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Urban Genres — an Attempt at Defining the Genological Landscape

Abstract

The article attempts to outline the urban genological landscape of contemporary Polish literature. This landscape is created primarily by means of textual arcades — essayistic, polymorphic form, which arises from the attempt to find a discursive equivalent of experiencing the city. The act of walking and reading the city/depicting the city in writing is the essence of modern urban genres. The other important determinants are: the construction of subject, which relates to the patterns of the anthropological figure of *flâneur*, and the so-called intellectual *flânerie*, which involves the principle of double vision — seeing the city and at the same time confronting it with history, the read books and with the traces of the past. This type of urban experience contributed to the development of other urban genres, which are called in this paper ‘urbantexts’, such as the modern urban novel, *faits divers*, urban legend or urban collages.

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We have come to think about a novel as a bourgeois epic — an idea that gained popularity owing to Lukács. Still, what sort of an epic is it? This question is posed by Michał Głowiński (Głowiński 1998: 219) in his well-known work *Powieść i autorytet* [*Novel and authority*] with the aim to encourage a discussion on the axiology hidden in fictional narrative. Might it be the kind Franz Hessel fantasised about when writing in his urban essays, “*Flânerie* is a way of reading the streets, where people’s faces, shops, window displays, outdoor cafes, cars, tracks and trees become a series of letters, which together form the words, sentences, and pages of a book that is always new” (German original in Hessel, 1984: 145, translation from Daum, 2005: 51)? Or is it the one written by the novelist from Walter Benjamin’s notes, the inventor of the bourgeois epic poem?

The street becomes a dwelling place for the flâneur; he is as much at home among house façades as a citizen is within his four walls. To him, a shiny enameled shop sign is at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his living room. Building’s walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries; and café terraces are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done.

(Benjamin 2006: 68–69)

There is a strong belief in analogy between the building blocks of the city and urban literature resonating in the vast part of opinions on the relations between urbanism and the progress of literary genology (in the approach practiced by Lukács and sociologists of art close to him in terms of methodology — mainly, the novel). Though it can be explained by the materialistic foundations of thought in case of at least some of the critics interested in this issue, the richness of the urban theme in modernist writing, the perception of experiencing urban space as a special lens that converges various matters that profoundly exceed the ‘motivology’ in its narrow sense, and the observations of how the spatial aspect influences the identity of the subject in the spirit of 19th century — it all stems from the same source, i.e., the fascination with the city and its ability to co-create artistic forms. Creators of these forms do not limit the urban tissue to the role of building blocks of literary space and quite often turn it into a mirror of anthropological identification. For if modernity, present in so many approaches — both artistic and critical, becomes equal to experiencing urbanism (at its numerous different levels — sensual, identical, economic, gender, political, geographical, etc.), then in reflecting on modern and post-modern genological landscape one cannot underestimate this dependence.

Moreover, if discussing genre in the traditional sense as a set of intersubjective rules for constructing a text, an element of literary grammar (in the sense of a phenotype/genotype or *langue* and *parole*) or a normative act that regulates the good practice of constructing and receiving the text is problematic when it comes to the latest literary works, then the modern understanding of the literary theory in cultural perspective returns due rank to genological reflection recognised also as a cultural reflection. Here a wide scope for analysis of urban genres appears, genres, which show particularly clearly the communicational and sociological aspect of the functioning of post-modern genres, as urban literature not only does demonstrate the society's need (which shows in the popularity of its many forms, such as vintage crime novels or *space-ronniki* [*walk journals* — Translator's note]), not only is it an answer to spatial practices¹ of the recipient (a mimetic reflection of these practices), but also the major factor behind the creation of these practices. At one time it is a literary spatial practice manual (the phenomenon of urban literary tourism following the footsteps of beloved characters, especially the so-called *murder walk*²), at another — a scenario for actions initiated in the extra-textual space (the phenomenon of urban games inspired by literary plots, literary city guides, etc.), and at yet another, finally, a component of institutionally shaped politics of site (monuments, memorials, plaques related to writers and protagonists of their urban texts, etc., literature as a tourist product). All the said phenomena are situated, obviously, on the borders of textual studies and the surrounding context beyond the scope of literary studies, hence, they are in-line with the scope interest of culturally-centred genologists, according with the concept developed by Sendyka, who states, that a text is not merely a source of cultural data. Cultural studies explore texts not only on the cultural level, but also perceive them as indirect messages that contain information pertaining to social and cultural processes hidden beneath the literary language of forms. Therefore, according to Sendyka, genre discourse as a utterance, which has been formed for over two thousand years, might become the area in which the model of anthroposphere, a holistic human world as an organized whole, would be searched for (2006: 276–277). The author further recalls this perception of genres had been already proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, according to whom the very existence of genres demonstrates the entirety of means of collective navigation in reality, and thus, the real poetics of a genre can only be a sociology of this genre.

This paper is a proposition of reconstructing the genological landscape of modernity, whose important part is made up by urban genres. I find this term to stand for texts related with experiencing urbanism in terms of theme and form, in the sense that they constitute the result of a search for textual equivalent for the experience of being in an urban space, together with the corresponding sensory impressions (abundance of images, sounds, etc.,

¹ Whereas by the term of spatial practices I understand every act performed by the subject in the space, with accordance to the rhetoric of walking by Michel de Certeau. Cf. Certeau de 1984.

² That is, following the footsteps of crimes depicted in crime and sensation novels (such as highly popular sightseeing in cities that played background to the protagonists of Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*). Murder walks constitute an element of cultural tourism, which includes literary tourism — a phenomenon that reaches back to 18th and 19th centuries (cf. Mikos von Rohrscheidt 2008). A particular sort of literary tourism, which is travelling in the footsteps of novel protagonists, is discussed by Halina Kubicka, who specifies this kind of activity as fiction tourism (cf. Kubicka 2012: 130ff; Szalewska 2014).

which translates into perceptive poetics³) and the impression of motion, crossing the city in the sense of de Certeau's spatial practice. Therefore, the genological landscape in the above described view cannot be included into normative poetics; it transgresses descriptive poetics, constituting a cultural phenomenon, a sort of a model for interpreting modernity, a medium, which conveys the urban experience and the reflection that organises this experience. In the above described sense, a study of genres becomes seeking rules of modern spatial imagination and models of 'domesticating' the space by means of discourse.

Urban genres have taken a good hold in the awareness of participants of literary communication in 19th century along with the development of the bourgeois lifestyle and press. It would take many years and bear fruits of multi-volume monographs to reconstruct the progress of urban themes entering into popular literature and, later, into high literature. After all, a 19th-century novel, being itself a vast research field, is to great extent an urban novel. Hence, not undertaking interpretation of obvious examples, a title of one of the publications dedicated to this phenomenon, *From Wandering Writing to Wandering Reading: Productive Digression in Victorian Serial Fiction*, might be considered significant. The author, Julia McCord Chavez, draws the following statement while analysing Dickens' prose:

This fragmented, disjointed and overabundant text [a novel titled *Our mutual friend* — Author's note] invites its readers to imaginatively enter the streets — [...] — to become urban wanderers who negotiate the exaggerated images that bombard them from all sides. In this sense, the novel might be thought of as a textual embodiment of nineteenth-century metropolis' arcade culture. Viewed in this way, *Our mutual friend* represents an extension of contemporary texts like John Timbs' *Walks and Talks about London* (1865), which Lynda Nead has described as *the textual perambulation*. According to Nead, in this genre *the book is a substitution for the city streets and enables the reader to visualize the places in the text as though out walking. It is an intellectual, sedentary form of tourism in which the images of London exist through the text and where walking is achieved by reading.* (McCord Chavez 2008: 50)

The juxtaposition of reading and strolling is referred to by McCord Chavez as "reading-as-walking" as a reception model characteristic of the 19th-century urban prose, which would make a successful option in reading Polish novels as well, for instance Bolesław Prus' *Lalka* [The Doll], a representative 19th-century Polish urban novel. This tradition was inherited and transformed by modernist novel, which brought progress of next locations on European and later American maps, and then significantly widened models of identifying the situation of the subject in space (from Aragon's surrealist "polis" to Kafka's existential-claustrophobic "everycity"), of mutual correlations between the identity and the site, the internal and the external landscape. There are numerous propositions for classifying the poetics of the description of urban space in the literature of the first half of 20th century (Rybicka 2003). Both the experience and its representation techniques applied by highly different writers of that time are the archaeology of the present-day urban genology, for the

³ The term was introduced by Elżbieta Rybicka, who explained, that the "radical" perceptive poetics aimed at reaching an unmediated urban experience and revealing the triviality, the commonness of daily life. According to Rybicka, such dimension of the urban space was to be free of any imposed symbolic meaning, "axiological categorisations" and "emotional categorisations". The effect (both linguistic and constructional) of the ultimate closeness to a perceptive process and sensory impressions of the city was sought to be achieved by means of juxtaposition, collage, impressionist descriptions and listing. Textual arcades were the form corresponding to these experiences (Rybicka 2003: 317).

modern writing operates with a range of strategies developed by authors of the former two centuries (such as ocularcentrism, polyphony, transition from panoramic description to a passer-by's description, and so on), when the realisation of urban theme has made its way on a road marked with transitions from Dickensian London to Joyce's Dublin and from Baudelaire's *flâneur* to Benjamin's arcades.

Yet, it was not only the novel that was seeking textual equivalents of the urban experience, though it did provide the most mature realisations of the urban theme. Angela Hohmann recalls a concept of *tableaux*, a highly popular literary predecessor of *flâneur*-texts, triggered by an urge to make the transience of modernity still and formed in 18th century in line with Louis-Sébastien Mercier's tradition. Apart from sketches depicting city types and chronicles that engaged in gossips, it was tableaux that brought the urban resident closer to the increasingly larger and complex city (Hohmann 2001: 342–343). It was the small prose forms and micro-narratives categorised as an anecdote, *urban legend*, urban *faits divers*, a rumour, an image or “physiologic” sketch that prepare contemporary forms of representing the urban space experience with its eventualisation, discontinuity, sensory overload and multi-voiced narrative. It was these forms that were first consumed by the increasingly heterogeneous novel, which reached for these “quotes of reality” to obtain a realistic effect, to break free from the 19th-century formula later on and return to anti-narrative structure of the “poetics of excerpt” in the latest urban works. When attempting to reconstruct a modern genological landscape of urban literature, one should bear in mind these seemingly obvious sources of inspiration. For *tableaux* prepares textual arcades and it is them, and not a novel, which might be regarded as the key genre representing the modern urban experience.

Elżbieta Rybicka states, that at present, textual arcades tend to be more interested in the cultural character of the urban reality, thus leading their way to become a form of expression representative of the modern culture, in contrast to their initial role of a mere urban equivalent of a pastoral (Rybicka 2003: 170–171). Arcades, as a genre, enjoyed peak popularity in the last decades of 20th century in the writing diverse authors, such as, Małgorzata Baranowska (e.g., *Pamiętnik mistyczny* [*Mystic Diary*], *Wracam na Ochotę* [*I'm Going Back to Ochota*]), Zbigniew Herbert (e.g., *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* [*Barbarian in the Garden*], *Barbarzyńca w podróży* [*Barbarian on the Go*], *Labirynt nad morzem* [*Labyrinth on the Sea-Shore*], *Martwa natura z wędzidłem* [*Still Life with Bridle*], *Mistrz z Delft i inne utwory odnalezione* [*Master of Delft and Other Founded Pieces*], *Węzeł gordyjski oraz inne pisma rozproszone 1948–1998*, [*The Gordian Knot and Other Scattered Writings*]), Wojciech Karpiński (e.g., *Amerykańskie cienie* [*American Shadows*], *Pamięć Włoch* [*Memory of Italy*], *W Central Parku* [*In Central Park*]) and Adam Zagajewski (e.g., *Dwa miasta* [*Two Cities*], *Lekka przesada* [*A Slight Exaggeration*], *W cudzym pięknie* [*Another Beauty*])⁴, taking

⁴ Rybicka (Rybicka 2003: 167–169) lists numerous names of authors of *flâneur*-texts (Marceli Motty, Paulina Krakowska, Jerzy Żulawski, Jerzy Stempowski, Leon Choroński, Maria Kunciewiczowa, Adolf Rudnicki, Józef Wittlin, Tymon Terlecki, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Julian Kaden-Bandrowski, Czesław Miłosz, Miron Białoszewski, Andrzej Zawada, Inga Iwasiów, Anna Nasilowska, Marta Zielińska, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński). This list ought to be complemented with guide texts in the strict sense, despite their proximity to literary feuilletons, drawing on pop-cultural symbols and narratives (such as, *Paryskie spacer* by Ludwik Stomma), and with essays from the border of scientific, critical-literary and travel texts (such as, essays by Paweł Hertz, Mieczysław Jastrun, Zygmunt Kubiak, Jan Parandowski or *Przechadzki ateńskie* by Władysław Witwicki). Among the latest texts of this kind works of the following writers can be undoubtedly classified to this sort of convention: Ewa Bieńkowska (*Co mówią kamienie Wenecji*, *Michał Anioł — nieszczęśliwy rzymianin*), Lenta Głowczewska (*Nowy Jork. Kartki z metropolii 1983–2002*), Andrzej Stanisław Kowalczyk (*Miejskie. Amsterdam, Paryż I, Paryż II, Berno I, Berno II, Warszawa, Londyn*), Kazimierz Mrówka (*Wenecja*), Arkadiusz Pacholski (*Brulion paryski*), Krzysztof Rutkowski (*Książę bezdomny, Paryskie pasaż*).

on the role of the dominant model among modern urban writing formulas. In contrast to the increasingly polymorphic novel, it is now a fully crystallised and recognisable convention with a monothematic focus on describing the functioning of the subject in the urban space, which consistently and repeatedly offers to readers a specific model of experiencing the city in a modern way.

The name ‘textual arcades’ derives in origin from, obviously, the grand work by Walter Benjamin. Popularisation of this concept in the Polish critical tradition is owed to Krzysztof Rutkowski, the author of the polymorphic cycle *Paryskie pasaże* [*Parisian Arcades*], and — which is interesting in view of the sociology of literature — to publishers⁵, whose influence on the shaping of genological awareness of recipients (but also that of more and more new authors) cannot be underestimated. In turn, in the scientific discourse this term was brought into use by Elżbieta Rybicka (cf. Rybicka 2003)⁶, though, not without limiting it with the view of perceptive poetics at the very beginning of its “academic life”. Arcades, understood as the central point of the genological urban landscape, would be then a heterogeneous essayistic-fictionalised form of walking-writing (even if walking takes place often solely in the space of a library), a literary equivalent of a thoroughly modernist way of experiencing a city, combined with already-post-modernist awareness of its textualisation, expressed in the metaphor of a city-palimpsest. In this view, the constitutive characteristics of a genre would be the specific construction of narrative ‘I’, spread sylleptically between fiction and autobiography, as well as the intentional adoption of the ‘*flâneur*’ label with all of its 19th-century body of experience (the leisurely pace of the stroll, the refusal to take the marked route, interest in street eventualisation, constant hesitation between the urge to become one with the crowd and to keep the distance as an observer, adaptation of a passer-by’s perspec-

Opowieść o tajemnych przeżyciach, Raptularz końca wieku, Requiem dla moich ulic, Śmierć w wodzie. Proza, Wokulski w Paryżu), Adam Szczuciński (*Włoskie miniatury*), Agnieszka Taborska (*Okruchy amerykańskie*) and Marek Zagańczyk (*Droga do Sieny, Krajobrazy i portrety*). Even this (perforce) incomplete list allows anyone to realise the popularity of *flâneur*-texts in contemporary literary culture.

⁵ Most of the titles cited here were published by one of the two publishing houses (in case of Karpiński’s *Pamięć Włoch* — by both of them) — Fundacja Zeszytów Literackich (Warsaw) or *słowo/obraz terytoria* (Gdańsk). What is more, individual book series initiated by these two houses not only popularised *flâneur* writing, but also — which is more important from the view of the present work — they had a profound impact on forming readership skills and genological awareness vital for the existence of this genre. The *Pasaże* [*Arcades*] series under the imprint of *słowo/obraz terytoria* become in this light a clear declaration, that the titles included are part of the Benjaminian tradition and share a specific sensitivity, methodology, form, etc. Thus, the role of series here is to signal genre. An even greater role in the shaping of communication between the author and the recipient of *flâneur*-texts has been played by „Zeszyty Literackie”, a periodical and a publishing house at the same time. Their series and mini-series, such as *Podróż* (with re-edited, among others, Paweł Muratow’s *Obrazy Włoch, Pamięć Włoch* of his spiritual disciple, Wojciech Karpiński, as well as the first edition of *Włoskie miniatury* written by the representative of the young generation, Adam Szczuciński) are in the perspective of genological studies a manifestation of which a strictly specified “family” of saunterers the authors belong to. Moreover, the series define a line of inheritance — from literary fathers to literary sons, from masters to disciples, who then achieve excellence in the field of sauntering themselves. Thus, one should not forget about the range of writers who deliberately refer to the already-established formula of textual arcades.

⁶ The canonisation of the genre is confirmed by the presence of the entry ‘arcades’ in the genological dictionary constructed in a periodical titled „Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich”. Nevertheless, the entry description leaves much to be desired, as it was based merely on the works of Krzysztof Rutkowski, and, what is more, completely ignores Rybicka’s output. Nevertheless, at the same time it does indicate the presence of this concept in genological awareness (Bogolewska 2010: 264–265). A detailed description of genre determinants of textual arcades are included in my monograph — Szalewska 2012.

tive, ocularcentrism, choice of the space of urban sites/routes of memorial). This tradition is deeply rooted in Polish literature, which is proven, among others, by the construction of subjectivity in classic Polish essayistic works. According to Andrzej Kowalczyk, the motif of a stroll, a walk, a journey is one of the “travel” topoi most frequently indicated by researchers. Moreover, it is highly popular among critics, such as Pater (“intellectual journey”), Meyer (who depicts a leisurely walk in an art gallery), Stempowski (who published his works in „Kultura” under a collective title *Notatnik nieśpiesznego przechodnia* [*A notebook of a leisurely passer-by*]). In *La terre bernoise* the rhythm of a stroll defines the narrative formula, which Kowalczyk exemplifies with the following passage: “Spod stóp nieśpiesznego przechodnia (*un passant attentif*) podnosi się pył wspomnień, porównań, skojarzeń i cytatów. [...] Niniejsze zapiski powstały przy okazji spacerów, spotkań i skojarzeń” [A dust of memories, comparisons, associations and quotes arises from beneath the feet of a leisurely passer-by. [...] These notations have been made during walks, meetings and associations] (Kowalczyk 1990: 24).

As a form of articulation of an intellectual stroll, arcades would make one of the most traditional forms of essayistic works. One can note the concurrence of strolling and pondering on the things seen in works of many 20th-century essayists, just to mention (naturally) Jerzy Stempowski and his idiom of a leisurely passer-by, *Petersburg* [*Petersburg*] by Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Londyn* [*London*] and *Paryż* [*Paris*] by Tymon Terlecki, the works of Józef Wittlin and Czesław Miłosz, Gustaw Herling-Grudziński’s literary voyages to Italy or works of Jan Józef Lipski and Józef Czapski. This sort of writing prepares a model of experiencing the city, which would reveal itself in the modern urban novel by making, obviously, a simplification imposed by the diachronic perspective. Here I have in mind poetics as different to each other as these presented in the prose of, among others, Joanna Bator, Sylwia Chutnik, Stefan Chwin, Paweł Huelle, Dorota Masłowska, Daniel Odija, the grotesque transformations of urban space in *Noc żywych Żydów* [*Night of the Living Jews*] by Igor Ostachowicz, or in the works of Ignacy Karpiński. The element that integrates these highly different variations of genre within the contemporary urban landscape is the already mentioned combination of the modernist anthropological figure of a leisurely passer-by with a formal (though leading to various consequences in its different implementations) attempt to find a textual counterpart of the process of thinking about the city and experiencing its multi-voiced and multi-sensory space. This is most vivid in the very essay, which, as a mask of the contemporary intellectual problematisation of modernity and its urbanism⁷, thematises this experience explicitly. Herbert advises in *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* [*Barbarian in the Garden*], that a visitor to a new city should first wander along its streets, choosing one of countless strolling methods, e.g., either turning left or right, or just taking a path as straight as a die (Herbert 1997: 76–77), Bieńkowska describes her first encounter with Venice in *Co mówią kamienie Wenecji* [*What the stones of Venice say*]. Visiting cities, she practices “sztuka rozpoznawania” [the art of identification], discovering space by means of sight, smell, hearing and touch (Bieńkowska 1999: 96). The first stage in the modern experiencing of the city is to immerse oneself, sensory and somewhat pre-reflectively, in the urban space and street eventualisation. Yet, this

⁷ In Kowalczyk’s *Nieśpieszny przechodzień*... one may come across his remark, that an essayist is one of many literary masks of a modern-day intellectual. According to the author, an essay relates the subject’s self-presentation with radical criticism of the subject’s situation in modern society. Due to these functions that bind it, the form develops a distinct language and its own symbols (Kowalczyk 1997: 171). Likewise, ‘*flâneur*’ would be a role taken by an intellectual in textual arcades, a mask, which, when put on by the subject, equips him with a specific symbolism.

naive view does not last long, for the post-modernist city is not only a multi-voice space, but also a space that has been read repeatedly. Thus, the foundation of an urban landscape is intertextuality and co-strolling, understood as moving intellectually in an already-interpreted space (which can also manifest itself in at least several models of intertextual dialogue, such as, imitation⁸, dialogue, parody, playing with urban narratives — the last of which may be exemplified by the novel *Ciemno, prawie noc* [*Dark, almost night*] written by Joanna Bator).

It is characteristic for the newest urban genres to have a duality embedded in the subject construction. On one hand, it is defined by a desire to immerse oneself in the unmediated experience of the space, to find the first, intact view of the city, to penetrate the urban space with all senses (a source of more and more new critical approaches that appreciate sensory urban practices, as well as urban novels that explore sensory experiences, which can be exemplified by works of such profound dissimilarity as those of Orhan Pamuk and J. M. Coetzee). On the other, this attitude is characterised by the need for intellectual study of the urban theme through reading, opinions and history. Iwaszkiewicz, by stating that the view on the Field of Mars does not trigger in him an impression as great as depictions of Adam Mickiewicz and Puszkina did (Iwaszkiewicz 1981: 55), juxtaposes his Petersburgian experience with literary images of the city. Herling-Grudziński states to have read much about the frescos in the Piccolomini library, beginning with Berenson's academic assessment and ending with a touching description from Herbert's *Barbarzyńca w ogrodzie* (Herling-Grudziński 1996: 191). He reveals a practice typical of the *flâneur*, namely, confronting what one sees with what one has read, and sometimes even "styling" one's own urban experience with accordance to the notes made by his or her predecessors. This kind of writing gives away its 19th-century roots with a double-seeing strategy (Kamionkova-Straszakowa 1991: 702) — looking at an actual space and projecting what is seen onto a screen of general culture — an intellectual reflection on aesthetic, historiographical and ideological issues. This constant tension between the directness of experiencing and the inevitable mediation of the description, intermingled in the intertextuality of the urban text, is explained by the specificity of intellectual *flânerie*, a stroll undertaken simultaneously both in the actual space specified on the map and the

⁸ Arcades would become in such view an ivy growing between inter-texts. This is observed particularly in the latest of the works discussed here, which take under account the increasingly rich tradition of the genre, such as Szczuciński's *Włoskie miniatury*. The laconic form and the small size of the passages cited below intensify the impression of a strong dependence of the essayist's arguments on his predecessor's reflections. For instance, the fragment *Taormina*. Ślady is constructed from paragraphs with stylistics rendered in the fragments below: "Czytałem tu *Lamparta*. Próbuje wyobrazić sobie Hertz'a i Iwaszkiewicza przechadzających się alejami parku. [...]" [Chciałbym — Author's note] *Móc kiedyś powiedzieć jak Jan Kott [...]* [I've read Lampart here. I try to visualise Hertz and Iwaszkiewicz sauntering along park alleys. [...]] (If only one day I could — Author's note) say just like Jan Kott (...)] (Szczuciński 2008: 11); "Hertz jest autorem przekładu wybitnej książki Pawła Muratowa *Obrazy Włoch*" [Hertz made a translation of *Obrazy Italii*, a brilliant book by Pavel Muratov] (Szczuciński 2008: 11); "Spośród poświęconych *Taorminie* wierszy Jarosława Iwaszkiewicza najbardziej lubię ten o Annie Achmatowej. [...]. Brodski wspomina, że zawsze starał się przyjść do niej z bukietem" [From Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's poems dedicated to *Taormina* I like the most the one about Anna Akhmatova. [...]] Brodsky recalls he would always make effort to visit her with a flower bouquet in his hand] (Szczuciński 2008: 12); "Teatr Greco to miejsce urokliwe. Wspaniale opisał je Goethe" [Teatro Greco is a charming place. Goethe has depicted it splendidly] (Szczuciński 2008: 12); "Niedawno Marek Zagańczyk przysłał mi fotografię Pawła Hertz'a" [Recently, Marek Zagańczyk has sent me a photograph of Paweł Hertz] (Szczuciński 2008: 11). Szczuciński's arcades are formed by explicit and allusive references to the authors' urban experiences who create his collection of mental representations, which gives away his relation to a specific tradition, his choice of reading, purposeful imitation of older and already-authoritative arcades-makers.

discursive space. This phenomenon is analysed by Stefan Morawski basing on Musil's works. 'Flânerie' can be considered as a lesson restructured by an "essayist-philosopher" in his world-view. In line with Musil's opinion, it is further stated, that the depiction of the urban space created by the *flâneur* must be opposed, as it is (just like the very act of leisurely walking is) contaminated due to its direct contact with the trivial surface reality. When "re-painting" the mental picture of the epoch', Musil-artist ("*der Dichter*") becomes an independent observer, a strict nonconformist, as only then his awareness would reach beyond the horizons of Musil-wanderer, the *flâneur* (Morawski 1995: 50–51).

The most significant space of the *flâneur's* intellectual work — and also the last of constitutive determinants of textual arcades — would be the historic imagination. If a city becomes in modern spatial *topoi* study a mirror for various cultural and political-economic processes, then, most of all, it is also a mirror for loss and transience. In his *Requiem dla moich ulic*, Krzysztof Rutkowski recalls Stendhal's walks from Palais-Royal to Tuileries Gardens leading through a Parisian quarter that is virtually non-existent (Rutkowski 2008: 12), indicating the theme and emotional background of yet another of his Parisian arcades with the very title (*Paryskie pasaże*). As a genre, arcades are not only the effect of seeking textual counterparts of spatial practices performed in actual space, i.e., the rhetoric of walking described by de Certeau, where subsequent figures of speech (which are counterparts of specific types of urban perception) form a story of a wandering passer-by⁹. The essence of arcades does not boil down merely to the rhetoric of walking, though it does play a fundamental role by specifying the 'zero-level' of this kind of writing. Still, a double-seeing principle 'builds up' above it, which translates also into the analogous double topography principle. As Wojciech Ligęza concludes in his monograph dedicated to the experience of emigrating, there are two directions according to which city maps are oriented, namely, the real direction and the sentimental one (Ligęza 1998: 186). However, this remark concerns not only the specific situation of alienation, but also defines the duality found by Morawski in the figures of Musil-wanderer and Musil-intellectual on a different level. For textual arcades are a form of encounter between an actual city and an imaginary one, the one that was read and the one that was reflected upon, and as such they constitute an exceptionally interesting material for studying the contemporary historical imagination. This sort of experiencing the city by the means of its history and the technique of constructing the world depicted based on time spatialisation has become a dominant characteristic of the urban landscape in recent years, revealing its potential in the novel. The post-modern prose (Chwin, Huelle, Iwasiów, Liskowacki), with its high-literary character, post-resettlement and post-memory, adapts the achievements of 'little-homeland' literature of the 1990s by rewriting and problematising local narratives during pensive *flânerie* through historical cities-palimpsests and the lost toponymy of the past. Nevertheless, vintage crime texts are now at their peak of

⁹ Recreating the 19th-century "arcade" culture in the textual architectonics corresponds to the concept developed by de Certeau, who finds in rhetoric an equivalent of the actual motion in space — "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered. At the most elementary level, it has a triple 'enunciative' function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic 'contracts' in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an 'allocation', 'posits another opposite' the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action). It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation" (Certeau de 1984: 97–98).

popularity, with their authors ‘settling in’ more and more new cities (Krajewski’s Wrocław, Wroński’s Lublin, Lewandowski’s Warsaw, and so on), applying into the popular literature the double-seeing principle, in line with which the present-day topography conceals maps of earlier spatial practices.

The most significant achievement of textual arcades was the transition from the panoramic view of the city to the passer-by’s perspective, from the third person narrator remaining beyond the portrayed urban reality to the viewpoint of a *flâneur* immersed in the urban space. This “perceptive revolution” (Rybicka 2003: 109) has enabled experiencing the city individually, as well as seeking a discursive equivalent of the process of strolling in the urban space (intellectual *flânerie*) and pictorial equivalent of historical imagination, which finds in the modern culture a proper field for its activity in the urban space.

In conclusion, it ought to be reminded, that by consolidating its position in the awareness of creators and recipients, textual arcades, obviously together with numerous other socio-literary factors, have contributed to the restitution, modification and, at times, even creation of lesser genre formulas of urban literature, such as the simplified version of the arcades — *spacerownik*, a walk journal in which the reflection on the traces of the past frozen in the observed space, characteristic of a *flâneur*-essay, is replaced with journal-like tourist guidelines. Numerous other examples could be mentioned here, since in recent years the publishing market has experienced a highly rapid increase in works proving ambitions to step beyond a mere guidebook, which is indicated para-textually in titles, like *Spacerownik powstańczy* by Józef Krzyk, *Spacerownik. Łódź filmowa* by Joanna Podolska and Jakub Wiewiórski, *Spacerownik. Warszawa śladami PRL-u* by Jerzy S. Majewski or *Spacerownik krakowski* by Krzysztof Jakubowski and co-authors. A walk journal is the younger brother of arcades, an interesting hybrid of utilitarian writing and an attempt to create artistic essay, which returns in its journalistic stylistics to the source of urban genres, that is, the press. Significantly, insofar as the textual arcades were originally a form of expression of the modernist *sui generis* experience marked with strong anesthetisation of reality and with what Stefan Morawski calls an intellectual *flânerie*, a walk journal would be a genological mark of the transformation from the Benjaminian *flâneur* into the Bauman’s tourist¹⁰.

The modern “genre landscape” is linked with the urban experience in the centre of which the textual arcades are situated and with complex configurations of forms of utterance of different compositional and stylistic dominants on its peripheries. On one hand, there are guidebook-arcade hybrids like walk journals, therefore, genres related to utilitarianism, on the other — those in which the intellectual *flânerie* intermingles with a strictly scientific discourse. An excellent example of the latter would be Elżbieta Janicka’s *Festung Warschau*, a kind of scientific-literary collage constructed and based on the Benjaminian method of assembling quotes (from statements of historians, witnesses, writers) in citing

¹⁰ According to Bauman, once a day or every week a post-modern *flâneur* would visit promenades filled with shops, avoiding on their way any contact with the streets in-between. The shops served the *flâneur* as his temples, yet the main places of worship were the summer beaches, where the ones who could afford such a pilgrimage would go (Bauman 1993: 82).

someone else's voice and in the possibility of "arcade", stereo-metric reading. Thus, Janicka's book may be read by means of: the original primary text, which is, in fact, an arcade *flânerie* in the contemporary Warsaw confronted with its literary description and the academic knowledge of the history of *Festung Warschau*; numerous quotes incorporated as in a collage; footnotes that construct a complementary, yet also an autonomous Varsovian narrative; lastly, by means of photographs, which become increasingly important building blocks of the contemporary urban genres, susceptible to inter-semiotic relations due to the theme. The Janicka's book and (already) numerous walk journals make the trace of the past that persists in the architecture and topography the basic object of their interest, as if following Walter Benjamin's statement: "Arcades are [...] monuments of being-no-more" (Benjamin 1999). At the same time, textual arcades and related forms are also memorials of a certain kind of urban space perception, a specific historical model of experiencing the background of one's own existence, in which individual association, a melancholic contemplation on the past and the sense of relation between identity and the site play such a great role. Nowadays, the number of authors writing about local narratives as geo-literary texts that are a record of their personal experience of a given site (Konończuk 2012: 142). Writers tend to explore their private space more often and more willingly, especially those non-existent in the discourse of dominance". Nevertheless, a specific kind of these "geo-literary texts" stem from the city, which I call in this paper **urbantexts**.

One could include to urbantexts — genres, genre varieties, one-time formulas, and, most of all, hybrids, that form the genological landscape — generally textual arcades, yet also the modern urban novel, *spacerowniki* and polymorphic para-arcade formulas similar to scientific prose (such as Elżbieta Janicka's *Festung Warschau*) or to poetic prose (such as Przemysław Owczarek's *Miasto do zjedzenia* [*City for eating*]). Lastly, when writing about the urban geological landscape, one should also keep returning to its archaeology, the 19th-century press and the arising micro-genres of the street, which, since they usually make up larger textual compositions, are an example of a pure urbantext. The potential of urban micro-histories in literary studies has been already discussed by Roland Barthes and in its Polish context by Michał Głowiński, who applied the concept of *faits divers*, proposed by the former, into his analysis of Miron Białoszewski's works (see: Głowiński 1973). Białoszewski, the author of *Szumy, złepy, ciagi*, is the most inventive (as far as it comes to seeking para-genre formulas that convey the perception of the city) in Polish literature and, at the same time, has the greatest sensitivity when it comes to detecting the specific urban rhythm. His works are an example of highly individual, idiomatic (and, thus, non-arcade) experience and discourse, distinct in comparison to the titles mentioned above. The author is the only one who has reached for the so-called pure urbantexts, for all this narrative chaos that determines the shape of the modern urban genre landscape. The centre, textual arcades, originates in the concept of *tableaux*, columns filled with urban narrative junk — gossips, blood-chilling crime stories, warnings, scoops and anomalies. At the same time, this discursive waste becomes a valuable work site of an urban archeologist. Urbantexts, which mature into arcades, are a genological set of micro-histories, little urban genres with overlapping features, to which one ought to include *tableaux*, chronicles, urban legends, rumours, physiological sketches and pitavals. Diversity of this kind of short narratives, though often of a very small or even negligible aesthetic value, does constitute a remarkably rich material for analysing the city in its textual dimension, as well as for analysing discursive forms of taming the space by means of passing on its story.

Thus, if an epic shows life of a community based on the background of historical events that are of importance to this group, then a post-modern bourgeois epic, created by urban-texts divided into subsequent cantos in a digressive and multi-layered plot, depicts a group of *flâneur*'s descendants — individual passers-by, undertaking urban reading practices again and again to find traces of the 19th-century arcades, hidden within a modern *polis*.

Translated by JOANNA ZAHORSKA

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