experience, rather than imagination, determines the sense and lasting value of a work. The opportunity for subsequent expansion and associa-

historique, "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich", vol. 2, fasc. 3, Łódź 1960; Dane k, op. cit.

³⁹ Lukács, op. cit., pp. 331–334.

tion of new spiritual messages is inherent in this fundamental experience" ⁴⁰.

In connection with such an approach to creative production (not solely poetical, not even only artistical, but conceived very broadly), it will be found that any literary presentation of a work's genesis is prone to be superficial and inaccurate. Most often it is reduced to a mechanical arrangement of action, like "X brought back the memories of Y, fixed his gaze in the window, stood up, lit a candle, and started writing"; or else, to a quite stereotype and very simplifying kind of psychology:

"Far below at the foot of the heavens, there sprawled the azure expanse of the sea, and against its background something like islands of snow stood out. Those were the clouds! ...A lightning zigzagged one of them like a fireball and apparently struck somewhere down below...

"Adam stepped aside from the guide. He snatched out a notebook and began to write. That was the first time since he started making excursions in the Crimea that inspiration overcame him so directly. Whatever he had jotted down before were nothing but loose notes.

"«You listen only to what the Lord commands nature».

"He finished the poem. The form of a sonnet occurred to him as a matter of course. He liked that form. With his gift for rhyming the four rhyme-setting endings came to his mind at once, and coping with that complex verse pattern caused him pleasure comparable to that of a fencing master executing a brilliant swordplay. And he liked the profound thought contained in the concluding tercet like a polished diamond in an elaborate setting" (Świdorska, *Adam*, vol. 2, p. 82).

As can be seen in the above the genesis of the work is reduced to "creative inspiration" under the influence of the majestic Chatyr Dag. The poetic aspects of the artist's profound experience in that outpost of the oriental world, introduction of a separate narrator, the Moslem "mirzah", all previous exercises in that task (how easy to present under the pretext of the "loose notes"), all those have been forgone and replaced by a superficial and rather banal mention of the poet's perfect control of the difficult form of the sonnet. In the light of the above fragment it would appear that perhaps right are the authors who limit their scope of information to the actual deeds of their heroes and give up all attempts to present the process of genesis, although in the aspect of biographical quality this practice results in considerable gaps.

The difficulty grows even more when, as has often been the case, an artist's production finds multiple manifestations. While this offers less

⁴⁰ Jastrun, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

risk in linking the different works to different concrete experiences and circumstances, the issue is complicated by the necessity of adopting different artistic approaches in order to avoid repetition. The novel runs perhaps a better chance of presenting the whole genesis when a hero's main *opus* is really his whole lifetime record, based on some fundamental and uniform ideology, as is the frequent case of scientists and statesmen. The novel of Morstin *Kłos panny* (*Maiden's Sheaf*), 1929, is an eloquent case in point. The author goes to great length showing the various conditions which made it possible for the theory of the heliocentric system to take root in Copernicus' youthful mind, then proceeds to portray the theory's eventual emergence and gradual growth in many aspects, some of them negative as well as positive. In effect, the work of Copernicus is indeed the work of the whole lifetime and of "the whole man", not solely of an astronomer; also, and to the same extent almost, it is the product of the epoch and the human *milieu*, within which religious devotion contributed to make man's intellect more enterprising and to give it the prime impetus of a Renaissance reanimation.

An equally accurate and versatile treatment has been given by M. Ziolkowska to the rise and development of Ludwik Zamenhof's work, in her novel *Doktor Esperanto* (1959). The Old Testament tradition of the Tower of Babel, which caused that God confounded the languages of the earth, was very much alive in Ludwik's family and it bore fruit in a tragedy, written by the 9-year-old boy. This and his daily observation of the mutual enmity between the different sectors of the multilingual population of 19th century Białystok in East Poland — Poles, Russians, Lithuanians, Jews and Germans — caused that Ludwik, who at 14 knew six languages, took pride in his command of school jargon and later into Esperanto, not only sees the consistent trend of that evolutionary fraternity. Aside from these personal attitudes the author succeeds in presenting the 19th century interest in the problem of a world language, consonant with the ideals of Fourier and the slogan "proletarians of all countries unite". The reader not only is witness to the gradual transformation of a schoolboys' jargon into "*lingua universalis*", and later into Esperanto, not only sees the consistent trend of that evolution; he also perceives the historical conditions favouring the timeliness of that ideal, cherished for ages, and a coincidence of personal predilections and circumstances which destined one concrete individual to identify himself with that ideal. What remains is the problem of Zamenhof's talent, his extraordinary linguistic capabilities. But that, being a matter of genetics and physiology, would have first to be the subject of scientific study before becoming the subject of a convincing

literary presentation⁴¹. Nonetheless, the reader learns that Ludwik's father was a teacher of languages, a grandfather was a linguist in his own right, and the "family knack for languages" serves as a prime argument for the future inventor of Esperanto in the discussion with his father, who doubts the son's capability to achieve what he had set out to.

These examples have been cited to moderate somewhat the generally correct, but a little extreme, judgment of Lukács, concerning the deficiency of the biographical novel in presenting the broadly conceived genesis of achievements of a creative individual. The timeliness of that judgment is naturally greater with reference to the novelized biography. However, the work of Copernicus has been presented in a book representing the pure type of structure of the biographical novel, and *Doktor Esperanto* represents the type of novelized biography which evidently borrowed some elements from the two proximate genres — the tale and the novel.

And finally, a separate problem, and perhaps even more difficult, is posed by the presentation of the essence of the social value of the work. Naturally, this problem arises in a novelistic presentation and not in a narrator's commentary. The matter is relatively simple when the artistic product finds immediate social response: for example, artistic, political, utilitarian, suffice it to cite the creative work of Michelangelo, the invention of the vaccine treatment of rabies, the invention of penicillin, or far-reaching social reforms, like the abolition of slavery. Whereas the novelized biography may run into some difficulty in this matter, too, the novel can always resort to a fictitious appearance of the hero or simply the introduction of appropriately functionalized characters. When, however, the creative achievement of an eminent personality has been discovered or properly evaluated only by his distant posterity (for example, the works of Cyprian Norwid in Polish literature), or when it is a natural process that the importance of such achievement is revealed and increases with the passage of time (as is the case with philosophical theories and even many scientific discoveries of a theoretical character), then it cannot be presented in a manner corresponding to the presentation of the biography proper. It simply transcends the time limits circumscribed by the plot. And when the modern biographical novel, based on a well-documented scientific approach and complemented with the element of considerable historical probability, is loath to im-

⁴¹ Cf. also theories propounded by E. Kretschmer on the inheritance of talent and magnifying of such in cases of conflicting cross-breeding (*Ludzie genialni* (*Human Genius*), translated by P. Hulka-Laskowski, Warszawa 1933, pp. 116—142).

pairing the "aura of authenticity" and therefore avoids the eery connotations which might accompany scenes of overly accurate prophetic visions, overcoming the hero while he is asleep or awake, foreboding feelings, predictions, etc., it can only give up the impossible. Its resignation, however, can find dual justification: 1. Definition of the social importance of one or another human pursuit is more properly the subject of a scientific monograph than the obligation of a biographer: man and his activity are something else again than his lifetime record and its eventual importance⁴², the scale and essence of which frequently even the author himself is unable to realize, much less predict their future importance for posterity. 2. Not insignificant is the fact that the reading public has as a rule acquired beforehand some fundamental knowledge concerned with the achievements of eminent personalities and the import of such; on the other hand, it knows considerably less about their life and personal features, and this latter aspect frequently provides the primary impulse for making a decision to read a literary biography.

It should further be added to these characteristics of the genre — its structure and inherent potentialities — that in comparison with the novelized biography it has at its disposal a considerably richer array of technical means; this is a direct consequence of the accepted presence of fiction.

In particular we might enumerate the freedom in constructing the narrator, who need not be identified with the person of the real author, as is the case with the biographical tale. Nor must he be so carefully concealed from the reader's eyes, which, while not indispensable, ^{is} nonetheless quite representative of the novelized biography in which the "assembled" succession of scenes with documentary inserts is supposed to function in the absence of any "assemblyman". As regards his construction and privileges, the narrator of the biographical novel is treated *per par* with the narrator of the novel in general, although authors, in their anxiety to get their message across to the readers, will but very seldom embark on the latest experimental innovations in this area.

Appearance of a concrete narrator is a peculiar feature of the biographical novel, distinguishing it sharply from the other two genres. This role is sometimes entrusted to the principal hero (e.g. M. Yourcenar, *Mémoires d'Hadrien*; W. Koch, *Pilatus' Erinnerungen*; W. Woro-

⁴² "In this work, as also in my previous biographical novels, I sought only to achieve a faithfully recreated image of man. However, man is so closely connected with his work that a considerable portion of the book has invariably had to be devoted to this aspect, too; yet I do that always from the point of view of the hero's experiences associated with such work" (A. Świdorska, *Adam*, vol. 1, Foreword).

szylski, *Sny pod śniegiem* (*Dreams under Snow*)). In recent years, perhaps inspired by T. Mann's *Doktor Faustus*, several authors have come up with "a fascinated narrator", that is a concrete narrator, conceived as a person who, fascinated by the extraordinary personality of the hero, resolved to write his biography. Such a "fascinated narrator" is sometimes depicted as having had a personal relationship with the hero, like the Pharisee Nicodemus in relation to Christ in J. Dobraczyński's *Listy Nikodema* (*Letters of Nicodemus*, 1952), or Ksawery Bojanowski in relation to Adam Mickiewicz in *Rękopis dla wnuków* (*Manuscript Written for Grandchildren*, 1955) (both those narrators are historical figures; their assumption of the narrator's function is fictional but made probable by, in the former case, the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus and, in the latter, the tradition of memoir-writing prevailing among Polish noblemen). Other narrators in that class spark off a whole series of information and source hunting with a view to enlarging compositionally the inevitably narrow horizons of the concrete narrator: two cases in point are the young Roman historian in relation to Julius Caesar (B. Brecht's *Die Geschäfte des Herrn Julius Caesar*) and the acquaintance of Cyprian Norwid (L. Kaltenbergh, *Dno czary* (*Sufferer to the End*)). It is a seldom occasion on which we can encounter relations by more than one narrator, set one against another and enjoying different rights. The novel *Lotte in Weimar* draws the profile of the hero through grand monologues by persons from his close entourage, a "real" monologue of the poet himself, and another as conceived by Lotte. In *Płomień róży* (*Rosen Aflame*, 1959), by S. Flukowski, the monologues of Juliusz Słowacki, delivered during his meetings with Cyprian Norwid, are represented partly as real recollections and partly as poetic visions of the other poet, with inserts and supplements by an abstract narrator. In *La Vie passionnée de Verlaine* by F. d'Eaubonne the basic story, told in the third person singular, is interspersed with entire chapters related in the first person. These are apparently conceived as recollections, thoughts, or delirious raving of the bed-ridden hero. Nonetheless, despite those potentialities of the genre, which have been confirmed in concrete practice, the most representative mode of narrative remains that delivered by an abstract narrator in the third person, and the approach is either "scenic" (from the point of view of a neutral observer) or "personal" (from the inner point of view of the principal hero)⁴³.

⁴³ This is the "pressure of history" on the structure of the genre, similarly as in the case of "the concealed narrator" who is used by the novelized biography nearly to the exclusion of all other narrating techniques. "As a result of the constant pressure of historical conditions on the concrete literary material, and

Other means available in the construction of the biographical novel, though seldom applied in view of the preponderant influence of naturalistic poetics, are inserts of an entirely different semantic character than the principal yarn of novelistic narrative. These either serve to introduce the reader into a world approached from another plane than the "realistic" biography of the hero, or endeavour poetic stylization. Each part of E. C. Kolbenheyer's trilogy *Paracelsus*, whose texture is *par excellence* realistic, is preceded by a prologue attempting symbolically to interpret the successive stage in the life of the hero⁴⁴. The concluding chapter of R. Wołoszynowski's novel *Słowacki* (1929) is filled with fantastic stylization in the spirit of the Greek tragedy: nature's voices are heard, so is a flute from Elysium, and Erinyes, and Fates; the voices of living and deceased persons, with whom the dying poet has been connected throughout his life, are interspersed with the songs of chorus. Very similarly in a recent novel on the same poet — *Płomień róży* (*Roses Aflame*) by F. Flukowski — we find an episode which is constructed on two different planes: superimposed on the realistic parlor scene in the Słowacki family home is a charming fantastic scene: "Apollo who came for a visit, accompanied by the Muses Euterpe and Klio". Whatever takes place in the parlour, Apollo and the Muses comment upon in the aspect of future developments, express their enchantment over the little boy above the head of whom they see a radiant star — the stigma of future genius. Furthermore, the author takes the liberty of introducing the episode of the poet's parents getting acquainted with each other, forgetting all reference to the encounter of two types of mentality — that of Słowacki with that of Norwid — the encounter that constitutes the compositional backbone of the whole plot.

As can be seen, the poetics of the biographical novel is based on a far more poetic "code" than that of the novelized biography, and its assortment of "means of communication" is much wider indeed. The point is that the message it attempts to get across to the reader is different from that of the novelized biography. In the latter, the techniques of extension and modulation of the represented world and the emotional

thereby on the generic structures realized by such material, owing to the flexibility of the structures certain «deviations» occur from their primal form, deviations which take place in an obvious and correct manner. At the various stages of the historical, realizational viability of the genres these deviations stabilize to a certain extent (taking the matter in general terms) and constitute certain historical types of the given generic structure" (Skwarczyńska, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 152).

⁴⁴ Honsza, *op. cit.*, chapter III, *Paracelsus, Trilogie von E. C. Kolbenheyer*, pp. 48—72.

atmosphere would be absolutely incompatible with the style and texture of the work.

Extension of the informative content, and consequently the text's considerable departure from the documentary nature and allowing for greater place to the work's structural peculiarities, which in turn breed within the individual construction of the given work a diversified gamut of aesthetic values, typical of the novel, this extension and its consequences define the discreet character of the biographical novel as compared to the novelized biography. And yet, despite its lesser structural importance, the problem of meticulous biographical informativeness is still outstanding in this genre and requires a rational solution. Who knows if the authors' frequently repeated explanatory notes on the relationship between biographical fact and poetic fiction are not, after all, the best way out. For a work of literature, whose most important single structural element is a personality well-known by name, a personality authentic and very significant in the history of mankind, such a work must devise a clear and comprehensible system of links to the historical reality. In the case of the novel this function is discharged by commentary, which is always useful and sometimes even indispensable on social and aesthetic grounds. Otherwise, when no commentary is on hand, the noncritical reader may become grossly misinformed, whereas the critical reader, overwhelmed by a host of obvious but unanswered questions, may easily be thrown off balance beyond the possibility of aesthetic contemplation.

Translated by *Jerzy Jastrzębowski*

BIOGRAFIA UPOWIEŚCIOWIONA A POWIEŚĆ BIOGRAFICZNA
DWA NIEWŁAŚCIWIE ROZRÓŻNIANE RODZAJE ZBELETRYZOWANEJ
BIOGRAFII

STRESZCZENIE

Rozprawa o biografii upowieściowionej i powieści biograficznej zawiera następujące tezy:

1. Opowieść biograficzną (np. dzieła Stracheya, Zweiga, Maurois, Berenta) można wyodrębnić od biografii naukowej i od pozostałych gatunków zbeletryzowanej biografii na podstawie samej analizy stylistyczno-kompozycyjnej. Biografia upowieściowiona natomiast i powieść biograficzna wykazują z aspektu formalnego wiele powierzchownego podobieństwa; różnią się między sobą głównie stosunkiem do fikcji i do powieściowego uogólnienia. Można to jednak uchwycić dopiero przez zestawienie świata przedstawionego z historyczną rzeczywistością. Stąd brak wiedzy o niej (o życiu, osobowości, dziele i epoce bohatera) lub formalistyczne ujęcie

literatury mogą prowadzić do kwestionowania sensowności rozróżniania tych gatunków. Dodatkowe komplikacje wnoszą typy pośrednie, np. I. Stone'a *Pasja życia* czy Dobraczyńskiego *Listy Nikodema*.

2. Reprezentatywne przykłady biografii upowieściowionej w polskiej literaturze to Parandowskiego *Król życia*, Świdorskiej *Zygmunt* czy Adam, Majchrowskiego *Pan Sienkiewicz*, książki Pauszer-Klonowskiej. Założeniem gatunkowym jest bezpośredniość obrazu, jaka cechuje „zwykłą” powieść, z tą jednak modyfikacją, że bohater, którego życie jest wyraźną dominantą kompozycyjną utworu, jak i pozostała „reszta” świata przedstawionego to nie „wytwory swobodnej fikcji”, lecz możliwie ściśle i źródłowe „odbicie realnej rzeczywistości” nawet w szczegółach. To założenie jest jednak w samej swej istocie problematyczne, w sposób całkowicie konsekwentny nieosiągalne. Na płaszczyźnie koniecznej selekcji i transpozycji materiału biograficznego oraz koniecznych jego „uzupełnień” z jednej strony, a swoistych wymogów zbeletryzowanej, stylizowanej na powieść struktury artystycznej z drugiej — toczy się walka między funkcją informacyjną a estetyczną. Tylko wyjątkowo dogodny układ faktów biograficznych może zharmonizować obie funkcje; ich najczęściej spotykane „uzgodnienie” nie jest korzystne dla żadnej. Biografia upowieściowiona zatem z samego założenia gatunkowego nie jest dokładnym informatorem w zakresie faktów, gdyż czytelnik nie wie właściwie, gdzie biegnie granica między daleko posuniętą dokumentalnością a konieczną domieszką „fikcji”. Nie daje też należycie sugestywnej poetyckiej syntezy, gdyż jest zbyt skrępowana autentyzmem. To tłumaczy, że mimo bujnej od lat przeszło 30 żywotności gatunku we wszystkich chyba literaturach z zasięgu kultury europejskiej i mimo pewnych zasług, zwłaszcza przy zwalczaniu szmiry sensacyjno-erotycznej, szeroko uprzednio rozpowszechnionej w zakresie zbeletryzowanej biografii, oraz przy zaspokajaniu masowych potrzeb poznawczych jest to gatunek o nader rzadkich wybitnych osiągnięciach, tak estetycznych, jak i nawet poznawczych. Opowieść i powieść biograficzna dystansują go w obu dziedzinach.

3. Powieść biograficzna (Morstin, *Kłos panny*, Jastrun, *Spotkanie z Salomeą*, Poeta i dworzanin, Flukowski, *Płomień róży*, Woroszyński, *Sny pod śniegiem*) w zestawieniu z poprzedniczką to niejako współczesny film poetycki o życiu bohatera porównany z naturalistycznym filmowym kalendarium. Zamierzenia jej są o wiele bardziej syntetyczne, a zarazem propozycjonalne, subiektywne. Wszystko to uzdolnia ją do walki o „prawdę poetycką”, którą stanowi względna trafność oraz sugestywność ogólnej koncepcji bohatera i jego epoki, całościowo organizującej utwór. Syntetyzujące uogólnienie i subiektywny stosunek autora do przedmiotu — założenia *par excellence* powieściowe — prowadzą do wyzyskiwania powieściowego prawa do fikcji, ograniczonej jednak koniecznością daleko idącego prawdopodobieństwa. Stąd luki w biografii, zaginione dzieła, rozbieżności w interpretacji (nad czym boją autorzy biografii) — to nader cenne „zielone światła” dla biograficznie prawdopodobnej fikcji. Obecność jej warunkuje z kolei: 1. zwiększenie swobody artystycznego kształtowania tak głównej postaci jako nadal podstawowego elementu strukturalnego, jak i pozostałych składników świata przedstawionego, który na ogół jest tu bogatszy i bardziej wycieniowany niż w biografii upowieściowionej; 2. wydane zwiększenie swobody faktury na odcinku kompozycji tak fabuły, jak i utworu ujętego jako najwyższa całość; 3. zabezpieczenie możliwości (przypadkowo tylko posiadanej przez biografię upowieściowioną) rzeczywistego powieściowego uogólnienia; 4. wzbogacenie możliwości poznawczych dzieła w dziedzinie historyczno-społeczno-kulturalnego konkretności niebiograficznego, sfunkcjonalizowanego wobec płaszczyzny poetyckiego uogólnienia; 5. zmniejszenie ściśle faktograficznej biogra-

ficznej informacyjności. W rezultacie powyższego utwór traci znamienność dla biografii upowieściowionej charakter „montażu-wypracowania” spreparowanego na podstawie źródłowej, nabiera natomiast więcej cech indywidualnej konstrukcji artystycznej. Mimo przychylniejszej tutaj sytuacji dla działania funkcji estetycznej funkcja informacyjna nie traci swego znaczenia. Informacyjność szczegółowa zostaje jednak uchylona na rzecz uogólnionej informacyjności o wysokim zobowiązaniu wobec historycznej prawdy (stąd cenny zwyczaj informacji autorskich o granicach między autentyzmem a fikcją).

Do naturalnych ograniczeń powieści biograficznej należą: 1. mniejsza, w stosunku do „zwykłej” powieści historycznej, możliwość odzwierciedlania szerokich i złożonych procesów historycznych; 2. trudności w przedstawieniu dzieła wybitnej jednostki, zwłaszcza w aspekcie jego szeroko rozumianej genezy, wielostronnej przecieć i zawsze historycznej, oraz w aspekcie społecznej doniosłości, objawiającej się nieraz dopiero z upływem czasu. Pewną pomoc w tym zakresie stanowią jednak mogą szerokie prerogatywy powieściowego narratora oraz dopuszczalność także fikcji o charakterze wyraźnie „antyrealistycznym”, którą jako sprzeczność stylową eliminuje biografia upowieściowiona.

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