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Ryszard Kapuściński and the Fierce Debate on “Magical Journalism”

Abstract: As a journalistic genre, reportage is determined by the context in which it is produced. It transports the reader to a specific time and place, but, unlike the news, it does not depend on current events. Therefore, a reporter is not constrained by brevity and, like any other author, aims to develop their own style. This was the case of Ryszard Kapuściński, who was the Polish Press Agency’s only correspondent in Latin America from 1967 to 1972. After this experience, Kapuściński returned several times to the continent from 2001 to 2005 and gave lectures for the *Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano*, founded by Gabriel García Márquez. His reportages about the continent are considered highly political (in fact Artur Domosławski describes him as a naive “true believer” in communism during his stay as a correspondent). This article, however, views the significance of his time on the new continent from a different perspective. Was the most important Latin American influence on Kapuściński actually the style and genre that he developed as he explored a new kind of reportage: “magical journalism”?

Keywords: magical realism, genre, journalism, fiction, objectivity

Streszczenie: Reportaż jako gatunek dziennikarski jest zdeteminowany przez kontekst, w którym powstaje. Przenosi czytelnika w określony czas i konkretne miejsce, ale w przeciwieństwie do newsów nie jest zależny od bieżących wydarzeń. Dlatego reporter nie jest skrepowany wymogiem zwięzłości i jak każdy inny autor dąży do wypracowania własnego stylu. Tak było w wypadku Ryszarda Kapuścińskiego, który w latach 1967–1972 był jedynym korespondentem Polskiej Agencji Prasowej w Ameryce Łacińskiej. Po tym doświadczeniu Kapuściński kilkakrotnie wracał na ten kontynent w latach 2001–2005 i prowadził wykłady dla *Fundación Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano*, założonej przez Gabriela Garcíę Márqueza. Jego reportaże o Ameryce Łacińskiej są uważane za wysoce polityczne (Artur Domosławski opisuje Kapuścińskiego korespondenta w tamtym regionie jako naiwnego „prawdziwego wyznawcę” komunizmu). W niniejszym artykule spojrzymy jednak na znaczenie jego pobytu na nowym kontynencie z innej perspektywy. Czy własny styl, który rozwinął, zgłębiając nowy rodzaj reportażu: „dziennikarstwo magiczne”, nie okazał się najważniejszym owocem jego zagłębiania się w świat latynoamerykańskiej kultury?

Słowa kluczowe: realizm magiczny, gatunek literacki, dziennikarstwo, fikcja, obiektywizm

Introduction

Reportage is a cross- and interdisciplinary genre. It is traditionally regarded as a journalistic form, but cases like Truman Capote or Ryszard Kapuściński straddle the border between literature and journalism, blurring the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction. Thus, the best reporters have enlarged the scope of journalism, overcoming its limitations.

The strong dependence on the context, which makes reportages into works with an expiry date, is the tie that Kapuściński wanted to leave behind when he conceived his major works, *The Emperor* (1978), *Shah of Shabs* (1981) and *Imperium* (1993). In this article we aim to place his works in the genre of magical journalism because of their literary features, the inclination to contrast and a tendency to what Edward Said called “orientalism” in his homonymous seminal essay published in 1978.

Kapuściński is not the only reporter who gave his accounts a symbolic sense. This was a common strategy for all the members of the Polish school of reportage, which was the voice of conscience for their countrymen from the so called “Polish thaw” until the fall of communism in 1989.

However, the solid roots of intentional journalism in Poland can be traced back to the emergence of *publicystyka* in the Renaissance and its social impact only increased since the loss of independence (1795). In fact, this subversive political message is one of the features of magical realism as well.

On the other hand, in the Anglo-Saxon tradition the foundation of journalism as a profession lies in the principle of veracity. So far the apologists of this school, such as John Ryle or Jack Shafer, have claimed that the reporter has no right to change the world he is depicting one iota. From this perspective, Kapuściński's books are no longer reportages, but literature, and the readers should not mistake their content with reality.

What if the disagreement among critics of Kapuściński lies in the difference in what Hans Robert Jauss called the horizon of expectations? When confronted with the text, readers do not link Kapuściński to magical realism and its hidden political critique, demanding an open and accurate text. Moreover, many foreign readers are unaware of a problem they have not experienced: reporting in times of censorship.

A biographical approach: Kapuściński in Latin America

At the beginning of his time as an American correspondent (1967-1972), Kapuściński's headquarters were located in Santiago de Chile. In April of 1968, he got the information that soldiers under the command of General Roberto Viaux were on the verge of a *coup d'état* against the government of Eduardo Frei Montalvo. Immediately, Kapuściński sent a note to his agency, indicating it was not

to be published. Due to the editor’s carelessness, it appeared on the front page of *Trybuna Ludu*. As a result, the Polish ambassador in Santiago urged him to leave the country.

Therefore “Kapu” quickly moved to Lima in 1968. In the capitol of Peru he translated *The Bolivian Diary* by Ernesto “Che” Guevara as an exercise in order to learn Spanish. Then he travelled across Bolivia following “Che” Guevara’s route (from the city of Santa Cruz to the village of La Higuera, where the charismatic leader had been executed).

Soon after, in August 1968 Aleksander Krajewski, the Polish ambassador in Brazil, requested a correspondent, so Kapuściński briefly moved to Rio de Janeiro. Finally, in autumn the reporter Edmund Osmańczyk left his PAP post in Mexico City, where “Kapu” established himself by the end of the same year.

In 1969 his wife Alicja and his daughter Rene joined him in the Aztec capital and stayed with him for three years. That summer he travelled to Peru, Bolivia and Venezuela, where great changes were taking place. In autumn of that year *Książka i Wiedza* published Guevara’s *The Bolivian Diary*, translated into Polish by Kapuściński as *Dziennik z Boliwii* and prefaced by the very same Fidel Castro.

Next year the reporter followed the kidnapping and death of the German ambassador to Guatemala, Karl von Spreti. Those events were reported in *Trybuna Ludu* (no. 143) and *Tygodnik Kulturalny* (no. 24).

In September of 1970 he came back to Peru and Bolivia, as well as Chile shortly before the election victory of Salvador Allende’s coalition.

The following year in November, he covered Fidel Castro’s visit to Chile, his first time to South America since 1958. In 1972 he officially ended his time as correspondent in Latin America after travelling across Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, Uruguay and Brazil. Then he returned to Warsaw to teach journalism and collaborate with the monthly magazine *Kontynenty*.

In 1974 he briefly returned to Colombia. Afterwards, “Ricardo” gave university lectures as a visiting professor both in Mexico City and Caracas (Venezuela). He then changed destinations (Ethiopia, Angola) until January 1979, when he covered John Paul II’s visit to Mexico.

Kapuściński took a political turn and in August he travelled to the Gdańsk shipyards to cover the strikes and the birth of the Polish trade union Solidarity. In September, the magazine *Kultura* published his *Notes from the Coast* (*Notatki z Wybrzeża*, No. 37) on the protests.

In 1982 Kapuściński left the Polish United Workers’ Party in protest against the closure of the magazine *Kultura*. This step, as he perfectly understood, meant not working for any publications until the unpredictable fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and African famines completely absorbed Kapuściński for the next decade.

In March 2001 he returns to Mexico City, invited by García Márquez, to give a workshop at the FNPI. Next year, “Ricardo” made a promotional tour through

the continent (New York, Santa Fe, Idaho, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil). In October 2003 Kapuściński received the prestigious Spanish Prince of Asturias Award for Communication and Humanities *ex aequo* with the liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino (born 1928 in Lima). In both 2004 and 2005 he continued to teach journalism workshops at the García Márquez Foundation.

As we have already seen, “Kapu” ideologically evolved from sympathising with the guerrillas in Bolivia and Guatemala to returning the Communist Party card. This leads us to put forward the hypothesis that the long-lasting Latin American influence on Kapuściński was not political, but artistic and literary. In fact, he arrived on the continent at a unique time (exactly when *A Hundred Years of Solitude* was first published on May 5, 1967 by *Editorial Sudamericana*) in the midst of the Latin American literary boom.

Actually, many of the movement’s most prominent representatives – Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Carlos Fuentes, Elena Poniatowska – were writers as well as journalists. Furthermore, their reportages have been described by colleagues such as Juan Cruz or Bruno Pardo Porto as “magical journalism”.¹

The origins of magical realism

Any discussion on the existence of magical journalism must be preceded by a definition of the artistic movement underpinning it. The term “magical realism” was coined by German art critic Franz Roh (1890-1965) in 1925 in his essay *Post-Expressionism – Magical Realism: Problems of Recent European Painting*.

On the other hand, the first literary reference can be found in the work of novelist Massimo Bontempelli (1878-1960). From the pages of his magazine *900*, Bontempelli spread the notion of magical realism between 1926 and 1929. The Italian writer used the term to describe his own serialised novel *Intense Life* (1920).

It was not until 1943 that we come across the concept again, as it was glossed over in an exhibition at MOMA. Nevertheless, critics of the time either ignored the term or adopted it as a synonym for surrealism. However, the two movements may be differentiated from one another as follows: whereas magical realism deals with improbable events, surrealism presents events that are downright impossible. Magical realism is intended as a contrast to the despair and anguish of life characterised by existentialism, promoting a more optimistic and lively understanding of the world.

¹ B. Pardo Porto, *García Márquez y el periodismo mágico*, ABC Cultura, 7.09.2018, https://www.abc.es/cultura/libros/abci-garcia-marquez-y-periodismo-magico-201809060202_noticia.html, accessed: 30.05.2021; F. Díaz de Quijano, *El ‘periodismo mágico’ de Gabriel García Márquez*, El Cultural, 7.07.2017, <https://elcultural.com/el-periodismo-magico-de-gabriel-garcia-marquez>, accessed: 13.06.2021.

Four years later, Arturo Úslar Pietri published the essay *Letras y hombres de Venezuela* (1947), in which he stated:

What came to predominate in short stories and to leave its mark in a lasting way was the consideration of man as a mystery in the midst of realistic data. A poetic divination or a poetic negation of reality. In the absence of any other words, it could be called magical realism.²

Almost simultaneously, in 1949, Alejo Carpentier published the novel *El reino de este mundo*, which some critics view as the pioneer work of the movement. In the prologue, Carpentier asked: “After all, what is the entire history of America if not a chronicle of the marvellous real?”³ He thus coined the term “the marvellous real” to describe the search for magical elements within reality.

The equivalence between “the marvellous real” and “magical realism” has been widely debated. Although Venezuelan scholar Víctor Bravo views the two concepts as interchangeable, other critics draw subtle distinctions between them. “The marvellous real” is not an international trend, nor is it chronologically limited like magical realism. In fact, the latter includes writers from other continents such as Salman Rushdie and Günter Grass, who were personally and professionally close to Kapuściński.

“The marvellous real”, moreover, derives from the indigenous and African roots of the new continent, and is evident in colonial literature as well as in the novels of Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Ángel Asturias. Finally, “the marvellous real” displays an exuberance worthy of the Baroque, which is reminiscent of the Sarmatian and archaic language used in Kapuściński’s *The Emperor*.

Úslar Pietri traces the emergence of the fusion between the real and the fantastic between 1930 and 1940, peaking in the 1960s and 1970s. This paradigm shift was also related to the political situation and demands of the readers, as the Peruvian researcher José Miguel Oviedo explains:

The boom was, first and foremost, a remarkable conjunction of great novels in the mid-1960s and a revaluation of works, no less important, that had been overlooked or read in a different context. The ‘boom’ functioned as a magnet that focused attention on a handful of new authors and their immediate masters, thus creating a design or map that redefined our literature, specifically the novel (...). This change consisted not only of the rediscovery or appearance of certain

² Quoted by V. Bravo, *Magias y maravillas en el continente literario*, Caracas 1991, pp. 14-15: “Lo que vino a predominar en el cuento y a marcar su huella de una manera perdurable fue la consideración del hombre como misterio en medio de datos realistas. Una adivinación poética o una negación poética de la realidad. Lo que a falta de otra palabra podrá llamarse un Realismo mágico” (trans. Amelia Serraller).

³ A. Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo*, Madrid 2012, p. 12: “¿Qué es la historia de América Latina sino una crónica de lo maravilloso en lo real?” (trans. A.S.).

contemporary authors (...) such as Asturias (18-02-1901) and Carpentier (19-02-1903), but also the emergence of a new and wider readership, a publishing boom inside and outside the continent, and a kind of historical expectation awakened by the nascent Cuban Revolution. The consolidation of these three aspects explains the rapid dissemination of everything that came under the 'boom' label.⁴

The most characteristic feature of the magical realism movement is that the narrator introduces improbable events in a completely natural way. Paradoxically, the astonishment comes from the incorporation of illogical and dreamlike elements into the text spontaneously, without underlining or explaining them to the reader.

As mentioned above, many of the authors in the magical realism movement were both writers and journalists, a fact exemplified by the two Nobel laureates Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa. It is interesting to observe, however, how the two writers who knew each other well and belonged to the same generation had opposing views on the dialectic between non-fiction and literary creation.

For Vargas Llosa, journalism is not on a par with literature and he treats it as a supplement to his activity as a writer. In his view, the supreme value of journalism is its truthfulness. He does not consider it timeless, imperishable or refined like art, but he views it as an important exercise in transparency and civic-mindedness:

Since my father got me a job in the local section at La Crónica de Lima, journalism has been a loyal, fascinating, productive companion to my literary vocation, ranging from events to sports, from international news to editorials and articles.

All dictatorships practice censorship and use blackmail, intimidation or bribery to control the flow of information. The democratic health of a country can be measured by assessing the diversity of opinion, freedom of expression and critical spirit of its various media.⁵

⁴ Quoted by J.M. Oviedo, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana IV. De Borges al presente*, Madrid 2012, p. 288: "El 'boom' fue, en primer lugar, una notable conjunción de grandes novelas a mediados de la década de los sesenta y una revaloración de obras, no menos importantes, que habían sido soslayadas o leídas en distinto contexto. El 'boom' funcionó como un imán que concentró la atención sobre un puñado de nuevos autores y sobre sus inmediatos maestros, creando así un diseño o mapa que redefinió nuestra literatura, específicamente la novela (...). Este cambio no sólo consistió en el redescubrimiento o la aparición de ciertos autores contemporáneos – como Asturias (18-02-1901) y Carpentier (19-02-1903) –, sino el surgimiento de una nueva y más amplia capa de lectores, de un auge editorial dentro y fuera del continente y de una especie de expectativa histórica despertada por la naciente Revolución cubana. La consolidación de estos tres aspectos explica la rápida difusión que alcanzó todo lo que venía presentado bajo el membrete del 'boom'" (trans. A.S.).

⁵ M. Vargas Llosa quoted after J.M. Calvo Roy, *Vargas Llosa: "El periodismo es el mayor garante de la libertad"*, *El País*, 13.10.2006, http://elpais.com/diario/2006/10/13/sociedad/1160690409_850215.html, accessed: 13.05.2021: "Desde que mi padre me consiguió un

A biographical clarification is relevant here: Vargas Llosa was 15 years old when his father got him his first job in the press and he continues working as a columnist for *El País* more than 60 years later.

According to his confession, objectivity is not an unattainable ideal. On the contrary, it is an indispensable commitment to the reader. Consequently, journalists “must establish a clear boundary between information, opinion and interpretation so that the reader can form his or her own idea of what is happening”.⁶

His arguments are impeccably formulated, but they contrast with another, opposing notion of journalism advocated by García Márquez. In a thorough interview he gave for a documentary in 1998, “Gabo” said:

I would say that I came to journalism because I saw it as being not about literature but about telling things. And within that conception, journalism must be considered as a literary genre, especially reportage. That’s a battle I’m waging because journalists themselves refuse to accept that reportage is a literary genre. They even view it with a certain contempt in the depths of their souls. And I would say one thing: a reportage is a story that is totally based on reality, just as stories are undoubtedly founded in reality. Fiction... No fiction is totally invented. It is always an elaboration on an experience. So, in the same way that I came to journalism, I realise that this same process is another stage in my apprenticeship, let’s not say literary, but in the development of my ultimate vocation to tell stories. To tell things.⁷

In this beautiful, simple language, the Colombian writer explains that the structure of a chronicle or a report is the same as that of a story. Both are nourished

trabajo en la sección de local de ‘La Crónica de Lima’ el periodismo ha sido un compañero leal, fascinante y fecundo de mi vocación literaria, desde sucesos a deportes, desde información internacional hasta editoriales y artículos.

Todas las dictaduras practican la censura y usan el chantaje, la intimidación o el soborno para controlar el flujo de información. Se puede medir la salud democrática de un país evaluando la diversidad de opiniones, la libertad de expresión y el espíritu crítico de sus diversos medios de comunicación” (trans. A.S.).

⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷ Y. Billion, M. Martínez Cavard, *Gabriel García Márquez: La escritura embrujada*, Madrid 2007, p. 47: “Yo diría que llegué al periodismo porque consideraba que el asunto no era de literatura, el asunto era contar cosas. Y que dentro de esa concepción, el periodismo hay que considerarlo como un género literario, sobre todo el reportaje. Ése es un pleito que me traigo yo porque los mismos periodistas se niegan a aceptar que el reportaje es un género literario. Inclusive, en el fondo de su alma lo ven con un cierto menosprecio. Y, yo diría una cosa, un reportaje es un cuento totalmente fundado en la realidad. Como el cuento tiene unas bases, sin lugar a dudas, fundadas en la realidad. La ficción... Ninguna ficción es totalmente inventada. Siempre son elaboraciones de experiencias. Entonces, por la misma forma en que yo llegué al periodismo me doy cuenta que ese mismo proceso es una etapa más de mi aprendizaje, no digamos literario, sino del desarrollo de mi vocación definitiva de contar. De contar cosas” (trans. A.S.).

by reality but can never replace or fully capture it. The practice of journalism can also be an art, as is true of García Márquez's own chronicles. Years and decades go by, yet they continue to be read with interest. They thus prove to be something more than obsolete news, a writer's sustenance or pastime.

Kapuściński, who liked to quote García Márquez as one of his teachers, belonged to the latter tradition:

True journalism is intentional, that is, it sets a goal and attempts to bring about some kind of change. No other kind of journalism is possible. I am talking, of course, about good journalism. If you read the writing of the best journalists – the works of Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway, Gabriel García Márquez – you will see that it is always intentional journalism. They are fighting for something. This is very important in our profession. To be good and to develop empathy within ourselves...⁸

In fact, intentionality is in the very nature of magical realism. If we understand magical realism as the art of turning the common and the everyday into the awesome and the unreal, questioning an accepted reality can be politically subversive.

This is exactly what García Márquez accomplished in his novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975) and what Kapuściński did three years later in *The Emperor*. They both played with amplifying and suspending time to demonstrate the ridiculousness of a political regime:

An old man with no destiny with our never knowing who he was, or what he was like, or even if he was only a figment of the imagination, a comic tyrant who never knew where the reverse side was and where the right of this life which we loved with an insatiable passion that you never dared even to imagine out of the fear of knowing what we knew only too well that it was arduous and ephemeral but there wasn't any other.⁹

Haile Selassie's Ethiopia in *The Emperor* suffers from the same dread and anachronism, like the world García Márquez described:

In the evenings I listened to those who had known the Emperor's court. Once they had been people of the Palace or had enjoyed the right of admission there. Not many of them remained. Some had perished, shot by the firing squad. Some had escaped the country; others had been locked in the dungeons beneath the Palace,

⁸ R. Kapuściński, *Los cínicos no sirven para este oficio*, trans. X. González Rovira, Barcelona 2002, pp. 38-39.

⁹ G. García Márquez, *The Autumn of The Patriarch*, trans. G. Rebassa, London 2014, pp. 228-229.

cast down from the chambers to the cellars. Some were hiding in the mountains or living disguised as monks in cloisters...¹⁰

There are also much more mundane examples such as this quote from Kapuściński’s *Imperium*, which uses hyperbolic adjectivization and bimembration to take an everyday situation such as passing through customs to paroxysm, stretching the narrative time:

Then come the dogs. German shepherds, furious, trembling, frenzied; the train has barely stopped when they throw themselves under the cars, barking, baying. But who could be riding underneath the wagon, in minus forty degrees Celsius? No matter how many sheepskin coats he had on him, he would freeze in an hour, and we have already been rolling nonstop for an entire day.¹¹

“Magical journalism”: a controversial label

The question of “magical journalism” is a controversial one. Jack Shafer’s diatribe *The Lies of Ryszard Kapuściński. Or, if you prefer, the “magical journalism” of the now departed master* is a clear indication that the American reporter views “magical realism” as literature and sees no place for it in journalism. Meghan O’Rourke offers an opposing perspective, questioning the possibility of total veracity:

Strictly segregating fact from fiction hobbles literary journalists unnecessarily. Where fiction is an inclusive genre, one that allows for its conventions to be violated, journalism relies on a system of conventions intended to guarantee objectivity.¹²

O’Rourke goes on to demonstrate that witness accounts of events are often unreliable. Are objectivity and truth in fact possible? Already in the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant established that the *noumenon* or the thing-in-itself has an independent existence and an impenetrable face for the cognitive subject.

In the case of Kapuściński, the magical component of his writing was first detected by British novelist John Le Carré:

¹⁰ R. Kapuściński, *The Emperor*, trans. W. Brand, K. Mroczkowska-Brand, New York 1983, p. 14.

¹¹ Idem, *Imperium*, trans. K. Glowczeska, London 2019, p. 29.

¹² M. O’Rourke, *Ryszard Kapuściński. Defending his Literary License*, *Slate*, 30.01.2007, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2007/01/defending-ryszard-kapuscinski.html>, accessed: 1.06.2021.

If García Márquez is the grand wizard of modern fiction, Kapuściński is the conjurer extraordinaire of modern reportage, and *The Soccer War* is a splendid example of his magic.¹³

American writer and journalist Adam Hochschild explicitly described Kapuściński's work as magical realism in a review of *The Imperium* published on November 3, 1994 by the prestigious *New York Review*. He linked the concept of magical realism to the development of creativity and the use of striking paradoxes and colourful amplifications:

If a reporter means someone who accurately presents facts normally thought important ("The President's press secretary announced today that..."), Kapuściński is anything but one. He takes few notes. His dispatches from odd corners of the world often ignore the main political events. If the work of contemporary Latin American novelists, sprinkled with trees that move and birds that talk, is magic realism, Kapuściński, a Pole, has created a kind of magic journalism.¹⁴

Finally, Beata Nowacka, a professor and a biographer of the Polish reporter, fully supports this description of his work. She titled her first monograph on Kapuściński in 2004 (recently republished) *Magical Journalism. Ryszard Kapuściński in the eyes of critics*. Nowacka argued:

Kapuściński's journalism is magical because, being journalism, it goes far beyond its limits, achieving the status of a literary work. Sometimes, the exceptional nature of his work has caused problems for critics who, unprepared for such an original stance on reportage, seek exact data and precise calculations in his books. Instead, they encounter a magical world of operetta kingdoms, as if plucked from medieval darkness, a world of corridors intersected by icy air, by mighty trees that witches inhabit by night. It is no surprise, then, that some critics were infuriated by such a representation of the world in a reportage, a genre that had hitherto been informative.¹⁵

¹³ J. Le Carré, *Publisher's Note on R. Kapuściński, "The Soccer War"*, trans. W. Brand, New York 1992, <https://penguinrandomhousehighereducation.com/book/?isbn=9780679738053>, accessed: 30.05.2021.

¹⁴ A. Hochschild, *Magic Journalism*, *The New York Review*, 3.11.1994, <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1994/11/03/magic-journalism/>, accessed: 1.06.2021.

¹⁵ B. Nowacka, *Magiczne dziennikarstwo. Ryszard Kapuściński w oczach krytyków*, Katowice 2006, p. 8: "Dziennikarstwo Kapuścińskiego jest magiczne, bo będąc dziennikarstwem, wykracza znacznie poza swoje ramy, zyskując status dzieła literackiego. Wyjątkowość tego pisarstwa sprawiała więc czasem kłopoty recenzentom, którzy – nieprzygotowani na spotkanie z tak oryginalną wersją reportażu – szukali w tych książkach ścisłych danych, precyzyjnych wyliczeń. Trafiali natomiast do magicznego świata operetkowych królestw, jakby żywcem wyjętych ze średniowiecznych mroków, do świata korytarzy wydrążonych w zmrożonym powietrzu, potężnych drzew zamieszkiwanych

Conclusion

Ryszard Kapuściński aspired to recreate worlds, to leave a mark on the reader and to transcend current affairs. To this end, the writer and reporter never ceased to experiment throughout his life. He dignified journalism, which had been viewed as short-term, minor and purely informative. In his work, reality and creativity go hand in hand. It is in view of its dual descriptive and symbolic dimensions that we, following Adam Hochschild and Beata Nowacka, describe it as magical journalism. In other words, a style that incorporates fantastic or mythical elements into otherwise realistic narrative.

In fact, even Kapuściński's critics agree that he blurred the lines between fantasy and reality, which is one of the primary features of magical realism. Moreover, he fulfilled the fundamental requirements of the genre, which are amplification and intentionality, to turn a text into a powerful tool against a political regime.

This is why, although the debate on the pact of truthfulness as the basis of journalism is still open, Kapuściński's affiliation to magical realism seems unquestionable.

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