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PSYCHOLOGY VERSUS LITERARY STUDY

(An Old Problem Re-stated)

Friendly wrangles between psychology and literary study are nothing new. From time to time, they cool off, only to revive with even greater vigour than formerly. In such wrangles there is no cause for surprise, since, from a certain point of view, the two disciplines have common interests but entirely different approaches. Psychologists, in fact, are generally speaking not directly involved in the conflicts; the arts and literature have so far lain only on the perimeter of their field¹. It is rather their enthusiastic disciples among critics and historians of literature who launch these peripheral skirmishes.

The theme of the wrangles is variously formulated. Most frequently discussed, however, is the problem of freedom and determinism, and that of evaluation. Thus, for instance, I. A. Richards, in his latest book delineates the contrasts in the approaches adopted by these two branches of learning to the question of human freedom². Such a posing of the question is, however, unacceptable. Literary study cannot abandon the concept of cause and effect, of deterministic assessment of a work of art. Subject to determinism being discussed in a specific context — a literary context. The factors in such a determinism are the weight of tradition, the contemporary poetics, the rules of a given literary form and so forth, and finally the interior determinism of the work — such and not some other aim of a work, capable of deduction, having been chosen, then it could not have been realised in any other way.

The next common indictment against psychology is to the effect that it does not point up the value of a work but rather hangs the mediocrities on the same line

¹ Typical evidence of this is to be found in the „Annual Review of Psychology”. Though this Review has appeared since 1950, not until vol. 12 did it publish for the first time a discussion of psychological aspects of aesthetics. Cf. Carroll C. Pratt, *Aesthetics*, „Annual Review of Psychology”, vol. XII: 1961, pp. 71–92.

² *Notes Toward an Agreement between Literary Criticism and Some of the Sciences* [in:] *Speculative Instruments*, Chicago 1955, pp. 3–16.

with the masterpieces. It is a fact that, as often approaching the pattern of the physical sciences, psychology seeks to eschew evaluations, desiring to be maximally "intersubjective". But it can support with its own justifications the system of evaluation exteriorly chosen by psychologists. When psychologically interpreting the essence of a literary work, it is possible, also, to show how successfully it was realised.

But has the essence of a literary work a psychological status? Is it a mental phenomenon? Here, and only here, lies the crux of the matter. However, it will be necessary to restrict the theme of the present article. It is not purposed to discuss here the fundamental point — the manner of the existence of literary works. This point is, by contrast with the questions referred to above, certainly decisive in the skirmishes between psychology and literary study. It cannot be dismissed in a few words. We must assume, therefore, arbitrarily but not without the endorsement of the overwhelming majority of contemporary theoreticians and methodologists, that a literary work has an objective existence as a "thing", independent of and different from the creative or receiving processes. And we shall challenge the premises of all those scientists who maintain, in the words of a participant³ in the 1954 Oxford Congress: "[...] we cannot grasp the poem's full significance until we know how it came into being" (p. 71).

Consequently, we shall delineate a situation plan as follows. Each of the three factors involved in the idea of literature — the writer, the work, and the reader — has inherent in itself a complex of factors which are linked with psychology. There falls within the accepted domain of this science research concerning the creative process, and the personality of the writer, together with the aesthetic reaction of the reader. In this sphere, literary learning can supply only the necessary materials. The reverse is the case with deliberations concerning the work itself. Here, psychology (whether as current knowledge of certain psychic facts, or as a science) plays the secondary role.

Such a division of priorities as between the two studies is, although, as already indicated, questioned by certain individuals, sufficiently near the truth to give it a place in such commonly approved text books as, for instance, that by Wellek and Warren⁴. It will therefore constitute for us a convenient starting point.

Let us, then, lead off from a discussion concerning the usefulness of psychology in elucidating phenomena described by the artist in his work. Roman Ingarden, whose enlivening and co-ordinating contribution to the theory of literature cannot be neglected by any Polish student, convincingly establishes, in his essay on "Psy-

³ W. Rose, *Psychology and the Literary Analyst* [in:] *Literature and Science. Proceedings of the Sixth Triennial Congress. Oxford 1954*, Oxford 1955, pp. 65–72.

⁴ R. Wellek and A. Warren, *Theory of Literature*, New York 1956, Ch. VIII: „Literature and Psychology”.

chologism", the boundaries within which psychology has the right to manoeuvre⁵. The example he cites at the end, nevertheless, is of somewhat doubtful appropriateness: "[...] it is therefore possible to examine how, for instance, the plant world is presented in *Pan Tadeusz* or others of Mickiewicz's works. But has that suggested to anybody that literary study should be treated as a branch of botanics?" (p. 199).

This argument, based on analogy, is easily exposed. One has only to state, in conformity with common experience, that the real objects of literature are emotional, moral, cognitional and other acts of human beings, that the universe encompassed in a literary work is a humanised universe, that even the world of plants referred to by Ingarden is important only as an expressive embodiment of nostalgia for the "land of childhood".

We prefer another conception, so well formulated by John Hospers⁶. According to Hospers, the writer enjoys a certain degree of freedom, poetic licence includes numerous phenomena — such as world-views or the current of events. A literary work may express a false or improbable philosophy, may record fantastic happenings, but in one respect the writer is bound by an immutable rule — he must be faithful to human nature. "All these considerations of truth the writer can violate with impunity if it serves his purpose; the only thing he dare not tamper with much is human nature. If his characterizations are to any great extent untrue to human nature, we pounce upon this as a fault and condemn him forthwith" (p. 51). "Human nature" is expressed, above all, in the way of creating a character, and the faithfulness of such creation is identical with the probability of the characterization of the individuals introduced. If it happens that we are uncertain as to whether a given detail is true from the point of view of psychology, it is well to ask competent persons — say psychiatrists.

Notwithstanding the suggestiveness of John Hospers's premise, a number of doubts arise here, also. First of all, to start from the end. What is that "human nature"? There are as many kinds of human nature as there are theories of personality, and not less than there are world-views. Second, a literary work is never written specifically for specialists in different branches of the science of Man. Literary works are written for readers scientifically educated to a degree not above common sense level. If such a reader, possessed of a serious literary culture, feels that something does not ring true, then that will be a sign that something is not as it should be. Third, the celebrated works of narrative art (since it is to such that Hospers refers) often reveal an arbitrary spontaneity in creating the individuals introduced; it happens also that the matter of characterological probability is no more than superficial. It was solely the patterns of the realistic novel of the 19th c., and the theory and critical practice superimposed on it, which stimulated certain

⁵ R. Ingarden, *O psychologii i psychologizmie w nauce o literaturze* [in:] *Szkice z filozofii literatury*, vol. I, Łódź 1947, pp. 187–200.

⁶ *Literature and Human Nature*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", vol. XVII: 1958, no 1, pp. 34–44.

former psychologists to start treating novelistic or fictitious heroes on the same plane as real, living people. Artists subject their heroes to cosmetic and surgical operations just as frequently as other elements of the world they portray. The puppet figures of the 18th c. short story, Słowacki's *The King-Spirit* — who, in the course of history and by means of metempsychosis, enters into different personalities — or finally the Kafka hero metamorphosed into an insect, are witnesses to the falsity of concepts which require literature to portray "characters". The writer may, taking a single figure as example, illustrate one aspect only of human personality, which in its entirety is sometimes represented by way of two or three fictitious beings. Alternatively, the psychic process is sometimes divided in a similar way, or certain phases of psychic evolution are divided into elements. And only by taking into consideration several novelistic heroes shall we arrive at a representation of a specific mental phenomenon.

Therefore, following Hospers but stepping over the limits he delineates, we may say that the writer can — but need not necessarily — portray individuals in accordance with commonly understood characterological truthfulness. On the other hand, it seems that the essence of the connections between life and art are best to be found in various psychic processes and conditions. Those are the smallest units from which the writer builds up his compositions. He may arrange them in imaginary patterns, but intrinsically they must retain a likeness to facts known to us from experience. Just as fantasy is a new way of organising elements already accepted, just as painting — even the completely abstract — is an allusion to forms and colours existing in empiric reality, so literature, burdened more than other arts with links with the human world cannot be free from such. Of course, in addition to psychic actions, there exist also other fundamental elements derived from outside and taken into literature, but we are concerned now exclusively with the domain of psychology.

Let us combine two themes which are widely discussed — one of them among critics, the other in psychology. Next, let us see whether these two different themes compared one with another will throw new light on the other. The two themes are objective correlative — a term introduced by T. S. Eliot — and the theory of perception, an exceptionally developed branch of contemporary science. "Objective correlative" implied, of course, those elements of a literary work which embody emotions in a tangible form. Those emotions nakedly expressed would not move us, but expressed by means of poetic images and action are brought to life. And now it is necessary to ask: How does it happen that on the basis of the objective correlative the emotions grouped around a lyric subject can be reconstructed? Here, in many cases, the theory of perception will come to our aid. There now exist as regards this theory two principal orientations — that is, emphasis laid on the objectivity of stimulants, or emphasis laid on the importance of the perceptive organism, on its actual conditions and its past. "That which within us is waiting to move — the desire waiting to be fulfilled — sensitizes the act of perception to

apprehend that which is already waiting to be apprehended"⁷. In our case, the second orientation will be more to the purpose. When in lyrics we encounter transmuted pictures then, by way of unconscious inference, we arrive at a reconstruction of the emotional condition which may have initiated such metamorphoses. For instance, we compare the appearance of a calm summer sea, as we receive it with the intention objectively to register it, with that transmuted likeness which is imposed on our eyes by emotion. All these are common observations, but the theory of perception does provide rich, detailed material. Only on the basis of such material shall we be able to explain different examples of this general rule, and also such phenonema as, for instance, synesthesia.

Although we do not insist on an exclusive meaning of "human nature", nor do we require from the author characters which conform with it, nevertheless we can draw certain parallels between literature and scientific conceptions of individuality. Every writer constructs his work, more or less clearly, on a specific idea of the human person. In psychology, not to mention philosophy, there exist numerous conceptions. It is not often that such a conception is entirely at variance with reality. For the most part those conceptions refer only to a fragment of reality, sometimes they are incapable of verification. But neither of those charges can be upheld in relation to literature, which is entitled to present an image from a free and personal point of view and is not concerned with the requirement of scientific verifiability.

An attempt to confront certain theories from social psychology with the writer's vision was recently undertaken in the columns of the "American Journal of Sociology"⁸. Discussing the method of creating the hero in *Rouge et noir*, the author draws attention to the similarity between this method and the conceptions of a trend called interactionism. The author of the article falls into an error not infrequently encountered among representatives of the "behaviouristic" sciences treating the humanities liberally when discussing literary problems. That error might be termed "cognitive fallacy". The author, with the best intentions towards the values represented by art, maintains that psychology and sociology should pay more attention than hitherto to literature because it is there they can find an intuitive approach to truths often not yet defined by scientific methods. This is in a sense correct, but it must be borne in mind that cognitive process in a work of art does not take place as something independent or superior but remains intertwined with other processes which are actualized by artistic imagination. It is all very fine that Stendhal should have preceded G. H. Mead in the understanding of the dependence between the ego and the image which nearer or more remote members of our circle have of us, or which we imagine that they have. But let us suppose that Mead's ideas, revelatory from another point of view, have been superseded by new theories

⁷ Gardner Murphy, *Human Potentialities*, New York 1958, p. 55.

⁸ Francis E. Merrill, *Stendhal and the Self: A Study in the Sociology of Literature*, The American Journal of Sociology, vol. LXVI: 1961, no 5, pp. 446-453.

and fresh empiric discoveries. Will *Rouge et noir* lose on that account some part of its evocational power? Extremely doubtful.

We shall propose here an emulative way of drawing comparisons between literature and psychology. While standing by Mead's system, let us apply it to the works of Witold Gombrowicz. Let us compare the psychologist's and the creative writer's systems. In the case of that Polish writer, those comparisons are not superficial; they reach into the depths of the composition itself. Especially is this to be seen in his grotesque *The Wedding*⁹, in which both the action and the individuals — even the language — emerge from the interplay and influence one on another of a number of personalities. The theme is presented from the point of view of Henry who, having evoked the memory of his family home, and some of his most intimate circle becomes himself, by those materialised images, remoulded and then in turn transmutes them. This is, as it were, a parable on the moulding of the human persona and human actions — the very essence of those actions. That parable makes a great impression on us not by reason of the theoretical thesis but because of what the author has been able to do with that thesis. For the important thing is — how does the thesis of a literary work function? Developing that analysis further, it should be possible not only to demonstrate those analogies between the ideas of writers and of scientists which are of the greatest interest to the historian of ideas, but also to elucidate the differentiation between a poetic and a scientific discourse. We shall then approach knowledge concerning that secret of art which explains why although scientific doctrines do become obsolete, the fruit of artistic capacity does not become obsolete, or at least the process is much slower.

Of such are random examples of the "uses of psychology" in a domain independent from that science. And what is the situation in the own demense of that science? Let us refer, as examples, to three articles devoted to research in the psychology of readership.

A work by Eric Goetlind¹⁰ postulates several ways of describing poetic sensibility in the consumer of literature. The author proposes differentiation between several such factors as: the capacity of reacting to rhythm (here is involved "a rhythmic feeling connected with bodily reactions to a given rhythm", then "ability to identify special rhythmic sequences as expressions of certain feelings or attitudes", and lastly "rhythm memory" enabling the complete grasping of rhythmic patterns), sensitive reaction to euphonic aspects, capacity for synesthetic feelings, the extent of association of ideas, "high emotional mobility", and so on.

Different in character is the article by Thayer and Pronko¹¹.

⁹ A translation of this work into French has already been announced. So far, there has appeared in French *Ferdydurke* and *Pornography*. There exists also an English translation of *Ferdydurke*.

¹⁰ *The Appreciation of Poetry: A Proposal of Certain Empirical Inquiries*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", vol. XV: 1957, no 3, pp. 322–330.

¹¹ Lee O. Thayer, N. H. Pronko, *Some Psychological Factors in the Reading of Fiction*, "The Journal of Genetic Psychology", vol. XCIII: 1958, 1-st half, pp. 113–117.

Here are reported results of research by the questionnaire method. A hundred and twelve students were required to read five excerpts from works of fiction (length of an excerpt, about half a page). They were asked the following questions connected with the characters concerned: "1. Did you have a good mental picture of? 2. Did you like? Why? 3. Describe in your own words, in any manner you wish. Upon what details or ideas in the passage you selected those »cues« you did, and possibly overlooked others?" (pp. 113—114). Finally, the students were to complete a personal details form for the main heroes, covering twenty five traits. Results based on analysis of those questionnaires include some of special interest. For instance, it was made quite clear that when a reader "likes" (or "does not like") a certain fictitious character, he is liable to ascribe to that character all the positive traits (or negative). With a more neutral emotional approach, objective factors came more definitely into play — but in that case the depth of experience also, and the expressiveness of the image represented is less. Here we touch the problem of the conjunction between the independently existing text and many different ways of its individual reception. To what degree does the inherent disposition and the entire biography of the reader determine his point of view? And — let us comment — if we contest individual idiosyncrasies, shall we not arrive at experience which is "correct" but devoid of intensity?

Still more material is to be found in the work by Wilson¹², undertaken within the framework of broader researches on fantasy at Harvard Psychological Clinic under the eminent psychologist, H. A. Murray. Using several different techniques (interview, questionnaire, projective test, and so on), an attempt was made to find common ground between coincidences concerning profiles of personalities and the kind of books chosen, and the very fact of broad and serious reading. The premises which dominated this research was: "The reading of literature, we would propose, is indeed action, a way of behaving. It is the 'living through', in symbolic terms, of the experience of the author and his characters, forms and language" (p. 47). And further: "The participation in presentational symbolism must be distinguished from the instrumental apprehension of discursive symbolism" (p. 48). A literary experience is differentiated by, among other things, the existence of "empathy and identification". The conclusions from the researches undertaken confirm the supposition that reading matter accompanies the development of personality, that there exists a point of contact between readers' attitudes and systems of evaluation and those which are embodied in the works they have chosen. At the same time, the great surprise emerged from a global comparison of the extent and depth of literary experience with other traits of personality. For instance, it appeared that the great readers are not of the escapist, passive or rebellious type, are not maladjusted in society. Just the reverse, the best readers are individuals who are active, integra-

¹² Robert N. Wilson, *Literary Experience and Personality*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", vol. XV: 1956, no 1, pp. 47—57.

ted in a group, with an extrovert approach. That is in accord with such an understanding of literary experience as Wilson accepts — as a specific form of activity.

What moral precept will a literary theorist infer from an empiric description of readers' experiences? Among many such precepts possible, one of a practical nature is: it is desirable to learn better control of one's poetic sensibility. The great battle between the adherents of the 'impressionistic' method and the propagators of "scientific" techniques was decided long ago in favour of the latter, which even so does not mean that the question of training the "literary ear" ceased to be of interest. Although we must to a maximum extent objectivise our observations and conclusions, nevertheless there goes along with us and leads us in our work that capricious "ear". Knowledge of all the dangers and traps, which threaten our poetic sensibility, enables us the better to avoid them. On the broad basis of empiric discoveries there will perhaps be built in the future an extensive theory of readers' experience; for the moment, let us benefit by even those fragmentary elucidations which are already available to us.

First attempts at an experimental approach to the problem of readers' experience could not ignore the help of literary experts. They have controlled the amassing and interpretation of literary texts. But researches undertaken concerned only the rudiments — main themes, "ideas", characters and so on. Even here, the invisible but decisive influence is that exerted by the entire artistic construction. This is even more true when we set out to examine not those extracts which can most easily be subjected to discursive paraphrase, but the complete work as it is received by the reader. Then, the work and its elements must be described by means of adequate and supple language — none other than the language of literary research. We know that the exchange of services as between criticism and psychology does not take place on the principle of symmetry. The psychologists' language possesses an exactitude which literary humanistics has not achieved, and perhaps never will achieve. Certain observations, hypotheses and psychological theories can, therefore, be simplified for the needs of literary research, but a freer discourse of that "informal science", as Ch. L. Stevenson¹³ has aptly termed our discipline, will contribute to the psychologists such conceptions as can only with difficulty come up to the expectations of that science, and an attempt to identify them with accepted psychological idiom may be somewhat difficult. However, there is no other way.

Of decisive importance here may be the categories of literary genres introduced by critical studies. There should be an experimental verification as to the manner in which, receiving a work, we involuntarily place it against the background of other, similar structures. We might compare the "depth" and the "correctness" of the experience with the capacity for differentiating as to genres. For even the

¹³ On the "Analysis" of a Work of Art, "The Philosophical Review", vol. LXVII: 1958, no 1, pp. 33—51.

least sophisticated readers do make certain differentiations, generally not even consciously. Witness to that is the interest in certain types of literary structures — for instance, “balladomania” of the first half of the 19th c., or the perennial attractiveness for the Polish reader of novelistic forms, with parallel lack of interest in the short story.

The same problem arises also when we approach the question from the point of view of creative psychology. How do basic impulses and chaotic material transform themselves to the dictate of the orders of the rules of an emerging structural outline? How does a private system of experience undergo “translation” into a system of social communication? What in such a situation is the aspect of the relationship of original rules as to genres to the variation which the writer is, in a way, proposing to literature?

Nevertheless, it is no use denying that creative processes are infinitely more resistant to empiric research than are the experiences of the receiver. The more so if such researches must be experimental in kind. It is possible, to order, to experience in favourable circumstances aesthetic impressions when reading a literary work, but it is almost impossible, to order and under observation, to give birth to a successful work of art. Even so, there do exist various lasting traces of creative processes, such as authors’ notes; there are also testimonies by those who have participated at such processes. Further, there are the actual confessions of writers, but we enter here the boglands of introspection or, to use a more modern expression, “phenomenal experience”.

More accessible, on the other hand, are the examinings of relations between the personality of the artist and the fictional world he creates. Next, it is possible to attempt to measure poetic sensibility (verified when receiving other people’s works and then compared with elements of the artist’s own works). Finally, the theme of the objective meaning of a poem can be of maximal interest — does the writer always “understand” his own work?

The appropriate literature embraces hundreds of items, and a good guide to it is an extensively annotated bibliography by Stein and Heinze¹⁴. Of paramount interest is the fact that an important role should be played in experiments of this type by the categories worked out by literary study, including the category of genres. The picture here sketched with such lightning brevity of certain border problems appropriate to the competence of both the psychologist and the literary theorist needs two additions. No one can disregard today that psychoanalysis which in some form or another occupies a prominent position in contemporary science. Its influence is widening, from psychiatry which was its cradle, though general psychology, and reaching as far out as anthropology and sociology. It is not proposed to enumerate a list of different schools. Suffice it to divide them fundamental-

¹⁴ Morris I. Stein, Shirley J. Heinze, *Creativity and the Individual: Summaries of Selected Literature in Psychology and Psychiatry*.

ly into two groups: one which treats psychoanalysis as an "auxiliary instrument"¹⁵, and one which practices "oceanic psychoanalytic criticism"¹⁶. In the first case, psychoanalysis is entitled to approach the same literary problems as other branches of psychology; in the second, we shall reject psychoanalysis, as we shall reject every dogma which claims a monopoly of being able to explain every phenomenon.

And a final question. Much of what we have said in the present article concerning the relationship between psychology and literary study is also valid if for psychology we substitute sociology. The alternative which is presented by certain theoreticians — psychology or sociology is a false alternative. The real choice lies between structural researches and those transmuting the work of art into a mere mental or social phenomenon. Every justifiable interdisciplinary relation linking our deliberations with other branches of knowledge can be established equally well with any of the behaviouristic sciences. The stand taken up by certain theorists who, for instance, assault "psychogenetism" and defend "sociogenetism" seems, from the point of view of methodological sequence, to be indefensible. The psychological and social sciences, linked by social psychology — a science long in taking shape and only lately gaining its scientific spurs — constitute a continuum. Furthermore, included with them should be cultural anthropology, that branch of science which, starting from research into primitive societies, has more recently broadened its interests to embrace all systems of culture. This domain is by literary study the least used, although by its nature it is especially suited to it. The subject of precisely that science is the system of evaluation, patterns of behaviour, the importance of art and beliefs within the entire structure of civilisation. For practical purposes, of course, we can — and in general must — narrow the field of research. Nevertheless, it is undesirable to change what is an enforced husbandry into a cognitional postulate. Viewing literary phenomena in the perspective of facts supplied by other sciences — and especially the behaviouristic sciences — can yield only good results to our general knowledge in that field. The one thing always to be borne in mind is respect for the interior rules of a given scientific system. Such systems cannot, though inter-connected, be interchangeable. And there is no dominant science. Exclusive priority goes to philosophical inquiry, and even that only when by this term we understand the analysis and arrangement of conceptions, methods and theories embodied in other fields of knowledge.

Translated by *George Bidwell*

¹⁵ This term was used by Simon O. Lesser, who ascribes to this "auxiliary instrument" enormous importance. Cf. *A Note on the Use of Scientific Psychological Knowledge in Literary Study* [in:] *Fiction and the Unconscious*, Boston 1957, pp. 294–308.

¹⁶ Cf. the interesting and illuminating essay by C. Crockett, *Psychoanalysis in Art Criticism*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", vol. XVII: 1958, no 1, pp. 34–44. Crockett takes his stand in opposition to "oceanic psychoanalytic criticism" and delineates a narrow but indubitable domain for psychoanalysis.

PSYCHOLOGIA WOBEC BADAŃ LITERACKICH

STRESZCZENIE

Przyjmując w badaniach literackich założenia strukturalne, nie usuwamy tym samym możliwości współpracy z psychologią. Wymiana usług jest, oczywiście, dwustronna. Psychologia gromadzi wiadomości, które dają się skonfrontować z opisanymi w utworze zjawiskami psychicznymi. Chociaż pisarza nie obowiązuje życiowe prawdopodobieństwo w kreśleniu postaci i charakterów, to jednak musi posłużyć się pewnymi elementami zaczerpniętymi niemal bez zmian „z zewnątrz”. W naszym przypadku są to różne czynności i stany mentalne. Z nich dopiero, najmniejszych cząsteczek składowych, wznosi autor swoje bardzo niekiedy ponadrealistyczne budowle. Przykładów na płodną współpracę psychologii z badaniami literackimi mogłoby np. dostarczyć zastosowanie niektórych teorii percepcji do problemu „objective correlative”. Ukazałoby się wówczas w nowym świetle zagadnienie związku podmiotu lirycznego z niektórymi aspektami obrazowania. Kiedy bowiem napotykamy w poezji przekształcone i nasycone emocjami obrazy, to drogą nieświadomych wniosków dochodzimy do rekonstrukcji nastawienia uczuciowego, które mogło wywołać owe przekształcenia. A właśnie wpływ stanów osobowości na treści percepcyjne jest tematem szeroko dzisiaj dyskutowanym w psychologii. Inne punkty styczne między nauką o literaturze a psychologią pojawiają się przy rozważaniach nad koncepcją osoby ludzkiej, zawartą w niektórych utworach. Analiza, jaką proponujemy, powinna pokazywać nie tylko, ciekawą dla historyka idei, analogię łączącą pomysły pisarzy i uczonych, lecz i odsłaniać odrębność dyskursu poetyckiego wobec naukowego, zasadę, co sprawia, że chociaż starzeją się doktryny naukowe, to nie starzeją się — a w każdym razie starzeją się wolniej — wytwory umiejętności artystycznej.

Z kolei badania literackie przychodzą z pomocą psychologii w obserwacji procesów tworzenia i przeżywania utworów oraz przy ustalaniu związków między profilem osobowości a układanym lub odczytywanym dziełem. Psychologia porównuje dwa człony — obiektywnie istniejący utwór i zachowanie się człowieka. Do opisu utworu służy wyłącznie język badań literackich, jakkolwiek może się on wydawać z punktu widzenia precyzji naukowej mocno „nieformalny”. Np. kapitalne znaczenie powinna tu mieć wprowadzona przez wiedzę o literaturze kategoria rodzajów. Należałoby sprawdzić eksperymentalnie, jak — odbierając utwór — umieszczamy go mimowoli na tle innych podobnych struktur. Zestawilibyśmy „głębię” i „poprawność” przeżycia z biegłością w dokonywaniu rozróżnień gatunkowych. Ten sam problem wyłania się i wówczas, gdy poruszymy rzecz od strony psychologii twórczej. Jak pierwiastkowe bodźce i chaotyczny materiał przemieniają się pod nakazem prawideł rysującego się mgliście szkieletu rodzajowego? Jak prywatny system doznań ulega „przekładowi” na system komunikacji społecznej? Jak w tej sytuacji wygląda stosunek zastanych reguł gatunkowych wobec wariantu, który pisarz niejako proponuje literaturze?

Też niniejszego artykułu jest, że ogólne zasady współpracy między psychologią a badaniami literackimi zachowują swoją moc także w wypadku zastąpienia psychologii przez socjologię. Alternatywa, jaką nam przedstawiają niektórzy teoretycy: psychologia czy socjologia, jest alternatywą fałszywą. Obie dziedziny, wraz z „cultural anthropology”, powiązane psychologią społeczną, stanowią continuum. Właściwy wybór dokonuje się między badaniami strukturalnymi a badaniami sprowadzającymi dzieło sztuki do zjawisk mentalnych lub społecznych. Każdy zaś prawomocny związek międzydyscyplinarny, łączący dociekania literackie z innymi gałęziami wiedzy, może być zawarty równie dobrze z jedną, jak i drugą przedstawicielką „nauk behaviouralnych”.

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