

DOSSIER

LITERARY JOURNALISM AS A DISCIPLINE IN POLAND:

before and after Kapuściński

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ABSTRACT – This essay offers a summary of the history of literary journalism in Poland. Taking into account a specific national literary history, it shows the historical roots of literary journalism (known in Poland also as literary reportage), its development and evolution. Aiming to fill in a significant gap in existing research on literary journalism, the article explores the popularity of the genre in Poland. The article focuses on the meaning of the so-called Polish School of Reportage, shows its founding members, predecessors and successors, and discusses four famous theoretical debates concerning the use of facts and the abuse of fiction in Poland's literary journalism. Along with investigating the split of literary journalism studies into journalism studies and literature studies, the article also touches upon the different educational paths of practicing reporters and theorists of the genre. The article concludes by postulating that literary journalism studies be united and established as a separate academic discipline.

Key words: Polish literary journalism. Literary reportage. Polish school of reportage. Abuse of fiction.

JORNALISMO LITERÁRIO COMO DISCIPLINA NA POLÔNIA: antes e depois de Kapuściński

RESUMO – Este artigo oferece um resumo da história do jornalismo literário na Polônia. Levando em conta uma história literária nacional específica, mostra as raízes históricas do jornalismo literário (conhecido na Polônia também como reportagem literária), seu desenvolvimento e evolução. A fim de preencher uma lacuna significativa na pesquisa existente sobre jornalismo literário, o artigo explora a popularidade do gênero na Polônia. O texto enfoca a importância da chamada Escola Polonesa de Reportagem, mostra seus fundadores, antecessores e sucessores, e analisa quatro debates teóricos famosos sobre o uso de fatos e o abuso da ficção em jornalismo literário no país. Juntamente com a investigação da divisão de estudos de jornalismo literário em estudos de jornalismo e estudos de literatura, o artigo

também aborda as diferentes jornadas educativas e teóricas dos jornalistas no exercício do gênero. O artigo conclui postulando que os estudos do jornalismo literário devem ser unidos e estabelecidos como uma disciplina acadêmica específica.

Palavras chave: Jornalismo literário polonês. Reportagem literária. Escola Polonesa de reportagem. Abuso de ficção.

PERIODISMO NARRATIVO COMO DISCIPLINA EN POLONIA:

Antes y después de Kapuściński

RESUMEN – Este ensayo ofrece un resumen de la historia del periodismo literario en Polonia. Teniendo en cuenta una historia literaria nacional específica, muestra las raíces históricas del periodismo literario (conocido en Polonia también como reportaje literario), su desarrollo y evolución. Con el objetivo de llenar un vacío significativo en la investigación existente sobre periodismo literario, el artículo explora la popularidad del género en Polonia. El texto se centra en el significado de la llamada Escuela Polaca de Reportaje, muestra a sus miembros fundadores, predecesores y sucesores, y analiza cuatro debates teóricos famosos sobre el uso de hechos y el abuso de la ficción en el periodismo literario de Polonia. Junto con la investigación de la división de los estudios de periodismo literario en estudios de periodismo y estudios de literatura, el artículo también aborda los diferentes recorridos educativos y teóricos de los periodistas en ejercicio del género. El artículo concluye postulando que los estudios de periodismo literario deben unirse y establecerse como una disciplina académica separada.

Palabras clave: Periodismo literario polaco. Reportajes literarios. Escuela Polaca de reportajes. Abuso de ficción.

1. Introduction

Polish narrative journalism is one of the fastest-growing genres in Poland. Book-length reportage¹ competes with fiction, and each year the percentage of Polish reporters published in foreign markets increases. Based on the data from a 2015 report published by the Polish Book Institute, six of the ten largest literary publishing houses have either an independent reportage series or a separate subcategory of non-fiction (Frukacz, 2016). Additionally, amongst the most translated Polish writers are Polish reporters such as Ryszard Kapuściński or Hanna Krall (Frukacz, 2016). Furthermore, since 2010 the international Ryszard Kapuściński Award for Literary Reportage (established by the Council of the Capital City of Warsaw) had been awarded every year to the best reporter. Those who have won include the French war correspondent and writer Jean Hatzfeld, the Belarusian investigative journalist and 2015 Nobel Prize in Literature winner Svetlana Alexievich, and the British journalist and writer Ed Vulliamy.

Taking all that into account, Poland may seem to be the “Eldorado of reportage” (Gliński, 2014, p.1).

Nevertheless, the genre’s popularity, its history, evolution and discussions it has raised are rarely analyzed by foreign scholars and academics. The reason might be the lack of bibliographical data available in foreign languages. This is why Polish literary journalism, which is frequently researched and discussed by literary theorists, media scholars and practitioners of this genre in Poland, is unknown to the wider academic public.

This article – or, rather, brief critical introduction – fills in this scholarly gap and shows how literary journalism developed and evolved in Ryszard Kapuściński’s homeland and what polemics and discussions it raised. I begin with a definition of Polish reportage, highlighting the genre’s traditions and particularities with respect to other nations’ literary journalism. The next section covers the educational paths of key practitioners and theorists of Polish reportage. I then discuss the meaning of the so-called Polish School of Reportage, show its founding members, predecessors and successors, and discuss four famous theoretical debates concerning the use of facts and the abuse of fiction in Poland’s literary journalism. In my conclusion I draw attention to the schizophrenia plaguing the discipline in Poland and obstructing discussions on the genre and suggest a possible future direction for literary journalism.

2. The birth of Polish reportage

In order to write about literary journalism in Poland, first we ought to clarify some of the terms used by theorists and practitioners on the ground. When we talk about narrative journalism or literary journalism in Poland, we use the term “reportage” or “literary reportage.” It was adopted by the European languages in the second half of the 19th century to describe “journalistic reporting” of real events. The reporting was given another dimension through a detailed description of the milieu and of the dramatis personae, and the reporter’s own impressions about the reality he/she was describing (Wolny-Zmorzyński, Kaliszewski & Furman, 2006).

As John C. Hartsock states, literary reportage is very much a cosmopolitan genre that transcends national boundaries (Hartsock, 2011). It is also a genre of many variants, that is, very “elastic” in the

European tradition (Hartsock, 2016). The Polish case is no exception. There are as many definitions of reportage in Poland as there are people writing and investigating it (taking into account definitions both by theorists from different faculties – Polish Philology, Cultural Studies, Sociology and Journalism – and practicing reporters).

Reportage in Poland was initially on the periphery of literature; later, as a result of a unique cultural and social situation that arose during the interwar period, reportage was launched into literary prominence, becoming a genre in its own right (Rurawski, 1992). At that time, the magazine *Wiadomości literackie* (Literary News), a socio-cultural weekly founded by Mieczysław Grydzewski and published between 1924 and 1939, allowed the publication of the first literary reportages of writers who were at the same time reporters. The literary reportage of *Wiadomości literackie* was above all an attempt to inform the intellectual bourgeoisie about current events (Rurawski, 1992). This differed from the socialist magazines, which were also popular at that time, because, in describing real current events – very often as they were happening (for example, demonstrations) – their intent was to get the people involved in the struggle.

If we look even earlier, we can see that the first Polish texts, which closely resemble what we know today as reportage, had already appeared in the 19th century. Researchers such as Małgorzata Kolankowska and Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński emphasize that the tradition of reportage in Poland is very long, dating back to 1838, when Józef Ignacy Kraszewski published his *Pracownia Suchodolskiego* (Suchodolski's Workshop) in the *Tygodnik Petersburski* (St. Petersburg Weekly), which is considered today as the first text of this genre in Polish literature. Other significant pieces of early literary journalism in Poland include the 1905 Nobel laureate for Literature Henryk Sienkiewicz's letters from America (1876-1878) and those from Africa (1891-1892) (Kolankowska, 2010). Additionally, both Bolesław Prus (one of the main representatives of Polish positivism of the second half of the 19th century) and Władysław Reymont (awarded the 1924 Nobel Prize in Literature) wrote works that we would now catalogue as reportage. In the case of Prus, these are *Kroniki* (Chronicles), published in the Warsaw daily newspaper *Kurier Warszawski* (The Warsaw Courier) and in the weekly magazine *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (The Illustrated Weekly) from 1875 to 1887. Reymont, in turn, is considered the author of the first modern reportage, *Pielgrzymka do Jasnej Góry* (Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra Monastery), written in 1894

and published in book format the following year. He narrated the pilgrimage to the temple of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, which he participated in as a correspondent for *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*. Similar trends can be observed in Russia, where strict censorship “promoted a kind of subjective journalism in which stories of ordinary people were told in an emotional tone” (Platt, 2013, p.185)². Anton Chekhov, author of *Sakhalin Island* published in 1895, was one of the greatest proponents of this trend. Hence, we should underline that the trajectory of Polish reportage is rooted in the works of literary realism and Polish positivism of the second half of the 19th century.

According to the famous Polish reporter Krzysztof Kąkolewski, reportage was born with the development of modern society. Its golden age began during the industrial revolution, with the birth of the world market, global civilization, and the development of communication. The thirst for information created the press as we know it today, together with reportage. This stage was inaugurated by Egon Erwin Kisch (Kąkolewski, 1992). Kisch – known also as the “raving reporter,” thanks to the series of reportages published under this title – is considered the forefather of this genre. Like Kafka, Kisch was born in Prague but wrote in German. He also belonged to the group of Jewish intellectuals, socialists and liberals. According to Kisch’s own definition, reportage is a “milieu study” (Hartssock, 2016, p. 84). He wrote about cultural life in Prague and described his many travels and experiences during the First and Second World War. With nearly all his works translated into foreign languages (including Polish), he became an example for subsequent generations of journalists, including Ryszard Kapuściński, who learned how to edit his own texts by reading Kisch. Additionally, Kisch’s journalistic production was openly permitted by the government: Kisch’s ideology (he was a Communist), his idealized vision of the Soviet Union, and his strong criticism of Capitalism suited the Polish People’s Republic propagandistic point of view. According to Keith Williams (1990),

Kisch had stressed two key factors for the content and form of reportage. The first was the importance of gathering factual materials by first-hand, empirical methods and the second was the need for what he called ‘logische Phantasie’: the imaginative quality and rhetorical skill which brings facts together into significant patterns of interpretation, puts them into context, and reveals their past and future direction (Williams, 1990, p. 95).

Additionally, Melchior Wańkiewicz, the father of Polish reportage, was inspired by Kisch's traits when expanding the formula for reportage by adding elements of fiction to it (Frukacz, 2016).

The genesis of reportage can also be linked to social needs. In addition to the afore mentioned thirst for information, we can add political influence. For instance, representatives of the literary left, who struggled against tradition and who postulated a *literatura fakta*, or "literature of fact", believed that the stages of social development had been ideologically tied to traditional structures. To approach the new social reality and expose the degeneration of the system, new tools of knowledge and new means of expression were needed. Therefore, the concept of reportage promised, on the one hand, freedom from traditional schemes and, on the other, the possibility of capturing the new reality as it was unfolding. Thus, we can trace the origins of Polish reportage back to propositions promoted in 1920s USSR by "literature of fact" and referenced by Polish critics and authors. Soviet literature turned towards reportage because of the need to record momentous events. The birth of the journal *LEF* (Left) in 1923 (later, from 1927 to 1929, *Novy LEF*, or New Left), and the publication by the avant-garde group Left Front of the Arts of the volume *Literatura fakta* (Literature of fact), in 1929, were linked to a new cultural program, according to which literature had to "build life" through an accurate description of facts. Consequently, newspaper, reportage, biography – in short, documentary literature – grew in importance (Wolny-Zmorzyński, 1992).

However, when confronting the Soviet and the Polish schools of documentary reportage, we can observe some differences. One of the most striking is that in Polish reportage literary fiction is intermingled with a realistic description of events; it also borrowed stylistically from the realist novel and autobiography. In this way, Polish reportage soon acquired a poetics of its own. Its character may be attributed in part to the lack of psychological fiction in Poland. Kubacki was the first critic to notice this "literary contamination", where creative elements were incorporated into the description of reality (Kubacki, 1937). For all these reasons, the documentary story began to be called literary reportage. However, in the interwar years, this genre responded to new needs and, after 1945, developed along established lines and gained a wider readership. What is the reason for this great popularity of literary reportage in post-war Poland?

In *The Theory of the Novel* (1920), Georg Lukács distinguishes

between “integrated civilizations” and “problematic civilizations” (Lukács, 1988). Although he does so in order to study the different modalities of the novel, we could easily apply his distinction to show how, due to Poland’s post-war cultural reorientation, reportage gained a prominent position as an artistic form. Following the Second World War, Poland was undoubtedly a “problematic civilization”, in which its people began looking for absolute values. Poles had to learn to live again and asked questions to which there were no easy answers. This is why the Second World War acquired a double meaning for the country’s subsequent artistic output. On the one hand, the war led to the emancipation of the reader, who with his direct experience became the protagonist; on the other hand, it awoke in the masses a passion for authentic events. After having been through traumatic events, the average Pole’s lived history was much more interesting than even the most fantastic fiction. Kisch must have observed this fact since he considered reportage, and not the novel, as the future of literature (Hartsock, 2016). Demand influenced the market in Poland. Reportage was soon present in the daily press as well as in magazines, and it started to be published in book-length format, which further increased the popularity of the genre.

Moreover, as literary historian Kazimierz Wyka points out in his discussion of the novel during the interwar period, reportage is a forerunner of fictional prose that deals with issues which are still too close, emotionally speaking, for writers to distance themselves from sufficiently, but still demand to be remembered and described in a certain way (Zurek, 1992). Thus, reportage in Poland was born as a genre closely related to the press, linked to political movements, and used as artistic weapon. As such, from the very beginning in Poland, information and commentary were conjoined. All of these circumstances shaped Polish reportage, giving it the form we recognize today.

3. The educational paths of Polish reportage’s practitioners and theorists

If we look briefly at the practitioners of reportage in Poland, what we find is that, while the first School of Journalism in Poland was established in Warsaw in 1927 (Wolny-Zmorzyński & Kozieł, 2013), not all practicing reporters studied journalism, not even

Melchior Wańkowicz, the acclaimed “father” of Polish reportage. In fact, Wańkowicz took degrees from the School of Political Sciences in Cracow and the Faculty of Law at Jagiellonian University. Amongst his “students” (faithful readers and journalists who saw themselves as his disciples) were Hanna Krall and Krzysztof Kąkolewski, who completed their journalism training at the University of Warsaw, and Ryszard Kapuściński, who took a degree in history. The next generation of reporters proved not to be that different in the eclecticism of their education: Mariusz Szczygieł, Journalism; Artur Domosławski, Theatre Studies; Wojciech Górecki, Journalism, History, and a PhD in Social Sciences; Adam Leszczyński, a PhD in History; and Ludwika Włodek, a PhD in Sociology.

As a discipline in Poland, journalism has been theorized by many prominent scholars and analysts since 1927, when the School of Journalism began offering a course on Press Studies (Wolny-Zmorzyński & Kozieł, 2013). Even Polish practitioners, such as Wańkowicz and Kąkolewski, who offered their opinions on the journalistic craft, reporting techniques and methods of writing, have been contributing to the theory of the genre. Others not practicing journalism, from academics, scholars and researchers, have similarly advanced our understanding of the genre: literary historian and critic Waław Kubacki; literary historian and critic Kazimierz Wyka; linguist and Polish press researcher Walery Pisarek; literary historian Michał Głowiński; journalist and media theorist Jacek Maziarski; Polish philologist Małgorzata Czermińska; media and literary theorist Zbigniew Bauer; media and literary theorist Kazimierz Wolny-Zmorzyński, just to name a few. They have been joined by a whole new generation of Polish academics, philologists and literary historians, on the one hand, and journalistic and media theorists on the other (Katarzyna Frukacz, Magdalena Horodecka, Joanna Jeziorska-Haładaj, Jan Miklas-Frankowski, Marta Okuniewska, Beata Szady, and Mateusz Zimnoch, among others).

These lists of names are not comprehensive but show two interesting tendencies. First, among reporters, we can find those who learned journalism as a discipline and those who learned it through praxis while earning a degree in another field (mainly social sciences but also the humanities). Second, the group of theorists can be divided between Polish philologists (literary critics and historians) and journalistic and media theorists.

4. The Polish School of Reportage

When talking about literary journalism in Poland, one has to mention the Polish School of Reportage. It is a term frequently used by practitioners of the genre. In his book *Reportaż po polsku* (Reportage in Polish), Polish reporter and scholar Maciej Siembieda (born 1961) suggests that this term is rather conventional. Siembieda states that undoubtedly Polish reportage is very different from its Western cousins due to the Polish political situations of the 1960s, 1970s and also 1980s.

According to Siembieda, the Polish School of Reportage is a technical term and has to do with the “smuggling” of information during state censorship. The example that Siembieda analyzes in his book is Hanna Krall’s reportage *Portret Rodziny Z. we wnętrzu* (An Interior Portrait of Family Z.): “The text – saturated with pretend admiration for the precise organization of the co-residency of six people in one room – resembles propaganda from those times” (Siembieda, 2003, p. 4). Instead of criticizing the lack of space or intimacy of the six people living in one room, Krall presents their life as something positive and desirable, leaving it up to the reader to work out the absurdity of such a perspective. In a sort of circumstantial way, Krall mentions that father Z. is a labor inspector, mother Z. works in a school, grandmother Z. is a retired language teacher, Elunia Z. is a nurse at the hospital, her brother Janusz Z. is a student and her other brother Tomek Z. works at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Readers might be surprised at first: “How can it be?, the reader will reflect. People so necessary to society are forced to inhabit one room? And something here sounds very strange to the reader – but that’s his problem” (Siembieda, 2003, p. 5). The censor could not do anything about it. The text did not criticize the regime. According to Siembieda, the Polish School of Reportage consisted of narrating the events in such a way that the reader could relate them to his own consciousness and experiences, he/she could see the horror and absurdity of the family’s situation, even if at the literal level of the text everything seemed fine.

Marek Miller (born 1951), a reporter, scholar and founder of Laboratory of Reportage at the University of Warsaw, offers a rather different approach³. According to Miller, the Polish School of Reportage is formed by three great figures: Krzysztof Kąkolewski (1930-2015), Ryszard Kapuściński (1932-2007) and Hanna Krall (born

1935). Thanks to the “Three times K” – a term he uses to describe this generation – reportage in Poland became an important genre. Their work methodologies, processes of documenting their stories, ways of writing and interviewing people, together with their works, established what today is known as the Polish School of Reportage (Łuka, 2013). In short, they are the masters for subsequent generations of Polish reporters.

Wojciech Górecki (born 1970), also a Polish reporter, considered Melchior Wańkowicz (1892-1974) to be the father of Polish literary journalism. Wańkowicz is the author of many reportages written in Poland and abroad, but his greatest fame comes from his works about the Second World War, particularly his three-volume reportage *Bitwa pod Monte Cassino* (Battle of Monte Cassino). Górecki also mentions Ksawery Pruszyński (1907-1950), who in the 1930s gained popularity with reportages from Palestine and those about the Spanish Civil War. However, the genre’s blossoming, according to Górecki, occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, when Kapuściński, Kąkolewski, Krall, Małgorzata Szejnert (born 1936) and many other great authors began publishing their stories (Zielińska, 2017). The popularity of reportage at that time, Górecki posits, had to do with the fact that it relied on a literary form, and was able to “smuggle” in between the lines content that otherwise could not be shown in print because it would be stopped by communist censorship. The so-called “drop of water” method used by Hanna Krall served this purpose, as Górecki’s writes:

As the whole ocean is reflected in a drop of water, so in her stories is all of contemporary Polish reality reflected. It was not allowed to mention the scourge of alcoholism, so she presented the fate of a single alcoholic. It was not allowed to write that communism was bad, so she would find a little bad communist somewhere far away in the province and showed him (Zielińska, 2017, p. 3).

Mariusz Szczygieł (born 1966), another Polish reporter, claims, in turn, that the Polish School of Reportage is in fact the whole Polish tradition of non-fiction writing. In his text in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, he suggests that we can trace the Polish School of Reportage back to Władysław Reymont’s *Pilgrimage to the Jasna Góra Monastery* from 1895. According to Szczygieł, before the Second World War, the Polish School of Reportage was already a trend:

Writers of the 1920s and 1930s, involved in building an independent Poland, knew that influencing the minds of Poles through novels would take too long. The novel is written in

a year or two, while a reportage can be written in a week. Thanks to that, they could quickly say something publicly about important social issues (...). The chiefs of Polish weeklies, as *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News), sent writers to famous court cases in order to be able to print a neat literary reportage rather than a shallow report. Hence, the care for the form we cultivate in the reportage to this day. There is practically no great Polish writer of the early twentieth century who would not write literary reportage. And so the Polish school began (Szczygieł, 2017, pp. 26-28).

Later, in the same article, Szczygieł indicates that in fact the rules of the Polish School of Reportage might be traced back even further to Count Jan Potocki's travel reports from Morocco in the 18th century⁴.

In her article "Kapuściński and Beyond: The Polish School of Reportage", British literary journalist researcher Susan Greenberg points out that "Kapuściński represents only one example of a larger tradition characterised as a 'Polish school of reportage', which has become an influential part of Poland's cultural and political heritage" (Greenberg, 2012, p. 123). In between representatives of this particular tradition, Greenberg sees: Marian Brandys (1912-1998), Hanna Krall, Ryszard Kapuściński, and the generation that followed with Anna Bikont (born 1954), Mariusz Szczygieł, and Wojciech Tochman (1969). She also adds: "The tradition is still strong, and an Institute of Reportage has been established in Warsaw to help secure the future of high-quality journalism" (Greenberg, 2012, p. 123). According to her: "Communist censorship provided writers with years of practise in the literary game of disguising universal meanings in the detail of the text" (Greenberg, 2012, p. 123). She also focuses on reporter's interest in the everyday life of ordinary people (Greenberg, 2012).

What, then, is the Polish School of Reportage? It seems as if there is no clear answer. It exists in the Polish imaginary as a conventional term that, depending on the speaker may refer to the particular generation of journalists (Miller's Three times K), to the whole tradition of reportage in Poland (Szczygieł's tracing back Polish reportage to 18th-century travel writings), to the ways a writer hides his criticisms of the state "between the lines" to avoid censorship (Siembieda, Górecki, and Greenberg), presents history from the point of view of common people (Greenberg), or shows a particular case to represent the whole (Górecki about Krall and the "drop of water" method).

The word "school" in Polish studies, then, seems rather problematic. Originally, it refers to an organization that provides instruction, but it can also denote a group of people who hold a

common doctrine or follow the same teacher, a group of artists under a common influence, or a group of people of similar opinions or behaviors ("School" n.d.). In Poland, it refers rather to trends visible in Polish culture in the 1960s: there is a so-called Polish School of Reportage, just as there is the so-called Polish School of Documentary. They were never established as organizations, never constituted as closed groups of people; there was no particular manifesto that they followed. Instead, they referred to a particular generation of authors or to a particular teacher. However, by referring to these authors or teachers, journalists and film-makers do not necessarily follow their mentors' working methods or theoretical and practical assumptions. What is more, frequently they contradict them and establish their own rules. This situation, surprisingly, is visible in both schools that have to do with "registering" reality, the Polish School of Reportage and the Polish School of Documentary.

5. Polska szkoła dokumento (the Polish school of documentary)

If the Polish School of Reportage can be traced back to the 1960s and to the three prominent representatives of this genre, Krall, Kąkolewski and Kapuściński, all three born in 1930s, the Polish School of Documentary "started" with Kazimierz Karabasz (1930-2018). Karabasz, whose documentary films won many prizes at international festivals (e.g., the Grand Prix at Leipzig Film Festival, the Lion of San Marco at the International Festival of Short Films and Documentaries in Venice, the Main Prize at the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival and the Golden Gate Award at the San Francisco International Film Festival), was a teacher of film-makers, such as Marcel Łoziński, Wojciech Wiszniewski, Krzysztof Kieślowski, and many others. The director also taught at the Polish Film School in Łódź and is author of several books about documentary film-making, like *Bez fikcji* (Without Fiction), *Odczytać czas* (Reading the Time), *Rozmowa o dokumencie* (A Conversation about the Documentary) and creator of the method called The Patient Eye ("About Us. Polish National Film School", n.d.).

There is not enough space in this article to fully examine Karabasz's approach, but a brief look into The Patient Eye is important to any discussion of literary journalism. The method consists of patiently observing reality. As a documentary film-maker, Karabasz believed in the "pure" document, in which scenes cannot be staged;

everything has to occur naturally in front of the camera without any interference from the director or other parties. The film-maker must observe only; he cannot arbitrarily intervene and affect the filmed reality (Hendrykowski, 2005). In short, Karabasz, like Kąkolewski, believed that the documentary form does not use fiction of any kind.

A slightly different approach is the one presented by Karabasz's "students", Krzysztof Kieślowski and Marcel Łoziński, who already at school – while studying with Karabasz – entered into a dispute with him. The disagreement had to do with the role of staging. For Łoziński (born 1940), nominated in 1993 for an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short for his *89mm from Europe*, patience is not the only option. On the contrary, Łoziński believes that the world in front of the camera rarely talks about itself. In order to allow reality to talk and to say something important, the director has to make it possible by arranging the right situation. As Łoziński puts it, "The reality doesn't think, the author has to do it for her" (Hendrykowski, 2005, p. 57). Łoziński's method is known as "the thickening of the reality". Of course, this "thickening" does not mean that the author can change the reality or lie. According to Łoziński, although the film-maker can thicken the reality in his film, he cannot misshape it; as in a documentary, there is no right to act against reality (Hendrykowski, 2005). For example, if we make the film about the market square and sellers there, instead of waiting and filming all the buyers for hours, we might ask our friend (unknown to the seller) to come by, choose a couple of things, and run away without paying. The situation is probable (we know the market square, and from time to time it happens there); it might have happened, but instead of waiting for it, we can provoke it, stage it in order to see how our seller is going to react.

6. Fact and fiction in Polish reportage: four case studies

Łoziński's disagreement with Karabasz in particular is, in fact, similar to controversies arising around the Polish School of Reportage in general, and its past and present representatives. Artistic freedom, realism, ways of expression, particular ways of writing and literary or artistic components of documentary prose or film were and still are contentiously debated. In order to show some particularities of Polish disputes, I would like to discuss four of them. The first one is a case of plagiarism between Ryszard Kapuściński and Bohdan Drozdowski; the second a discussion between the student Kąkolewski and his master

Wańkowicz. The third case is a discussion between a student and a master's work: Domosławski versus Kapuściński and the controversies that arose around Kapuściński's biography. Fourth is the case of two "schools" of journalism, a discussion between two practicing reporters: Szczygieł versus Domosławski, and some of their colleagues.

6.1 Kapuściński vs. Drozdowski

The reportage *The Stiff* (published in English first in *Granta* magazine in 1987 and afterwards as *Nobody Leaves* in Penguin Classics in 2017) was originally published in the Polish bi-weekly *Polityka* in 1959. Written by the Polish reporter Ryszard Kapuściński, it narrated the journey he took accompanying five miners. They traveled in a truck from the coal mine in Silesia to the region of Masuria, bearing a coffin with an eighteen-year old who had been killed in a mining accident. On the way, the vehicle broke down. They decided they were not too far from their destination, so they carried the coffin on their shoulders and began walking. After a while, exhausted, they stopped in a forest, lighted a bonfire, and invited some girls who were passing by to join them, all with the coffin hidden close by in the bushes. Once they had rested and the bonfire burned out, they took the coffin and continued their trip (Kapuściński, 2017). Kapuściński's reportage narrates this one particular event, but with noted artistic value, questioning the universal notions of youth, life and death. Surprisingly, one year after the publication in *Polityka*, in the theatre magazine *Dialog* (Dialogue), Bohdan Drozdowski published a play called *The Cortège* with the plot nearly identical to that of *The Stiff*. Kapuściński regarded it as plagiarism (Domosławski, 2012).

There were many people involved in the scandal. According to Domosławski, Drozdowski and Kapuściński made a gentlemen's agreement in which Drozdowski had promised to write to the magazine *Dialog* and explain that he was inspired by Kapuściński's reportage (Domosławski, 2012), but it never happened. When Kapuściński came back from Congo and saw that Drozdowski's play *The Cortège* was about to be staged, he wrote a letter to *Polityka*, calling Drozdowski a plagiarist. As Domosławski points out,

The quarrel about plagiarism revolves around the literary form of *The Stiff*. In his letter attacking Drozdowski, Kapuściński calls his article a fictional story. Drozdowski defends himself thus: '[T]his piece could have been read as a report, a genuine report to boot (...) The facts presented in news reports are nobody's property and

may be regarded as public property, just like anonymous agency news items, which quite often contain ready-made dramatic plots' (Domosławski, 2012, p. 126).

Famous writers and journalists joined the debate. The Writers Union stood behind Drozdowski; the bi-weekly *Polityka* defended Kapuściński.

As Domosławski explains, the quarrel about plagiarism focused on the limits of fiction in journalism, on the lines that demarcate the borders between fiction and non-fiction. "By introducing elements of invention, by processing reality, do we shift our text from the 'journalism' shelf to the one marked 'literature'? Is literary reportage – as Kapuściński himself thought – an independent artistic work, a legitimate literary genre?" (Domosławski, 2012, p. 127), wonders the author of Kapuściński's biography.

6.2 Kąkolewski vs. Wańkowicz

Krzysztof Kąkolewski (1930-2015), the famous reporter from Kapuściński's and Krall's generation, wrote essentially about Poland and, thus, is unknown to foreign readers. Nonetheless, he is worth mentioning, not only because he is the author of thirty-eight books, sold over one and half million copies in Poland, but also because his definition of reportage and his theories on using fiction in literary journalism influenced both Polish theorists and practitioners alike. Kąkolewski was the author of books such as: *Jak umierają nieśmiertelni* (How Immortals Die, 1972), a behind-the-scenes look into the murder of Sharon Tate, Roman Polański's first wife; *Co u pana słychać?* (How Do You Do, Sir?, 1975), interviews with ten Nazi criminals who were never prosecuted and who lived out their quiet comfortable lives in West Germany; and *Wańkowicz krzepi* (Wańkowicz Comforts, 1972), an extended interview with Melchior Wańkowicz on his reportage, work habits, and ways of gathering information, a reporter to a reporter interview that comprises 190 questions and answers in forty-eight hours of dialogue. Although the book about Wańkowicz did not spark significant controversy, in its pages we can detect the nucleus of the future debate about the condition of Polish reportage.

Both Kąkolewski and Wańkowicz were reporters, worked as journalists, and both also took an active role in defining the genre they practiced. Although Kąkolewski considered himself Wańkowicz's

student, their attitudes towards truth and fact were slightly different. One of the most interesting polemics in the history of modern Polish reportage took place precisely between Wańkowicz and one of his prominent students, Krzysztof Kąkolewski, and had to do with fiction and real-life facts in the reportage (Zimnoch, 2014).

According to Melchior Wańkowicz, reportage is a description of reality, and this description, in turn, is a kind of mosaic consisting of many different stones, which should be arranged in such a way that they reproduce the image of a depicted story. The stones, in turn, are real-life facts. In another of his books Wańkowicz declared that reportage was as old as human speech, and he warned writers that they should treat reportage with more respect because it was a genre from which literature derived (Żyrek-Horodyska, 2017). Wańkowicz also claimed that pre-reportages were written by Homer, Tacitus and Herodotus (Żyrek-Horodyska, 2017).

According to Krzysztof Kąkolewski, reportage was a "current story about real facts" (Kąkolewski, 1992, p. 64). Therefore, for Kąkolewski Wańkowicz's theory of reportage as a mosaic was unacceptable. Wańkowicz believed that reportage had to reflect reality, and that entitled the reporter to use fiction (the factual layer had to be true, as in a report, but the imagery is rooted in aesthetics just as in a short story or novella) (Wolny-Zmorzyński, 1992). Kąkolewski maintained that fiction was an abuse of the reportage convention, and he opted for the total exclusion of fiction from reportage (Wolny-Zmorzyński, 1992).

6.3 Domosławski vs. Kapuściński

Similar polemics can be observed in Artur Domosławski's biography of Ryszard Kapuściński, *Ryszard Kapuściński: A Life*, published in Poland in 2010. The publication not only sparked many controversies but also divided public opinion. Even in the English-language press, a series of reports were published underlining the fact that in the biography Kapuściński was accused of lying and playing loose with facts (Mackey, 2010). Fans of Kapuściński responded by pointing out that it was well known that the Polish reporter wrote his books years after the events in which he participated, and he never intended to confuse his readers. Neal Ascherson argued on the *Guardian's* website that Kapuściński just kept two notebooks: one

as a reporter writing his correspondences for Polish Press Agency where he worked at that time, and the other as a writer, wherein he noted the reflections he was to use afterwards when writing his book. “To mix the two notebooks up is to miss the point of him. Artur Domosławski’s book, from what is reported about it, suggests that Kapuscinski was a dishonest reporter,” adds Ascherson (qtd. as cited in Mackey, 2010, p. 3). In the interview with *The New York Times*, Domosławski explained that his book is not an attack on Kapuściński:

In my book I don't accuse him at all — that is not the tone of the book, and it's completely wrong to use that word. I am just saying that I prefer to put some of his great books on the literature shelf rather than the one reserved for journalism. Those books continue to be great as literature, but not necessary examples of journalism (qtd. as cited in MACKAY, 2010, pp. 6-7).

Why is this the case? Domosławski believes that a journalist makes a pact with the reader, and, if journalism crosses the border with literature, it sacrifices its credibility, which is unacceptable (Mackey, 2010).

When the biography was published in Poland, many people (including Domosławski himself) expected that it would start a great public debate about reportage and its borders. However, what happened was instead a discussion about what a great reporter is allowed, or not, to do (Majewska, 2017), and what a biographer can and cannot write (Bratkowski, 2017). Nevertheless, the whole discussion around the book shows the duality of the Polish tradition of reportage. On the one hand, when Domosławski declared that there was no dog which peed on the dignitaries’ shoes (referring to the opening phrase of Kapuściński’s *The Emperor*), some of the readers felt defrauded. On the other hand, others did not. As Polish researcher Mateusz Zimnoch explains,

The whole problem is difficult to resolve: on equal terms it can be argued that it is a lie and abuse, because the dog did not pee on any dignitaries’ shoes, or that this poetic image is fully acceptable in reportage, because it aims to make the description of the world more plastic, increase the suggestiveness of seemingly irrelevant details or give a specific atmosphere of the described realities (Zimnoch, 2014, p. 38).

In a similar way, we can relate to the fragment about the big fish in Lake Victoria. In *The Shadow of the Sun*, Kapuściński insinuates that the fish became big because they ate Idi Amin’s victims, who were dropped into the lake. Domosławski points out that it is a wonderful

metaphor of Amin's tyranny and cruelty at the time but feels that it is wrong from a factual point of view: "Those fish were taken from Nile – it was a famous experiment – and became bigger because they were eating smaller fish and even destroyed the ecosystem of the place" (qtd. as cited in Mackey, 2010, p. 9). Examples such as these are many, but the question remains the same: is a reporter allowed to "arrange the mosaic", to borrow Wańkowicz's definition, as he pleases, or does he need to adhere to verifiable facts? Or can he "thicken the reality", to draw upon Łoziński's expression, or must he just observe and record?

6.4 Szczygieł vs. Domosławski

Although the debate about the condition of Polish reportage did not take place in 2010 when *Ryszard Kapuściński: A Life* was published, after two court trials and a change of publisher, the second edition of Domosławski's book appeared in Polish bookstores in April of 2017. This edition included an afterword by Piotr Bratkowski, who wrote about the scandal that accompanied the first edition of the book, together with additional material, such as opinions taken from Polish and international critics. On that occasion, the publication opened an interesting debate between practicing reporters that can be divided into two camps. In the first one, we find Mariusz Szczygieł, a reporter from *Gazeta Wyborcza*, raising his voice in defense of the "Polish School of Reportage" (or rather one of the traditions of this genre in Poland that allows the reporter to use fiction if that helps to depict the reality and reads better). The second camp comprises reporters from *Polityka* and *Krytyka Polityczna*, such as Artur Domosławski and Andrzej Leszczyński, and calls for establishing visible rules that once and forever exclude fiction from Polish reportage.

It seems that this debate began with an interview in *Krytyka Polityczna* in which Artur Domosławski criticized the attitude of one of the reporters from *Gazeta Wyborcza* who wrote on Facebook that reporters without talent should write about facts and those with talent should be allowed to write as they pleased (Majewska, 2017), and who defended the fact that in Poland there are still many reporters for whom the literariness of the text is more or as important as the facts themselves. As a rejoinder, Mariusz Szczygieł wrote an article in *Gazeta Wyborcza* where he reiterated the reporter Stefan Kozicki's claim that

reality creates facts but that the text is created by the writer's relation to those facts. Echoing Andrzej Mularczyk, Szczygieł stated that the fact is something like a gold nugget, adding that the majority of us prefer to have a ring at home rather than just a nugget. "If someone prefers Anglo-Saxon reportage where only facts matter, that's his choice. For me these are frequently quite boring texts", Szczygieł observed. He also underlined that in his opinion the reporter can do everything the writer does, with only one exception: he cannot make the stories up (Szczygieł, 2017). In his article, Szczygieł also referred to the Polish School of Reportage, tracing it back to the 1894 piece by Reymont mentioned earlier, *Pielgrzymka na Jasną Górę* (Pilgrimage to Jasna Góra Monastery), and arguing that before Second World War the Polish School of Reportage was already a serious movement. According to Szczygieł, the conscious and deliberate fabrication of non-existent situations and heroes has been present in Polish reportage for a long time (in Wańkowicz's texts, amongst others). Although Szczygieł stated that he personally prefers to be informed that he is reading someone's creation, fiction in Polish reportage – especially in literary reportage – has not been stigmatized by many Polish editors for decades; it was even appreciated.

Another reporter, Andrzej Leszczyński, took a similar stance in the discussion. In the text published in *Krytyka Polityczna* entitled "The Polish School of Lying", he writes that it is high time to define finally what the reporter can and cannot do, and when reportage ceases to exist as reportage and becomes literature. He criticizes that there are still reporters who openly admit in interviews that they use fictional "elements" in their books. Leszczyński also refers to the case of a famous award-winning reporter caught red-handed after quoting a dialogue from a movie in his book and passing it off as an interview he had conducted. Leszczyński positions himself against fiction and points out that the tradition of the Polish School of Reportage was being shaped during the time of the Polish People's Republic, when it was impossible to talk openly about various topics. Therefore, there was general consent for the use of literary language to address them. The verification of a reporter's words then was also far more difficult than it is today (Leszczyński, 2017). However, everything has changed, and the rules should finally be established, underlines Leszczyński.

Although the debate is in full swing, there is still one voice missing – the theorists. Is that because, as scholars, we avoid taking an active role in public debates, or do not have the same

access to the public, because mass media are more interested in hearing top reporters quarrelling about the future of the genre than scholars pronouncing their views? Or perhaps, we know that this debate is irreconcilable unless we – theorists from different fields – join forces and create a common discipline with its own tools, methods and knowledge.

7. Conclusion: Literary Journalism as a discipline?

Analyzing the history of literary journalism in Poland, showing its roots, schools and traditions, and highlighting the polemics and discussions it has raised over the last few decades, I have suggested in this article that there serious difficulties to overcome if we are ever to achieve disciplinary status for Polish literary journalism. In my opinion, the reason for this is twofold: literary traditions in Poland of the past century generally favored factual representation, and its journalistic traditions fluctuated between both, making it difficult for literary journalism in Poland to comfortably situate itself between the novel and the news story. It is not coincidental that reportage has always been seen as the bastard child of the two separate disciplines, literature and journalism (Bak, 2011).

This duality has produced both advantages and disadvantages, and not just in Poland. If literary journalism is being investigated from both ends of the disciplinary spectrum, we could assume there is twice as much research and analysis being conducted on it. However, even if there are more and more studies on literary journalism being published, researchers in the literature department are often unaware what their confreres in the journalism department are doing, so enclosed both are within their own disciplines. As a consequence, literary journalism, in Poland in particular, is currently caught between two scientific fields and, as such, in being analyzed with tools from one or from the other⁵.

This problem is just the tip of the iceberg, though. The lack of a common platform that would allow communication between theorists and practitioners, or at least between researchers from philological and journalism faculties, presages dire consequences for an emerging field, as it finds itself locked in a vicious cycle of repeating the same arguments, such as the debate concerning fact versus fiction in reportage. The conflict, fueled by practitioners as well, is as old as

the genre itself. Furthermore, Polish literary journalism is very much enclosed within its own Polishness. Few books on literary journalism written by foreign scholars have been translated into Polish, and even fewer Polish scholars of literary journalism are publishing their research in foreign journals. As a result, the debate has proven rather unproductive over time and is pretty much monothematic, enclosed as it is within one faculty, be it literary or media studies. The fact that there is no academic journal in Poland dedicated to literary journalism studies that could serve as a platform of communication and allow academics from different fields to get to know their research and methods, has only exacerbated the problem.

Establishing literary journalism as a separate discipline might, therefore, help scholars and academics, first, to work together and grow aware of their mutual interests, and, second, to establish new conceptual tools and theoretical frameworks for this particular discipline that could help nurture it along. In his speech at the International Association for Literary Journalism Studies (IALJS) conference in Vienna in May of 2018, John S. Bak made a clear distinction between disciplines and studies. A discipline is, he stated, “an institutionally recognized and sanctioned pillar of scientific inquiry that addresses and resolves problems deemed important by society, advances research pertaining to that field (and its many branches) and forms future scholars who will continue this bilateral research/pedagogy paradigm” (Bak, 2018). Therefore, it seems that encouraging literary journalism studies in Poland – currently practiced in different faculties by scholars with different disciplinary training – to become one discipline might be an answer to at least some of the problems that literary journalism suffers in the country at present.

In theorizing about the origins of literary journalism studies, Bak used the metaphor of adopting children, in the case of academic studies, versus reproducing children, in the case of disciplines. On the Polish soil, it seems that the divorced parents (and we can enumerate many “failed” couples: philologists and journalists; theorists and practitioners; humanists and scientists, etc.) do not talk to each other, even though they share custody. Both try to convince the child that he/she belongs with them, and not with the other parent. Creating a common discipline would build a home for this lost and confused child, giving him/her a place to call home. Of course, as with all families, there would be a lot of arguing, but disputes and discussions, such as those outlined in this article, are nearly always

part of the growth process, and encouraging them within a shared space instead of behind closed disciplinary doors would nurture the genre more than denature it.

NOTES

- 1 I will use the terms reportage, literary reportage, and literary journalism interchangeably in line with current usage in Poland. All translation from the original Polish, unless otherwise stated, are my own.
- 2 Unless otherwise stated, all quotes from both Spanish and Polish works were my translations.
- 3 The Laboratory of Reportage is a two-year postgraduate program offered at the University of Warsaw and run by Institute of Journalism. Created by Marek Miller in 2001, it enables students to study under the supervision of masters (there is a foreman-apprentice system in the Laboratory) and to work together, creating a polyphonic novel (Szady, 2012).
- 4 It is worth mentioning that Mariusz Szczygieł, together with Wojciech Tochman and Paweł Goźliński (all three active reporters for *Gazeta Wyborcza*), established the Institute of Reportage that runs their own school, entitled the Polish School of Reportage. It is a private, one-year course – costing approximately \$4,000 and taking place on weekends (there are nine three-day conventions) – where people can learn how to write reportages (Instytut Reportażu. n.d.).
- 5 Surprisingly, a similar trend was described by John C. Hartsock who in his article on marginalization of American literary journalism repeated after Lounsberry that American literary journalism remained “the great unexplored territory of contemporary criticism” (qtd. as cited in Hartsock, 1998, p. 81). However, according to his findings the lack of research in the case of American literary journalism was due to the fact that both literature academy and journalism study excluded literary journalism from serious scholarly consideration. Quite the opposite is the situation in Poland where both literature and journalism departments analyze Polish reportage.

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