

LITERACKIE OBRAZY MIAST

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The Forgotten City of the Forgotten Author – The Image of Chicago in *The Stories of the Streets and of the Town* by George Ade

Zapomniane miasto zapomnianego autora – wizerunek Chicago w *The Stories of the Streets and of the Town* George'a Ade

Key words: Chicago, American literary reportage, city image, urban life, enthusiasm

Słowa kluczowe: Chicago, amerykański reportaż literacki, obraz miasta, życie miasta, entuzjazm

The following paper intends to present the image of the late-nineteenth-century Chicago created by an almost forgotten representative of the American literary reportage, **George Ade (1866–1944)**. The author of the paper also aims at introducing this hardly known journalist, fiction writer and playwright, whose works definitely deserve more public and scholarly attention both in the United States and among the American culture enthusiasts all over the world. For the sake of making readers more familiar with the writer, the beginnings of Ade's career as a reporter in Chicago are mentioned as well as his attitude towards the prevailing journalistic modes of the time. The brief analysis of his city sketches (*The Stories of the Streets and of the Town*) focuses mainly on the common or hidden, and thus often ignored, aspects of urban life which, according to Ade, accounted for the genuine character of Chicago. The overview of *The Stories of the Streets and of the Town* also considers the writer's concern with the condition of being truly Chicagoan. Along with the outline of the forgotten or unfrequented places (extremely small shops, junk shops, the wharf), inconspicuous occupations (vegetable sellers, laundry men) and new trends (in architecture, arts, and dining out) discovered or re-discovered by Ade, the close reading of the selected sketches reveals his major

journalistic and literary techniques. Their combination conforms to the popular “fact-fiction discourse” [Robertson 1997, 82] practiced in the American press of the 1890s. Within that discourse, Ade’s contribution to the image of Chicago owes its uniqueness to his sincere hunger for experience accompanied by optimism as well as authentic and never-ending enthusiasm. These features, paradoxically, may have contributed to the contemporary reader’s rather limited knowledge of the nineteenth-century journalistic view of Chicago exemplified by George Ade.

Authenticity and optimism are the often underestimated aspects of Ade’s journalism for which Chicago columnists should remember, commemorate and follow the example of their famous predecessor and his popular column *The Stories of the Streets and of the Town* (1893-1900). The city reporters of today may imitate e.g. Ben Hecht, Ring Lardner or Mike Royko, and at the same time not realize that those twenty-century Chicago columnists admired the now unfairly neglected elder colleague and fellow-townsmen. For it was George Ade who, targeting at the readers of his day, left the next generations with the precious image of the booming city of the 1890s, and the equally valuable insights into the urban history of the social change (e.g. immigration, social-climbers) in America. What is more, through his city sketches he largely contributed to the popularity and the development of that journalistic-literary tradition later labeled as the new journalism or literary reportage – his “familiar prose style (became) quickly recognized as a standard for urban storytelling” [Gilbert 1991, 49].

As Alissa Anderson remarks in her article on Ben Hecht, who considered George Ade “his most direct precursor” [Anderson, online], the turn of the nineteenth century in the United States proved that “giving writers room to experiment with overtly literary approaches, in addition to regularly encouraging vivid reportage, could produce content that would move papers” [Anderson, online]. As it happened in other American cities, also in Chicago a number of “aspiring novelists, playwrights, poets (...), and other literary hopefuls” [Anderson, online] were employed by newspapers in order to meet readers’ demands and simultaneously increase circulation. Besides, the creative, personal and literary approach towards reporting suited both the immensely popular sensational mode of conveying news (the so-called yellow journalism) as well as the heavily didactic trend represented by the reform-oriented muckrakers¹. Interestingly, George Ade, following neither of the prevailing journalistic modes, managed not only to succeed, but also, for about two decades, to have kept the enthusiasm of his readers, literary critics’ favor and the status of a local celebrity. The critics praised the reporter especially for the “verbal and visual descriptions of the sights and sounds of Chicago” [Applegate 1996, 6] while William Dean Howells “believed Ade captured the American spirit with all its foibles” [6]. In his introduction to the 1941 edition of *The Stories*

¹ A somewhat pejorative term for investigative reporters. It is associated with a period of crusading American journalism called muckraking, initiated in the 1890s but especially active during the first dozen years of the twentieth century.

of *Chicago* Franklin J. Maine observed that the praise came also from Henry L. Mencken who emphasized that Ade was “as American as buckwheat cakes” [Ade 2003, xxx], “as thoroughly American, in cut and color, in tang and savor, in structure and point of view” [xxix]. Mark Twain paid special attention to the authenticity of *The Stories*’ characters (mostly literary composites), presented so skillfully that they appeared to him both credible and familiar [Granger, online].

It can be claimed that George Ade’s writing was always devoted to the common, everyday, average and undistinguished. Encouraged with the publication of his teenage essay entitled as familiarly as “A Basket of Potatoes”, the writer never turned away from the matters close to the heart of the proverbial John Doe – an ordinary man in the street. His big-city reporting career actually started when his Purdue University friend, John T. McCutcheon, helped him to be employed in the then *Chicago Morning News*, where young Ade was assigned to keep a weather column. It is believed “he developed a passion for the subject. He interviewed bell hops, bank presidents, policemen, meteorologists, teamsters and dozens of perspiring citizens about their reaction to a heat wave” [Coyle, Carroll 1964, 25]. Due to his experience as a farmer boy, and, most of all, his passionate approach, the weather news gained such popularity that the column was moved to the front page of the paper. The same engagement and sincere zeal during the coverage of sports events, e.g. boxing matches, ensured Ade the position of the official national sports reporter. Thanks to those initial successes, in 1893 he (along with John T. McCutcheon, the illustrator and his college friend) joined a group of selected reporters observing the World’s Columbian Exposition, during which his special column “All Roads Lead to the Fair” multiplied the number of the reporter’s and the illustrator’s fans. That fact, in turn, paved the way for two columns on *The Chicago Record’s* (the former *Chicago Morning News*) editorial page and the seven-year-long history of *The Stories of the Streets and of the Town* (1893–1900), published every single day.

According to *The Chicago Record’s* managing editor, Charles H. Dennis, who made the two columns available to Ade and McCutcheon, the selection of topic depended on the young and promising authors. Considering Ade’s non-sensational and not overtly reformatory attitude towards the Chicago life as well as not a particularly catchy title of the series, such longstanding renown of the column could hardly be ensured. However, surprisingly enough, the paper’s readers proved eager and attentive, and they appreciated the way in which their city was described by Ade and illustrated by McCutcheon [Spears 2005, 78, 92].

The regularity of appearance may have been one of the elements which won *The Record’s* readership. Once Ade managed to introduce some characters and topics that received acceptance and aroused interest, he created some kind of a writer-reader bond based on his audience’s expectations, curiosity and the simple certainty of tomorrow’s column’s presence. At the time of the rapid urban growth consisting in: the influx of new inhabitants, both from other parts of the

country and from abroad, the establishment of new city districts, the development of technology, industry and transport, the rise of crime and social unrest, the prospects of some stability and homeliness were priceless. These values, disregarded by the yellow journalism or entangled into the muckrakers' social causes, received their embodiment in a range of common Chicago characters and ethnic groups usually representing the lower and middle classes. Among the "Great Unchronicled" [Shepherd 1960, 3] there were: "the office worker, the boarding house dweller, the Chinese laundry man, the junkman, the street peddler" [Krissoff-Boehm 2004, 391], the black shoeshine boy, and the house maid, some of them being immigrants from e.g. Germany, Scandinavia or Greece. The inevitably appreciated quality of commonness and being somewhere 'in the middle' of the American society was additionally strengthened by the fact that Ade's characters were not chosen due to any tragedies or heroic undertakings they experienced as a result of their social position or family background. Ade encountered all of them doing his daily work of a reporter, walking from place to place and using a range of information-gathering skills and tricks, which depended mostly on creating the atmosphere of familiarity with his sources: he "drew out shoeblacks, needled the cop on the beat, (...) pumped street car conductors, (...) snooped backstage at the Olympic Theater, joked with charwomen, egged on smart aleck delivery boys, laughed at stories of Pullman porters (...), and kidded with waitresses, barbers, actors, hotel clerks, and tugboat captains" [Carroll, Coyle 1964, 29-30]. Everyday strolling from corner to corner of the city made it possible to reveal its secretive paths and places to the observant and diligent eye. The reporter's systematic wanderings made his relation not only credible and personal but also inspirational and eye-opening to the general public, who actually began to realize and acknowledge their own town in terms of its complexity and novelty.

The complex and surprising character of Chicago is gradually displayed in the column in terms of overlapping and reciprocally influential factors. The writer's daily reports reflect the end-of-the-century's changes in the city, e.g. the transformation in its landscape (more industrial, new means of transport and places of entertainment, foreign immigrants' settlements) and its potential impact on the character of Chicago. During his city searches Ade learns that the presence and influence of immigration can be particularly visible "in Clark Street, where all the nations of the earth dwell together in harmony" [Ade 2003, 163]. The reporter's curiosity as well as the discovery drive led him to the national group which was then considered the most exotic, the Chinese. While going in detail through the daily chores of a typical Chinese immigrant and the habits of a laundry place's owner, Ade stresses his own professional and personal skills by pointing out that he is admitted into some privileged or even sacred territory ("behind the red curtain" which "few white men ever get an opportunity to explore" [164]). Thanks to that special chance, he provides his readers with a precious lesson on the 'otherness' (color symbolism, day schedule, eating habits, pastimes), which, at that time, was

gradually becoming part of their surroundings and their town's history and milieu. To make his account more attractive, the author emphasizes the Chinaman's mysterious and suspicious behavior, illustrated by partitioning space, using untypical colors in the workplace (red) or being exceptionally healthy "in spite of the foul air, the poor food and the long hours of work ..." [167]. Yet although the writer does his best in terms of the thorough (workday, subsequent activities) and vivid reportage, many of his remarks prove that he was politely tolerated by the Chinaman as an unwelcome, but influential, guest rather than a trustee. Consequently, the reporter-subject relationship is marked with such generalizations as "the natural suspiciousness of the Chinaman" or "the Chinaman is as frugal in sleep as he is in everything else except opium ..." [164]. Apart from the always repetitive steps and chores (expressed in the Simple Present Tense) undertaken by the reporter-accompanied laundry man, the author allows himself and the reader some room for doubt and the possibility of exceptions through the usage of such time expressions as *commonly*, *ordinarily* and *rarely*. Also, he is able to admit his somehow limited point of view by speculating why the Chinamen tend to use the red color to separate space at their workplace: "Why these curtains are always red no one has ever explained. *Perhaps* it is exciting to the Chinaman's imagination" [164]. This sketch, demonstrating an utterly different culture on the American ground (or – underground - "downstairs (...), in their basement") [163] and expressing some helplessness about the interpretation of the Chinaman's lifestyle, ends on a hopeful note. The author shares with the readers the information that "in Chicago he (the Chinaman) has learned, as a rule, to patronize American doctors. Three or four physicians control most of the Chinese patronage [167], which may indicate the beginnings of the process of assimilating into the American urban reality.

Another nation whose representatives Ade encounters in his across-the-city wanderings are Germans. Like the Chinamen, the immigrants from Germany are pictured in terms of a specific occupation and the region of Chicago they settled down in. Additionally, in the case of the Gruber family presented in the sketch "With the Market Gardeners", the settlement appears marginal in a way similar to the Chinese dwellings which are hidden in the basement, both places not fully incorporated into the town. The marginality of the Germans consists in their ten-acre farm being located within "the great vegetable fringe lying inside the city limits ... on the continuation of a city street" [57] which started thousands of numbers back into the proper urban area. Yet the author eagerly turns that location into an advantage by claiming that "this family combined the tax-paying privileges of city life with all the charm and freedom of residence in the country. They could see very little of the town, but they had the satisfaction of knowing they were a part of it" [56]. Apart from the importance of acquiring their urban identity by foreign immigrants, "the patchwork nature of Chicago's urban landscape" [Spears 2005, 99], where the "rural hinterland often seemed very close at hand" [99], is indicated by Ade and perceived as a positive feature of Chicago's image. He also expresses his

buoyant optimism by showing the bright side of Mr. Gruber and his son's daily ride to the market where they sell their vegetables. In spite of the long drive, the men always enjoy some of its aspects, apparently simple and elusive e.g. "the cool night breezes" [56] which do not only keep them awake but create "that adventurous feeling of one who travels deserted thoroughfares and knows that the darkened houses are full of sleeping people" [56]. Another touch of this adventure spirit occurs with the impression of the brilliantly lit night places in which crime and commerce intermingle depending on the time of day and night. Through these two examples the author subtly expresses not only the German settlers' absorption and appreciation of the urban world but, to a large extent, his own sensitivity to its, even most transitory, manifestations. At the same time, Ade's taking note of the elusive elements of the city life cannot hide his personal experience of a quite recent newcomer to Chicago. And, as the one who exchanged his about 600-inhabitant hometown (Kentland) for a metropolis, he booms with alertness and "open, enthusiastic eyes" [Krissoff-Boehm 2004, 391] for which Chicago of the time "may as well have been a foreign country" [O'Connor 2011, online]. The initial curiosity became quickly transformed into "an appetite for Chicago" [Carroll, Coyle 1964, 25], which Ade "devoured (...) with all his senses" [25]. Due to Chicago's size and diversity, that feeling of sincere awe and lasting curiosity accompanied the writer for a long time, thus marking his works with factual and emotional authenticity.

Keeping his eyes open and senses sharp characterizes Ade's attitude of the newcomer but also reflects his treatment of the journalistic profession. "Any one who keeps his eyes open can find a number of strange vehicles in Chicago" [Ade 2003, 87], announces the author at the very beginning of one of the sketches, yet that claim can refer to the majority of the stories of the collection. Ade knows and makes his readers aware that anyone who is observant can begin to 'learn' and discover his surroundings and the whole of Chicago through e.g. so far unnoticed or ignored small shops of the city [34], the junk shops of Canal Street [79], sidewalk merchants and their wares [109], or lawn parties ("The Barklay Lawn Party"), encountering a city professional, e.g. a coachman ("The Glory of Being a Coachman"), or perhaps coming across the city's bygone landmarks ("At the Green Tree Inn"). However, in order to genuinely experience, acknowledge and understand Chicago, one needs open-mindedness and some bravery about both places and people: "he must go into the districts where the people live, and not confine his observations to the down-town districts" [87]. In the west side of the city, between Western Avenue and the river, also near Green Street and Center Avenue, the attentive reporter discovers really small shops "each of which selfishly takes up as much as fourteen feet of the street" [39]. The author turns the reader's attention to "a cobbler's shop which is so small that the customers must wait their turns and go in one at a time" [34], an old-fashioned white house owned by "an old man attired in the fashions of fifty years ago" and taking care of "old-fashioned

flowers” [37], a bakery and a laundry, “both of which get along comfortably in a room less than ten feet wide”, “the smallest tailoring establishment”, “an undersized candy store” whose “window is large enough to show a dozen dishes of candy” [38], as well as a tiny restaurant with a telling name of “The Hole in the Wall.” The area of Canal Street abounds in junk shops where “backyard rubbish” [79] of all sorts (“the empty bottles, the tin cans, the rags, the broken stove-lids and worn-out copper boilers”) [79] gets converted into “bright money” [79], thus providing one with “an object lesson in economy, a practical sermon on the value of looking after the pennies” [79–80]. As many other stories in the collection, this one is divided into several brief sections where the writer conveys a variety of glimpses into the visited places, most likely to show the reader that the whole picture requires a number of insights and a variety of angles, including Chicago’s “sights and sounds, its smells and its characters, its crudeness and its sentimentality” [Carroll, Coyle 1964, 29].

While exploring the inhabited parts of Chicago, vibrant and offering true-to-life accounts, Ade devotes some considerable searching to the then lively and now quiet and forgotten whereabouts. In the sketch “At the Green Tree Inn” the reporter takes the reader about half of the century back to the Chicago of the 1830s, when it “was a straggling hamlet” [70]. During his excursions into the Chicago River area with the purpose of finding its oldest building, he realizes that among “the hundreds of persons who pass it daily very few know its history” [71], and decides to make his column the medium of common historical knowledge about the city. He presents the reading public with specific dates based on the available sources and pictures the detailed history of the Green Tree Inn’s names and owners. The last owner of the tavern, Mrs. Sarah Barrington, is paid special attention as a still living and approachable link with the past; due to the encounter with her, the reporter accepts and emphasizes the natural interaction between the historical and the present. The sketch “Old Days on the Canal” brings into focus the golden days of the Illinois and Michigan Canal when it gave the city grain, money, profits, and employment. The author reminds his readers of some important but already forgotten dates of the Canal’s history (1848 – its establishment and 1866 – the peak of its prosperity), and expresses his strong conviction in its significance (“...yet the canal is today an important waterway...” suffering since “the epidemic of railroad-building which began just after the close of the (Civil) war...” [52]. The introductory paragraphs of “Old Days on the Canal” and “Life on a River Tug” stress the city’s historical-mythical roots through such phrases as “In the good old days, before the town lay under a pall of smoke...” [51], and “Long ago there was an eddy in the Chicago River” [157]. The author thus presents Chicago as a ‘seriously old’ settlement worthy of its dwellers’ respect, memory, and interest. In that kind of quest for Chicago’s historical significance, Ade definitely employs his still bubbling tourist-like enthusiasm to popularize the town which has just recently become his home, and creates the impression of the long-lasting, multi-

generational relation between the place and himself. In such a way he makes some welcoming gesture of acceptance and good-heartedness towards the numbers of immigrants who, upon their arrival in Chicago, long to identify themselves with the new surroundings.

The idea of identification or assimilation of newcomers into the city refers to the already mentioned stories on foreign immigrants (“With the Market-Gardeners”, “Clark Street Chinamen”), to the sketches on Chicago’s history as part of one’s individual heritage, but also is more or less explicitly analyzed by Ade in terms of being genuinely Chicagoan. The quality which could not be acquired just with the mere fact of settling down in the city and learning its history seems to haunt the writer, whose exuberant and meticulous reporting definitely helps to prove his own status. The story “In Chicago But Not of It” provides an analysis of the sense of belonging to the city using the example of a recent issue – the perception and reception of art and its institutions by Chicagoans. According to the author, some discrepancy between the city and the very notion of art can be easily noticeable, since “(e)ven the entrance to the Art Institute is not at all like Chicago. It has too many broad landings and too little regard for space” [18]. This remark is expressed in a way suggesting the observer’s thorough knowledge of the city, or even evoking the native’s deeply rooted and complacent certainty. Yet Ade takes his profession seriously and therefore provides the reader not only with his conviction but with an explanation based on reportorial evidence of the eye-to-eye witness. He points out what differentiates the Institute from the outer world and its hectic pace. For instance, the policeman whose appearance (“His gloves are spotless white, his clothes are without a speck and he stands with his shoulders back.”) and behavior (he not only directs the visitor but “gives (...) some notion of the delights in store for him.”) [21] make him untypical of the city police, or “the girl with the apron” [20], representing the newly rising group of women studying art, practicing painting and sculpture instead of wasting “time on chocolates and matinees” [20]. Another example refers to the enthusiast of art who, in contradistinction to the so-called average visitor, does not pass “along a row of pictures, giving about thirty seconds to each” [21], but “plants himself before the ‘work’ to be admired and begins a critical analysis of color, shade, technique, feeling and all the other things which critics find in a painting” [22]. While observing the Institute and its guests, the reporter comes to the conclusion that the city-art relationship will evolve with time, since at the moment “Chicago isn’t old enough” [21] to comprehend and appreciate the truly artistic spirit. The Art Institute, however, brings some hope of becoming at least “the home of the enthusiasts” [21], whose zeal will contribute to the creation of some elite, indispensable in each big city.

Through picturing the contrasts between Chicago ‘proper’ and what stands out of it, Ade simultaneously and perhaps incidentally chronicles how some of the novelties are gradually interwoven into the reality of the city. Some of them

appear suddenly and create some sensation and stir, for example the trend among art students known then as ‘Beardsleyism’, and described by the writer as “present raging”, “the malady” [150], or even “the epidemic” [151]. The form of the column, always more open to the so-called subjective opinion, enabled Ade to express such remarks about the Chicago followers of a young English painter, Aubrey Beardsley, due to whom “the traditions of thirty centuries were shattered” through the promotion of “draw(ing) things which were perfectly unintelligible” [150]. According to the columnist, referring to Beardsley’s ideas as ‘weird’ and violating “anatomy, proportion or laws of light and shade” [150] is not art criticism but just “a simple account of the kind of pictures that allured the amateurs” [151]. Yet despite a number of some definitely unfavorable opinions on the trend so uncritically absorbed by the city’s youth, Ade manages to see the bright sight of the phenomenon in terms of its usefulness for Chicago. He, in a sense, defends the honor of the city by finding “one young man (...) (who) adopted the boldness of the style, eliminated the utter insanity, utilized the decorative effect of striking contrast, and, by reason of the fad, made a reputation as a designer, bringing some good out the mess of evil” [151].

In his inquisitive search for urban changes and their potentially positive role in Chicago’s development, the reporter takes note of the appearance and the rise of popularity of restaurants, usually owned by Frenchmen and favoring the tastes of the French cuisine and lifestyle. The usual thorough observation of his subject makes it possible for the writer to describe served meals, beverages as well as the most typical clientele of those places as “certain old-timers” [9], characterized by a specific set of eating habits (claret in large glasses, fish, tobacco smoke) and behavior (gesticulating, “a certain foreign way of bowing to the cashier” [9], endless discussions). As in the majority of his urban sketches, after having presented a particular place, event or idea, Ade resorts to an analysis of its impact on the city. In “Since the Frenchman Came” he is mainly concerned with the scale of effect foreigners had on Chicago. The fact that the French restaurant became a prosperous and recognizable institution is the first important conclusion; the other one concerns possibly the most longstanding change in Chicagoans’ lives – the pattern of their eating-out customs (“The number of down-town people who can and will give an hour to their dinner is increasing”) [12].

Although Ade traces down and gives accurate accounts of numerous places, names and city trends in order to immortalize them (or at least – to make their presence felt), he realizes that the time has come when changes appear so quickly that “destruction and construction (are ...) to be seen from the same window” [104]. In the sketch “After the Sky-Scrapers, What?” he expresses considerable concern about the tempo of the architectural change in Chicago, yet at the same time seems to yield to it as to a natural phenomenon, perfectly rooted in the city’s character. The acceptance of change equals a possibility of oblivion; by acclaiming that “the town is never satisfied with itself” [104], the author pays a kind of

homage to its dynamics and energy, and foretells the transformation of the Chicago landscape as well as his own disappearance from the city's literary scene.

While going through the sketches of George Ade's *Stories of the Streets and of the Town*, the reader has an overwhelming impression that the collection can be a fruitful source of knowledge about the Chicago of the turn of the nineteenth century: some of its history, the bygone landscape and character as well as its development and prospects for the upcoming future. According to some scholars, "Ade's stories remain an invaluable source for studying urban social history" [Krissoff-Boehm 2004, 392] as they "documented the transformation of America from a rural society to an urban one" [Chapman, online] with a special focus on "the pragmatic efforts of the little man to get along in such a world" [Backstreet, online] of change and unrest. There has been an expectation and hope among the lovers of the writer's talent that "a critical reevaluation of Ade will now be possible and that later generations of Americans will not only get huge enjoyment from reading Ade, but will understand American life better by having seen it through the eyes of one of the sharpest and most realistic commentators we have ever produced" [Shepherd 1960, 1]. The already quoted Lisa Krissoff Boehm admits, in her review of *The Stories*, that "Ade's keen ability to see the city allows his work to transcend the usual limits of newspaper writing and break down barriers between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow'" [Krissoff-Boehm 2004, 391]. In that way, in his day, he transformed the newspaper column into a more widely available source of skillfully structured information on the city of Chicago. The combination of accurate research, vividness, and the personal touch, which are the essence of literary non-fiction/journalism, resulted in the astonishing but unfairly forgotten image of one of the most prominent cities of America of the end of the nineteenth century. It should be stressed that the power of that image relies considerably on the writer's "enthusiasm (...) for people, journalism, financial success, good talk, and good times" [Carroll, Coyle 1960, 27].

Unfortunately, despite the above mentioned strong points of Ade's city journalism, in the 1930s his *Stories of Chicago* lost much of their appeal and popularity. It is ascribed to the writer's indifference towards such critical issues as the Great Depression and the wars: the Civil War in Spain as well as World War II, which he seemed to have ignored as potential topics or motifs of his journalism [Green, online]. Moreover, the characters of *The Stories of the Streets and of the Town* are types rather than individuals, which makes them rather elusive and slipping out of the reader's memory easily. Also, although Ade's *Stories* can serve today's Chicagoans and Americans as a guidebook unraveling their city's hidden or forgotten charms and secrets, they at the same time often suffer from the narrator's unnecessary detachment. Literary scholars observe that, although Ade enjoyed and promoted accuracy and ubiquity in the city research, he played the role of "the detached outsider" [Kohlert 2011, 75] and "scrupulously maintain(ed) a safe distance" [Gilbert 1991, 51] from ugliness and danger. His tendency to pro-

vide happy endings and hopeful notes [51] is, on the one hand, reassuring, but, on the other, it gives the impression of safety and propriety which fades away sooner than the picture of the extreme and the tragic.

The awareness of the imperfections of Ade's treatment of Chicago should be considered in literary studies; yet the enthusiastic image of the nineteenth-century city could be more widely popularized as an unforgettable illustration of Chicago's past and an inspiration for reporters to incorporate more optimism in their accounts of urban life. As for the future of Ade's status in the journalistic history of Chicago, there is a chance that his name will be mentioned and commemorated in the year 2024 – on the occasion of the centennial of The Ross-Ade Stadium, one of the city's famous landmarks. Whether more Chicagoans, Americans, as well as, generally speaking, worldwide recipients of the American literature and culture will begin to associate George Ade not only with the stadium's principal benefactor or, at its best, an enigmatic 'Indiana humorist' of some crossword puzzles, depends on the city of Chicago's authorities and local activists, such as history enthusiasts, literary scholars, and journalists for whom, in particular, Ade's "current obscurity (may appear) undeserved" [Chapman, online].

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Streszczenie

Artykuł poświęcony jest obrazowi XIX-wiecznego Chicago nakreślonego przez niemal zapomnianego przedstawiciela amerykańskiego nurtu reportażu literackiego, George'a Ade. Wkład autora w rozwój tego gatunku reportażu związany jest przede wszystkim z sukcesem jego rubryki *The Stories of the Streets and of the Town (Historie ulic i miasta)*, publikowanej przez siedem lat (1893–1900) w gazecie codziennej „The Chicago Record”. Popularność tej serii reportaży wynikała w dużej mierze z pełnego entuzjazmu przedstawienia miasta jako fascynującej przestrzeni, zasługującej na nieustanne odkrywanie. Szczegółowy opis oparty był na autentycznej ciekawości, szczerym przywiązaniu, a także autorskiej uczciwości. Dzięki niegasnącej reporterskiej czujności i ciekawości George'a Ade, czytelnicy jego rubryki mogli zaznajomić się z niektórymi aspektami historii Chicago, być na bieżąco z najnowszymi miejskimi trendami oraz snuć refleksje na temat przyszłości miasta. Autor poruszał uniwersalne kwestie imigracji, asymilacji, architektury, sztuki i zmian w obrębie miejskiej przestrzeni. Przyjęta przez Ade perspektywa zdystansowanego obserwatora życia wielkiego miasta sprawiła jednak, że jego *Stories of Chicago* dość szybko popadły w zapomnienie. Zdaniem autorki, miejskie szkice George'a Ade, jak również jego pozostałe artystyczne przedsięwzięcia zasługują na przybliżenie czytelnikom oraz uwagę badaczy literatury zarówno w Stanach Zjednoczonych, jak i na całym świecie.