

TRAVEL ANTHROPOLOGY IN THE LITERARY REPORTAGES

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Abstract

This article explores the relationship between travel anthropology and the genre of literary reportage. We scrutinized the theoretical foundations and genesis of travel anthropology, outlined its basic principles, and explored its connections to other disciplines. We also examined the phenomenon of literary reportage, its peculiarities, and principles both at the level of thematization and the level of narrative and compositional structure. According to our research, the methods of travel anthropology used by contemporary authors include fieldwork, participant observation, in-depth interviews, and detail fixation.

Keywords: literary reportage, travel anthropology, participant observation, in-depth interviews.

Introduction

Anthropology as a field of the human study is intrinsically related to the process of travel. Since the great geographical discoveries of the 16th-17th centuries, when „*Short History of the Destruction of the West Indies*” of Bartolomeo De La Casas, ship’s logbook of Christopher Columbus, letters of Amerigo Vespucci or Diary of Antonio Pigafetta appeared, stories of the wanderers have become the narrative corps that shapes travel literature. The era of realism entrenched the travel anthropology as a way of fixing reality on both horizontal (geographical) and vertical (human studies) levels, naturalism and constructivism continued this process. In the twentieth century there were three defining schools of literary reportage that formed the basis for the tradition. These include American “New journalism”, Polish “Literatura faktu” (literature of the fact) and German “die literarische Reportage” (literary reportage). These and other significant schools of the genre, through their synthesis of journalistic approaches to gathering information and literary form of text, serve as a tool for illuminating real events and phenomena. The purpose of this article is to highlight the features of travel anthropology in literary reportage (on examples from Polish, Austrian, Belarusian and Norwegian journalism over the last decade) and to explore more deeply the relationship between travel anthropology and the genre of literary reportage.

Context and sources

In the conceptualization of Western anthropology the work of the Polish-English anthropologist and sociologist Bronislaw Casper Malinowski, who conducted his field

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research in New Guinea, the Trobrian Islands, the Canary Islands, and Australia was of great importance. During his travels and sojourn in the authentic environment of the peoples studied, he wrote his works. The scientist observed culture as a coherent entity consisting of interconnected elements and became the founder of a functional school of anthropology. According to Bronislaw Malinowski, by examining specific elements of culture and identifying dependencies between them we can get a more general picture [1944, p. 150]. Croatian researcher Ivona Grgurinovic considers Bronislaw Malinowski's studies on the island of Trobrian as the beginning of travel anthropology (as a branch of socio-cultural anthropology) [2012, p. 45], which is the subject of our study.

In the period of conceptualization of the "research on the road" and its emergence as a separate constitutive feature of social and cultural anthropology, researchers travelled to exotic countries, geographically distant places to study various aspects of the social and cultural life of a particular community, immersing themselves in its life. Ivona Grgurinovic is convinced that Bronislaw Malinowski was a key figure in the "mythical history" [2012, p. 46] of Western anthropology because of the multi-year trip to the Trobrians in the early twentieth century and initiating the so-called "participant observation", which laid the ground for modern research.

One of the most fundamental works on travel anthropology are books written by American researcher Marie Louise Pratt *"Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation"* (1992) and *"Field Research in Common Places"* (1986). In these texts, Marie Louise Pratt analyzes the phenomenon of European travellers and the so-called exploration writing [1992, p.83], that arises because of travel and exploration of societies in different countries.

We should mention the work of James Clifford *"Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century"* (1997). The researcher writes how through travel and „translation" of other cultures enables to dislodge stereotypes and recognize different points of history while maintaining small identities in conditions of domination and globalization [1991, p. 70]. Besides that, it is worth noting that thanks to the studies of Marie Louise Pratt and James Clifford travel anthropology is shaped as an object of research by many younger scientists, such as Patrick Holland and Graham Hagan (*"Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing"*, 1998), Jan Borm (*"In-betweeners? On the travel book and ethnographies"*, 2000), Peter Galm and Russell McDougal (*"Writing, travelling and empire in the margins of anthropology"*). The most up-to-date publications on this topic belong to the already mentioned Ivona Grgurinovic (*"Anthropology and Travel: Practice and Text"*, 2012).

Philosophical concept and terminology

Philosophical analysis of the phenomenon of travel is implemented by existentialist Gabriel Marcel. In his book *"Homo viator"* he formulates an anthropomodel, which means "travelling man" [1949, p. 102], but we are speaking not only about geographical journeys but also about travelling and road to ourselves. According to this philosopher, the path to truth lies through acts of inner self-knowledge, in particular through the formation of a kind of inner position. Gabriel Marcel is convinced that man is a pilgrim, whose gaze is directed at the constantly changing reflection of his own self. Due to this dynamic flow of inner life, being is not a state, but a process of eternal renewal, of continuous birth. "Etre c'est etre en route", writes Gabriel Marcel, which means "To be – to be on the road".

The formula was adopted by many authors who used a literary reportage for their writing. The genre, due to the synthesis of journalistic approaches to gathering information and the literary form of presentation of the text, serves as a tool for coverage of real events and phenomena, has different modifications in countries, depending on their specificity. The multifaceted and diverse perspectives of literary reportage became the subject of research at the end of the twentieth century. One of the most thorough scien-

tific works on this subject is the work of the Austrian researcher Catherine Kostenzer.

In the book *"Literary Reportage. About the hybrid form on the border between journalism and literature"* Caterina Kostenzer explores the genesis of this genre, from the travelogue literature and antiquity to the XVI century, its modification in the era of realism, naturalism, and constructivism, up to the modern schools of reportage.

"Literary reportage is a hybrid genre that was formed under the influence of both typically journalistic and typically literary trends. Literary reportage represents not only the genre but also the personality of the reporter so it can also be defined as an individual expression of the artistic creative process" [2009, p. 15], according to Caterina Kostenzer from the University of Innsbruck. A study of the historical and theoretical foundations of this genre clearly shows that literary reportage is based on a long tradition of journalistic and theoretical trends that relate to the theme of realism. According to Caterina Konstenzer during her research, she has found numerous confirmations that, in spite of the established concepts, literary reportage is mainly a journalistic genre with selectively literary features. We differentiate the three main anthropological methods that authors use in this genre: the experience of fieldwork, in-depth interview, and the importance of the details.

Experience of fieldwork and its narrativization

The most important method in travel anthropology used by authors writing in the genre of literary reportage is fieldwork. In socio-cultural anthropology the list of meanings of the term "field" is diverse – it is interpreted as classical open space or cleared space, where the researcher can freely look around and not be distracted by social contacts, analyze what you have seen from a scientific perspective. For the second case, the French ethnographer-Africanist Marcel Griol exploring the West African people of the Dogon, in 1928-1933 first used aerial photography, which came into practice of anthropological exploration [1991, p. 142] This method has impressed with a contradiction the classical research field and those anthropologists who work "on the ground", directly in a field. Inasmuch as field-based science requires participant observation (the French equivalent of the term "terrain") and the fixation of the details.

In this context, the work on "cleared space" was more abstract, however, according to researcher James Clifford, "we should admit that scientists work with the field without stepping there" [1991, p. 38]. The author of *"Routes"* points out that, in anthropology it is important not just to obtain fresh empirical data and aerial photography cannot provide this. In his view, going out to the field involves a spatial difference between an inpatient workplace and a study location outside; after all moving to a cleared space for the anthropologist determines the particular practice of substitution and purposeful, disciplined focus.

An American researcher at the University of Pennsylvania, Henrika Kuklick, reminds us that the transition to professional field research in anthropology took place in the late nineteenth century. [2007, p. 10]. This approach is empirical and interactive, so it was quickly put into practice. According to James Clifford, the main feature of fieldwork is leaving home to work with people. These can be in-depth interviews when the interlocutors are together for a certain amount of time. "We need intense, deep interaction, something that guarantees a canonical spatial practice of knowledge extension, say, a long stay in the community. Fieldwork may also include repeated short visits, as noted in the American tradition of fieldwork" [1991, p. 39], he writes.

A modern example of such field work in literary reportage is the book *"The Bookseller of Kabul"* written by the Norwegian journalist Åsne Seierstad. She spent a year in Afghanistan, exploring live of the city and the people of the country. *"The Bookseller of Kabul"* is a story about the life of one family who lived in Afghanistan, in which the regime of the Taliban was overthrown in 2001-2002. A journalist did not neglect anyone from this

family. We discover more through a prism of life of children, adults, old members of the family of Sultan Khan, the bookseller of Kabul, about Taliban, Mujahedeen, former kings of Afghanistan, or the presence of the USSR and America. "Åsne Seierstad acquaints us with their neighbours, near and distant relatives, the life of the Afghanistan city, orders of public requirements. Especially these requirements are hard about women", writes Ukrainian author Anastasia Levkova [Levkova, 2014].

According to James Clifford, after the anthropologists have stopped relying on the accounts of field data collectors, travellers and various interpreters, their authority was increasingly based on the experience of fieldwork: "Experiential authority is based on a »feel« for the foreign context, a kind of accumulated savvy and a sense of the style of a people or place", while "the experience of the researcher can serve as a unifying source of authority in the field" [1988, p. 35]. In the opinion of Ivona Grgurinovic, it is on this experience of travel, the experience of being in another place, in a foreign culture, that the authority of travel writer and travel writing are based on, the experience is what makes his/her text credible [2012, p. 46].

On the other hand, even though it is "difficult to say very much about the experience. Like »intuition«, it is something that one does or does not have, and its invocation often smacks of mystification" [1988, p. 35], this can be true of ethnography, but in travel writing invoking experience is not merely an unstable background of authority. According to Ivona Grgurinovic in a "scientific" text, such as ethnography, which is (after all) sustained not only by experience but also by institutional and disciplinary history and the authority of rationalist science as such, there is no place for experiential subjectivizations; travel writer is subjected to somewhat different forces and milder restrictions [2012, p. 49].

Shared by these practices, anthropological fieldwork requires the researcher to do more than pass, instead of conducting interviews and surveys is not enough – the legacy of intensive fieldwork determines anthropological research styles critical to disciplinary self-determination. But how does a field research tool influence the construction of a narrative corpus in literary reportage?

In-depth interview and the importance of the details in a literary reportage

One of the main features of literary reportage is the dominance of dialogues, namely the disclosure of characters and problems through dialogue, as well as the meticulous reproduction of the speech specificity (dialectisms, jargon, soundtracking, etc.). In addition to participant observation, the in-depth interview method is of great importance for travel anthropology. Such conversations are characterized by the length of conduction, details, and increased attention to non-verbal approaches. According to the researcher of this qualitative method in anthropology, Palena Neale, the author, who conducts fieldwork, should take into account physical gestures, poses, facial expressions [2006, p. 6]. This method also includes in-depth collective interviews where the researcher works with a focus group.

A great example of this method in the literary reportage is the book "*The Dancing Bears*", written by a Polish journalist Witold Szablowski, which discovers the transition from captivity to freedom. His collection of the reportages, published in 2015, is divided into two parts: in the first he explores trained bears who had lived in Bulgarian Roma families for decades, earning money for them, and after being taken away from their owners, they were learning how to live at large. The second part is about the countries which cannot cope with freedom after the collapse of the USSR. Witold Szablowski travelled to his native Poland (as well as England, where he communicated with immigrant Poles), Ukraine, Estonia, Serbia, Albania, Cuba, Georgia, and from each country he described situations that demonstrate the difficulty of transitioning from one state to another.

His reportages are based on dialogues. Each reportage is like a conversation with a character, described by the author. In such in-depth interviews, the recipients tell the most

intimate things about their lives. The main character of the book *"The Dancing Bears"* Giorgi Mirchev Marinov shares his memories: "I loved her as if she were my daughter [...] God is a witness, I loved her as if she were human. I loved her as my dearest. She always had enough bread. The best alcohol. Strawberry. Chocolate. Bars. If I could, I would hold her in reverence. So if you say that I beat her, that she was bad with me, you are lying" [2014, p. 10].

In this context, we consider three aspects of verbal communication: epistemological (as the exchange of information between communicators), ontological (as a thinking activity) and pragmatic (as the realization of communicative intentions). Using in-depth interviewing tools, the reporter makes individual contact. Through in-depth interviewing, the journalist conducts a field study, allowing the reader to look deeper into the real-life of a community, village, city or country.

Another method in field research is the fixation of the details. This method is used in many sciences, and in this case, journalism and anthropology are intersecting here, because the details are decisive in literary reportage. In the preface to the first *"New Journalism Anthology"* American journalist Tom Wolfe highlighted detail as an element of "symbols of human status" among the four fundamental features of the genre. Details are about gestures, behaviour, clothing, furniture, landscapes, or weather. For example, a leading Polish reporter, Hanna Krall, in an interview in *Litakcent Magazine* said: "When I write literary reportages, I always use plenty of details. I believe that the world can be told through the details. When it is seen what is on the table, who is wearing what" [Krall, 2016].

As Maria Tytarenko points out in the article *"Keys to non-fiction: truer than reality"*, it is important for the author not only to notice the salient details but also to select the most eloquent ones, not to overload the text with unnecessary and at the same time to maximize the character or scene [Tytarenko, 2017].

As an example, we would like to quote an excerpt from the book by a Polish reporter Hanna Krall, texts of which are characterized by psychologism. In the in-depth interviews through a psychological prism, she describes the stories of her characters. The most famous text of Hanna Krall is *"Shielding the Flame"* about the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto. Hanna Krall recorded the memories of one of the leaders of the uprising and the prominent cardiac surgeon Marek Edelman, who saved the lives of many people. They have a strong friendship and, as a result of communication between the reporter and the doctor, the book was published. Hanna Krall opens the events of the ghetto uprising to the world and subsequently, the book will be translated into dozens of languages, which will bring her world fame.

The author pays special attention to the details. For example, the book *"Shielding the Flame"* begins with the next dialogue:

"You had a sweater made of red furry wool that day. It was a pretty sweater," you added, "from the hangar. It belonged to a very rich Jew. There were two leather straps above the sweater and a flashlight in the middle of the chest. You imagine what I looked like!" You said when I asked about the day of the nineteenth of April..."

"Did I say that? It was cold. In April, it is cold in the evenings, especially if a person eats a little. So, I put on a sweater. It's true, I found it among the things of Jews. One day, they were all kicked out of the basement, and I got myself an angora sweater. It was a good thing. That man had plenty of money and before the war donated to FON, for an airplane or a tank, something like that" [Krall, p. 6].

"Shielding the Flame" is not just a description of the days of rebellion, but a book about the extermination of Jews who voluntarily go with a loaf of bread to death. "The text by Hanna Krall is an extremely interesting book that forces us to ask themselves some important questions", writes about Hanna Krall's book Anna Chehovich. [Chehovich, 2016].

Detailing has a significant place in a literary reportage, but it should not be trivial and had an additional value.

Literary reportage as a hybrid form of salvage ethnography

According to the researcher James Clifford, literary reportage is also a form of salvage ethnography, which is the recording of the practices and folklore of cultures threatened with extinction, including as a result of modernization. It is generally associated with the American anthropologist Franz Boas; he and his students aimed to record vanishing Native American cultures. But since the 1960s, anthropologists have used the term as part of a critique of 19th-century ethnography and early modern anthropology.

The perfect example in this context is the journalistic study *"The Dying Europeans"* by the Austrian author Karl-Markus Gauss. The book consists of five reportages, each of which tells us about a separate ethnic group. For instance, the Sephardic Jews of Sarajevo, which are descendants of those who were expelled from Spain at the end of the 15th century because of their religion. Most of the exiles settled in the Balkans, where they were received by the Ottoman Sultan. The second nation described in the book is the German-speaking population of the Gothic region of Slovenia (another name is Kochevie). Their ancestors moved from Carinthia and East Tyrol to the undeveloped, thick forests of the earth from the early 14th century. The third research group, the Arberes, the Albanians of southern Italy living there from the 15th century, were fleeing from their homeland from the atrocities and wars. Another national minority described by the author are the Sorbs or the Lusatians, who have lived on the present German lands for over 1200 years. The last group, the Aromanians, is one of the most ancient, according to Gauss, European peoples scattered across countries (mainly the Balkans or near Greece, Bulgaria, ex-Yugoslavia), and only Macedonia has managed to recognize as a separate ethnic group.

This book shows the variety and diversity of Europe, what we now refer to as European culture and European standards, is based not only on Judaism and Christianity, but also on Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Considering the opinion of a Ukrainian author Anastasia Levkova, the literary reportage of Karl Markus Gauss puts couple of questions: "What are the ethnicities in the globalized world? Why is national identity important? What will the ethnic map of Europe look like in 20, 30, 50 years? And what will change it in the so-called political, linguistic, household ecology of this part of the world? What should be the balance between maintaining the traditions of a particular ethnic group - and being open to a new one?" [Levkova, 2016].

This book shows us the method of Karl-Markus Gauss: his story is based on trips to places he writes about, conversations with representatives of minorities, but there are also philosophical considerations and historical excursions.

Current discussion

The main discussion in travel anthropology now is to distinguish between simply tourist experiences and, in fact, in-depth research. Human or individual, culture, society, peoples — they all are the objects of travel anthropology. The media attention about the misadventure and recent rescue of British explorer Benedict Allen from Papua New Guinea, and the debate over whether his exploits are culturally appropriate in a post-colonial world, raise a question that is at the heart of anthropology itself. „Why do we travel to other cultures? Who, if anyone, gives permission? Are only some reasons for travel valid? And once you're there, what understanding do you hope to achieve?" [Ochota, 2017] — asks Mary-Ann Ochota in the article of *"The Guardian"*.

Allen described his objective as tracking down a band of people "out-of-contact with our interconnected world". He insists that his work as a professional adventurer-explorer is not about conquering nature, planting flags or leaving your mark. It is about the

opposite: opening yourself up and allowing the place to leave its mark on you. That, he explains, is the reason for not taking GPS or satellite phone, which would be standard safety equipment for most remote expeditions. If the locals cannot leave when a dangerous situation or illness occurs, why then, should their white-skinned guest? According to reflections of Mary-Ann Ochota, it feels like tribal tourism exploits the tourists seeking an “authentic” cultural experience more than it exploits the entrepreneurial locals offering dance performances, traditional costume, or market knick-knacks.

In the context of literary reportage study non-tourist experience is important, in which the format of deep research prevails. A relevant example of this is the book by the Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich „*Secondhand Time*”, in which she researches a „soviet human”. „Communism had a crazy plan,” the author says in the preface to the book, “to remake the “old” human, the “dilapidated Adam”. And it came true ... maybe, only it came true. For seventy-plus year olds, the laboratory of Marxism-Leninism created a separate human-type – “homo sovieticus”. Someone considers it is a tragic character, and someone calls it a “sovok”. It seems to me that I know this person, she knows me well, and I have lived side by side with her for many years. She is me” [Alexievich, 2017]. For thirty years the Belarusian journalist and writer have studied the Soviet human, his culture, the society in which he was created and lived, his social attitudes and customs. Through dialogues, in-depth interviews, observations in her texts, she shows a certain slice of the era, the current state of society.

An author who uses the tools of sociocultural and travel anthropology should be able to keep track of the problems of communication within human communities over time. Studying the micro dynamics of culture allows seeing the processes of creation and decay of various sociocultural objects. In the postmodern world, the micro dynamics of change in communities is characterized by such features as the pluralism of the life world, of the individual and the community, of the multi-vector processes of sociocultural life, of the decentralized sociocultural space.

Conclusions

The goal of this article was to highlight the features of travel anthropology in literary reportage and to explore more deeply the relationship between travel anthropology and the genre of literary reportage. We defined the theoretical foundations and genesis of travel anthropology, outlined its basic principles, and highlighted the features of interaction with related sciences. Besides, we have defined the phenomenon of literary reportage, its peculiarities, and principles at the level of thematization and the level of narrative and compositional structure. By our definition, travel anthropology is a science that studies the history and nature of human, sociocultural space, social connections and structures by collecting information over short and long journeys, using tools of observation, in-depth interviews, empirical experiences, and other. For our analysis, we used examples of contemporary authors who use travel anthropology for their research. Among them are Osne Sayerstad, Witold Szablowsky, Karl-Markus Gauss and Svitlana Alexievich.

Based on the analyzed texts of contemporary literary reportages, we can distinguish the following theoretical and methodological foundations of travel anthropology:

1. The unity and diversity of the phenomena of sociocultural life – the anthropologist seeks to synthesize integrative and differentiating features of social and cultural phenomena based on general principles of anthropological methodology.
2. Duality – recognition of the primary duality of social life: ideality and reality, objectivity and subjectivity, “naturalness” and “artificiality”.
3. Relationalism (epistemological view, according to which only knowledge of relations between things and concepts is possible) – the interpretation of the human social world as a substance, which constantly changes the configuration of certain life

processes and relationships between people.

4. **Dynamic orientation** – consideration of sociocultural phenomena in their dynamic expression; study of dynamic processes in groups, by which each individual influences his culture and culture – on the individual.

5. **Objectivity** – the sociocultural features of the human community should be considered, rising above the level of values and methods of thinking of the observer, as close as possible to fully reflect the values and methods of thinking of the group they are watching.

Using the methodology of travel anthropology, the modern researcher opens new horizons of many modern worlds, which is changing and fluctuating, daily absorbing and losing certain experiences and phenomena. The theoretical value of our research is reflected in the coverage of new aspects of the analysis of literary reportages, in substantiating the special role of travel anthropology, in writing journalistic texts, and in expanding the interpretive possibilities of the methodologies of theory and history of journalism, social communications by taking into account insights.

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