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**FROM THE METHODOLOGY OF SEMIOTICS OF**  
**CULTURE (STEFAN ŻÓŁKIEWSKI'S ANALYSIS**  
**OF STUDIES IN LITERARY CULTURE)**

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1. STUDIES IN LITERARY CULTURE

Stefan Żółkiewski laid out a detailed agenda for a new scientific discipline giving it the name of studies in literary culture. Its main task is to investigate, from a historical perspective, social functions of literary communication processes made up of literary works seen here as "facts" of communication. It challenges the ergocentric perspective generally adopted in literary studies, and makes a clear reference to Yury Tynyanov who treated literary systems primarily as systems of literary FUNCTIONS. When compared to Tynyanov's approach, however, Żółkiewski goes even further in reducing the autonomy of literature. The cultural substance of the work vanishes in a macro-communicativistic perspective (Żółkiewski 1980: 6–7, Morawski 1981: 316; Jastrzębski 1981; Ossowski 1983: 83; Szary-Matywiecka 1980: 378; Rosner 1981: 49; Rosner 1974: 60).<sup>1</sup>

This first systematic exposition of studies in "literary culture" is dominated by the macropragmatics of literature. Literary culture is analysed through functional models of literature, its social circulation, communicative

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<sup>1</sup>When I say "Żółkiewski" I refer here almost exclusively to his role as theoretician contributing to literary studies, remembering, however, that this is just one of Żółkiewski's many scientific roles and that only when considered TOGETHER are they able to give some impression of the man's scientific personality and bearing on the world of science.

situations, institutionalized strategies that govern the processes of sending and reception, class and economic determinants (as well as various mediations that serve their ends), social practices, semiotic systems, as well as cultural norms, patterns and roles. Literary culture, essentially a highly diverse phenomenon, is here conceptualized and problematized, made to yield to theoretical rigors. For example, “literary circulations” are here characterized through such concepts as “sender,” “receiver,” “ideology” (semiotic function), “communicative situation” and “communicative apparatus” (along with their material functions). The meta-literary consciousness of literary public is here less important than behavioural stereotypes of the readership, one bases on them to help draw conclusions about social functions of literature while leaving its aesthetics or artistic merit out of the scientific picture. One may call this approach the non-normative description of norms that govern communicative behaviour (Żółkiewski 1980: 159, 161, 248, 252; Żółkiewski 1979: 5, 540, 633; Dmitruk 1971a, *passim*; Dmitruk 1971b: 405; Szary-Matywiecka 1980: 378, 385; Mitosek 1982: 132; Macuzanka 1984).<sup>2</sup>

## 2. SEMIOTICS VS. MARXISM IN STUDIES IN LITERARY CULTURE

The incorporation of arsenic into copper to make bronze took two thousand years to develop (Weinberg 1975). Semiotics, hermeneutics and Marxism are considered to be the most vigorous methodologies of the day. Each stands entirely on its own. Until just recently Żółkiewski was an (irreconcilable) antagonist of hermeneutics, therefore this particular school of thought is left out of his theoretical project which goes onto fuse semiotics and Marxism. Morawski notes that Żółkiewski’s position is shaped by SOCIOLOGY of literature, SEMIOTIC theory, and MARXIST social philosophy. Having Marxism and sociology next to each other doesn’t seem unreasonable considering that Marxists are allowed to adopt sociological perspectives as a natural consequence of their philosophical convictions, even

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<sup>2</sup>Monopolistic system (i.e. despotic, with a claim to universality) can be described as a system which not only refuses to be a “descriptive plane” for any other system, but also refuses to have any other system as its own “descriptive plane.” In other words, it refuses to reveal a common semantic invariant (for both itself and the other system). This is tantamount to cultural extermination of all other systems except for the system-usurper (see Lotman 1977: 34–61). Żółkiewski’s doctrine, which has been developed multilaterally, itself has a couple of unilateral aspects which rescue the doctrine. Those aspects could appear threatening if not for the fact that it’s not this or the other unilateral aspect but the general monopoly of the doctrine which is threatening.

if their scientific methods are SOMETIMES free from sociocentrism, or even sociotropism (Morawski 1981: 304; Mazurkiewicz 1984: 65).

If we were to believe Foucault, even in the smallest text, the history of ideas seeks to discover the POINT OF RUPTURE that separates the innovative from the traditional (Foucault 1972: 142). Taking this term away from where it originally belongs (doing here a similar thing to what Dmitruk did with the term “formation”), my goal is to identify the point of rupture in the studies of literary culture. In my opinion it can be found at the point where semiotics and Marxism meet. Dmitruk somewhat confusingly says that Żółkiewski’s theory laid out in *Kultura, socjologia, semiotyka literacka. Studia* is fused by its Marxist and semiotic perspective (Dmitruk 1980b: 71). Had Dmitruk said “its perspectives” instead of “its perspective,” he would have recognized, let’s resort to tautology, the difference of different things, and therefore raised the necessary QUESTION of fusing those two perspectives into one. Note, for example, that there is rather a CONFRONTATION (Mazurkiewicz 1984: 60) between the Tartu–Moscow SEMIOTIC School and MARXIST theory of socio-cultural phenomena, which must have been internalized in what Dmitruk happens to call fusion.

Since Marxism and semiotics stretch out to different directions, studies in literary culture can be viewed as a force resulting from the summing of vectors of its “constituent parts.“ It has been said that one cannot apply two mutually exclusive systems of measurement to one object of inquiry, but there is no evidence to support the claim that this is the case within the present discussion. This bringing together, as perhaps Roland Barthes would say, of Marxist reason and semiotic thought into a Marxist reflection on the efficiency of sign usage (Bujnicki, Sławiński 1977: 50) is not entirely foreign to contemporary humanities. Therefore, the “fusion” we’re discussing here interests us as a typical as much as a singular occurrence (individual facticity of idiographic nature). Both the individual and the collective may use various world-models (and therefore various “languages,” or systems) which may interact in many ways (Żółkiewski 1979: 320). But how? How does their forced coexistence look like? Rather than describing particular facts, both semiotics and Marxism are concerned with general laws, they meet therefore as two different nomotetisms. Let’s explore those differences further.

As discourses (see Foucault 1972: 68), semiotics and Marxism have different DOMAINS OF VALIDITY (that is, what are the criteria of truth governing propositions belonging to the discourse), DOMAINS OF NORMATIVITY (that is, what are the criteria governing relevance or irrelevance

of propositions, or their marginality), and DOMAINS OF ACTUALITY (that is, notions, concepts, claims, hypotheses, problems and solutions that are still in use or “have fallen into disuse”). Their conceptual, subject-matter and methodologically-theoretical frameworks are different and autonomous. Contrary to Marxism, semiotics is a theory that is not ideological and also cannot be ideologized. Having highlighted those differences we may now say that they are logically incomparable. One may speak of them as alternatives, or that they exist in “confrontation.” One may say they are complementary, but what we are trying to discuss here is their “symbiotic” FUSION. If the semiotics of culture is sometimes criticized for its internal inconsistency (Rosner 1981: 273), then what could be said about the complex synthesis of semiotics and Marxism, a synthesis which would involve merging their conceptual frameworks, assumptions and methods? How would their balancing mechanism work, if there is one, or at least a mechanism that would determine how one relates to the other? Mechanical integration of various machines, for example, poses technical challenges which cannot be overcome easily and universally by employing mathematical formulas (Wiener 1989: 142–143). Here, the very idea of “FUSION” in ITSELF poses a conceptual challenge which (let’s consider it as a primary “deep” difficulty) must further MANIFEST itself in a myriad of secondary problems. What we are therefore discussing here is not a screeching of a “Marxist saw” (already a proverbial phrase among Polish studies scholars), but rather a screeching of a methodological saw. There’s a French saying for our present predicament: *deux orders – désordre*, two orders make one disorder. Morawski claims that at the end of the day this “Marxist-semiotic” (and thus historical and systemic) position held by Żółkiewski appears to be rather unconvincing as it doesn’t do away with practical shortcomings encountered in Marxism or semiotics, and that, on top of that, much is left to desire when it comes to the accuracy of its assumptions and conclusions (Morawski 1981: 313).

It’s said that semiotics is, as it were, a roundtable at which the representatives of various disciplines can sit and discuss what they have in common as far as language and signs are concerned (Pelc 1977: 251–251). But in our present considerations semiotics is approached as a partner rather than the middle ground or roundtable. In studies in literary culture, MUTUAL influences between semiotics and Marxism are undeniably asymmetric, that is, they cannot be characterized by the relationship of commensurability or equivalence. In the argument proposed by Żółkiewski those two “discourses” sometimes run parallel to each other, but his primary purpose is to achieve an UNEQUIVALENT fusion (and any unequivalence necessarily provokes

conflicts), although it would be difficult to argue that this would be simply because the more complex framework overpowers one considered to be less complex.

This unequivocal treatment differs from the Michail Bakhtin's approach, in which neither of the points of view have a deciding sanction (Bakhtin 1984). Socio-communicationism developed by Źółkiewski is a configuration with a dominant, one may even say that there is a dictate of the dominant. For Źółkiewski, Marxism undeniably functions as a "dominating system with a claim to universalism" (Źółkiewski 1984b: 33) and an overarching principle guiding his methodological convictions. Thus, in this double configuration, Marxism could be described as, to quote Zdzisław Cackowski, "a sub system of a protective-provocative-assimilative nature," with an assumption of dialectical tension occurring between isolation and assimilation of this subsystem (Kmita 1974: 294). One may call it the more aggressive, "masculine," determinative element (Sławiński 1971: 45). Kmita would perhaps call it paradoxically "a supersubstructure" (Kmita 1976: 24), a term one would want to clarify further by pointing to its singular moment, namely that it's a "substructure" (a component of configuration) which subdues not only the other substructure, but also the structure as a whole, that being studies in literature and anything they may stand for. Things being so, one must also consider here a communicationist notion of control.

A controlling system is one which works to make desired CHANGES in the other system, defined as the controlled system (Lubański 1975: 31), that in our case is semiotics. It suffers from "repression" (Foucault 1972: 142), foreign and external laws (of heteronomisation), it's subject to the influence of a regulator who speaks from the supreme position of greater power. This functional complementation without equivalence can be regarded as subservience of the subordinated. The very substance of the subordinated is interfered with, ENCROACHED upon. Źółkiewski treats semiotics instrumentally, uses it to pursue goals set out for studies in literary culture and considers it to be a purely instrumental component of the discipline. Its methods are adapted selectively and thus its complex conceptual framework is adjusted and tweaked to be compatible with the new purposes. The results of semiotic analysis are dominated here by the criteria and problems of Marxism which is conceptually impenetrable to semiotic ways of thinking, and if maybe this is not completely true than certainly semiotics is here penetrated by Marxism to a greater degree than vice versa. Zdzisław Cackowski would say that Marxism maintains its identity while subjugating semiotics in the process, that it insulates its "substance" and structure against COMPLETE

“reciprocity” of influence. It would seem that, Źółkiewski, as a founder of studies in literary culture, is a much more independent thinker in his treatment of semiotics than he is in his treatment of Marxism.

### 3. SPECIAL TYPE OF SEMIOTICS

To learn how the game works is to knowingly ignore the irrelevant aspects of the GIVEN game. Semiotics has embraced all perspectives of disciplines investigating language FOR LANGUAGE’S SAKE and sign for SIGN’S SAKE, evolving into the structural and functional theory of SIGN regardless of the form it may take. Źółkiewski sees it as the main force driving reconstruction of humanities and a great promise for sociology of culture that will help the discipline overcome minimalism of the quantitative approach and eventually progress towards the study based on quality, content and meanings. Semiotics is as yet unaware of its abilities, it’s shifting and changing on a journey to self-definition. Semioticians have so far managed to stay clear, so is the word, from the mistakes made by the humanists of older times, which is not to say they’re not erring on their own. Some of those errors are addressed by Źółkiewski who believes that the representatives of other fields engaging in semiotic analysis should also contribute to internal discussions and disputes happening within semiotics proper (Weinberg 1975; Pelc 1977: 251; Umiker-Sebeok 1977; Źółkiewski 1979, p. IV, 420, 569, 609; Janus, Mayenowa: 48; Źółkiewski 1981: 166; Dmitruk 1979a: 407; Heinz 1978: 423).

Źółkiewski reproaches hermeneutics for having meant different things in different times (Źółkiewski 1979: 600). Bear in mind, however, that semiotics itself, in its still relatively short life, has already been approached quite variously. Źółkiewski stresses that various conceptual frameworks can be adopted to pursue what is stereotypically called semiotic analysis (Źółkiewski 1979: 618), pointing also out that just between themselves the Tartuists share a handful of different theoretical perspectives (Źółkiewski 1979: 603). An exception to his wholesale opposition to hermeneutics, Źółkiewski concedes that he feels close to some methods followed by hermeneutics (Źółkiewski 1984a: 63, 1n). He would be perhaps equally eager to say that he feels distant (or foreign) to some methods pursued by semiotics, which would introduce more clarity to his semiotic perspective and show that he is unwilling to accept the actual scale and degree of diversity among competing tendencies in semiotics (Mazurkiewicz 1984: 60). If it’s indeed the process of codification of theory (Legutko 1984: 1078) that is the first step to dogmatism, then semiotics is still a long shot even... from making this very first step.

By itself, mechanics is unable to account for all systems available to mechanical analysis. Mathematics cannot demarcate the field of its fruitful application (Weinberg 1975). Things are perhaps no different with semiotics, various disciplines welcome semiotics as an opportunity to universalize their language and method and also as an inspiration for conceptual invention. John R. Pierce warns, however, that it's the beginners game to seek universal and infallible problem-solving methods, more experienced players rather proceed in a step-by-step fashion, trying to identify better measures to deal with the challenges as they emerge along the way (Pierce 1961: 127–169). One such measure can be to ADAPT the method to the particular problem, rework the tool to make it suitable for the new purpose according to a simple principle of putting the available means to proceed with the task one is presently concerned with. This, to quote Jerzy Pelc, “tendency towards practicality and flexibility in theoretical thinking,” is precisely what Żółkiewski does with semiotics. He adopts and adapts semiotics selectively where it fits best his needs in developing studies in literary culture. He's unwilling to embrace semiotics on its own terms, rather bending it to his own rules, thus creating a *sui generis* kind of semiotics (Kmita 1974: 218; Pelc 1977: 260; Pelc 1969).

As a general language and a general theory, semiotics is a superordinate discipline to studies in literary culture which, as it were, provide a “model” for “interpretation” of semiotics. This somewhat reserved “as it were” is used here to indicate that by speaking about interpretation of an axiomatic and formalized system we're not readily expecting it to be deformed by interpretive practice. But our present discussion about the use of semiotics in this particular area is especially heavy with deformation (also, what we are deforming is far from being a complete system). This is where one begins feeling uneasy about how far deformation of semiotic assumptions, concepts and rules can go, how far can one stretch and bend semiotics to make them serve (after all) extra-semiotic purposes. Isn't it that semiotics is here made to radically change ITS OWN assumptions, scientific perspective, problems, motives, and, finally, its procedures and ways of thinking?

In this new area the rules and principles of semiotic theory are simplified and “watered down,” semiotic concepts are redefined to accommodate a broader scope of theoretical considerations (this is not to say that it must necessarily conflict with the demand for precision, although it surely increases the odds of such a conflict emerging), their theoretical meaning is even substantially tweaked which means that the assimilated semiotic theory was used here merely as “thought material” for various conceptual trans-

formations. Żółkiewski never conceals that semiotic analyses only partially shed light on the problems which the new discipline is meant to elucidate. Let's just add that there seems to be a (serious?) logical incomparability between semiotic theory based on the notions of sign and meaning, on the one hand, and semiotic theory based on the notions of semiotic object and its two functions (textual and material) on the other, although Żółkiewski would maybe argue, perhaps not without reason, that it is about achieving a more adequate approximation towards practical-objective reference of the theory (e.g. Pelc 1987; Bujnicki and Sławiński 1977: 9–10; Sławiński 1971: 101; Kmita 1980: 30, 38).

It's quite telling that Żółkiewski is sympathetic towards Bakhtin's "departure from semiotic rigourism of his youth" (Żółkiewski 1981: 168), although at the same time Bakhtin earns Żółkiewski's praise for his "methodological rigourism" (Żółkiewski 1981: 168). Taking semiotics out of its own context must be judged a singular idea (Weinberg 1975). But how can we establish that this is not the case? In comparison to semiotics of the Tartu School, which Żółkiewski both fiercely debates and draws inspiration from, there is no continuation and further development, but rather continuation and negation both at the same time. Żółkiewski is put off by Lotman's semiotic immanentism, arguing with him not simply because he understands semiotics in a different way; first and foremost he does so because his whole approach to culture is different than that of Lotman's. He therefore differs with Lotman at the level of constitutive claims, and only CONSECUTIVELY differs from him at the level of consecutive claims.

By accusing semiotics of immanentism, Żółkiewski wants to say that it never goes beyond itself, or, in other words, that it's itself, and itself only. This accusation, as I said, strikes at its very essence, or, put differently, is a call for a new essence of semiotics. Semiotics as seen in the Tartu School is modified by Żółkiewski even more radically than what Kmita did with Znaniecki's notion of humanist coefficient, which he confessed to modify "on his own." If the theory and its modification do correspond, then the correspondence is of "substantially corrective" nature. Maybe one should speak here about using semiotic theory according to the analogy principle rather than the essence principle, and further label Żółkiewski's use of vastly reorganized semiotic themes as "analogous semiotism," in a similar vein to Goldmann's "analogous Marxism" (Żółkiewski 1979: 620; Kmita 1973: 176; Kmita 1980: 40, 55; Ossowski 1983: 81; Jiří 1972: 111; Żółkiewski 1972: 187–188; Grajewski 1970: 143).

But perhaps the way I see things is somewhat flawed or at least



exaggerated? Let's take one more look at the problem. If I understand correctly what is meant in the first quoted passage on page 55 of his paper *Pożytki poznawcze i granice stosowania analizy tekstów kultury*, Żółkiewski wants to say that his reflections on semiotics as a discipline or "system" of knowledge were guided by a conceptual model which accounts for everything what semiotics as a specialist discipline eliminates, it is also meant to cover what originally falls outside its conceptual framework. This seems to be a countermodel. Much like "poetic phonology" proposed in the Theses of the Prague Circle was fittingly named counterphonology (Dąbrowski 1983: 157) because it was based CONTRASTINGLY on the "ordinary" phonology, the model in our present discussion should be accordingly labelled as a COUNTERSEMIOTIC model. Introduction of the MATERIAL function to reflections on the semiotic object would be a hallmark (and the essence) of this countersemiotic model.

That someone follows a semiotic method in his studies doesn't necessarily mean that he endorses the semiotic (semiotistic?) conception of science (Kmita 1974: 232). But Żółkiewski not only APPLIES semiotic method and even DEVELOPS a type of applied semiotics, but also, largely through arguments and discussions with the Tartu School, participates in GENERAL debates on signs, their properties and the nature and tasks of semiotics, although he never considers his semiotic proposals to be unambiguous or definitive (Żółkiewski 1979: VI). Which is why it's worth at this point citing Jerzy Pelc who, noting that far from discouraging development of applied semiotics, and its goals he considers to be useful, promising, difficult and RISKY, he nevertheless underlines that in its present stage of development, semiotics must be still taking care of its fundamental research rather than its various applications, methodological verification of which remains one of the primary tasks of logical semiotics. The latter "is not responsible" for modifications of semiotic tools done for extra-semiotic purposes, but it should reveal their true nature (Pelc 1987; Pelc 1982: 339).

#### 4. THE TECHNIQUE OF SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

Żółkiewski's view on semiotics is not entirely consistent. At times he concedes that it's POSSIBLE to speak of a separate, sufficiently general and abstract theory of signs (Żółkiewski 1979: 573), elsewhere, however, he says restrictively that semiotics is NOT AS MUCH a separate discipline BUT RATHER a valuable auxiliary technique for investigating disciplines that abound in signage (Żółkiewski 1979: 534). It seems that out of the two semiotic approaches described by Umberto Eco, that being the theory of

communication universals and the descriptive technique of communicative situations, Źółkiewski favours the latter (Dmitruk 1979b: 407–408), and one which is assigned a limited and specific set of tasks. He also believes that theoreticians from the Tartu School seek to develop homogenized techniques of cultural description rather than indulge in essentialism, that is, theoretical considerations taking the essence of culture as their primary subject (Źółkiewski 1979: 605), although his dispute with the Tartu School focuses largely on what this essence would be. Roman Mazurkiewicz once wrote that semiotics is humbled by artistic language of Medieval Russia (Mazurkiewicz 1984: 383) and it appears that Źółkiewski would welcome a similar degree of humility from his own version of semiotics. As Metz's searched for "analogies of sensuous code elements" to aid his semiotic analysis, our present analysis has for studies in literary culture a "technical and auxiliary value," "indispensable but limited" (Źółkiewski 1981: 174), significant relevance at the initial stage of research (Źółkiewski 1979: 644). If auxiliary is also taken to mean secondary, then it may be quite surprising to hear that if it were that case that semiotics is not capable of overcoming the heterogeneous nature of cultural phenomena then the operational value of semiotic analysis would be secondary and auxiliary at best (Źółkiewski 1981: 169). One would imagine that this speaks for semiotic analysis as something of primary importance, although Źółkiewski refuses to think just that. But if the method introduces highly significant problems to the theoretical picture is it be wise to dismiss it while SOLVING those very problems (see Kmita 1974: 16)?

## 5. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS OF SEMIOTICS?

One should treat semiotism as a whole cognitive approach, not merely as a method or procedure. Behind any given conception of semiotics (be it functional or generative, for example) there is a different conception of culture – this is so even if theoretical language of this particular type of semiotics is unable to ARTICULATE such a general conception of culture. Therefore, it's not enough to say that semiotic analysis doesn't free us from cultural theory. If the semiotics of culture, for example, aspires to be an embodiment of a general theory of human communication, the ambition here is essentially culturological. When it explores meanings and world models informed by systems of those meanings, then it's a type of meta-epistemology and a type of a theory that gives an order and a structure to the world. Not every general ontology, and theory of categories in particular, makes it possible for sign theory or semiotic theory of culture to exist under

its assumptions. Conversely, semiotics cannot be reconciled with just any given ontology or epistemology. If one doesn't respect this consideration, one is prone to eclecticism, that is, an incoherence of scientific perspective. Only when this consideration is respected can one legitimately speak of the methodological impact of semiotics on cultural studies as a whole. Even those wishing to perceive semiotics as an early tool designed for solving technical and analytical issues would have to respect its primary assumptions (Rosner 1981: 199, 273–275; Żółkiewski 1979: 638; Jiří 1972: 75; Bolecki 1976: 154, 163).

Żółkiewski is reluctant to go beyond operationalism, that is, the operational norm of scientific efficiency of concepts, he's reluctant to put methodological apparatus to philosophical tests. As regards methodology, he seems to be leaning towards philosophical neutrality since he believes that scientific concepts are retrofitted with philosophy rather than have it found in their substance (Żółkiewski 1979: 578). Speaking from the estranging distance, Żółkiewski says that the French are discussing philosophical (ontological) assumptions as well as the implications and epistemological advantages of semiotics (Żółkiewski 1979: 576, 615). I would call this view of Żółkiewski an aphilosophical approach. He concedes that the use of techniques of semiotic analysis can result in "further, and entirely different, epistemological conclusions" (Żółkiewski 1979: 615) for the sociology of science, or meta-science, but he stops at that, never sharing even very general thoughts about his view on this matter. He also concedes that his own semiotic considerations bring an answer to the most general theoretical questions and are therefore highly significant for his discourse in general, which includes the ideas explored in this paper. They provide him with a general theoretical framework where literature is an integral part of culture (Żółkiewski 1979: VII). Those assumptions can be regarded as culturological. Which means that they weigh much more than just some auxiliary technique useful at the initial stage of research (Żółkiewski 1979: 644). A mathematical machine is only as smart as its user (Lubański 1975: 111), and so is semiotic analysis. Semiotics is not seeking to take the place of other disciplines (Dmitruk 1979b: 407), but wants to be recognized as one.

## 6. THE NORM OF OBJECTIVISM AND EXACTNESS

Semiotic analysis considers only what is systemic (standard?), "grammatical," repetitive, regular, "common," and social, that is, what is relevant communication-wise. Żółkiewski reaches for a semiotic framework for its method. One may even go as far as to say that he reaches for a semiotic

framework to make it more rigorous (Janus, Mayenowa 1975: 18, 30, 49, 51; Dmitruk 1979b: 197; Lotman 1977: 12, Foucault 1972: 79; Szocki 1984: 36),<sup>3</sup> which would be possible thanks to its systemic nature (Hopfiner 1981: 265). He's suspicious of intuitive beliefs (Żółkiewski 1980: 97), which he wants to replace with scientifically correct and objectively verifiable study of meanings. He does so believing that as far as meanings are concerned intuitions are usually misleading (Janus, Mayenowa: 25, 35). This, for want of better reference, could be considered as a Lotmanian theme, since Lotman, a student of Hjelmslev strongly influenced by his neo-positivist logicalism, also strives for objective clarifications through reduction of the human (subjective) factor which tends to be elusive methodologically and unyielding to effective control (Heinz 1978: 308).

But here we must confront the proverbial avalanche of doubts and reservations. There is a variety of opinions in the Tartu School and these are not interpretable in an unambiguous and clear way (Żółkiewski 1979: 603). The systemic nature of "semiotic systems" is sometimes considered to be fictional (Wolicki 1974: 118) or showing merely a system-like resemblance. As a consequence, the exactness of semiotic categories also becomes highly suspicious (Bolecki 1976: 155). Let's also note that some clarifying distinctions made by Toporov are dismissed by Żółkiewski as "perhaps not subtle enough" (Żółkiewski 1979: 618). Semiotics makes no scholar immune to mistakes in the way one understands meanings, and also it's not only semiotics that has the exclusive authority in this respect as meanings are influenced by philosophical and ideological beliefs which may eventually outweigh the respect for semiotic rigorism. Additionally, this declarative as opposed to actually pursued rigorism can go side by side with a more inventive approach to semiotics. For example, Żółkiewski notes that some work of the Tartu School is both methodologically rigorous and highly inventive. Invention quarrels with rigor. Other antagonistically "coexisting" pairs are: objectivity and engagement, perhaps both strongly featuring in the studies of literary culture (see Sławiński 1971: 50), or objectivity of scientifically approached philosophical neutralism and ideology, are after all part and parcel of Marxism and also of Żółkiewski's discourse.

If I'm correct, it was not like this before his paper *Pożytki poznawcze i granice stosowania analizy tekstów kultury* that Żółkiewski introduced a more elaborate notion of "semiotic-structural analysis," a concept already featur-

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<sup>3</sup>This "rigourist" claim is repeated so obsessively that one feels almost tricked into believing that this is indeed how things are.

ing in the work of Katarzyna Rosner,<sup>4</sup> for example. Żółkiewski concludes, however, that the rules of this analysis are also uncertain (Żółkiewski 1984a: 51), that the method is prone to arbitrariness, that it provides no procedure for selection of “facts and phenomena as they appear in their relationships” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 38), and that, consequently, the final say belongs here to intuition, for which, after all, Żółkiewski has little appreciation, but which happens to drive more inventive approaches in semiotics. What’s more, one may even come to see a vicious circle here because a legitimate selection should be based on a perceived state of affairs that one feels is right and therefore strives to achieve. Żółkiewski admits that “the hierarchy of the facts of culture preserved in texts” is hypothetical (Żółkiewski 1984a: 38), which means it’s speculative, and thus uncertain. But the preceding hierarchy, that is, a hierarchy of texts of culture, is hypothetical as well. Żółkiewski never provides examples of those two hierarchies, and, consequently, those two kinds of hypotheses, leaves their meanings rather mysterious, if by hierarchy one understands something else other than merely the promotion and degradation of texts (Żółkiewski 1980: 191). As a matter of fact, all those shortcomings criticised in hermeneutic approaches can be found in the method created by Żółkiewski.

Objectivism, the “the quality of our culture,” as well as desubjectivisation of cognition, are considered to be the advantage, not the “benefit,” of the semiotic method (Żółkiewski 1984a: 60). Żółkiewski raises this point frequently. But now, driven by a cybernetic impulse, he starts claiming the opposite by saying that the cognizing subject cannot be eliminated from the process (Żółkiewski 1984a: 60). This about-face should be followed with a radical change in many of his previous opinions, even if we were to assume that this “resubjectivation” is not purely of psychological, but rather of an epistemological and methodological nature. The “observer” is a personification of methodological competence, or a methodological directive, to a much greater degree than the aforementioned (Żółkiewski 1984a: 60) competence enabling textual creativity: it’s a formal subject of sorts. One should also be able to deduce it from the structural-semiotic analysis proposed by Żółkiewski (since the “observer” category wasn’t introduced to its design in order to modify it). But Żółkiewski himself is not treating the observer in a formal way if he understands them as a “member of a particular semiotic community” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 60). I doubt whether this corresponds with “theoretical assumptions of cybernetic procedure” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 59)

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<sup>4</sup>The subtitle of her book is clearly paraphrased in the title of Żółkiewski’s paper.

since this “particularness” is clearly of a socio-cultural nature.

If the analysis must take into account the observer category, then it would be wrong to assume that it “happens on the other side of subjective perspective” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 65) because observer’s perspective is clearly subjective (with this point we could start building our case for hermeneutics). If cybernetics is inspired by the observer category, and the inspiration could as well come from physics as a natural science (Żółkiewski 1984a: 67), then it makes little sense to have both the subject and the idiographic “on the same side.” If one wants to arrive at objectivism through structural methods, then how can this approach be reconciled with the idea of “substantial contribution to individual psychology, psychoanalysis and social psychology, all of which relate to consciousness” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 36)? If semiotic pragmatics, so valued by Żółkiewski, is dealing with subject-relations, then why Żółkiewski eschews questions about the subject’s reactions to cultural phenomena, thinking them to be “delusive” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 54)? The list of reservations and questions could go on, so let me just note that it’s completely unclear why Żółkiewski, being rather unfriendly towards the category of implied author considering it to be ergocentric, is theoretically inclined to accept the category of observer who is “characterized by his ability to come up with descriptions” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 60). But this makes him an implied observer, “assumed” by those descriptions as the embodied competence to make those descriptions. But isn’t it perhaps so that its redeeming quality is that the observer category is used by cybernetics AS WELL?

## 7. PANSEMIOTISM

Dmitruk maintains that semiotics, humbled by various disappointments, is no longer tempted to be concerned with the world at large (Dmitruk 1979b: 403). But the declared (Żółkiewski 1980: 14) and postulated (Żółkiewski 1980: 130) pansemiotism proposed by Żółkiewski goes that very way. The term itself, “pansemiotism,” suggests some kind of absolute and all-embracing nature. The reverse of pansemiotism seems to be, so to speak, a pancommunicationalist understanding of culture. One could pejoratively speak of pansemiotism as the “semiotic theory of everything.” Neutrally speaking, pansemiotism suggests that all cultural realities have meaning. Since Żółkiewski believes that signs and meanings have systemic characters, his pansemiotic claim is rooted in the idea of pansystemism and antisubjectivistic (desubjectivistic) intent (Rosner 1981: 62, 274; Hopfner

1981: 226; Mitosek 1982: 139; Dmitruk 1979b: 403–404). “Culture, as it is, is a system” (Żółkiewski 1980: 46). Pansystemism, however, conflicts with historicism that is also present in Żółkiewski’s discourse. Their coexistence in his theory is, I suppose, possible, thanks to the double meaning given to the term “culture,” at times understood as a historical reality (resistant to pansystemisation), while elsewhere conceived as a theoretical construct and interpretive model imposed on or extracted from the reality (and only about such extraction–abstraction one can safely say that culture is a system).

If we were to gloss over those considerations, one would have to ask whether it’s not the case that semiotic techniques, delivering us, as they do, from certain kinds of arbitrariness (Żółkiewski 1979: 524), at the same time bring about other kinds of arbitrariness that are equally disturbing. Even if one wouldn’t say this about the techniques themselves, their fetishization certainly does expose us to arbitrariness, and pansemiotism WOULD be such fetishization if one insisted on understanding it as the exclusive and universal methodology, monopolistic conceptual framework for cultural studies, with its very presence, as it were, disqualifying all other approaches. Curiously, Żółkiewski rejects this view. In other words, his declaration of pansemiotism is without consequence for his methodological standpoint, the pansemiotic aspect is present in form rather than substance. For Żółkiewski, semiotics is not comprehensive enough as it describes only the “inner workings of semiotic systems” (Żółkiewski 1980: 15). He is not satisfied with semiotic immanence, a concept that one may associate with Lotman. But, just as one isn’t physicalist if one also uses other disciplines to describe the world, one isn’t a pansemiotician if the conceptual framework and methodology of semiotics aren’t his sole reference. Żółkiewski goes beyond semiotics towards “matter-of-factness” (and its functions), while for a consistent pansemiotician there wouldn’t be any “beyond” to go to, and it goes without saying that an inconsistent pansemiotician is not a pansemiotician at all. Żółkiewski creates, or recognizes, extra-semiotic mechanisms governing cultural and artistic phenomena, which after all limit the semiotic sphere of influence (Mazurkiewicz 1984: 61). Idealist pansemiotic assumption is challenged by cultural (determinative) superiority of extra-textual systems, and if superiority has also something to do with being crucial, then one needs to say that this idealist feature is hardly essential to the doctrine, and therefore its desirability looks highly doubtful (see Kmita 1974: 69). Additionally, in considering efficiency of semiotic procedures (Żółkiewski 1979: 601), we’ve already established that Żółkiewski treats semiotic analysis as a tool of merely auxiliary importance.

Those who accept LIMITS of semiotic productivity, shouldn't depreciate what lies outside the discipline in terms of subject matter (expressiveness and aesthetics of literary works not reduced to their communicative aspects) or methodology (hermeneutics). Limits in the productivity of certain ("our") disciplines shouldn't be treated as limits beyond which one can find only failed disciplines, but rather as limits for the given type of productivity.

## 8. PANIDEOLOGISM

Żółkiewski may be preaching pansemiotism, but he also practices panideologism, which undoubtedly comes as a result of Marxism as his preferred epistemological perspective which considers social sciences through the notions of class and ideology (Kmita 1973: 349, footnote 20). Żółkiewski writes that "the textual character of ideological structures [which are always linked to class, and therefore political, interests – S. D.] is what makes them operationally distinguishable" (Żółkiewski 1980: 81). In short, and hopefully without giving a false account of his view, textuality is an indicator of the class-determined domain of ideology, or "ideological systems of culture" (Żółkiewski 1980: 80). IF the study of the ideological cannot in itself be free, as social sciences cannot, from the stigma of ideology, and IF the study of class determinants cannot in itself be free from political associations, then, taking into account what was said above about textuality, semiotics itself must be ideological and political. Perhaps semiotics must be ideological whenever one chooses to bring it together with theoretical priorities of the Marxist perspective. Let's quote one more oscillatory, and therefore confusing, passage: "the whole sphere of signs IS ideological [and "ideological" maintains its genetic reference to the "class" – S. D.], but signs' persistent continuity throughout history DEPRIVES them of their ideological unambiguity" (Żółkiewski 1980: 80 - emphasis S. D.). How things stand, then, IS or is DEPRIVED, and therefore is not? Or, "rather is," or "is rather deprived"? And: if something is ideologically ambiguous, and thus ideologically unclear, is it still ideological in any way? This returns us to the familiar conclusion: if the sphere of signs is ideological, then semiotics would have to take the ideological into account, and this would eventually lead to semiotics being ideological too. Żółkiewski indeed belongs to those thinkers who see it that way.

Stefan Morawski notes that by marrying ideology with semiotics, Żółkiewski takes advantage of only one of the opportunities for heteronomisation: he ideologizes semiotic processes (or, more precisely, semiotic systems), wrongly assuming that the precision of semiotic analyses won't suffer in



the process. One other opportunity which he doesn't take is to apply semi-otics to ideological texts to challenge their self-interpretation and authority (Morawski 1981: 313). Let's seize on this remark and ask again what is the relation between ideology (after all pervading both the whole discipline and its scientific results) and scientific procedures that are guided by objectivism and verifiability. This seems to be an essential question if semiotics is governed by method and ideology is governed by rhetoric (Głowiński 1984: 1167).

Żółkiewski uses the term "ideology" without intention to tame its ambiguity. It has little to do with Marx's understanding of normative ideology which is conceived as false consciousness that knows neither its origin nor function, and which is opposed to the notion of critical consciousness (rather than true consciousness, as one might've expect). Ideology as false consciousness is underpinned by the interests of various groups or classes, whereas ideology itself, as a defence and justification of those interests, is understood as epistemologically false illusion that relates to the social subject rather than reality. This is why for Marx his own point of view was anything but ideological (Kuniński 1981: 118–121).

When he uses such phrases as "systems of cultural signs, ideological systems" (Żółkiewski 1979: 520), Żółkiewski understands ideology VERY BROADLY. One could easily say that he identifies ideology with social consciousness (Ossowski 1983: 81) or that he considers the ideological to be identical with the cultural.<sup>5</sup> Ideology is understood as an aggregate equivalent of: 1) world-conceptualization, 2) world-modelling, 3) institutionalized axiology of the world, 4) social functioning of any substance and value, be it of philosophical, religious, ethical, artistic or scientific nature, because in the language of ideology, understood in a way where it has no particular limits, EVERYTHING is associated with what is REGARDED as the fundament of ideology, or, to make a reference to Foucault, EVERYTHING is soaked with ideology. Żółkiewski sees art as a part of ideology (Żółkiewski 1979: 141, Foucault 1972: 185; Kuniński 1981: 124; Głowiński 1984: 1168), he also believes literary consciousness and literary ideology to be one and the same thing (Żółkiewski 1980: 248). He speaks of "ideological (literary) forms" (Żółkiewski 1984a: 49), writing that "ideology is how one indulges in mass culture leisure, how it organizes statistically visible patterns of behaviour" (Żółkiewski 1979: 127–128). It seems that it would be impossible to draw

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<sup>5</sup>One should therefore ask what logic governs these identifications as Żółkiewski already identified the cultural with the textual and the process of communication, even if those identifications are limited to certain elements or aspects.

a clear line between strictly ideological and the ideologized (see Kuniński 1981: 118). Since ideologies are instruments created to pursue class-political interests (Kuniński 1981: 121), it appears that culture here is understood in a radically political way. This is not only an implicit, but also explicit view of Żółkiewski who said in an interview that “our culture is becoming more and more political and this process will continue into the future” (Macuzanka 1984: 7).

Having said all that, let’s only add that it was only following the impatient and relentless insistence of Zofia Mitosek that we can nevertheless witness the extent to which Żółkiewski has restrained politization of his discourse. Mitosek notes that in his earlier selection, *Kultura, socjologia, semiotyka literacka. Studia*, Żółkiewski didn’t hesitate to judge literary situations or promote various political and cultural agendas, while his recent book, *Wiedza o kulturze literackiej. Główne pojęcia*, is somewhat less inclined to consider our cultural styles in the spirit of the “high ideals of Marx,” instead replaced by a “universal cognitive perspective,” something which Mitosek calls “narrowing of perspective” through the “gesture of pure theory” (Mitosek 1982: 140–141). But what would be the name for the situation where “universalism” means as much as “narrowing?”

## 9. BETWEEN SEMIOTICS AND SOCIO-COMMUNICATIONISM

The word about Thomism is that it literally drowns in Aristotle (Marías 1984: 1071). What I will say about semiotism of studies in literary culture is that it literally drowns in socio-communicationism. Between themselves, Marxists may argue whether or not the GENERAL theory of social being and historical process is in certain aspects similar to the traditional pre-scientific speculative philosophy of history (which it, as a scientific theory, replaces), but risks of incommensurability notwithstanding, one can by analogy say that Żółkiewski builds a GENERAL materialistic conception of literary socio-communication based on historical materialism. Jiří Levý believes that the model of communication cannot grasp the literary work (or literature?) as a solid and historically conditioned fact (Jiří 1972: 112). I will call this position pure (cybernetic) communicationism. Levý’s belief is taken further by Żółkiewski whose conception can be described as empirical (historizing) socio-communicationism. While Medvedev and Arvatov sought to eliminate the opposition between formalism and sociologism (Balbus 1975: 28–29), Żółkiewski heads towards a methodological fusion of semiotics and sociology. He believes, and passes on this belief to his followers,

that humanist conscience cannot ignore sociological reality (Lalewicz 1975: 158). This reminds us of Źółkiewski's dispute with the Tartu School and his complaint that Lotman's continuation of Russian formalism proposes a too narrow an understanding of culture which the Tartu School conceives to be merely a semiotic mechanism that produces, processes and stores information. Źółkiewski argues that such understanding of culture doesn't take into consideration how relationships between cultural texts look like and what are the circumstances in which they are functioning. One might say that Źółkiewski opposes semiotics that retain their complete autonomy and refuses to engage with sociology. Ivanov, "always referring to various languages," is preaching semiotic autonomy, while Źółkiewski, underscoring the decisive role of social practices, favours semiotic heteronomy. If we were to assume that Źółkiewski builds on the foundation of semiotics, we would have to concede that, as he continues with the construction of his theory, this foundation is largely replaced by a different and much more massive fundament. Similarly to Mukařovský who went beyond the *Theses* of the Prague school after 1934, Źółkiewski goes beyond the legacy of the Tartu School. What they have in common is that they both gravitate towards sociologism and communicationism, eventually departing from the idea of systemism (Balbus 1975: 8); Źółkiewski 1979: 602, 605; Źółkiewski 1984a: 58, 1n; Rosner 1981: 57; Źółkiewski 1972: 178-198; Stanosz 1978: 238).<sup>6</sup> That is not to say that going beyond systemism means that one abandons systemic thinking altogether. Which makes for the very particular position they both find themselves in.

Semiotic analysis always begins with a particular text of culture (Źółkiewski 1984a: 18), while socio-communicationism sees only types, collections and series of texts. If only for this reason one should bear in mind that what Źółkiewski actually does is apply semiotics to studies in literary culture, which, strictly speaking, is something different than the semiotics of literature. He explores a mutual penetration happening between semiosis and the structures of social order, going away from structural semiotics towards analysis of the real intracultural communication processes, abandon-

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<sup>6</sup>One cannot argue that meaning is always systemic (objectivistic formula) while maintaining that meaning is always for someone (subjectivistic formula), or say both that meaning is systemic and that meaning is a correlate of the process or act of communication (communicative situation). See Rosner 1981: 20; Źółkiewski 1979: XXV. It's worthy to note that Lotman is also confused, although maybe less clearly, with the same difficulty that troubles Źółkiewski. Namely, he's introducing non-systemic descriptions of intra-cultural processes of communication that cannot be reconciled with systemic semiotic analysis (Rosner 1981: 258).

ing semiotic normativism in the process (Rosner 1981: 259). As an approach, systemism is selective and interested only in particular aspects of the reality. Situationism, on the other hand, that is, the study of communicative situations, is aggregative and concerned with multifaceted completeness and totality. For Żółkiewski, semiotic systems (and world-models) are transformed in response to changes occurring in communicative situations, which in his theory function as independent variables (determinants), with systems (and models) taking the role of dependent variables. If we were to apply this description to the communicative situation which is internally composed of three aspects – technological, social, and semiotic – then one would have to note that technological and social aspects are determinative of the semiotic aspect of the situation. Also, communicative situations determine social roles and how they are performed (Żółkiewski 1980: 100; Dmitruk 1979a: 9; Hopfner 1981: 266).

Drawing, as it were, from Dewey who believed that meaning is essentially a property of behaviour, Ivanov conceives the learning process of semiotic systems as a mechanism for behavioural programming. Precisely this way of thinking is used by Żółkiewski to progress from semiotics to sociology. He repeats that what modelling semiotic systems express is also expressible in the language responsible for the programming of individual and collective behaviour as well as behavioural motivations, adding that description of programming of these behaviours and motivations can be translated into the language of sociology (Żółkiewski 1979: 334; Janus, Mayenowa: 88–89; Kmita 1980: 174). Semiotism and sociologism both reform one another to create semi-sociologism where systems of signs and meanings can explain not only communication practices (Żółkiewski 1979: XXV), but also creative practices (Żółkiewski 1980: 171) and organization of the society as a whole (Voloshinov (Bakhtin): 108–109).

“For a Marxist, communicative situations are composed of characteristics of the social formation in which the given text functions as a message. Ultimately, these characteristics (...) relate primarily to modes of production prevailing in the given society, and refer to consciousness of its social structure. Communication processes have a mediatory role in these dynamics” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 25).

This is what I call the socio-fundamentalism of Żółkiewski who proposes here a two-pronged semantic amplification. By saying “communication,” he primarily means communicative situation, which he further identifies with its social context (which is here understood VERY BROADLY indeed). This is why the mediatory role of social communication (Żółkiewski 1984a: 43)

and mediatory role of social context, or even cultural context (Żółkiewski 1984a: 50), are considered to be interchangeable concepts in Żółkiewski's theory. Morawski argues that Żółkiewski takes the conceptual pair of *praxis* and *mimesis* and reshapes it as *praxis* and *semiosis* (Morawski 1981: 310–311). Concepts and methods of analysis are, to a degree, semiotic, but that cannot be said of perspectives and motives of those analyses. Even if the problem is inspired by semiotics, the research is conducted from the socio-communicationistic perspective (e.g. Ossowski 1983: 81; Dmitruk 1980a: 88; Rosner 1981: 12–13; Żółkiewski 1979: XXIV, 325; Błaszkiwicz 1980: 146; Dmitruk 1980b: 72). Let's now look into details of this cultural description presented so far in more general terms.

Conceived in opposition to aspect-driven methodology, one way to proceed with of the aforementioned amplification is to propose a multifaceted and progressive expansion of the object of scientific inquiry. This approach constitutes a transition from semio-aspectivism to socio-globalism. Żółkiewski explicitly states that semiotic-communicational perspective is too narrow and needs to be transcended. The semiotic aspect of the “semiotic object” is burst apart from the inside and undermined by the bustling abundance of sociological themes and aspects. Żółkiewski writes:

“While speaking about material functions of semiotic objects, we're essentially leaving the domain of communication relations. This is similar to the characteristics of social roles of the sender and the addressee in extra-communicational aspects of their political, productive or economic behaviour, among others. We're transcending communication in a similar fashion when we're creating comprehensive characteristics of a communicative situation by describing it primarily through relations that communication practices have with other practices. Which is why both semiotic objects and senders or addressees are distinguished with regard to how they refer to both communication relations and the higher-order relations in culture as a whole, understood here as a participation in culture of a particular type and style” (Żółkiewski 1979: XIII-XIV).

This openly conceded lack of homogeneity of criteria for establishing basic theoretical concepts must result in a lack of homogeneity of the theory built upon those concepts.

In his understanding of the semiotic object, Żółkiewski seeks to establish a connection between the system of meanings and the system of practices, further tying the latter to the system of material objects, “goods” that drive the class struggle (Żółkiewski 1979: 606). Semiotism is embedded in activism, while activism is embedded in technologism, economism, and

the theory of class struggle (socio-political theory). That the embedding process goes in this and not any other direction shows that Żółkiewski seeks, firstly, to account for the interconnectedness of all phenomena (which means that, if one may say so, his theoretical project would have no specific direction), and secondly, that he seeks to expose forces that govern cultural phenomena (Żółkiewski 1979: 622) which in his view are external (which sets out his theoretical project in a particular direction). Striving to account for phenomenal interconnectedness, which is, not less than the individual, *INEFFABILIS*, leads one away from the possibility of this process to be ever successfully completed. This clearly follows on from the characteristics of classification criteria: easily comparable on a textual-systemic level, but much less so on the social level of practices (Żółkiewski 1979: 631). What COGNITIVE value is thus in PRIORITIZING classification of practices if this particular sphere is essentially resistant to classification? As Żółkiewski concedes that comparison of “social characteristics” would be difficult without semiotic analysis, or textual-systemic analysis (Żółkiewski 1979: 631), it would rather speak for things being the other way round. Since Żółkiewski puts methodology first and reserves ironic comments for philosophers, let me just say that there are methodological arguments to perceive things the other way round (that is, criticise the priority of practices), whereas philosophical-doctrinal arguments (social philosophy) can be taken to support this claim. The priority of practices follows on from the priority of “assumptions” (Żółkiewski 1979: 622). After all, doesn’t Żółkiewski concede that criteria for classification of practices are acknowledged through, and CONTROLLED by, the classification of texts (Żółkiewski 1979: 631)? But what’s primary cannot be controlled by what’s secondary.

Let’s look at the issue differently and from another angle. One would expect that Żółkiewski takes away communicational INTENT from the definition of sign to make another point in his criticism of teleology (Żółkiewski 1984a: 15). But in a quote from Marx, and in Żółkiewski’s commentary to that passage (Żółkiewski 1984a: 16), there is a recurring category of purpose, or intent, conceived as something that organizes human behaviour. What he therefore does by taking away communicational INTENT is explaining semiotic practice using extra-semiotic practice, much like how literary practices (part of semiotic practices) were explained (both in their objective-causal and subjective-motivational aspects) through extra-literary factors (Żółkiewski 1980: 172–173, 242–243, 252, 268). It seems that the original claim that practice CONDITIONS TRANSFORMATION of objects into signs is now taken to mean that practice TRANSFORMS objects into signs. Quoting

Lévi-Strauss, Żółkiewski argues that the choice of the tool signifies social choice of the tool's type for the given type of practice. He further argues, doing little to support his claim despite the argument being debatable, that the pattern of practice is encoded in differentiating properties found in the outcome of the practice. Żółkiewski speaks about the "working man of the semiotic community," "historical social practices in the semiotic community" (Żółkiewski 1984a: 16), thus effacing the difference between semiosis and labour (as well as between semiosis and *praxis*). This may also be surprising because Peirce and Marx are mentioned separately and with no suggestion of associations between the two. It's possible to trace the origins of signification back to the elementary acts of production, but it doesn't mean that the mature sphere of semiotic practice can be characterized in a similarly un-autonomous fashion, i.e. by assuring that "there is no communicative intent in the world of typology of intent, the only intent there is the productive intent" (Żółkiewski 1984a: 16).

One could perhaps agree that the semiotic sphere is broader than the sphere of semiotic intent, but the only reason to do that would be to include symptoms to the broadly conceived sphere of signs. One cannot agree to questioning semiotic intent, especially if it's done for the sole reason of promoting productive intent. It appears, however, that in the studies in literary culture semiotism is an oppressed discipline.<sup>7</sup>

There is one more difficulty. Discussing *semiosis*, Żółkiewski writes that "intent is something what we speak about from the subject-perspective. An individual, however, neither creates signs, nor does he use them individually" (Żółkiewski 1984a: 16). This may be even true. But the same would have to be true for *praxis*, which would be at odds with the notion of productive intent: intent is something what we speak about from the subject-perspective, and an individual neither creates social practices, nor is he individually engaged in them, rather participating in a collective (mass) involvement in the given practice! If my analogy is correct, it must be so for BOTH elements, and if it's false, it must be so for BOTH of them as well.

It may be so that the mistake effacing the difference between *semiosis* and *praxis* has its origins in synecdoche or metonymy used to describe this phenomenon. Anything SOCIAL has at its bottom an element of communication, a necessary if not sufficient condition, which in turn has SIGNIFICATION as its reverse. Social practice is fundamental to all other practices, therefore . . . , etc. Only when we climb this ladder of synecdoche

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<sup>7</sup>Oppression always entails infringement of the rights of those oppressed.

and metonymy we begin to understand how one can mould such a phrase as “participation in the semiotic community through its social practices” (Żółkiewski 1984a: 17). Unfortunately, as we can see from the language used to express this thought, rungs of this ladder are made of purely stylistic material.

Let’s dwell for a while on the difficulties encountered in our discussion of practices. Żółkiewski himself concedes that one won’t solve the problem of classification of semiotic systems through classification of social practices (Żółkiewski 1979: 626). Semiotics has a broad autonomy in relation to practices, it may even be said that semiotics has no origin in practices. This is so because the relationship between semiotic systems and social practices, or even communication practices, is not, to borrow from the vocabulary of classical logic, attributive, that is, necessary and constitutive, but almost accidental, or contingent. It’s true that some systems are unique to certain practices, but we cannot speak here of one-to-one relations or relations based on the principle of exclusivity. Practices are multi-systemic, with fields of those systems spanning various practices or even types of practices (Żółkiewski 1979: 727). Besides, social practices, much like the texts of culture (Żółkiewski 1979: 629), are not “given,” but isolated BY US “depending on the theory of a particular practice” (Żółkiewski 1979: 630), or even depending on “classification theories.” Practices are therefore controlled by theories carved out of the wealth of human activity where things converge, mutually penetrate and influence each other. It’s those inner intricacies that make Żółkiewski say that “criteria arising from theories classifying various types and degrees of social practices are not comparable” (Żółkiewski 1979: 631), which means that one can rule out in advance the utopian idea of a single framework to accommodate description of those phenomena. Additionally, if each practice consists of a plexus of separate techniques distinguishable by particular strategies (Żółkiewski 1980: 41), then it would appear that each practice has various purposes and tasks to fulfil, whereas each technique is there to handle just a single purpose. Also, if social practices make up social realities, then techniques function as their non-autonomous components, one could perhaps go as far as to say that they are ideal, abstract aspects of practices. There are no pure, single techniques in social reality (as there are no single-system texts) because techniques constitute patterns of behaviour (see Żółkiewski 1980: 41) which function as the “privilege for the producer” (Żółkiewski 1980: 42).

## 10. CLASS



Continuing our discussion, let's mededicate at least a couple of passages to the problem of CLASS, as Źółkiewski is certainly a class-oriented thinker, showing class preferences (Źółkiewski 1980: 205) in cultural studies, undoubtedly recognizing, much like his closest follower Dmitruk, that superstructure is one particular battlefield of class struggle (Dmitruk 1980a: 88), and that both collective and individual cultural activity is conditioned by class and has class functions. His beliefs, however, are not dogmatic or radical. Źółkiewski recognizes supra-class national literature and literary tradition (Źółkiewski 1980: 153–154), he acknowledges that writing can easily transcend any given class (Źółkiewski 1980: 152), he won't support "class distinctions in literary preferences or aesthetics, or categorizing readers with regard to class or making divisions according to social circulations" (Źółkiewski 1980: 243), although he seems to be departing from this latter opinion in the following sentence when he speaks of "permanent correspondence" between the typology of literary audience and class stratification. This disregard for nuances following the sheer force of his "fundamentalist" approach is highly indicative of Źółkiewski's discourse.

But if class properties are properties of semiotic SYSTEMS realized in the text, then why aren't they deciding about the structure or origin of the text, but merely about its "social function" (Źółkiewski 1980: 205), which after all is conditioned by such extra-systemic factors as material function and communicative situation? If semiotic systems EXPRESS<sup>8</sup> consciousness of the semiotic community (Źółkiewski 1980: 195–196), one type of which is certainly artistic consciousness, then why shouldn't systemically determined "class properties" be perceived as a "sociological equivalent" of this consciousness (Źółkiewski 1980: 205)?

Źółkiewski believes that the principles of (class?) structuring of any given culture depend on human needs, while hierarchically differentiated needs depend on where one finds oneself in the (class?) social structure (Źółkiewski 1980: 240). But there seems to be a circular reasoning in this opinion. To say that "it's often a distinctive class property to absorb national culture" is not only paradoxical, but also follows a misconception if we were to assume that "class" means as much as "specific in its class aspect." What cannot be treated as a distinctive property of a class cannot be a class property, and indeed what's national is not something by which class can be defined. Absorption of national culture cannot be recognized as something specific to a class, nor can it be considered as its essential aspect.

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<sup>8</sup>This is just one example of Źółkiewski's failed attempts to eliminate expressiveness from his discourse.

Let's conclude this section noting once more that it is but a selection of inconsistencies and confusions, a list of which is yet to be compiled in full.

## 11. TROUBLES WITH THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

An information theorist and a philosopher would perhaps say that primary concepts appear to be, to a degree, relative (Lubański 1975: 93–94). One imposes a conceptual framework on one's object of inquiry to break it down into its constituent parts, therefore everything treated as "basic initial data" is already cognitively processed and not necessarily of a "purely objective" nature. Which is why, for example, de Saussure's system of natural language is CONTRASTED with "empirically given speech" (Żółkiewski 1980: 7). Żółkiewski himself asks in what measure texts, as elementary initial data, are nevertheless already abstracted (Żółkiewski 1979: 629).<sup>9</sup> This seems to be a peculiar question for a scholar who's "praxistic" thinking (denoting *praxis* and practices) gets the better of "symbolic" thinking (denoting signs and meanings), who starts classifying SEMIOTIC objects by establishing their MATERIAL function as well as practices which generate this function (Żółkiewski 1980: 100), who associates changes in meaning with changes in production practices (Żółkiewski 1980: 74), who rejects the view that texts are elementary data (Żółkiewski 1980: 146), and who, finally, acknowledges that the theory of social practices and the underlying general theory of culture (let's say, philosophy of culture) precede and condition semiotic analysis of texts (Janus, Mayenowa: 52). Mitosek sees it as a revolution in literary studies that analysis of a work should begin with a description of communication processes, that the meaning of a text is determined by its pragmatics,<sup>10</sup> and that its meaning is shaped by the circumstances of the reading process (Mitosek 1982: 137–138).

Let's assume that a scholar deals EXCLUSIVELY with basic empirical data and his own conceptual constructs. Żółkiewski believes that it's the process of communication (implicitly: not a literary work) that has to be considered as basic, or initial, empirical data (Żółkiewski 1980: 104, 105). Under this assumption, this approach forces a literary work into the category of conceptual constructs and takes away its cultural concreteness, but one has to say that it sits uneasily with our common cultural experience. It appears that the process of communication, much like processes in the history

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<sup>9</sup>If text data are not immediate, then systems must be less so.

<sup>10</sup>We shall take up this matter elsewhere, for now let's only remark that Jerzy Pelc said that it may well be disputable whether the semiotics of sign is made up of syntactics, semantics and pragmatics (Pelc 1987).

of literature or production processes, cannot be regarded as basic empirical data. The communicative situation could be considered as such data but Żółkiewski treats it as a “generalized concept” (Żółkiewski 1980: 67). The act of communication could be regarded as such data, but Żółkiewski is not interested in the individual, but in the recurrent and the repetitive. Let’s just ask a rhetorical question: must elementary initial data be the point of departure for our study?

Żółkiewski agrees with Lotman that semiotic, or semantic, analysis should be treated as the FIRST step, one PRECEDING RECONSTRUCTION of the reality modelled in the analysed texts. He also agrees that it should serve as a RUDIMENTARY documentation of dynamics, functions, goals, circumstances and typologies of cultures, one gradually supplemented with information about those phenomena coming from other sources. At the same time, however, he maintains that preliminary reconstructing hypotheses precondition semiotic analysis and must be concurrent with it, thus abolishing the priority of semiotic analysis, or at least accepting a typical hermeneutic circle, despite his strong opposition towards the hermeneutic method. He does so never minding his prior reflections where he advocates a beginning that, so to speak, gets ahead of itself, which is a paradox indeed (Żółkiewski 1979: 535, 608; Janus, Mayenowa: 47, 60; Błaszczewicz 1980: 145; Lotman 1968).

Żółkiewski wrote that the semiotic function of the semiotic object, i.e. its textuality, can be given cognitive priority only “from the perspective of methodology” (Żółkiewski 1980: 60). If we were to understand this passage as “methodological perspective, but not the subject matter perspective” then we would have to add that he also wrote that analysis of social practices, which precedes semiotic analysis, has its own epistemological difficulties and problems present in grand theories of culture (Żółkiewski 1979: 638).

Żółkiewski maintains that his idea of a double beginning, which advises starting with a textual description while already having historical reconstruction of communicative situations ready at hand, is INCONSISTENT only OSTENSIBLY. This is so, argues Żółkiewski, because already at the outset one can build various reconstructions based on previous accumulations of cultural knowledge (Gadamer’s idea of prejudgment, perhaps?) (Żółkiewski 1979: 530). This opinion, effacing the difference between what “one” knows and the system of knowledge, could’ve been legitimate, if by “inconsistent” one would falsely mean for example “workable” because it’s precisely this workability that Żółkiewski conceives here as an argument (“knowledge... enables...”). But when “inconsistent” is given correct and

logical meaning, his argument, supposed to disarm the anticipated objection, falls flat. Proposing to “begin” two things at once and AHEAD of anything else is internally contradictory, and therefore doesn’t work from the methodological point of view. Thus, perhaps by default rather than by design, this eradicates the hierarchy of cultural values embraced by the author, that being primacy of socio-pragmatics over literature and literary studies, distinguishable enough despite Żółkiewski’s assurances that literary studies and studies in literary culture complement one another.

Let’s consider THE SAME but in a different light. CLAIM: semiotic analysis is not the first step in Żółkiewski’s method. DEMONSTRATION: If we agree to differentiate between technological and semiotic planes - distinguish fishing, for example, from meanings associated with this particular activity, - and if we agree to first single out our object of inquiry, then the first step made by Żółkiewski in his method is made EITHER on the technological plane (singling out practice), OR on the utilitarian-practical-material plane (singling out utilitarian knowledge: axe, clothes), but NEVER on a semiotic plane (singling out the text), where only the second step is made. If I understand correctly the point at issue between Żółkiewski and Antonina Kłosowska (putting aside their disagreement concerning the scope of “symbolization”), for the latter the inquiry begins with the text of culture, while for the former with the social object. For Żółkiewski, the step labelled “semiotics” is neither the first, nor the last one. The OBJECT singled out by means of extra-semiotic procedures is FURTHER subject to semiotic analysis, which is then not only “transcended,” but also, so to say, “overcome,” although not exactly in the Hegelian sense of the term. This would imply that the way in which the object of inquiry is singled out doesn’t overcome heterogeneity of cultural phenomena, and that the post-semiotic phase of inquiry happening further on provides no guarantee for this overcoming to be realized.

The notion that objects singled out in this extra-semiotic mode are “SEMIOTIC objects” (because cultural phenomena “can be described as texts,” see Żółkiewski 1979: 230–231) seems illegitimate and appears to be a major source of conceptual difficulties that one should look into separately, especially if we were to agree that singling out of the OBJECT is an empirically-descriptive (if not deictic) procedure, while singling out of the TEXT is a conceptually-interpretive process. Having effaced the difference between the object and the text Żółkiewski may now argue that “we can (...) observe the text directly” (Żółkiewski 1979: 231). Direct observation ensures access to the material and sense data, but not the semiotic data.

Semiotic data is identified through a complicated cultural competence which includes the ability to refer to or reconstruct systems of cultural meanings. Before one can receive the textual message, one must first establish what type of text one is dealing with. This equally concerns both ritual texts and texts of philological significance.

## 12. TWO PRAGMATICS?

Żółkiewski considers pragmatic analysis to be immanent, intra-semiotic, or intra-textual, even Lotmanian, one is tempted to say. But he also speaks of a “separate pragmatic analysis of cultural texts carried out on a different level” (Żółkiewski 1979: 620–621), it apparently being a separate thing from semiotic analysis. The term “pragmatic analysis” has clearly two meanings, which is as disturbing as the double meanings of such terms as “text” and “function.” Soviet semioticians use them in a broad and narrow sense, the former being superordinate to the latter. What, then, are the two meanings of “pragmatic” in “pragmatic analysis”? If we were to consider pragmatics to be a part of semiotics, then the immanent character of Lotmanian pragmatics very much holds, and what Żółkiewski calls “a separate pragmatic analysis” (Żółkiewski 1979: 620) would logically appear to be some sort of pragmatic but extra-semiotic analysis, perhaps of a sociological variety. And those two sorts of analyses should be accordingly differentiated between while recognizing that they’re two entirely different things. This would draw a clear line between semiotics and sociology.

I don’t think Żółkiewski would agree with that. But there is yet another approach that one can adopt when considering this matter. Namely, one can differentiate between IMMANENT “pragmatic semiotic analysis,” which determines textual projecting of the function, and TRANSCENDENT analysis, which determines the actual functions. Or better still, between internal, textual analysis and external, communication-situational analysis. “Pragmatics” would be a generic term (and also the associated concept), while “internal pragmatics” and “external pragmatics” would be terms (and concepts) of specification. All three would fall under the term “semiotics.”

This, however, would raise the question why, and on what grounds, only one of three elements of semiotics would be split into two genera. Also, one would have to note that following this split, and because of the newly introduced notion of “external pragmatics”, the difference between semiology and sociology would become blurred. This is because “external pragmatics” emerges here as a semio-sociological concept, with its sociological aspect overshadowing the semiotic one. Without settling this issue here once and

for all, one can say that Lotman and Żółkiewski differ in such a way as a semiotician with inclinations towards logic would differ from a sociologist with inclinations towards semiotics. The former imposes language-like models on culture, the other does the same with societal-like models. They're similar in that each excessively stresses just one of the aspects of cultural reality.

One can hardly object against discussing syntactic and semantic properties of the text, but things are entirely different with pragmatics, which describes the relationship between the external subject of communication and the message, and therefore characterizes not the TEXT itself (see Żółkiewski 1979: 53–54) but the aforementioned RELATIONSHIP. One could perhaps speak of pragmatic properties of the TEXT if we were to turn the whole notion of pragmatics upside down and discuss how the text refers to the receiving subject of communication. For example, a wake-up call, an appeal, Tyrtaeus' lyrics, a courtroom speech, a sermon etc, all clearly have immanent pragmatics (which may not be of immediate interest to the sociologist of literature), which directly influences the structure of the textual MODEL of the receiver, one which is sometimes only suggested but at other times aggressively forced upon. Pragmatics that sociologists would find interesting is, so to say, empirical, although I believe that literary scholars, and also sociologists of literature, should be interested in both of those types of pragmatics, which, for example, spectacularly clash in a sacrilegious prayer discussed by Żółkiewski. And, immanent pragmatics aside, which is never neutral, it's only empirical pragmatics that is influenced by the communicative situation, current functional models of literature and its kind of circulation (Żółkiewski 1979: 54). When Żółkiewski criticises Lotman for neglecting pragmatic issues (Żółkiewski 1972: 182), what he undoubtedly means by this is social (empirical) macropragmatics, for which intra-textual pragmatics is as yet only a project of pragmatics. Apart from that, Żółkiewski seems to be endorsing the claim that semantics should build on (empirical)<sup>11</sup> pragmatics (e.g. Pelc 1987), meaning FACTUAL use of

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<sup>11</sup>If semiotic analysis is necessarily systemic in nature, then it's not true that it's logically possible to have a „pragmatic aspect of semiotic analysis” which doesn't concern the empirically extra-textual (Żółkiewski 1980: 78). In this approach, what's pragmatic is also extra-systemic. The phrase „pragmatic aspect of semiotic analysis” marries mutually exclusive notions, similarly to the phrase „semiotic object” which identifies an object that has two aspects and functions which are impossible to grasp through a single semiotic analysis or method. Żółkiewski essentially identifies the semiotic with the textual. When he speaks of semiotic analysis that has syntactic and semantic aspects, there is no doubt that he means TEXTUAL ANALYSIS. But pragmatic analysis is not an analysis of a text, even if we consider it to be semiotic, but

signs and texts. For Źółkiewski, “meaning of the text” is a value analysed as a social function contingent upon other cultural values, hierarchized by the receiver according to their significance (Źółkiewski 1979: 528). This is when Źółkiewski speaks of the pragmatic aspect of analysis. But if the “meaning of the text” is analysed also through its semantics, then we are perhaps allowed to say that semantic analysis examines interiorized meaning, while pragmatic analysis explores social exteriorization of the textual meaning. One may as well come to the conclusion that the “social role of the writer-sender, with all its ethos” is a FUNCTION of this exteriorization. One may further say, quintessentially, that the social role of the writer-sender is a FUNCTION of the social role of the receiver-reader who exteriorizes meanings of the literary work. I think that Źółkiewski would tend to agree with this view.

### 13. FINAL WORD: MULTIPLE INSPIRATIONS AND COORDINATION

Źółkiewski is responding to a variety of theoretical and methodological “impulses” (Źółkiewski 1984a: 61). He’s taking concepts and themes from various scientific disciplines and is morphing them into, to quote Morawski, singular and uneasy symbioses. His absorption can be viewed synchronically, by looking into particular configurations, or diachronically, by looking into changeability of changes. Disciplines he chooses from include, for example, Marxism, structuralism, sociology, cultural anthropology, history, and communication sciences such as semiotics and the theory of information). Each uses a different set of premises and methods, and ends up building a different world-picture. Thus, the work of Źółkiewski indeed “merges structures of various systems anew” (Źółkiewski 1980: 149), and it does so with full awareness of the risks associated with logical inconsistencies of a system built upon different languages (Kmita 1982: 50).

Lotman says that the greater the number of contradicting rules in a game, the richer the game itself (Sławiński 1971: 230). But this is not how a thinker should proceed, rather, he should be primarily concerned with the consistency of his discourse to make sure that what he has to say makes sense for others, proceeding in such a way as to offer a uniformed theoretical perspective (Lalewicz 1975: 134, 2n).

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a procedure that ANALYSES A RELATIONSHIP WITH A TEXT. To be sure, SITUATIONAL DETERMINANTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP envisaged by Źółkiewski cannot be part of semiotic analysis (Źółkiewski 1984a: 33). It resembles rather some sort of pragmatogenetism or sociologizing parapragmatics than anything similar to textual analysis (similarly, analysing storage conditions of a painting is hardly an analysis of the painting proper).

For these reasons I deemed it instructive to take a closer look at the internal organization of studies in literary culture, even if my discussion was limited to only some of its themes.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>As a way of excuse for possible omissions or deficiencies of this argument, let me just say that the present paper is but a selection of themes from my original and twice as long discussion of the topic.



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