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## AN ATTEMPTED THEORY OF THE REPORTAGE

### I

Before embarking on the analysis of the reportage's specific characteristics and attempting to set down a definition of this genre, a few words ought to be devoted to its genesis\*.

The reportage has been the subject of a great many theoretical works. Soviet literature alone has produced more than 400 works, dissertations and articles on the subject, and the Germans have even produced a monographic work entitled *Die Reportage bei Egon Erwin Kisch*<sup>1</sup>. Polish periodicals have published many voices in discussions concerning the reportage. It is a conspicuous fact that no exhaustive monograph on the subject has been elaborated to-date while imprudent and equivocal theories and pseudo-theories of this genre are rampant. The theory of journalism deals above all with the technical aspect of the newspaper; hence, it remains up to the theoreticians of literature to blaze the trail and put up signposts in the maze of the forms and styles of the reportage.

Such exigency is determined by the spectacular development of the reportage whose career was precipitated by the First World War. Ever since the outbreak of that war there has been noted an increasing demand for detailed, possible faithful, and genuine reporting of events. The new reader has developed a growing awareness of his co-participation in political events, he has developed a new mentality. The novel is embattled. The reportage has not only made deep incursions into the novel's sphere of dominance but has won new areas for literature; it has become literature's reconnoitering division, penetrating and grasping facts sooner than the novel, and reporting events which will probably never be within the novelist's scope of interest. The reportage can claim a very ancient pedigree: while some theoreticians hold the newspaper was the cradle of the reportage, others, including Kisch, see

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\* General remark: The present work, while taking into account the "foreign" reportage, deals above all with Polish material, presenting its current state to the foreign reader.

<sup>1</sup> D. Schlenstedt, *Die Reportage bei Egon Erwin Kisch*, Berlin 1959.

its genesis in the writings of Pliny the Younger, Marco Polo, and Ibrahim Ibn Jacob.

Eventually, the absolute majority of scholars have accepted the Middle Ages as the formation period of the reportage, and the emergence of newspapers as the beginning of the modern era in this genre. Writes Julian Stawiński<sup>2</sup>: "The reportage gradually became so popular that an entire wing of the press, what was then called »yellow press«, was based on it. Sir George Nawnes introduced it to Britain, and Joseph Pulitzer to the United States".

To an abrupt end came the era of the slow, evolutionary development of literature, rapidly vanishing was the old kind of readers who had been accustomed to that evolution. The new reader, oriented by the First World War towards topical reports, war correspondence and communiques, would not easily return to the novel, at least not in its traditional form.

The contact of the author with the reader is, in the case of the reportage, the contact between two contemporaries, their life experience being (at least in its general outlines) practically the same as it pertains to the same contemporary historical moment and has been shaped under essentially similar conditions. The reportage therefore, as no other genre, can influence the reader's imagination with the impact of associations with the direct, palpable reality close at hand, and can force him into a confrontation of his personal life experience with that of the author. In traditional literature, the reader was conventionally engaged in the plot, the tragedies contained in that literature being conventional and developing in a conventional world. The conventionality of the world of the novel, with the fiction and remoteness of the time of action, was bound to create a feeling of security. At its best, it could arouse curiosity while other sensations were strictly conventional. The spectator in a theatre, too, had the feeling of security, the stage and the lime-lights being a requisite and element of security. All that happened, happened within the limits of the stage. And, as if to add to it all, even the many corpses on stage were dead strictly conventionally.

Thus, both the novel and the theatre were able to simplify things, their receiving end being less critical and quite easy to guide. For example, a messenger would enter from behind the scenes and state: "a handful of our boys have put to the sword an enemy unit ten times their strength, storming the gates of the city". The spectator believes his words, accepts them as a reality within the stage, as a verifiable truth within the convention. He does not wonder "how come such an easy break?", does not ask "can it really be so?". And yet he would, had the messenger rushed into the theatre through the door for the public and said the same words in the audience. The spectator's reaction to his words would then have been quite different. The reportage comes exactly through this real door for the plot in the reportage is a genuine thing.

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<sup>2</sup> J. Stawiński, *Ogary poszły w las* (*The Hounds Entered the Forest*), "Świat", 1955, No 8.

Thanks to the new attitude and mentality developed by the new reader, the reportage sprang forth in a fertile ground. The statement can be ventured that the reportage is born when there arises, on the part of the reader, the necessity of co-participation without the intermediary of a deforming transmitter (poet, writer). This is probably the most important factor of the reportage's development and success, and in it, above all, lies the genesis of this genre.

## II

In order to more closely define the essence of the reportage and its distinctive individuality among other literary genres, more attention and space must be devoted to an attempt at defining all relevant characteristics typical of the reportage. We shall discuss at length the reportage as the literature of facts, and also — the technicalities of the reporter's job.

In his *Marktplatz der Sensationen* Kisch wrote the following words about the method of collecting material:

"I would sit in a mass of half-frozen people crowding a poorhouse, I would wait in a hungry line for free soup dispensed by a soup kitchen, I would spend nights with the homeless in a night-shelter, I would chop ice on the Moldau together with the unemployed, go down to Hamburg along with the raftsmen, play mute roles in a theatre, wander with a group of lumpenproletarians for hops harvest in Zatec land, and was an assistant to a dogcatcher"<sup>3</sup>.

As can be seen, Kisch was anxious to be wherever the events and people were of interest to him. His reportages contain the description of events in which the author either participated personally or else of which he was an eye-witness. The heroes, introduced by him, are all people with whom the reporter came personally into contact, and with whom he talked. The whole of his literary production proves what must have been a self-evident prerequisite for Kisch: his personal participation in all events described.

*Mała encyklopedia powszechna* (*Little Universal Encyclopaedia*) says under the entry "reportage": a genre of publicist prose, a lively description of concrete developments, based on the author's own observation<sup>4</sup>. Sierotwiński defines the reportage as "a publicist account of events, based on authentic materials directly collected"<sup>5</sup>. In his definition of the reportage, Jacek Wołowski says it is "a press article dealing with what the journalist has inquired about and penetrated"<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Marktplatz der Sensationen. Skizzen*, Mexiko 1942.

<sup>4</sup> *Mała encyklopedia powszechna* (*Little Universal Encyclopaedia*), Warszawa 1959, p. 809.

<sup>5</sup> S. Sierotwiński, *Słownik terminów literackich* (*A Dictionary of Literary Terms*), Kraków 1960.

<sup>6</sup> That definition not only defines solely one characteristic of the reportage, but in addition the word "penetrated" might be interpreted in many ways.

The above-cited definitions emphasize the necessity of the author's personal participation in, or attendance at, the events he proposes to deal with. Thus, autopsy is the essential precondition of a reportage's authenticity, and at the same time, one of its more important characteristics. It constitutes a warrant that the facts described have really taken place, that they are not fictitious creations.

In his volume of reportages, entitled *Ten Days that Shook the World*, John Reed, the American press correspondent and observer of the Great Russian October Revolution, described only those facts of which he was an eyewitness. He was very strict in observing that rule and, whenever some two developments occurred all at the same time, he always chose to write about the one he saw. Connected with the autopsy quality is the absence of literary fiction from the reportage. Incidentally, opinions are divided on fiction. Writes Kisch: "A reporter's fantasy may tread but a very narrow path from one fact to another, and the rhythm of its movement must be harmonized with facts"<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, Kisch rejects the very possibility of the existence of fiction in the reportage. Józef Kuśmierek, too, declares himself against fiction: "As I write I always restrict myself to facts, elaborating neither on what the given character thinks nor what he feels. I leave this up to the reader"<sup>8</sup>. In his review of John Reed's book, Kazimierz Koźniewski writes: "He [John Reed] has no use for fiction, and apparently needs no »filling« to his picture"<sup>9</sup>. Marian Brandys, in an article entitled *Ucieczka od prawdy (Flight from Truth)*, is unequivocal in defining his standpoint: "The contents of a good reportage should only be genuine facts, occurring at a concretely-specified place and a concretely-specified time [...]. A good reportage should allow for not even the smallest admixture of literary fiction. Throughout, it should be built of the material of a concretely-specified reality. In this consists the essence of the reportage conceived as a literary genre [...]"<sup>10</sup>.

Kazimierz Koźniewski defines the reportage as a protocol, whereas Timofeyev defines it as a document. Both definitions preclude the existence of literary fiction of any kind. The above views are partly opposed by Lovell, Mędel ski and Koprowski. According to Lovell, the reportage ought to be "enriched" with an additional message. A certain amount of literary fiction is necessary for getting this message home. As arguments supporting his thesis, Lovell produces his own reportages which, admittedly, are quite convincing arguments<sup>11</sup>. Mędel ski, too, declares himself in favour of admitting only a certain type of fiction. For him, literary fiction is "a condensation of human qualities present or events taking place in the society at a speci-

<sup>7</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Marktplatz der Sensationen*.

<sup>8</sup> J. Kuśmierek, the Introduction to *Opowiadanie reportera (Reporter's story)*, Warszawa 1959.

<sup>9</sup> K. Koźniewski, the review of J. Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World*, "Kwartalnik Prasoznawczy", 1957, No 2.

<sup>10</sup> M. Brandys, *Ucieczka od prawdy (Flight from Truth)*. "Nowa Kultura", 1953, No. 14.

<sup>11</sup> J. Lovell, *Cud się zdarzył (A Miracle Has Happened)* and others.

fied time and place"<sup>12</sup>. A writer, continues Mędelksi, builds a character for whom he opts various human qualities, taking courage from one man, sensitivity from another, perseverance from a third one, and so on and so forth, and then endows his hero with the whole lot. For Mędelksi, such fiction is unacceptable. In defining the hero of a reportage, the author performs only a selection, omitting some of his features and choosing the most relevant ones.

Mędelksi sees fiction in this for, in reality, the character under consideration possesses many qualities of which only one is selected. In this manner, he argues, the reportage presents a fictitious hero. It is, however, rather hard to agree with Mędelksi's view, for this selection is not fiction but an artistic operation performed with a view to emphasize one specific quality.

It is only Jan Koprowski who declares his unqualified support for literary fiction, arguing that no good reportage could be conceived without it. In such a good reportage "the names of heroes can be fictitious, the names of places can be fictitious; one thing must be real — the problem"<sup>13</sup>.

In their argument for and against literary fiction, the debaters forget about the fundamental distinction between the theoretical premises of the reportage conceived as a literary genre and the criteria serving to classify the individual productions of individual reporters. Of course, literary fiction is permissible in a reportage, and its presence does not disqualify that reportage. On the other hand, when we broach the matter of literary fiction in the context of theoretical deliberation on the perfect reportage standard whose form follows the laws governing that genre, then we must repudiate literary fiction<sup>14</sup> (as a programme!). The author of the present article will strive to define the specific characteristics of exactly such "pure" and "perfect" reportage. And after all, it is known that the division into genres is only a principle of classification of literary phenomena while the boundaries between genres are rather vague.

The obligatory absence of literary fiction from the reportage is connected with its other characteristic, namely the precise address of the facts, places and persons represented.

Let us return once again to the already quoted statement by Marian Brandys: "The contents of a good reportage should only be genuine facts, occurring at a concretely-specified place and a concretely-specified time" [...] <sup>15</sup>. Boris Polevoy asserts that a good reportage is concrete and reflects genuine facts. People described in it are real, existing persons. The plot is tied to a specific place<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> S. Mędelksi, *Co to jest reportaż (What Is Reportage)*, "Pomorze", 1956, April, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> J. Koprowski, *O reportażu prasowym (On the Press Reportage)*, *Prasoznawstwo* 1958, No. 2, "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego" ("Scientific Records of Warsaw University").

<sup>14</sup> Most theoreticians declare themselves for the absence of fiction from the reportage.

<sup>15</sup> Brandys, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

Kisch and Pruszyński did not describe but what they saw and lived through themselves. People in their reportages are people with names and addresses. Most reportages in the daily press, and the interventional reportages in particular, carry the names of localities, institutions and people, which must be absolutely genuine. This is connected with the reportage's verifiability and the possible reaction on the readers' part. The requirement of a precise address in the reportage does not seem to give rise to any reservations. Let us then again return to the definition of the reportage.

In their *Concise Dictionary of Literary Genres*, L. Timofeyev and N. Vengrov write: "The reportage is a literary genre whose sine-qua-non requisite is documentary truth, notarial truth, statistical and economic truth"<sup>17</sup>. Documentation is an indispensable requisite for the reporter in the process of collecting materials, and for the reportage as a confirmation of the genuineness of the facts represented. Documents can be diverse. Personal — biographies, diaries, memoirs, letters, notes. More important, however, are social documents which carry a legal weight: archive materials, documentation of enterprises, communal or school records, minutes, resolutions, regulations, accounts, books, periodicals, diagrams, chronicles, official correspondence, appeals and manifestoes, etc. Reporters often make use of such documents. Nevertheless, a good reporter sees the value of materials of this kind solely in that they are a confirmation of the facts he has chosen to describe.

The French poet and literary critic Claude Roy wrote in the years 1952-1953 a volume of reportages on China. His *Keys to China* contains in its concluding chapters some historical material which is cited as documentation of the author's findings (and explanation of certain phenomena), and also the texts of the regulations and laws mentioned in the book. John Reed furnished him with manifestoes, communiques and decrees issued during the Revolution (also in the form of documentation).

Let us now take a look at Kisch's volume of reportages, entitled *China geheim*<sup>18</sup>. In the reportage *Kapitalistische Romanze von den Bagdad-Juden*, the author quotes Karl Marx's statements in the "New York Daily Tribune" on the economic situation in China. In the reportage *Waffen sind das grosse Geschäft*, he adduces the texts of German and British diplomatic notes and press comments devoted to illegal arms trade. In that same reportage, Kisch gives verbatim quotes (in quotation marks) from statements by the envoy and foreign minister of the German Reich. A few pages further in the same piece, he adduces, also in quotation marks, the story by one Chinese sailor who witnessed the transshipment of arms in the open sea. In the reportage *Manlun und die Roten*, Kisch reprints a letter by Sun Yat-sen, the first President of the Republic of China, to the Soviet Government. The reportage

<sup>17</sup> L. Timofeyev and N. Vengrov, *Kratky slovar' literaturovedcheskikh terminov*, Moscow 1952, p. 82.

<sup>18</sup> E. E. Kisch, *China geheim. Reportagen*, Berlin 1933.

establishes such documentation as proof for the reader and for those who might charge it with falsity. Such proof must be considered equally important for Kisch who undertakes to elucidate some international problems as for a reporter who writes about his visit to a Mr. Dedo who has been charged with economic fraud. In both cases, the documentary quality is indispensable for the realization of the aims of the reportage.

### III

The above remarks have been a discussion of the reportage conceived as the literature of facts; let us now proceed to examine these characteristics which are a consequence of a reporter's job, his manner of work and realization of aims posed before the reportage. The principal purpose of this genre is to inform the reader about facts, people and problems. Kisch searches for truth, tracks it down everywhere for the sole reason of conveying it to the reader. He goes aboard ship to learn more about work aboard and in harbours; he is anxious to learn more about the mentality of officers and sailors. When in China, he closely follows the course of political events, studies the history of that country, peeps into temples, theatres, monasteries, and execution sites. All that he wants to show to the reader.

Wolanowski takes an interest in the history of Błędów sands<sup>19</sup> and a wrecked Nazi cruiser which goes for scrap<sup>20</sup>.

In his *Opowiadanie lekarza pogotowia*<sup>21</sup> (*The Story of a First Aid Doctor*), Józef Kuśmierek informs the reader about the work of the health service. Reporters go out of their way in the direction of human interest, trying to provide answers to questions that arise in the context of current, fascinating problems.

Let us take a closer look at a reportage from Tadeusz Breza's volume *Listy hawańskie* (*Letters from Havana*)<sup>22</sup>. The order of contents in the reportage *Hotel Nacional de Cuba* is as follows: 1) A mention about the author's illness, care extended by the Cuban authorities and health service; 2) Description of El Morro mews as seen from a hotel window; 3) The history of the castle since its foundation, its original and present designation; 4) The story of a Romanian employee of the hotel; 5) The Romanian's version of the history of the hotel; 6) Extensive digressions on the initial stage of Battista's career.

Within some ten pages, Breza thus succeeded in informing the reader about a fragment of the history of Cuba, the history of Battista, the present outlook of

<sup>19</sup> L. Wolanowski, *Służba Polsce*, [in:] *Przeważnie o ludziach* (*Mostly about People*), Warszawa 1953.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, the reportage *Hitlerowski pancernik jedzie na polski Śląsk* (*Nazi German Battleship Goes to Polish Silesia*). A charge is levelled against Wolanowski that, the little to the contrary, he gives only a marginal treatment to people.

<sup>21</sup> J. Kuśmierek, *Opowiadania reportera* (*Reporter's Stories*), Warszawa 1954.

<sup>22</sup> T. Breza, *Listy hawańskie* (*Letters from Havana*), Warszawa 1961.

the castle and hotel, the helpfulness of the health service, and about dozens of other interesting minutiae. In one word, he succeeded in conveying a certain amount of knowledge.

Information is by no means all that the reportage is supposed to do. It alerts the reader to certain problems it broaches. The very character of that literature requires it, a literature projecting the actual reality against the past and future, and illuminating one fact in relationship with other facts which either have already taken place or are due to take place soon.

In his article *Notatki reportera* (*Reporter's Notes*)<sup>23</sup>, Kozicki puts emphasis on the searching and exploratory character of the reporter's work: "A reporter searches for interesting, typical problems of the actual reality, and alerts the reader to them. He must have the feeling more or less of a chemist examining the composition of a substance he has been given for analysis". In the case of Kisch's *Yoshiwara am Kriegergrab*, this is the problem of the poverty and humiliation of a Chinaman in his own country. The short information about the various classes of funerals is an excellent reflection of the problem: "The coffin was carried by 32 coolies, as required by a first-class funeral. (Second class — 16 coolies, third class — 8 coolies, fourth class — 4 coolies, no class — the corpse is abandoned in an open field where dogs and cats gnaw at it, or in front of a European's who then must take the trouble of burying it)"<sup>24</sup>.

In *Paradies Amerika*<sup>25</sup>, Kisch dispels the myth of the United States being a country of universal well-being; in *Asien gründlich verändert*<sup>26</sup>, he indicates the changes brought on by socialism in a country with a feudal social system; in *Kriminalistisches Reisebuch*<sup>27</sup>, he spins deliberations on the subjects of crime and punishment, European judicature and prison administration.

For the purpose of alerting the reader, pointing to, or supporting, a problem, the reporter applies commentary of a specific nature. Sometimes it is a direct statement, more often the commentary is expressed through the form of the image, digression, remark, or side-plot. The commentaries explain the significance of particular facts, classify them, signalize the relationships between them, serve the purpose of a better communication of the message contained. They likewise guide the reader's attention, suggesting one out of many conclusions to be drawn.

More often than not, it is exactly the commentary that contains synthesizing conclusions, either directly conveyed or suggested between the lines, as it were. Such conclusions are, on the one hand, the judgment and evaluation of facts, phenomena and attitudes, and on the other, they precondition the value and expediency of the particular reportage. In this consists the publicist aim of the reporter's job.

<sup>23</sup> S. Kozicki, *Notatki reportera* (*Reporter's Notes*), "Nowa Kultura", 1953, No 24.

<sup>24</sup> E. E. Kisch, *China geheim*.

<sup>25</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Paradies Amerika. Reportagen*, Berlin 1930.

<sup>26</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Asien gründlich verändert. Reportagen*, Berlin 1932.

<sup>27</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Kriminalistisches Reisebuch*, Berlin 1927.

And by the way, only the tasks are similar whereas the methods of their realization are different from, let us say, a publicist article which uses abstract notions, the power of logical rationalization, and convincing reasoning.

In the reportage, this aim is attained through the image, digression, a plot of some kind. The publicist aim is a certain well-defined standpoint, the reporter's attitude toward the phenomena he proposes to write about. The attitude in reportage must be comprehensible for the reader. The reporter knows *a priori* which attitude will be acceptable and which will not. This tends to hamper to a certain extent the reporter's freedom of choice. While a novelist need not unequivocally side with one or another party in a conflict of moral or world-outlook attitudes, in the reportage this is impossible. Conclusions flowing from a reportage must be univocal.

Such univocal conclusions are encountered, for example, in Kisch's *Auf den Ruinen von Wusung*, which closes with the following words: "The Japanese flag, with its red sun and red sunbeams, flaunts over the corpse of Wusung [...]. The sun on the banner is like a round wound from which blood pours in all directions"<sup>28</sup>. The image of Japan's banner is a kind of generalization of the crime committed in Wusung. It speaks not only of the battle, it also speaks of the history and tendencies of Japanese imperialism.

In the same reportage, Kisch describes the calm and complacency of representatives of a League of Nations Commission, who are anxious only to secure good rooms in a hotel and choose a proper menu, all at a time when a few miles away a murderous battle goes on. The author counterpoises the picture of the hotel with that of an all-out war. He does not express his conclusions directly but rather suggests them, driving the reader towards indignation. Irony is Kisch's favourite method. More often than not it is a very subtle, inconspicuous irony, but with a considerable quality weight. As examples, let me cite the description of the flood in Archduke Ferdinand's estate<sup>29</sup>, the description of the roulette in Monte Carlo<sup>30</sup>, or the story of "Golgentoni"<sup>31</sup>.

Invariably, Kisch takes a well-defined standpoint. The reader is never at a loss: it is always clear to him against whom the author pronounces his indignation or irony. And this exactly is one more characteristic feature of the reportage: its tentatiousness plus the fact that the reporter's standpoint is always precisely defined.

If the reportage is a socially committed literature written for an equally committed reader, the reporter's attitude of committal is self-evident and understandable. As a matter of fact, the reporter always is committed — be it to an ideology which he advocates, or a publicist aim for which he struggles, or, as in the case of Kisch, to the pursuit of truth. The reportage is never apolitical; it always seeks to convince and win over, elucidate or unmask. It serves the end of shaping an ideological or

<sup>28</sup> E. E. Kisch, *China geheim*.

<sup>29</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Die Wasserkatastrophe von Konopischt*, [in:] *Marktplatz der Sensationen*.

<sup>30</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Der rasende Reporter. Reportagen*, Berlin 1925.

<sup>31</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Die Himmelfahrt der Galgentoni*, [in:] *Marktplatz der Sensationen*.

social attitude even when it transmits some general message or what seems to be pure information. This aspect is emphasized by Koźniewski<sup>32</sup> who maintains that a reportage which is limited to information, be it even information about interesting and sensational developments, and possesses no resources of social knowledge and no clear tendency, cannot be classified as reportage. Koźniewski cites an example: of a reportage which, though sensational, represents no cognitive value whatever if it is a description of an electrocution. The tendency can be expressed either through narration or the author's commentary; the succession and order of information, and even the piece's composition alone, can express such a tendency.

#### IV

Among the specific characteristics of the reportage one must also include the laws by which this genre is governed, and the methods by which the reporter tries to arrive at certain effects.

One of such characteristics is the reportage's verifiability. While writing about the literary reportage, Marian Brandys affirms: "The literary reportage is concrete, permits of no generalities, and is subject to the rigour of complete verifiability with the model it describes"<sup>33</sup>.

Let us ponder for a while what kind of verifiability it is to be. Brandys is explicit about it: he says he has in mind a complete conformity with the model described. And thus, a factory described in a reportage (apart from its precise location) cannot be a green-brick building if we know that such bricks are not used in the building trade; a hero (let us say, a leading lathe operator) cannot be a youth with a raven hair and charming smile if in reality he is bald and has some teeth missing in the front. It is against such lapses that Boris Polevoy warns us, recalling his own experiences. The nature of this kind of verifiability is chartered by other characteristics of the reportage, such as its documentary qualities and precise address. But then, any piece of literary work has its own kind of verifiability. But those other literary works can be verified within the limits of "a typical literary image" and a literary convention, whereas the reportage is verified in real life. This is one more proof of the distinctive character of that genre. A reportage not susceptible to verification would only be a tale on a given subject.

Let us pause for a moment over the methods which guarantee the reportage its communicative, optical and credible qualities. There exist many methods and tricks, though some of them are either less characteristic of the reportage or play a lesser role in its realization. The communicative quality in contents and conclusion guarantees the reader's participation in creation and the congruity of his life experience with the work. The same holds good for the language, composition, narration, and commentary in the reportage.

<sup>32</sup> K. Koźniewski, *Reportaż*, "Biuletyn Naukowy", No 11, Warszawa 1956.

<sup>33</sup> Brandys, *op. cit.*

The optical quality is attained through diverse linguistical and stylistical manoeuvres thanks to which the reader does not sense the transmitter but has the illusion of seeing the plot. Such an illusion may be achieved through an adept registration of minutiae, or presentation by the reporter of such sensations which the reader in his place would be certain to experience. A reportage is built so as to offer the reader a personal and direct vision of things and facts. Its credibility is a result of its documentary quality but it is reinforced by various measures the nature and impact of which depend on the individual properties and virtues of the reporter's pen.

Summing up the above deliberations we can collect and classify what seem to be the fundamental characteristics of the reportage. They are: 1. Autopsy; 2. Absence of literary fiction; 3. Precise address of the facts, places, and persons represented; 4. Documentation of facts; 5. Informative quality; 6. Seeking out problems, commentary, synthetizing conclusions; 7. Tendentiousness of the reporter's expressly defined standpoint; 8. Verifiability; 9. Characteristic methods and measures helpful in the realization of the reportage's aims.

The above characteristics are components of the definition of the reportage as they define the differences from and analogies with other literary genres representing reality.

Composition plays a major role in the reportage.

In statements and opinions concerning composition we usually find such generalities as that the reportage has a "specific" composition which is governed by "certain defined" laws, after which the most popular scheme of composition is usually cited as an example. For want of space we shall not undertake in the present paper to investigate into the essence of those vague laws, instead of devoting some attention to the composition of the reportage.

A reportage generally starts from a singular fact, from a detail. It is an introduction, as it were, an exposition made with a view toward attaching the reader's attention to a problem which, more often than not, is signalized exactly in the introduction. Next comes the development of the plot, the rise of conflicts, and preparation of the reader for the reception of certain conclusions. The last part is the settlement of conflicts and presentation of conclusions. There are, of course, other types of composition, too, but this seems to be a particular favourite with the reporters. Here is how Kisch starts his reportage entitled *Unter den Obdachlosen von Whitechapel*: "Miserable are those men and boys, covered with dirty rags, whom you see at the gates and in the windows of the houses [...]"<sup>34</sup>. In a similar vein, his *Perversees Vorspiel*<sup>35</sup> begins with the introduction into the plot by the following presentation of the hero of the reportage: "In one of the boarding houses in the outskirts of Brno there were no guests save for an elderly lady and her son. The

<sup>34</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Der rasende Reporter*.

<sup>35</sup> E. E. Kisch, *Marktplatz der Sensationen*.

son was a stout gentleman past thirty, most probably a bank clerk. He was wearing a pince-nez, and looked, if we may say so, extraordinarily uninteresting".

The composition may likewise suggest the importance of facts presented, emphasizing some, and subordinating others to the former.

It can safely be said that composition is one of the measures which assist the reporter in the realization of the informational and publicist aims posed before the reportage and conditioning the distinctive character of this genre.

## V

The next problem we propose to deal with is the division of the reportage into different types. Three principles of division certainly merit our attention: 1. With regard to the specific characteristics (and reference to other genres): the literary and journalistic reportage, the latter published in the daily press. 2. Division suggested by Leon Cieřlik: informational, publicist, and postulative reportage. 3. Division with regard to the publicist aim: interventional, informational, problem and grand reportage.

Let us now try and examine the first principle of division.

*Mala encyklopedia powszechna* (*Little Universal Encyclopaedia*) gives under the entry "reportage" and additional note "literary r." with the following explanation: presents in an artistic manner facts drawn from the reality. This clearly is not a satisfactory explanation, for practically every well-written reportage has some artistic value, and as such could vie for the name of "artistic reportage". Jan Koprowski is even more superficial when he proposes: "For the first thing, one must distinguish two kinds of reportage: one published in the literary magazines, and the other appearing in the daily press"<sup>36</sup>. That weekly, Sunday-go-to-meeting edition is supposed to be the literary reportage, the daily edition being the publicist one. Now, such a criterion for division is quite understandably unacceptable. Jerzy Lovell is, we believe, by far more prudent when he asserts that "we know we have to do with a literary reportage when the reporter, while in principle keeping the general »rigours« of the "classical« reportage, nonetheless ventures into the sphere of problems belonging to literature"<sup>37</sup>.

Let us further follow Lovell's thoughts. If a reportage comes to deal with problems belonging to literature it then deals with, among others, subjective contents: feelings, experiences and sensations arising out of a human individual's encounter with the external world. These are subjective contents. If the reporter comes to a factory and, writing about a youthful lathe operator, portrays his feelings during the milling of the factory's two millionth tube (a celebrated event!), he must rely on the operator's statement concerning his feelings. Otherwise, in case when the

<sup>36</sup> J. Koprowski, *Spór o reportaę* (*Argument about the Reportage*) "Kronika", 1955, No 11.

<sup>37</sup> J. Lovell, *Notatki o reportaę* (*Notes about the Reportage*), "Życie Literackie", 1961, No No 37, 38, 40.

reporter chooses to picture the hero's feelings himself, he ventures far out into the sphere of fiction which adulterates the "chastity" of the genre. In other words, according to Lovell, whenever the reportage ventures into spheres belonging to literature, the indispensable principle of the reportage's authenticity causes that it must go astray (at least, as far as most literary problems are concerned). The same aspect is emphasized by Mędelski: "If we now recall the premise that both the journalist as also the literary reportages are founded on the authenticity of the facts and developments they describe, we shall arrive at a paradoxical definition for the latter; namely, that a literary reportage is such a piece of prose which through a description of verifiable facts portrays unverifiable experiences". And further he adds: "Indeed, a definition equally paradoxical and true"<sup>38</sup>. It is true for Mędelski only so far as true is his assertion that "side by side with common journalist reportages there are uncommon, literary ones". Since, however, the author does not build up that proposition by any argument we can understand the adjective "uncommon" as the author's very subjective attitude toward the reportage he recognizes as being literary. We do, on the other hand, accept as sensible the discovery of paradox in the division of the reportage into journalist and literary.

The same question has been approached in a different manner by Jerzy Skórnicki in the article *Od Tatr po Bałtyk* (*From the Tatra Mts. Down to the Baltic Sea*): "The literary reportage is characterized by more perceptible elements, among them being: the fact of the introduction of the illusion of a directly-observed plot, introduction of dialogues in the form of an illusion of real conversation, and the fact of using a plastic picture as a form of the presentation of the background, circumstances and human figures. The publicist reportage is as a rule restricted to description: the course of events is in such a reportage described and not presented, the dialogues are not quoted but reported, the background of the plot and the human figures are described rather than presented in a plastic picture"<sup>39</sup>. In his article, Skórnicki draws the attention to the "literary quality" of the reportage. In this case, by the "journalist quality" we should understand a more compact form, with a greater degree of condensation around the direct report with a synthetic final conclusion. "The illusion of a directly-observed plot, introduction of dialogues in the form of an illusion of real conversation" are measures practicable only with the introduction of literary fiction to the reportage, while the application of a plastic picture can also take place in a reportage which the author will consider as being publicist.

The presence of literary fiction in the reportage has been discussed above, and, if we ban literary fiction from a "thorough-bred" reportage, then *eo ipso* the author's rationalization of such a division holds no value. This genre can very well do without

<sup>38</sup> S. Mędelski, *Co to jest reportaż* (*What Is Reportage*).

<sup>39</sup> J. Skórnicki, *Od Tatr do Bałtyku* (*From the Tatra Mts. down to the Baltic Sea*), "Życie Literackie", 1954, No 11.

fiction, and reportages with an infusion of fiction are viewed as a result of their authors' unrelenting quest for new forms of expression and also as a product of the process of obliteration of specific differences between genres.

However, to resume the matter of this principle of division: we have the right and reason to reject it on the grounds of inadequate substantiation. Leon Cieřlik and Kazimierz Koźniewski do not even mention that mode of division, using another instead. We shall therefore accept the already quoted statement by Marian Brandys ("the literary reportage is concrete, permits of no generalities, and is subject to the rigour of complete verifiability with the model it describes"<sup>40</sup>) as useful with one qualification: that it concerns the reportage as a whole. The artificial distinction between the literary and journalist reportage seems to have risen as a product of the widely-held belief that a publicist's work is a kind of "oral" rendition of lesser value and inferior quality. We are opposed to this judgment.

## VI

Let us now pass to the second type of division, which is used by Leon Cieřlik. The author distinguishes three components of the reportage: information, commentary, and the postulate. Depending on the supremacy of whichever of the three, he distinguishes: 1) informational reportage; 2) publicist reportage; 3) postulative reportage.

Writes Leon Cieřlik: "This mode of division, in which the criterion is the role of the particular components or functions, is justified above all by the fact that such a criterion is readily accountable and universal. Every other type of division gives rise to reservations. In the Soviet Union, for example, the theoreticians of journalism had distinguished many kinds of the reportage according to the subject criterion, thus ignoring all formal values and permitting of a practically unlimited concatenation of divisions"<sup>41</sup>. He also mentions some attempts which had been made to distinguish the industrial, rural, and social types of reportage. In this case, the very names of the proposed divisions are due to evoke serious misgivings.

Cieřlik's informational reportage has all the characteristics of a report, hence — an extended piece of information. The components of the reportage are, in this case, descriptions of social environment, developments, and the like. An informational reportage is oftentimes left without commentary, conclusion, or an attempt to solve the problem.

One can hardly agree with such a theory. Bereft of the above-named elements (the problem, commentary, and conclusion), the piece of work becomes nothing more but a report, even though the author may manage to convey an excellent

<sup>40</sup> Brandys, *op. cit.*

<sup>41</sup> L. Cieřlik, *Uwagi o reportażu (Remarks Concerning the Reportage)*, "Biuletyn Naukowy", Warszawa 1958, No 2/18.

picture of the environment. Nor does the contention hold good that the "city pages" of the daily press are frequently given over to such "informational" reportages for the specific purpose of covering "lesser" subjects, for elements of the press article dominate the small forms usually carried by the "city pages".

The argumentation for the publicist reportage is not really convincing, either. Writes Leon Cieřlik: "The publicist reportage, starting from a concrete fact, a concrete picture, spins deliberations of a general nature and unveils a broader social horizon of a singular fact. It differs from the publicist article in that the reportage describes the subject matter whereas the article presents it — the method of problem presentation is different".

There is absolutely no sufficient argumentation here why exactly this kind of reportage has been given exactly that name, and what is the essence of such a reportage. The domination of one or another element — in this case commentary — does not alone constitute an adequate explanation. "The postulative reportage, sometimes called interventional, differs from the other two classes in that it has a more pronounced dominance of immediate intervention expressed by the conclusion which is a postulate"<sup>42</sup>. There are two examples of misunderstanding in that one sentence. For the first thing, the postulative quality, or the presence of postulates, conclusions, is a characteristic defining the manner in which the reportage is realized, whereas intervention is the aim of such realization. And secondly, practically every reportage contains certain conclusions, some sort of postulates, and their dominance over the part of work from which they flow is limited, if at all possible; it is therefore imprudent to speak about a greater or lesser degree of the reportage's saturation with conclusions.

Consequently, the theory of division, as propounded by L. Cieřlik, is hardly acceptable.

K. Koźniewski, who as the criterion of division adopted the publicist aim guiding the reporter in his work, and determining the object of his work, seems to have come the closest to an ideal solution.

He distinguishes the following types of the reportage: 1) interventional reportage; 2) informational reportage; 3) problem reportage; 4) what is called grand reportage.

The interventional reportage is mostly written with the professed aim of making good some wrongs through the unmasking of evil. Here we shall include all reportages dealing with frauds, embezzlements, waste, and other ailments of the economy, administration, and social and state institutions. This type of the reportage is more frequent in the daily press than the others, and many examples can be cited.

In his collection entitled *W połowie drogi* (Midway)<sup>43</sup>, Salomon Łastik included interventional reportages devoted to the syllabus and examinations in Poland's

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> S. Łastik, *W połowie drogi* (Midway), Warszawa 1956.

secondary schools, as also to certain shortcomings in the cultural activities in the provinces. Józef Kuśmierek's *Opowiadania reportera* (*Reporter's Stories*) comprises exclusively interventional reportages: *Bieda Adachowej* (*Adachowa's Worry*), *Sprawa jednego konia* (*The Case of One Horse*), and others. Lovell, Kozicki, Wolański, and dozens of lessknown journalists from the daily papers, all write interventional reportages. The interventional reportage not only unmasks evil but tries to penetrate to its roots and point to the ways and means of removing such and improving the state of affairs.

The informational reportage as a rule familiarizes the reader with some developments, public or scientific affairs. Obviously, this is not where its role ends. A good reportage of this type has all the features, or at least the most important of them, listed in the preceding chapter. Fine examples are some of the reportages by Wolański, such as *Służba Polsce* (*Serve-Your-Country Youth Brigades*) or *Hitlerowski pancernik jedzie na polski Śląsk* (*Nazi German Battleship Goes to Polish Silesia*). In the latter, the authors familiarizes the reader with the history of a battleship of the Nazi Kriegsmarine, her activities during the war, and her postwar fate, when, lifted from the sea, her wrecked hull was scrapped and expedited to Silesian steel mills. That reportage not solely imparts information but also suggests to the reader a great many ideas concerning the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country, the struggle for peace, etc.

In reportages of that type the author, too, takes a certain standpoint, and exhibits a tendentious attitude to the facts he describes — either critical or affirmative.

The problem reportage is one in which the author addresses the reader with a view to conscientiously explain and elucidate some social, political, or economic problem. As examples we can cite Józef Kuśmierek's reportage *Dlaczego należy dzwonić na alarm*<sup>44</sup> (*Why an Alarm Must Be Sounded*), or almost the entire volume of reportages by Lovell, under the title *Cud się zdarzył* (*A Miracle Has Happened*)<sup>45</sup>, and most especially the following of the collection: *Zabójstwo miłości* (*A Murdered Love*), *Sprawa kobieca* (*A Feminine Affair*), *Progi dojrzewania* (*Threshold of Puberty*), *Pociągi jadą pijane* (*Drunken Trains on the Move*), *Co śni się współczesnemu* (*What the Contemporary Man Dreams About*), and *Są takie dzielnice* (*There Are Such Districts*).

A reportage of that type poses and identifies a problem, and, upon its presentation from various angles and with copious and relevant documentation, it seeks a solution and way out of the situation, whenever the situation ought to be changed.

The last of the four above-named types is the grand reportage (whose name may give rise to many reservations). In point of fact, it is a kind of problem reportage but of a higher rank as far as its subject matter goes, more ambitious in asking

<sup>44</sup> J. Kuśmierek, *Opowiadania reportera*.

<sup>45</sup> L. Lovell, *Cud się zdarzył. Reportaże i groteski* (*A Miracle Has Happened. Reportages and Grotesques*), Warszawa 1959.

questions and pursuing answers to them. In this case, one ought to be cautious while exemplifying for, as in every instance of evaluation, here, too, judgment is bound to be subjective. There can be no doubt, however, that in this class we must include the works of Kisch, Pruszyński, Reed, Roy, and some of Lovell's.

Once again let us emphasize that the borderlines between those types are not clear cut, and that more often than not a reportage has the characteristics of two or three of the types. That this is a praiseworthy practice best evidence are two of the above-listed reportages by Lovell: *A Murdered Love* and *A Feminine Affair*.

## VII

Having laid down the genesis of reportage, specified its peculiar characteristics, and defined its types, we may now attempt to examine the definition of the reportage as a genre, basing on the opinions of various sources as also on our own. To begin with, let us take a glance at the encyclopaedic definitions quoted by Leon Cieřlik in his work.

Under the entry "reporter", *Polska encyklopedia powszechna* (*Polish Universal Encyclopaedia*) explains: sprawozdawca dziennikarski (a journalist reporter). In the *Arct Dictionary of the Polish Language*, we find under the entry "reportaż" (reportage): sprawozdawstwo, kronika bieżąca (the art of reporting events, a current chronicle)<sup>46</sup>. Webster's *Lexicon*: reportage — report<sup>47</sup>. *The Fundamental Dictionary of the Russian Language* by Ozhegov and Obnorsky: reportage — an account (so-obshchentye) of local events, information<sup>48</sup>. Larousse: reportage = fonctions, servis de reporter dans un journal<sup>49</sup>. Brockhaus: reporter = Berichterstatter<sup>50</sup>. *Mala encyklopedia powszechna* (*Little Universal Encyclopaedia*): reportage — a genre of publicist prose, an animated description of concrete developments, based on the author's own observations.

Most of the definitions quoted above comprise the element that seems common to them: they term the reportage as being an account. The etymology of the word (from Latin reportare — to bring back, hand in, disclose) also indicates the connection between the reportage and the account. Basing on those opinions, L. Cieřlik suggests the following definition of the reportage: "The reportage as a journalist genre is an account of the reality, of events and facts which have genuinely occurred, of people who are their dramatis personae; such an account is given by a reporter who makes a prudent and adept use of the artistic means of expression; the essence of that account is best reflected by one literary convention: the image".

<sup>46</sup> Quoted after L. Cieřlik.

<sup>47</sup> Webster's *Imperial Dictionary*, Chicago 1908—1909, Vol. II, p. 1406.

<sup>48</sup> Y. Ozhegov ..., *Fundamentalnyi slovar' russkogo yazyka*, Moscow 1953.

<sup>49</sup> *Petit Larousse*, Paris 1959, p. 905.

<sup>50</sup> *Der grosse Brockhaus*, Leipzig 1933, Vol. XV, p. 631.

Let us now recall other definitions of the reportage.

Sierotwiński defines the reportage as "a publicist account based on directly collected and authentic materials (travel, interview, etc.)". L. Timofeyev: "The reportage is a literary genre whose *sine qua non* requisite is documentary truth, notarial truth, statistical and economic truth". J. Wołowski defines the reportage as "an article dealing with what the journalist has inquired about and penetrated". And a definition of the reportage as suggested by K. Koźniewski: "The reportage is a genre of publicist prose, in which the author, while fostering the beauty of the language and originality of composition, familiarizes the reader with authentic, precisely documented facts he personally verified with a view to enlarge the reader's knowledge and explain to him social, ideological and political problems"<sup>51</sup>.

If we now examine all those definitions we shall easily note their diversity in emphasizing the different aspects of the reportage. *The Polish Universal Encyclopaedia*, *Arct Dictionary*, Webster's *Lexicon*, Larousse and Brockhaus, all formulate their definitions on the basis of the genetic relationship with the account and of the etymology of the term "reportage". *The Little Universal Encyclopaedia* offers a popular scientific formulation which may be good enough for a layman but has no scientific value. It includes only three elements characteristic of this genre: the definition as publicist prose, authenticity, and autopsy. Sierotwiński's definition does not sufficiently distinguish the notion of "reportage" from that of "account". One can write an account complying to every single letter of his definition and yet not being a reportage. Timofeyev's definition, apart from the vague, hence relative and controversial formulation of "truth", contains two classes of terms: on the one hand, "a literary genre", and on the other, document, statistics, notary, etc., with not a word of explanation concerning the mutual relationship between such contradictory elements in the reportage. Nor does Timofeyev attach any attention to other, and very important, characteristics of the reportage, such as autopsy, the publicist aim, etc.

Jacek Wołowski comes out with a statement which cannot even be considered, for a phrase pointing to only one aspect of a complex problem hardly merits the name of definition.

More ambitious is Leon Cieślik who, in his definition, attaches importance to: a) specific classification; b) authenticity, i.e. precise address; c) the coexistence of literary and publicist elements in the reportage. Again, the inadequacy of this definition consists in too much emphasis on some characteristics while completely overlooking others. One is tempted to call such a definition fragmentary.

Koźniewski's definition is perhaps the best of all since it draws one's attention to the following characteristics of the reportage: a) definition of the genre; b) presence of certain literary elements; c) autopsy; d) authenticity; e) the documentary quality; f) the informative quality; g) the publicist aim.

<sup>51</sup> K. Koźniewski, *Reportaż*.

Generally speaking, Koźniewski does not omit any of the most important characteristics, and his definition of the reportage is quite adequate. Naturally, his is not a perfect definition as it does overlook certain characteristic features of the reportage; yet, it includes most relevant characteristics and does not fail to indicate their mutual dependence in the reportage.

What strikes one in this summary examination of different definitions is the apparent difficulty in the precise expression of the essence of the reportage. Most of the definitions are rather clumsy or fragmentary. This is a result of two facts: the nonexistence of an exhaustive theory of the reportage, with an apparatus of univocal and sharply distinguishable notions and terms, and secondly, the distinctness and specificity of this genre. Let us now stop and ponder over the latter phenomenon. In all discussions concerning the reportage in the literary press, we most often encounter controversial voices and arguments. There is a conspicuous absence of consensus even as far as key formulations are concerned. Very inadequate is the delineation of the limits of the genre, particularly where it exhibits literary characteristics, a consequence of which is the tendency to coin such terms as "literary reportage", "reporter's story", "reportage tale", "genuine story". The extent of such difficulties is exemplified by the standpoint of Soviet theoreticians who (Timofeyev, Polevoy) define the reportage as a literary genre, and have so far failed in pinpointing the reportage on the map of genres.

The following is a quote from P. Yushin's work entitled *The Reportage as a Genre*: "The reportage completely fills the gap dividing publicist prose from the belles lettres, and is at the same time a uniting link. This makes the reportage akin to journalist genres and those of the belles lettres to such an extent that the borderline between them oftentimes becomes imperceptible. In this consists the major difficulty of a precise definition of the reportage's specific characteristics. It combines the features of journalist and literary genres, resulting in an entity of specific peculiarities. Genetically, the reportage is more akin to the belles lettres, its genre distinctly gravitating to literature. In times of an intensified interference of politics into the affairs of literature and journalism, the reportage severed those relations and fell into the other extreme, absorbing the characteristics of publicist prose"<sup>52</sup>.

That difficulty, to which Yushin calls our attention, may be removed only by profound investigations into the tangent points and interdependence between the literary and publicist elements in the reportage. Using the author's metaphor, we should seek to define all properties of this alloy. Similar doubts arise while reading the definition of the reportage, offered by Boris Polevoy: "The reportage is on the borderline between artistic prose and those literary genres pursued by the newspapers. A good reportage has all the characteristics of a purely journalistic genre. It is concrete and reflects genuine facts. People described in it are real, existing persons. The plot of the reportage is tied to a specific place. The reportage has an exact address. On the other hand, if it is created by a master's hand it has all the

<sup>52</sup> *Ob otcherke*, edited by P. F. Yushin, Moscow 1958, p. 40.

attributes of a short story. It is written in a good literary language. It contains a characterization of the human figures, and a plastic description of the landscape [...]. The reporter presents the problem rather than speaks about it"<sup>53</sup>.

All the definitions which have been collected in the present article lead to one conclusion. There are too few serious scientific researches concerning the reportage, and only they could help to undertake a sensible attempt to define this genre and offer a proper formula of the definition. Among the existing definitions, Koźniewski's despite certain shortcomings seems to be the most convincing.

To conclude the present thoughts devoted to the definition, we desire to attract the reader's attention to the elements which we think ought to be given due recognition in a good definition of the reportage: a) delineation of the limits of the genre; b) consideration of all specific characteristics; c) emphasis on the distinct specificity of the reportage; d) tendentiousness.

### VIII

Both the various opinions, scattered throughout the present work, as also the author's own findings go to show the distinctive specificity of this genre of man's creativity. Analyzing the genesis of the reportage, we have arrived at the conclusion that it sprang from the changing attitude of the public among which a kind of secondary "facts hunger" superseded, what used to be a noncommittal attitude. As in no other genre, the influence of the reader's attitude on the reportage is closely bound with the influence of the reportage on the formation of the reader's attitude. The reportage, the topical literature, reacting to all political and social changes and feeding on facts, also depends on them and develops under their prevalent influence.

While attempting to define the specific characteristics of the reportage, we tried to attract due attention to the authenticity of the reportage, the precisely mapped limits of autopsy, the absence of literary fiction, the exact address of the facts, places and people, and the tendentiousness in the realization of the publicist aim posed by the author. All opinions and conclusions provide irrefutable proof that the reportage is an independent genre, has its own specific characteristics, and is governed by own laws. The dynamic development of the reportage has resulted in enormous achievements, among others, in the Polish literature. There have been some who predicted a rapid decline of the reportage in the era of TV, cinema and radio. The reporter's pen seemed tremendously handicapped so far as the documentary faithfulness, absence of fiction, and complete verifiability were concerned, when faced by the TV and film cameras and tape recorders. And indeed, the crisis of the classical reportage become even more acute, but the reportage as a genre continues to develop, seeking new forms of expression. To-date, it has penetrated to the film, radio and television. Artistic prose starts drawing more and more often on the experiences amassed by the reportage.

Translated by Jerzy Jastrzębowski

<sup>53</sup> Cf. M. Brandys, *Ucieczka od prawdy* (*Flight from Truth*).

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## PRÓBA TEORII REPORTAŻU

## STRESZCZENIE

Praca ta jest próbą konfrontacji różnych wypowiedzi polskich prasoznawców i reporterów na temat reportażu — gatunku ciągle żywego, rządzącego się określonymi, specyficznymi prawami. Jej ambicją jest utworzenie pomostu między tymi wypowiedziami a monografią reportażu, która niewątpliwie powstanie. Jej niezbędność determinuje żywotność gatunku. O ile o zamieraniu reportażu na różnych etapach jego rozwoju powiedziano wiele, o tyle o jego dalszych pomyślnych perspektywach przekonani są niemal wszyscy dyskutanci. Te obszary literatury, które z różnych względów reportaż chwilowo opuszcza, zajmowane są natychmiast przez gatunki mu bliskie, Reportażu można dziś doszukać się w powieści, i w rozszerzonej informacji w dzienniku, w filmie, radio i telewizji.

Wśród dotychczasowych wypowiedzi na temat tego gatunku przeważają głosy reporterów i prasoznawców. Jedni jak i drudzy (ci ostatni gros uwagi poświęcają sprawom technicznym cząsopism) nie mogli zdobyć się na wyczerpującą czy choćby zadowalającą teorię reportażu. Zadanie to może spełnić wyłącznie teoretyk literatury w oparciu o szersze podstawy teoretyczne i historyczne. Za egzemplifikacje w tych rozważaniach posłużyły wybrane utwory z olbrzymiego dorobku polskiego reportażu powojennego, reportaż Kazimierza Pruszyńskiego, a z obcych Egon Erwin Kisch. Autor spenetrował dorobek polskiego piśmiennictwa w latach 1953—1963 i z tego dziesięciolecia wynotował ważniejsze wypowiedzi o reportażu. Aby bliżej określić gatunek, należy zapoznać się z jego genezą i na tej podstawie dopiero w historycznym rysie przedstawić tendencje rozwoju i perspektywy gatunku. Historyczna część tej pracy skondensowana jest do koniecznego minimum. Bardziej szczegółowo potraktowano cechy gatunkowe reportażu, których wyznaczenie jest jedynym wyjściem do sformułowania roboczej definicji gatunku. One także określają jego odrębność i samodzielność, a także punkty zbieżne w stosunku do innych gatunków.

Wiele miejsca w tej pracy poświęcono także rodzajom reportażu w rozbiciu na poszczególne typy. Podziałów takich jest kilka. Reportaż literacki i dziennikarski, reportaż informacyjny, publicystyczny i postulatyczny. Trzeci podział rozróżnia reportaż interwencyjny, informacyjny, problemowy i wielki. Podziały te są nieadekwatne, częściowo błędne, a często ich istnienie można wytłumaczyć wyłącznie tradycją, zwyczajem. Jest to jeden z licznych dowodów na brak teorii gatunku, na nieostrość i wieloznaczność określeń, którymi posługują się nie tylko nieprzygotowani teoretycznie reporterzy, ale także i prasoznawcy.

W rozważaniach o genezie reportażu podkreśliliśmy w pracy olbrzymią rolę postawy czytelnika w rozwoju gatunku. Reportaż wychował sobie nowego, zaangażowanego czytelnika, przeła-

mał barierę bezpieczeństwa, którą gwarantowała np. widzowi konwencja teatralnej rampy czy generalizująca powieść. Nowy czytelnik, nastawiony na literaturę faktu i na informację, długo nie wracał do gatunków tradycyjnych, czasem nie wracał do nich już nigdy. Potrzeba wrażenia współuczestnictwa w opisywanych sytuacjach, potrzeba zdobycia całkowitego zaufania czytelnika, silnie wpływały na formę utworów. Nie jest to jedyna współzależność reportażu. Reportaż, literatura aktualna, reagująca na wszystkie zmiany polityczne i społeczne, żywiąca się faktem, jest też od nich zależna, rozwija się pod ich silnym wpływem. Nieco miejsca poświęcono także kompozycji omawianych utworów, więcej próbie definicji w oparciu o wspomniane już cechy gatunkowe i typy reportażu. Dobra definicja reportażu winna zawierać następujące elementy: ustalenie granic gatunku, uwzględnienie wszystkich ważniejszych cech gatunkowych, podkreślenie odrębności, specyfiki reportażu i jego tendencyjności. Definicja uznana w pracy za najwłaściwszą jest tylko najbardziej trafną spośród kilku wymienionych, ale nie spełnia tych wszystkich cech dobrej definicji.

Do pełnego kształtu, pełnej wartości definicji, podobnie jak i teorii reportażu, brak ciągle wnikliwych badań teoretycznych nad tym gatunkiem literackim. Prowokuje do nich m. in. i ta praca, określona jako "próba teorii reportażu".

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