Ryszard Nycz

"Kultura literacka (1918-1932)", Stefan Żółkiewski, Wrocław 1973 : [recenzja]

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Stefan Żółkiewski, **Kultura literacka 1918–1932 (Literary Culture
1918–1932),** Ossolineum, Wrocław 1973, 483 pp.

In Stefan Żółkiewski's book, which is fundamental for all future
studies of literary culture, three aspects are exposed as equally
important: the methodological, the historical, and the pragmatic.
The literary culture is presented as a separate subject of study,
as a discipline in itself, and the book is meant as a methodolo-
gical proposition for such a study. The author analyzes the literary
culture on the plane of literary communication understood as a con-
stituent of communicational processes within a given community and
as an aspect of the general problems of the study of culture of
modern societies. Among the contemporary approaches to this sub-
ject inspirations of Russian and French semiotics of culture and
those of Marxism have played the most prominent part in formu-
lating the main theses of the book. The semiotic approach allowed
the author, among other things, to treat culture as "the dynamic,
functional complex of semiotic systems and communicational proces-
ses of a given society" (p. 10). The basic assumptions ensuing
from the Marxist methodology and epistemology are explicitly for-
mulated by Żółkiewski in his Preface, where he also motivates the
necessity of the considerable widening of the range of phenomena
usually analyzed in connection with these problems.

> Literature in the 20th century does not function socially apart from politics,
> apart from social movements and their institutions and organizations for dissemi-
> nation of culture. with the school at the top of the list. It does not function
> independently of writers' social, as well as material, conditions of living and writ-
> ing, independently of their ideological conflicts, or aims and forms of their civic
> activities. We will not understand the social functioning of litterature if we separate
> it from the social and material conditions of living and of answering the readers'
> needs. All these elements of literary communication are dialectically interrelated
> and these relations also had to be presented and explicated (p. 9).

The "anthropological-semiotic-sociological" (p. 7, 414) methodolo-
gical approach represented by Żółkiewski enabled him to introduce
his own effective notions, such as: the social communicational
situation, the model of literature, or the social circulation of lite-
rature, which he finds useful for describing the functioning of me-
chanisms of the social literary communication. In fact, all the histo-

rical material analyzed and systematized in the book (Chapters I—VI) was used for characterizing the social communicational situation, which

is created by the writers transmitting their messages to the readers by means of a multifariously related, and arranged in space and time, system of institutions of literary life which, situated in the wider socio-cultural context, both present and traditional, form the type and style of a given literary culture (p. 407).

The author distinguishes three main models of the social communicational situation, differentiating them on the ground of various tendencies structuralizing culture, and peculiar to some groups of participants in those communicational situations. Characteristic of the "autotelic" tendency was its aiming at "continuing or negating cultural tradition" (p. 241). The political" tendency, represented chiefly by members of social mass movements, was characterized by its aiming at the political instrumentalization of literature. Finally, essential for the "mass" tendency was aiming at the structuralization of culture as the "amusement mass culture," culture of recreation and spare time.

The analysis of the material allowed Żółkiewski to characterize three basic types of social communicational situations which correspond to these tendencies of the structuralization of culture. The most common situation in the period under discussion was that of "contact with literature." Though this situation was capable of comprising all models of literature, it apparently preferred texts whose dominating function was the aesthetic-informative one. The core of the reading public in this situation of the least pressure on the reader was the intelligentsia, in whom this type of participation in culture was inculcated by school. Writers most often assumed here the role of cultural experts. Corresponding to the "political" tendency was the situation of "acquiring cultural advancement," with its preference for politically or ideologically committed literature and the political-topical reception code. The public recruited mainly from the working classes and peasants. In the formation of this situation the decisive role was played by institutions of social movements, of cultural and literary policy. The particularly symptomatic social role of the writer here was that of a man actively engaged in political and social work. Finally, the "mass amusement" tendency constituted the grounds for "amusement"

situations of communication, where the literature of amusement was dominant, the writer's role was that of the literary technician and the readers from various social groups assumed a common, consumers' attitude towards the text. A particular communicational situation affected the way of reading the text, bringing about the preference of the readers for one of the codes, as the phenomenon of homogenization evidenced.

Another pivotal category is the notion of a model of literature. Żółkiewski suggests a pragmatic (functional) classification of models of literature based on the criterion of different attitudes of the writer and the reader to the text. The model of "canon" literature was formed within the "autotelic" tendency of the structuralization of culture. The reader's attitude to the text was that of "discovering senses of culture," the main reception code was the "code of tradition of a given culture." The "committed" literature model which originated within the "political" tendency was characterized by the instrumental treating of literature by the reader whose reception code was the political, "newspaperlike" one. Finally, the "amusement" literature model, contained in the tendency structuralizing culture as the "amusement mass culture," performed a social function of a "specific literary game" where the code of the genre was the reception code. This classification is based on the analysis of large groups of texts and not individual works. Thus, it refers, as the author, paraphrasing de Saussure's differentiation, says, to "abstract languages of particular models of literature and not to a living language of individual writers" (p. 6).

Texts realizing those models functioned in various social circulations of literature. This last pivotal notion is defined by Żółkiewski as

circulation of literary texts between different types of writers and specific circles of readers, the reception of texts taking place in definite social situations of the literary communication, characteristic of a given culture. Particular circulations peculiar to a given literary culture are differentiated according to the specific character of the social functions performed by texts, and consequently, according to the specific character of the readers' needs which they answer (p. 412).

Each of the types of circulation is also distinguished by specific features of the readers' group or class belonging, specific social

roles of the writers, specific communicational techniques and, last but not least, by aesthetics specific for a given circulation. The author differentiates three main types of circulation: artistic, trivial and vulgar, and two existing only as relics: the circulation of the literature "for the common people" and the circulation of literary trash. In the "artistic" circulation, predominant in the period under discussion, the public took part in all three communicational situations. The cultural activity within this circulation was prompted by schools, social organizations and the majority of institutions of the cultural policy of the time. It was for this circulation that both the experts-writers and the activists-writers were working. The "trivial" circulation was formed on the grounds of the "amusement" situation of communication. The readers from this circle usually represented little social or reading experience. The writers acted as literary technicians, and the literature they produced — stereotyped, epigonic and of little aesthetic value — was connected with the press with a large circulation, with serial production and other institutions of the culture of amusement. The phenomenon of homogenization of reading could result in incorporating artistic texts into the "trivial" circulation. Participants of the "vulgar" circulation, which in the 1920's was still of minor importance, recruited from the readers of almanachs and possibly of weeklies, but they were not the readers of the daily press. The writer here was also the literary technician and his function was reduced to rewriting the existing texts. The "vulgar" circulation, verging sometimes on the "literary trash" circulation, was a product of the 20th-century market of mass amusement production, the representative examples of which were instalment publications. This type of subculture is continued today, among other things, by contemporary comics.

Those basic analytic categories: of the social communicational situation, of the model of literature and social circulation of literature, introduced by Żółkiewski, are to a great extent interdependent, which enables the author to indicate the essential regularities observable in the development and functioning of literary culture.

Participation in particular social situations of the literary communication motivates both the writers' decisions and the readers' choices which, through a repeatable writers' and readers' choice of the dominating code, dialectically affect the forming of models of literature functioning in a given culture. The social circulation

of texts which either faithfully or in the hybrid form realize the model features differentiates both circles of the public peculiar to a given literary culture and social functions of the model structures of literary works (p. 413).

Another aspect of Żółkiewski's book is connected with the systematization of the historical material from the period 1918–1932. The first date marks the beginning of the Polish modern literary culture, with the second the preliminary phase of forming modern mass culture closes. The author characterizes the main political and socio-economical processes, which decided the form of contemporary culture, especially pointing out to processes of industrialization and urbanization, of generalizing mass media and material means of mass information. It is the first synthesis of the literary culture of that period, and though, considering the early stage of the research and in some respects insufficient data (which compels the author to construct only hypotheses, however cogent they may be), Żółkiewski defines it as "tentative," actually the wide range of study and variety of facts taken into account are imposing. Thus only a short enumeration of problems the author deals with will be possible here.

The analysis of factors shaping the mass type of culture, such as: the technical equipment, paper industry, distribution, publishing market and the book market, characteristics of the press of small and large circulation, of film, radio and literature, helps the author to arrive at the conclusion that although the reading in the discussed period had not achieved the "mass reception," literature was also present in the radio and newspapers which had crossed this "mass reception" threshold. The study of the social framework of the readers permitted to reveal a new literary public which emerged at the time. The growing activity of information techniques was conducive to the processes of institutionalizing literature (p. 61). The analysis of the main institutions for programming culture (state and Church institutions, political organizations, schools, etc.) leads Żółkiewski to the following conclusions:

First, that the developing literary culture in the discussed period to an increasing extent takes advantage of the techniques characteristic of the mass culture. Secondly, that the line of development of this culture was indicated by the desire to win a new literary public by means of institutions. [...] Thirdly, that the literary culture of the time was developing to a great extent, though not entirely, as a culture

structuralized by the social emancipation mass movements. [...] In the fourth place, we have found that the structure of institutions for programming culture, the literary culture included, was homologous in comparison with the structure of the ideological and political divisions of the time. Finally, that the extensively developed institutions for programming culture allow us to assume that the literary culture of the time was also distinctly institutionalized (p. 129–130).

Żółkiewski describes this growing institutionalization from both the writer's and the reader's side, traces the phenomenon of professionalization of writing and manifestations of activity of institutions for programming the literary culture which acted upon the writer by various forms of the social patronage or control. Domination of the social literary policy over the pressure of the commercialized market caused that "the criteria of this policy were not subordinated to the commercialization of culture" (p. 190). Since what to a great extent decided about the social prestige of a writer was also his ideological activity, Żółkiewski points to the roles performed by writers and to their non-literary social functions. The analysis of the "social conditions of writing" (Chapter IV) has its corresponding, complementary analysis of the "social conditions of reading" (Chapter V), where the author characterizes the social structure of the reading population, describes the socio-economical circumstances of the forming of the Polish literary public of the time, and presents institutions of reading initiation (schools, reading societies, etc.), as well as the institutionalization of the readers' choices (literary criticism, school reading lists, etc.). Historical problems are completed with the analysis of general problems of participation in literary culture, where the author presents the repertoire of "high" and "low" institutions of participation in literary life, such as cinemas, professional and amateur theatres, cabarets, *cafés chantants*, lectures and meetings with writers, literary clubs and salons, or public libraries, and discusses possibilities of the actual reading choices, taking into consideration accessibility of original texts (both contemporary and classic) and translations from foreign literatures, as well as the social and economic stratification of the readers.

The third aspect of Żółkiewski's book is its prospective character. The outline of the beginnings of the Polish modern literary culture was meant by the author as a programme stimulating future

studies on the Polish 20th-century culture as well as inspiring the contemporary rationalization of the present cultural policy, especially in the field of literature. The methodological propositions presented in the work, such as the basic categories of description and their typology, can be valuable also for the analyses of other types of social communication — fine arts, film or science — as well as of customary, political or religious behaviour of a given community (p. 10). The language in which the discussed problems of literary culture were expressed and analyzed seems to be a significant evidence of the advanced efforts at creating a uniform language which would describe multifarious phenomena of culture.

Sum. by *Ryszard Nycz*
Transl. by *M.-B. Fedewicz*

Tradycje szlacheckie w kulturze polskiej (The Traditions of the Nobility in Polish Culture). Materials from the session organized by the group of scholars dealing with psychosociology of literature from the Institute of Literary Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences on 23rd, 24th November 1973 in Warsaw. Scientific supervision: Zofia Stefanowska. Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa 1976.

The book contains materials from the session which was devoted to presenting the role of the tradition of the nobility in Polish culture. The present stage of research has not as yet made the complete and coherent description of this subject possible, so the aim of the session was to confront the basic problems implied by the general subject as they are seen by representatives of different disciplines in view of the line of historical studies represented by them: the history of art and literature, of idea and philosophy, of politics and sociology. The texts included in the discussed volume, papers and selected parts of discussions, were in the majority rewritten and completed by their authors for the purpose of the book.

Janusz Tazbir's *Próba określenia kultury szlacheckiej w Polsce przedrozbiorowej (An Attempt at Defining the Nobility Culture in Poland before the Partitions)* deals with those elements of the no-