

The initial task is to develop an intellectual biography of Stefan Żółkiewski - one of the key figures of the Polish humanities and related science policy. The short biography of the researcher – who is one of the links between Polish science of the second half of the twentieth century and the traditions of the interwar period – is an argument for treating this figure as a model. The multidimensionality of Żółkiewski allows for the presentation of the entanglements in the field of knowledge and power in the region of Central and Eastern Europe and among researchers from the 1910 generation – which problems still bother historians of the humanities.

Moreover, the aforementioned material encourages reflection on the model of scientific biography, in particular the biomonography of a humanist entangled in the difficult political, social and cultural changes of the 20th century. The complexity of the main character of the project makes it possible for him to become the subject of a dense description as a one of the threads in the cultural history of Polish literary studies. On the other hand, its heterogeneity does not allow omitting the most important, general problems of the development in the humanities in the second half of the 20th century – the role of the scientific community, methodological changes, growing institutionalization, and political entanglement. Such problematization of the research's subject allows for an appropriate oscillation between the analysis of locality and globality.

The aforementioned reflection on the structure of the biomonograph, taking into account the complexity of the character, calls for the selection of a category that binds the indicated threads. This problem can be solved by using the category of implication - by analogy with the implicit function in mathematical analysis, defining a situation in which relations are not given in an unambiguous way, but they can be discussed under certain assumptions, in a specific environment - and even then not always with one formula. This category, related (but not identical) to the concept of circumstantial and entangled history, will allow to integrate texts and "extra-texts" of life and work that are difficult to connect, leaving a margin for inconclusives.

The first of these "environments" is the methodological eclecticism of literary scholars. Żółkiewski's works oscillate between neopositivism, marxism, dialogue and semiotics. An analysis of the changing rhetoric of his writing, with the homogeneity of the problem fields cultivated and the durability of the emancipatory-leftist attitude, should demonstrate the effectiveness of the so-called methodological eclecticism.

The second topic to be addressed within the framework of the outlined project would be to define Żółkiewski's role as a figure structuring the social relations of Polish literary scholars. Before the war, he was the president of the Warsaw Polish Students Association, in which he collaborated with Franciszek Siedlecki and Dawid Hopensztand. After the war, he conducted private seminars in Łódź, where he discovered the talents of scientists of such stature as Maria Janion, Maria Żmigrodzka and Tadeusz Drewnowski. In the Institute of Literary Research (IBL), established in the early 1950s, he worked closely with Maria Renata Mayenowa, Kazimierz Budzyk and Kazimierz Wyka. The semiotic thinking promoted by Żółkiewski inspired his doctoral students to write about film adaptations, stereotypes and storytelling. The proposed category of literary culture was creatively transformed by, for example, Krzysztof Dmitruk and Janusz Lalewicz, who became members of the laboratory established and managed by him at the IBL.

A separate task is to analyze Żółkiewski's institutional functions as an organizer of science. He coordinated the publishing series, raised funds, and animated translation works. After the war, he was the editor of numerous magazines (scientific and non-scientific), he sat on committees and editorial committees. He ensured the functioning of long-term and extremely expensive projects of an editorial, bibliographic or dictionary nature. At the same time, he remained a committed teacher who also cared for the material existence of students (the condition of dormitories and canteens).

The most difficult problem of the planned work, aimed at merging biography (private and public) with creativity, will be the analysis of Żółkiewski's involvement in social reality. In the mid-1950s, he became the minister of higher education to carry out a wide-ranging reform democratizing the system of Polish universities. In 1968, he openly opposed the decisions of the authorities to brutally suppress student strikes. He was removed from the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party and from his job at the University of Warsaw. After these events, he withdrew from open political activity, although he was still involved in numerous opposition activities (such as opposition to internment during martial law). Such diverse traces of political activity lead to questions about what is constant and what is changeable in Żółkiewski's attitude. The initially obvious answer would expose faith in a set of left-wing values: secularized society, participatory culture, progressive reforms.

Designed Żółkiewski's biomonography would concentrate on describing concrete "neighbourhoods" combining abovementioned themes: seminars – configurations of texts, scholars, places, things and ideas in political and institutional surroundings – theoretical constructs inspired by Cultural Studies of Science, history of ideas and sociology of knowledge.