

RECENT TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE ROLES OF WRITERS*

The social role, and consequently the social status, of writers has been recently undergoing interesting transformations.¹ They are not yet always taken into account in the sociology of literature, even though that role (or, strictly speaking, roles) in the second half of the 20th century in many respects differs markedly from that in the first half of this century, or, to adopt a conventional demarcation line, before World War II. These transformations have not yet fully crystallized, but it is legitimate to think that we are witnessing processes whose consequences will be better seen in the next century. On the other hand, prior to World War

* In the present paper its author has used parts of his book *Polish Writers, Professional Changes in the Perspective of Changes in Contemporary Culture*, Ossolineum 1971 (in Polish, with a brief summary in English). That book analyses the results of surveys of the Polish writers' milieu in 1959 and 1964 and compares them with a similar survey carried out in 1929.

¹ When reference is made to the *role* played by writers we mean the basic interpretation of that term, now current in sociological literature, as a set of rights and duties resulting from the fact individuals live in a community. Accordingly a *right* stands for a legitimate claim with respect to other individuals or society at large. A *duty* stands for a societally sanctioned expectation that a given person would satisfy certain legitimate claims (cf. M. Barton, *Roles. An Introduction to the Study of Social Relations*, London 1965, p. 2). This definition in fact refers to the concept of *social role* as defined by F. Znaniecki (c.f., e.g., *The Social Role of the Man of Knowledge*, New York 1940).

II the role of writers did not in fact differ so much from that which they performed in the 19th century, if we disregard certain specifically Polish aspects of the problem, which are not to be discussed here in greater detail. Let it be mentioned only that those specific aspects were fairly numerous: the traditions of the old-style intelligentsia as a social stratum; the role of writers as "the conscience of the nation" in the period when Poland was partitioned by the three great powers; the economic and technological backwardness of Poland in the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century; still now restricted development of mass media and mass culture.

The shaping of the roles of writers in a way which is different from that characteristic of the 19th century is a result of a set of social and cultural changes which are now taking place on a great scale. The basic trends of these changes, especially those which affect the issues we are here concerned with, will briefly be revised here before we proceed to discuss the nature of the transformations in the role of writers.

SOME TRENDS IN SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CHANGES

Our epoch is often referred to as that of rapid changes. Some doubts might be raised in connection with this label: not by questioning the occurrence and the importance of such changes, but by pointing out that rapid and far-reaching changes have been taking place—in Europe at least—for the last few centuries. But, on the other hand, at least two arguments are worth quoting in favour of stressing the changes taking place in the second half of our century. First, the fact that these changes have been markedly accelerated, especially after World War II. Second, a different, as it seems, attitude toward them: the visions of the collapse of Western civilization (cf. Spengler and, in Poland, the catastrophism of Stanislaw Ignacy Witkiewicz, better known under his pen name of Witkacy) seem to enjoy less popularity. Whereas fascination with the birth of new ideas, movements, and even nations has increased, accompanied by fascination with the growing possibilities of controlling social life, even though the danger of a total destruction of mankind is realized, with all its psychological consequences.

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The basic changes affect several spheres of social life, and their exceptional cumulation and interlocking accounts, as it is often believed, for their present pace. One of these spheres is that of economic development, with a quick rise of the national product, production and consumption, and rising living standards.² Another is that of advances in technology, which transform the conditions in which man lives in the present-day world (such transformations being, let it be noted, both desirable and undesirable).

These rapid advances in technology, particularly marked after World War II, are largely based on the achievements of science and expansion of scientific research. This has found reflection in the term "scientific and technological revolution," coined to characterize one of the trends now dominant in advanced industrialized countries. This, on the one hand, has resulted in an increased social prestige of that field of human activities, and, on the other, is connected with a rapid growth of the number of scientists.

Another phenomenon which is characteristic of the period that followed World War II and which is gaining in strength is a rise of the average level of education, both a prerequisite and a consequence of the former two facts. In some countries, the crossing of the first threshold in educational revolution, namely the vast spreading of primary education, which marked most advanced countries, was followed by the crossing of the second threshold, namely a vast spreading of secondary education. In many other countries, Poland included, that second process is likely to take place soon. When recalling this fact we mean both its obvious (and often discussed) effect which is a potential increase in the range of the reading public, and the fact that this also contributes to reduce the distance which in the 19th century usually separated the "enlightened" writer, with his masterly command of the language, from the little educated community.

² The devastation of Poland during World War II, the problems resulting from the need of organizing a new type of national economy, and presumably other factors as well account for the fact that Poland for the time being does not participate in economic growth to a degree in accordance with her aspirations, but if we compare the country's situation around 1930 and now we easily grasp the basic difference between the slowly developing agricultural Poland of 1930 and the rapidly developing country she is today.

Another effect is a large increase in the number of people who take to writing.

Phenomena which are of special significance for the present-day changes in social and cultural life include an immense rise in mobility, both spatial, which has been made possible by modern means of transportation, and social, in turn both vertical—along the ladder of social stratification, and horizontal—e.g., from one profession or occupation to another.

All these transformations, now taking place in the world, have their characteristic implications in the form of cultural processes specific to our times. First of all, the range of that which is assigned to an individual by his place in the social structure and determined by his job, place of residence, sex, etc., is shrinking; on the other hand, the range of individual choices, the role of individual differences, are growing. The “style of life” comes to depend more and more on the decisions of the individual himself.³

The pace of present-day changes accounts for a rapid collapse of old, established social patterns and systems of values; traditional cultural heritage in many spheres is being questioned, or just becomes useless. In literature (and, more generally, in art) this has shaken all criteria of evaluation, and also, in view of the decomposition of what is sometimes termed “collective style,” has resulted in difficulties in contacts between the author and his readers, in a kind of alienation of the author, who now is looking for his readers and his “social circle.”

MASS MEDIA VERSUS LITERARY ACTIVITY

One aspect more, namely the rapid expansion of mass media, requires special attention in view of its relation to changes in the role of writers. The emergence and the rapid expansion of television and an increase in the scope and influence of earlier

³ On the definition of the way of life and its transformations see J. Szczepanski, A. Siciński, J. Strzelecki, “Changes in the Way of Life in Socialist Poland in the Light of Contemporary Hypotheses Concerning Changes in Social Structure,” in: *A Long-Term Model of Consumption*, Ossolineum 1970, pp. 80-154 (in Polish); the publication was sponsored by The Polish Academy of Sciences Committee for Research and Prognoses “Poland 2000.”

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mass media: the press (especially publications of the "magazine" type), the radio, and the film (even the last-named two have their scope and functions reduced following the expansion of TV) all have far-reaching (and oft-analysed) consequences in the sphere of social and cultural life. MacLuhan's pithy formulation, "the medium is the message," probably exaggerated, but one which gives to the media of communication the pride of place among those factors which shape culture, is well known. A new type of culture, termed "mass culture," has developed.⁴ And mass culture means not only an unprecedented increase of cultural audience. It also means an increasing impact of the tastes of that swollen audience (especially under the capitalist market conditions), tastes which are shared by the homogenized content of messages disseminated by the radio, TV, and magazines. Being homogenized, these messages mix elements of different values, different styles, and different cultural levels.

It is claimed also that present-day culture, especially mass culture, is marked by an increasing importance of "the image," i.e., visual elements, at the expense of the role of "the word."⁵ Analysing the origin of this would take us far beyond the scope of the present paper. But it is worth mentioning that, as it seems, the essential role is being played by the fact that the rapid pace of the changes now taking place throughout the world is above all a rapid pace of *changes in things*. We are flooded mainly with all kinds of information about changes of that type, since these can best be *shown*, and are most easily and most effectively perceived visually. Hence the increasing importance of film producers, camera men, stage designers, since they are those who select the pictures to be shown and control the montage. *Conceptual* reinterpretations connected with changes in things, that is, changes in ideas, symbols, values, i.e., the sphere which is associated with "the word," follow much more slowly.

⁴ On the distinction between the "type" and the "style" of culture see S. Żółkiewski, *Culture in People's Poland*, Warsaw 1964, pp. 18ff (in Polish). In the interpretation adopted in this paper, "mass culture" stands for those manifestations of human intellectual, aesthetic, and recreational activities which are connected with the functioning of the mass media of communication. The grounds for such an interpretation are formulated in A. Siciński, *Leisure Time and Mass Culture in the Urban Milieu*, Warsaw 1966, pp. 5ff (in Polish).

⁵ See, for instance, A. Siciński, "Mass Media and Mass Culture," in *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, 2/1961 (in Polish).

Under such conditions the role of a writer who works for the mass media and is expected only to comment on what is being shown is much less important than was formerly the role of an average writer.

The expansion of the importance and the reach of the mass media, and above all the advent of the new mass medium which is TV, and also the expansion of magazines for the broad reading public—all these also account for the two phenomena which are of essential significance for the position of writers today. On the one hand, literature (to put it strictly, literature in book form) has lost its dominant position as a source of information about the world and as a source of interpretation of facts. In that role it is being replaced, on an increasing scale, by the mass media. On the other hand, however, the mass media need a large number of professional writers. This has given rise to a vast category of penmen who are not writers in the traditional sense of the term (they are not authors of novels, poetry, etc., or, generally, of books). But, which is even more important from the point of view of the professional status of writers, the functioning of the mass media is based on teams of collaborators, which include contributors of texts, images in various forms, music, etc., and those who edit the whole, who act as cameramen, etc. Hence the products of mass culture are much less individual in character, and sometimes just anonymous.

Although the consequences of the growing reach and importance of the mass media do not directly affect the social status and the literary production of all writers, and although—which is perhaps even more important—the professional organizations of writers sometimes fail to notice the existence of the mass media and that of the people who contribute texts for TV, the film, the radio, and the magazines, nevertheless the expansion of mass culture essentially works to differentiate the roles played by men of letters.

INTELLECTUALS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY

One of the consequences of the recent turbulent growth of science and technology, with the subsequent rise in the prestige of scientific thinking, is the emergence of a social group that

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enjoys fairly much prestige, namely the group of intellectuals, who—by the way—differ much from the intellectuals in the past epochs.⁶ The genealogy and the importance of this group differ from country to country, but here we wish to draw attention to certain similarities. They seem to be essential, since—in the opinion of the present author—the role of intellectuals will increase, and, even apart from this, it is linked with the activities of men of letters. The category of contemporary intellectuals covers prominent scientists; thinkers (prominent philosophers, ideologists); and also prominent writers and representatives of arts. By stressing the qualifier “prominent” we mean the fact that mere performance of certain professions classified as “creative” does not suffice for a person to be included in the category of intellectual. Personal success in a given profession, and in particular the acceptance of one’s achievements by the professional milieu is one of the necessary conditions.

In general terms, an intellectual is a man who (a) comprehends more than others do, i.e., knows how to associate interest in, and knowledge of, many fields; (b) knows how to convey his ideas to others. Hence, in order to be accepted as an intellectual a person has (1) to prove his outstanding achievements in a given field (which is the original source of his prestige), since the label “intellectual” is accorded, as it seems, only—and not all—those members of the intelligentsia whom J. Szczepanski suggests in the term “creative workers” (scientists, artists, etc.), i.e. outstanding individuals in those professions which contribute new artistic, scientific, ideological, moral, etc., value; (2) to show active interest in many fields (hence even an eminent scientist or expert whose knowledge and interests do not go beyond a certain specialized field would not be accepted as an intellectual); (3) to prove criticism, ability to make observations and to draw general conclusions, and to prove certain disinterestedness of action; (4) to feel the need of conveying his ideas to others (including the

⁶ An excellent review of the interpretations of the concept of the intellectual and his role in society is to be found in J. Szczepański, *Intellectuals in Contemporary Societies*, Part I, Stanford 1961. In that paper of his Szczepański points to the historical differentiation of the concept and the role of intellectuals, and also to the differentiation of their functions under different social and cultural systems. An interesting review of the ideas related to the concept of intellectual and his social functions is to be found in G. B. de Hussar (ed.), *The Intellectuals, a Controversial Portrait*, Glencoe 1960.

practical consequences and applications of such ideas: the clerkish attitude, in the sense used by Julian Benda, is today probably not characteristic of an intellectual's role.⁷

But let us consider whether these suggestions concerning the social role of the intellectuals and the expectations for the future are not just a continuation of that way of thinking which A. Kloskowska⁸ calls "the intellectual Utopia of the rule of souls by artists," recalling in this connection such opinions like that of T. Carlyle (in his *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*) that a lack of an organic category of intellectuals who would guide society is the greatest anomaly of the epoch, the product and the source of all other social anomalies.⁹ Now it seems that the situation has changed radically during the 130 years that separate us from the publication of *Hero-Worship*. In the 19th century such requirements reflected the intellectuals' rebellion against the industrial civilization, a rebellion which, as Klossowska has demonstrated,¹⁰ was often quite ambivalent in nature.

The question might be posed: what authorizes us to expect a rise in the importance of that role today? Now, as it seems, the emergence and growth of certain social roles takes place in three cases: (a) if there are social forces that are interested in such growth, (b) if certain organizations, with which those roles are connected, tend to expand, (c) if such are objective needs of a given social system. When predicting an increased importance of the intellectuals' role we mean mainly the last-named factor. Today, the demand for intellectuals (along with the certainly still greater demand for experts) comes from governments and from the various large organizations which are characteristic of present-day

⁷ The category of intellectuals is here defined in the way which, in J. Szczepanski's terminology (cf. his paper quoted in footnote 6), would have to be classed as a sociological or culturological definition (his distinction as between these two types does not seem quite clear). At any rate, the definition adopted by the present writer is very narrow, since it does not even cover all "creative workers and experts," not to speak of those definitions which cover the whole of the group called "the intelligentsia" or all "white collar workers."

⁸ A. Kloskowska, *Mass Culture, Pros and Cons*, Warsaw 1964 (in Polish). See in particular the chapter on "The Criticism of Mass Culture. The 19th Century Prologue," pp. 212 ff.

⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 215.

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societies. In this connection even the very term "intellectual" now means not so much the individual characteristics of a given person, but rather his—actual or expected—social role.

The importance of intellectuals is not the same in the various countries, and the predictions as to an increase in their importance also vary, but any analysis of these differences would go far beyond the scope of this paper.¹¹

The extension of the category of intellectuals is of essential significance for the social status of writers. First, the writers now have to share their function of authors of new ideas, "spiritual leaders," and experts on moral issues with other intellectuals, i.e. with a broad category of representatives of various professions, whereas previously they shared it, perhaps, with a much narrower group of philosophers and ideologists; (and still earlier, in European culture such function was performed by clergymen). Secondly, some writers only are, and can be, classed as intellectuals.

Even though we are concerned here with changes in the profession of writers, and not in changes in the functions of literature, we could risk the statement that the synthesizing role of literature is growing, and will do so even more in the future. This is due to the fact that since the public is being flooded with an immense number of ever new, unordered, and incoherent items of information provided by the mass media, the ordering

¹¹ In Poland, for instance, intellectuals and intellectualism usually enjoy much prestige, which is largely due to the traditions of the intelligentsia as a social category. On the other hand, attention is often drawn to the prevailing anti-intellectual attitudes in the United States, attitudes which, however, seem to lose ground recently. This is what R. Hofstadter says on this subject: "Before attempting to estimate the qualities in our society that make intellect unpopular, it seems necessary to say something about what intellect is usually understood to be... Anyone who scans popular American writing with this interest in mind will be struck by the manifest difference between the idea of intellect and the idea of intelligence. The first is frequently used as a kind of epithet, the second never..." And then after: "Intellect... is the critical, creative, and contemplative side of mind. Whereas intelligence seeks to grasp, manipulate, re-order, adjust, intellect examines, ponders, wonders, theorizes, criticizes, imagines. Intelligence will seize the immediate meaning in a situation and evaluate it. Intellect evaluates evaluations and looks for the meanings of situations as a whole." And then the author states: "I have suggested that one of the first questions asked in America about intellect and intellectuals concerns their practicality. One reason why anti-intellectualism has changed in our time is that our sense of the impracticality of intellect has been transformed." (R. Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, New York 1964, pp. 24, 25, 33).

and interpretation of information acquires special importance. But can and will this function be performed by literature alone? Literature will certainly perform it, but so will philosophy and science. Thus not only writers, but philosophers and scientists as well, will play an important role in this respect. Roland Barthes in one of his essays made a distinction between "writers" and "people who write" (*écrivains* and *écrivants*): in his interpretation, the former perform a function, whereas the latter engage in an activity.¹² It is claimed here that, for all the differences between the two groups, both of them, and even more broadly, just the intellectuals (in the sense adopted above), will function as interpreters of the world. In its budding form the process can be observed even today, if we consider the role played by certain types of essays, certain kinds of journalism, and popular science works. This process makes the writers lose their privileged position, since they have to share their role with other intellectuals.

On the other hand, however, the demand for writers *qua* intellectuals, i.e., as guides in the new world of things and as those who provide interpretations of new times, does not at all

¹² Barthes, who will be referred to later, says: "L'écrivain est celui qui *travaille* sa parole (fût-il inspiré) et s'absorbe fonctionnellement dans ce travail. L'activité de l'écrivain comporte deux types de normes: des normes techniques (de composition, de genre, d'écriture) et des normes artisanales (de labeur, de patience, de correction, de perfection). Le paradoxe c'est que les matériaux devenant en quelque sorte sa propre fin, la littérature est au fond une activité tautologique..." And at the next page: "Les écrivains, eux, sont des hommes "transitifs;" ils posent une fin (témoigner, expliquer, enseigner) dont la parole n'est qu'un moyen; pour eux, la parole supporte un faire, elle ne le constitue pas. Voilà donc le langage ramené à la nature d'un instrument de communication, d'un véhicule de la "pensée." Même si l'écrivain apporte quelque attention à l'écriture, ce soin n'est jamais ontologique: il n'est pas souci... Car ce qui définit l'écrivain, c'est que son projet de communication est *naïf*: il n'admet pas que son message se retourne et se forme lui-même, et qu'on puisse y lire, d'une façon diacritique, autre chose que ce qu'il veut dire: quel écrivain supporterait que l'on psychanalyse son écriture? Il considère que sa parole met fin à une ambiguïté du monde, institue une explication irréversible (même s'il l'admet provisoire), ou une information incontestable (même s'il se veut modeste enseignant); alors que pour l'écrivain, on l'a vu, c'est tout le contraire: il sait bien que sa parole, intransitive par choix et par labeur, inaugure une ambiguïté, même si elle se donne pour péremptoire, qu'elle s'offre paradoxalement comme un silence monumental à déchiffrer, qu'elle ne peut avoir d'autre devise que le mot profond de Jacques Rigaut: *Et même quand j'affirme, j'interroge encore.* L'écrivain participe du prêtre, l'écrivain du clerc..." (R. Barthes, *Essais Critiques*, Paris, Editions du Seuil 1964, pp. 148, 151-152).

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decrease. This is so although not just writers, but intellectuals in general acquire increasing authority as those who help interpret what we see and what we experience.¹³ It is worth noting in this connection that we have to do here rather with a nascent trend than with any well defined and effectively performed function.

PRESENT DIFFERENTIATION OF ROLES OF WRITERS

1. The factors specified above result in a new nascent, but marked internal differentiation of the category of those who engage in a broadly interpreted literary activity.

We have to single out at least three roles in which penmen appear (though this categorization is not so much a description of existing differentiation as a model-like classification to which the changes that are now taking place seem to point).

First of all, penmen appear in their *traditional* role of writers,

¹³ Contemporary writers find this role fascinating, which, after all, is quite obvious. Hence similar formulations are to be found in the works of authors of different makings, such as Jan Parandowski and Alejo Carpentier.

Jan Parandowski once said in an interview: "To be a writer should always mean the same it has meant since literature came into being: to be the voice of the world around us, the world in which man lives, feels, and thinks. The writer expresses it with his own soul and his own word; he expresses the external world, the Nature around us together with all that which Man has contributed to it by his history and civilization, and the internal world, in which he comes to comprehend other human individuals. Within these broad boundaries there is place for everything: the role of literature and its dignity, and the attitude of the writer."

And Alejo Carpentier wrote: "S'occuper de ce monde, de ce petit monde, de ce très grand monde, est la tâche du romancier actuel. S'entendre avec lui, avec le peuple combattant, le critiquer, l'exalter, le dépendre, l'aimer, essayer de le comprendre, essayer de lui parler, d'en parler, de le montrer, d'en monter les travers, les erreurs, les grandeurs et les ridicules, d'en parler et encore à ceux qui restent cois au bord du chemin, inertes, attendant je ne sais quoi, ou peut-être rien du tout, et qui ont tout de même besoin qu'on leur dise quelque chose pour les remuer. Telle est, à mon avis, la fonction du romancier actuel. Telle est sa fonction sociale, s'il en a une. Il ne peut en faire beaucoup plus et c'est déjà assez. Le grand travail de l'homme sur cette terre consiste à vouloir améliorer ce qui est. Ses moyens son limités, mais son ambition est grande. Mais c'est dans cette tâche en le royaume du monde qu'il pourra trouver sa véritable dimension et peut-être sa grandeur" (A. Carpentier, "Le rôle social de l'écrivain," in *L'Art dans la société d'aujourd'hui*, Neuchâtel 1968, p. 112).

authors of texts, texts of varying artistic value and belonging to various literary genres; they are mainly authors of books.¹⁴ This role of the writer has not changed much over the last fifty years (for instance, in Poland the number of such persons has been more or less constant in both halves of the 20th century). The most important of those changes which did take place is the continuing process of the professionalization of literary production, a process which could be noticed already in the first half of this century. Professionalization covers, by the way, not literary production alone, but the institutions which organize that production, i.e., the publishing houses. The two facts seem to be interdependent.

It may be expected, it seems, that this traditional role of the writers as authors of books will continue. The television, the film, and the magazines do not satisfy all cultural needs, or, rather, do not satisfy the cultural needs of all. The demand for books as sources of aesthetic experiences and entertainment would presumably continue in the foreseeable future. This would preserve the demand for that fundamental function of the writers which, according to Barthes, is the work on the word. It is also pointed out in this connection that "written-word civilization" is an indispensable support for scientific thought, on which in turn all contemporary economic and technological progress depends.

The assumption that books will not disappear in the foreseeable evolution of culture does not, of course, amount to the belief that their external forms will not change. It may be expected that in view of considerable future advances in printing technology the graphic outlay of books may be modified greatly.

It may also be expected that following its coexistence with mass media, literature, too, will undergo changes, and that there will be a division of functions between books, on the one hand, and TV and the film, on the other. Perhaps literature will strive

¹⁴ We are here interested only in that aspect of the differentiation of the roles of writers which is thought to be especially characteristic of present-day cultural change. In each of the three roles listed above we could single out various sub-roles. This division also intersects with those which as the criterion of classification adopt the functions of literature and use these to define the roles of writers (for instance, K. Rudzińska singles out the following such functions: aesthetic, ludic, cognitive, political. Cf. her paper *The Social Roles of Art and Artists in 20th Century Literary Sources* (in Polish, manuscript, 1971).

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more for syntheses, studies in ideology, psychology, and depth, leaving analyses, the epic elements, the outward appearance, and the detail to the audio-visual media.

Yet what is characteristic of the present times is the emergence of two new roles of penmen, each of which is based on a different principle. One is the role of the "man of letters-intellectual," the other, the "writer-in-team." The former differs from the traditional role of writers by the fact that the prestige and the influence of a man of letters-intellectual go far beyond the sphere of literature. The formation of the latter role is due to the specific techniques of working for the mass media.

Let it be stressed in this connection that these three roles do not imply a differentiation into levels of artistic value of the production of penmen. It is true that when it comes to *men of letters-intellectuals* (or, more precisely, men of letters in the role of intellectuals), we usually think of them as authors of new ideas, who use a new language to formulate "age-old" truths, as writers who are "the voice of the world" (formulation of Jan Parandowski), but in fact their prestige, once attained, sometimes continues even though their production deteriorates, or even though the writer does not improve his art. And furthermore—as is also the case of eminent persons outside the writers' milieu—not all writers, even the eminent ones, appear in the role of intellectuals. The role of writers as intellectuals also depends on the place which literature holds in the life of a given nation.

The rapidly growing category of *writers-in-teams*, i.e., professional and often anonymous authors of texts for the mass media (who often remain outside professional organizations of writers) is usually not expected to provide new ideas and inspirations; they are supposed to be skilled in replicating certain patterns, to have mastered the techniques of efficient writing, and to be very productive. But it also often happens that the performance of this role results in valuable works of highest artistic rank (as in the case of some screenplays, etc.).

Note also that the performance of a role is not fixed once and for all: with the lapse of time certain persons change their roles, while others manage to appear, in different situations, in various roles. In such cases, however, it is a characteristic feature that playing each of the roles involved is connected with a different institution.

2. The trends of the segmentation of the writers' milieu, as outlined above, are perhaps at variance with certain ideas about the development of our culture, because in the model of socialist culture the sharp division into the producers and the consumers of cultural values, a division which is typical of cultures of class societies, ought to be obliterated. It is expected that in the future every person, as far as his interests, needs, and talents permit, will be able to create cultural and artistic values.

Let us, however, consider which division could be obliterated in the foreseeable future, and what creative possibilities could be like. Let us begin with the latter issue. The value, the scope, and the nature of one's artistic production obviously depend not only on social conditionings, but also on certain psychological characteristics which are partly acquired, but partly inborn (regardless of our ignorance of the exact scope of what is inborn). There are no grounds to expect that the socialist system would remove differences in the degree and type of human abilities. Even though—it is true—it may be expected that increased welfare, which, among other things, will increase leisure time,¹⁵ will provide, under the socialist system, conditions favourable for artistic activity of all, the products will probably vary in value. At any rate it may be expected that the division into creative activity "for one's own sake" and "for others' sake (i.e., creative activity which would not only express the emotions of a given individual, but would also stimulate artistic experiences in others) would not vanish. In this paper, because of the starting point of our interest, which is contemporary literary production, we are interested mainly in production "for others' sake." The obliteration of the division into the producers and consumers of culture would probably be due above all to a general shrinking of social distances between individuals.

3. The prophets of present-day technology, and especially those who extol mass media, claim that we are rapidly nearing the situation in which the Earth will become a "global village," with most traditional differentiations and barriers removed. Yet,

¹⁵ It is arbitrary in the sense that it does not result from any necessity of satisfying elementary needs, even though it is certainly determined by social roles (with an increased possibility of choosing one's role).

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contrary to earlier expectations, we see that the importance of regionalism has increased. This can be seen clearly in TV programs, with some manifestations in the film as well.

These processes, which move in opposite directions, do not fail to affect the roles of writers. Men of letters-intellectuals are finding less and less difficulty in becoming popular on the global scale, which is due to advances in communication techniques. This, of course, applies to that scale of popularity which can be the share of a contemporary writer (as the popularity of film stars and pop singers must be measured by a quite different scale). Language barriers can rather easily be overcome by translations, and finding publishers also is none too difficult.

In their traditional role of those who produce books writers can expect to become widely popular mostly in their respective countries, although translations—in view of increased numbers of the reading public throughout the world—appear in other countries as well. But some of those writers even do not happen to be read on the national scale, even though they may have fans in a given region of their respective countries.

Writers-in-teams (who work for TV and the film) have an even more locally restricted circle of the public. Few of them only—and that under especially favourable circumstances—find a public outside their own countries.

Thus the range of influence of those institutions with which writers in their various roles are connected turns out to be an essential factor in the range of their appeal to the public.

4. Let us recall once more the fact that far-reaching changes are taking place not only in the roles of the writers, but also in technology and in the organization of public life. These changes are linked with a great number of controversies, conflicting interests, and clashes of ideologies. In such a situation an intellectual, and a man of letters-intellectual in particular, finds himself, especially as his prestige increases, under various pressures, and his role, not yet sufficiently defined, comes under fire from many quarters.

Another effect of the present-day changes, both in public and social life and in the functions of literature in the period of mass culture, is worth mentioning. The search for new forms of artistic expression (which is typical not of literature only) and

uncertainty of the criteria of evaluation (artistic evaluation included) also are by-products of the pace of the changes that are taking place today. The growth of the number of those who write, accompanied by the calling of the artistic criteria in question, makes the position of the writers exceptionally difficult.

These facts and the realization of responsibility and of the risk that goes together with the writer's role often give rise to a feeling of uncertainty that accompanies the activity of those writers who appear both in their traditional role and as intellectuals (writers working in teams are in a much better position in that respect).

Let it be stressed once more that the differentiation of the categories of penmen and of the functions and social status of those categories, as outlined in this paper, only begins to crystallize. The trends of the process are not always clear. Both the analysis of the past and the studies carried out in pre-1939 and post-1945 Poland point to the importance of the market and the techniques of the distribution of the products of penmen. Today, the situation begins to differ as between capitalist and socialist countries (and also as between the various categories of writers as listed here). In both groups of countries, however, it deviates from the old pattern, in which a writer was, in a sense, running a business of his own.

Today, a writer who turns out books by working individually comes closest to the position of a person who runs a business of his own. The survey of the writers' milieu, carried out in Poland in the 1950's and in the 1960's show that new decisions are necessary which would adjust that position to the economic and political principles of the socialist system; in particular, the basic institution with which writers who appear in their traditional role are connected, i.e., the publishing house, should be redefined. How far is it to be a manufacturer of books, and how far "Maecenas of writers"? The answer to this question is not yet quite clear.

Writers-in-teams, who are connected with the mass media, function under conditions which are determined by the organizational system of the media and their place in the national economy. The private or the public ownership of the mass media, and, in the case of public ownership, the fact that they function within a socialist or a capitalist economy, affect the social status,

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the prestige, the financial situation and the working conditions of that category of penmen.

A certain institutionalization of intellectuals, including men of letters-intellectuals, begins to emerge, too: the university reappears in its role of a centre of broadly interpreted intellectual activity.¹⁶ Both in the West and in the East men of letters-intellectuals come to be employed by universities, invited to lecture at universities, etc. Will the university become the main institution that groups intellectuals and ensures the linking of their intellectual production with the functioning of the system of power and the control of the national economy? This will depend, among other things, on the trend and the pace of the university's future evolution after going through the second and the third stages of the education revolution in the coming decades. In order to function so the university would have largely to abandon its present role of an institution that groups expert teachers and students, and to come closer to its mediaeval pattern of a community of people engaged in intellectual activity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The writers themselves do not fully realize the differentiation of their roles and the nature of such differentiation, as outlined above. This results in various misunderstandings and various myths current in literary milieus, and sometimes also in illusions and frustrations.

Even present-day studies in the sociology of literature fail to notice these facts. As an American sociologist of literature says, "The academic disciplines which have been traditionally charged with the history and analysis of literature have been caught unaware by the impact of mass literature, the best seller, the popular magazine, the comics and the like, and they have

¹⁶ The problem of institutions in which writers work is stressed intentionally, as it is believed that the institutionalization of culture (and especially an increase in the importance of "instrumental" institutions) is characteristic of the 20th century.

¹⁷ The role of the universities as related to the problems of intellectuals is given an interesting interpretation by L. Bodin in *Les Intellectuels*, Paris 1964.

maintained an attitude of haughty indifference to the lower depths of imagination in print.”¹⁸

And yet today it does not seem possible to describe the system of contemporary literary institutions without taking into account the fact that these cover, among other things, three different roles of writers; neither is it legitimate to speak about the functions of literature if one means books only, and leaves the other manifestations of literary production to the “sociology of mass culture.”

It is also to be borne in mind that each of the roles of the penmen has an important place in the development of national culture. Hence there are both practical and theoretical reasons to pay more attention to changes in these roles.

¹⁸ Cf. L. Lowenthal, “Literature and Society” in *Literature, Popular Culture, and Society*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1961, p. 141. Although Lowenthal stresses the necessity of covering popular literature, which is not on a high level of culture, with a sociological study of literature, he fails to notice, when he proceeds to discuss the status of writers, that the latter term now covers quite different social and professional categories.