

# What Does the Philologist's Library Make Possible?

## The Case of Stefan Szymutko

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### The invisibility of libraries

(...) the one thing that I want the students to get out of the course (...) would be a sense that thinking is not something that happens abstractly. Philosophy is not something that happens purely in the abstract, purely in the mind, that it happens in relation to books that you're holding in your hand, and pencils, and pens, and marking and reading as this active material, technical process (...).<sup>1</sup>

This is how Professor Katie Chenoweth, who studies Jacques Derrida's book collection at Princeton University, describes the goal of her course *Derrida's Library: Deconstruction and the Book*. Students learn about Derrida's philosophy by examining the marks and notes he

<sup>1</sup> *Derrida's Library: Deconstruction and the Book*, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDhKk2QiVro&feature=youtu.be&t=222>.

left on books.<sup>2</sup> If we were to talk about “philology” (or “literary theory”) instead of “philosophy,” the point made by Chenoweth would still apply. Indeed, libraries of philologists (and more broadly: scholars in the humanities) may be treated as a source of promising research material, allowing scholars to analyze the relationships between “private” writings and “public” results. Libraries are “unofficial and inconspicuous places,”<sup>3</sup> where intellectual inspirations, interests, ideas (both recorded and forgotten), professional and private acquaintances (or both), ways of reading fiction and academic texts, as well as various non-classifiable microtexts, are documented. While in the case of manuscripts, it is the archivist who creates the collection through selection and classification,<sup>4</sup> private libraries are compiled by their owners. Of course, a book collection may be forgotten, dispersed, moved into a different library or completely destroyed, but even in a fragmentary or mediated form (through stories), it enables us to see how worldview, cultural and political situation and science are intertwined.

However, such initiatives as *Derrida's Library*, where the *oeuvre* of a given philosopher as well as the marks and notes he left in his books are analyzed, are rare. Libraries of literary scholars are still “invisible” in the contemporary humanities, which draw on heritage studies and various philosophical and cultural studies theories of the archive. Ironically, the Anglo-Saxon reception of Derrida's short dissertation *Mal d'archive: Une impression freudienne* [*Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*] contributed to the marginalization of this research question. Published in French in 1995, the book popularized the very concept of the “archive.”<sup>56</sup> According to the British historian Carolyn Steedman, the French philosopher ignored the meaning of the “archive” established in the humanities, i.e. the archive as an institution which functions in a specific time and place and organizes, stores and shares various types of documents. Instead, Derrida used the concept that has been traditionally associated with auxiliary sciences of history, a place where positivist philologists conduct their research, as a key metaphor in his complex argument. Consequently, as Steedman notes, scholars could comment extensively on the relationship between the “archive” and the second Freudian topic, the history of the metaphysics of presence or Foucauldian power-knowledge, while ignoring the “inconspicuous nature of the archive,” i.e. arduous work in libraries or repositories.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See Julie Clack and Nick Barberio, “Deconstructing Derrida”, 30 June 2020, <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2018/06/18/deconstructing-derrida>.

<sup>3</sup> Magdalena Mazik, „Zaproszenie skierowane do wszystkich: biblioteka Mieczysława Porębskiego w MOCAK-u” [Invitation to everyone: Mieczysław Porębski's library at MOCAK], *Nowa Dekada Krakowska*, no. 3 (2013): 43.

<sup>4</sup> Danuta Ulicka thus describes the creative nature of archival work: “I had the opportunity to observe how Yuri Lotman's archive in Tallinn was created, how a lorry of papers was turned into folders filled with documents, to which a future historian will find it difficult to find a key.” Danuta Ulicka, „Kontrowersyjne i niekontrowersyjne wartości archiwum” [Controversial and uncontroversial aspects of the archive], in *Różne głosy: prace ofiarowane Stanisławowi Balbusowi na jubileusz siedemdziesięciolecia* [Various voices: works given as a gift to Stanisław Balbus for his 70th anniversary], ed. Dorota Wojda, Magdalena Heydel, and Andrzej Hejmej (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013), 115.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida and Daniel Ferrer, “Entre le corps écrivain et l'écriture...», entretien avec Daniel Ferrer”, *item Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 59–72; Hélène Cixous and Daniel Ferrer, “Je suis d'abord une lisante...», entretien avec Daniel Ferrer”, *item Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 45–57.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Carolyn Steedman, “Something She Called a Fever: Michelet, Derrida, and Dust”, *The American Historical Review* *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 4 (2001): 1161.

Indeed, the critical interest in Walter Benjamin's famous essay *Ich Packe Meine Bibliothek Aus: Eine Rede Uber das Sammeln* did not transform private libraries into critical objects of study.<sup>8</sup> Private libraries are studied and analyzed in the greater context of the "material turn" or the "turn to things" only if they are part of an artistic installation that may be read through the lenses of the Derridean or Foucauldian "archive" (especially in art criticism).<sup>9</sup> In French editorial studies, where, for example, notes on the margins of books are potentially interesting as a research problem from the point of view of the theory of the text, private libraries or book collections are never analyzed as a source of knowledge about the context of the creative writing process in the humanities. While Pierre-Marc de Biasi points out that "textual genetics" may be considered an auxiliary discipline for the broadly understood history of science, he does not think that book collections of scholars in the humanities constitute a separate (and interesting) research problem.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, this problem has been addressed only two times in *Genesis*, the flagship journal of genetic criticism which has been published since 1992, in an interview with Derrida and in an interview with Hélène Cixous.<sup>11</sup>

In the Polish humanities, private libraries of literary scholars, still associated with the stereotypical image of a noble and distant "professor," are analyzed almost exclusively in essays and articles published in special issues of journals devoted to the memory of a late scholar.<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of such articles, however, are written as biographical or even hagiographic essays, which often include lists of books. The commemorative and memorial context of the publication is not without significance for the form and content of the texts. In most

<sup>8</sup> See Homi Bhabha, "Unpacking My Library Again", *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 28, no. 1 (1995): 5–18; Joseph D. Lewandowski, "Unpacking: Walter Benjamin and His Library", *Libraries & Culture* 34, no. 2 (1999): 151–57; Alberto Manguel, *Packing My Library: An Elegy and Ten Digressions*. (London: Yale University Press, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Shep Steiner, "Rozpakowując (Ich) Biblioteki – o Umiejscawianiu Dwóch Politycznych Archiwów" [Unpacking (Their) Libraries: On Locating the Radical Archives of Walter Benjamin and Martha Rosler], *Tytuł Roboczy: Archiwum/Archive*, no. 3 (2009): 25–31 (the essay is devoted to *The Martha Rosler Archive*, installation exhibited by the artist in various forms since 2005); Tomasz Załuski, "Archiwum, czyli podmiot na półce" [Archive, or the subject on a shelf], *Tytuł roboczy: Archiwum/Archive*, no. 3 (2009): 28–29 (a response to Steiner's essay).

<sup>10</sup> "(...) almost all of the humanities and social sciences also have some direct connection with the genetics of the text (...)" Pierre-Marc de Biasi, *Génétiq ue des textes* (Paris: CNRS, 2011), 184–5.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida and Daniel Ferrer, "« Entre le corps écrivain et l'écriture... », entretien avec Daniel Ferrer", *Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 59–72; Hélène Cixous and Daniel Ferrer, "« Je suis d'abord une lisante... », entretien avec Daniel Ferrer", *Genesis* 17, no. 1 (2001): 45–57.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *inter alia*: C. Kłak *Biblioteka i glosy Stanisława Pigońa* [Library and voices of Stanisław Pigoń]; L. Forczek *Księgozbiór Stanisława Pigońa w Bibliotece Głównej rzeszowskiej WSP* [Stanisław Pigoń's book collection in the Main Library of WSP in Rzeszów], in: *Wokół Stanisława Pigońa. Nad warsztatem naukowym i literackim Uczzonego* [Around Stanisław Pigoń: On the scholar's scientific and literary workshop], ed. C. Kłak, Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, Rzeszów 1983; I. Płukis *Biblioteka Konrada Górskiego w zbiorach Towarzystwa Naukowego w Toruniu* [Konrad Górski's Library in the collection of the Scientific Society in Toruń], in: *Konrada Górskiego świat literatury, teatru i języka. Materiały konferencji zorganizowanej w setną rocznicę urodzin Profesora* [Konrad Górski's world of literature, theater and language: Proceedings from the conference organized to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Professor Górski's birth], ed. W. Sawrycki, J. Speina, Towarzystwo Naukowe w Toruniu–Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu, Toruń 1996; B. Chodźko *Dary dla Marii Renaty Mayenowej. Rękopiśmienne dedykacje w księgozbiorze MRM* [Gifts for Maria Renata Mayenowa: Handwritten dedications in MRM's book collection], in: *Obecność. Maria Renata Mayenowa (1908-1988)* [Presence: Maria Renata Mayenowa (1908-1988)], ed. B. Chodźko, E. Feliksiak, M. Olesiewicz, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2006; M. Mikiewicz *Biblioteka* [Library], in: *Erazm Kuźma. Słownik biografii i idei* [Erazm Kuźma: Dictionary of biography and ideas], ed. J. Madejski, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2016.

articles, the book collection and the textual (and not only textual) traces it contains are analyzed in order to create or consolidate the public image of its former owner in the academic community.

While they are often presented by libraries and other cultural institutions in the form of memorial exhibition rooms,<sup>13</sup> private book collections of philologists paradoxically still wait to be discovered. Indeed, it is time to confront the research potential hidden on the margins of books read by philologists with the study of a specific case. I will not analyze the library of a well-established literature critic, such as Stanisław Pigoń, Henryk Markiewicz or Wacław Borowy. Their private libraries have already been inscribed in the consciousness of the Polish humanities, for better or worse. The library of Stefan Szymutko, a Silesian literary scholar and essayist, known mostly, if not exclusively, for his book of essays *Nagrobek ciotki Cili* [Aunt Cila's tombstone], has never been analyzed. Located in the vestibule of the secretarial office at the College of Individual Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Silesia, it deserves critical attention because the queries conducted in it provided "facts and clues that complicate what we know and believe to be true" about Szymutko.<sup>14</sup>

### Notes, marks and flashcards as a source of discoveries

At the most basic level, research conducted at Szymutko's library brought to light and critical attention the essay *Niepokój zwyczajności* [The restless everyday], which was neither included in the only available bibliographical list of Szymutko's works<sup>15</sup> nor discussed by its author.<sup>16</sup> However, Szymutko's library is worthy of critical attention for reasons that go beyond "discovering" a text that has not been included in official bibliographies. Szymutko's library is the only relatively complete excerpt from the philologist's lost archive. Szymutko died suddenly, failing to officially donate his materials to a specific institution. As his relatives emphasized many times in private conversations, Szymutko wrote most of his articles on a computer, which was disposed of a few years after his death. Respectively, after some time, Szymutko threw away handwritten notes, typescripts or even private letters. Notes, marks and flashcards in his books – the testimonies of his writerly presence – are therefore the only source of knowledge that cannot be found in the official body of Szymutko's texts.

It should be emphasized that contrary to initial expectations the works of Martin Heidegger, Derrida or Gilles Deleuze, i.e. the authors whom the Silesian philologist referred to the most in his late essays (especially in *Nagrobek ...*), are not the source of many discoveries. Szymut-

<sup>13</sup>As was the case with, for example, Mieczysław Porębski's library, which may be studied at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków.

<sup>14</sup>This is how Danuta Ulicka wrote about the innovative nature of the Dawid Hopensztand archive she discovered, see Danuta Ulicka, "«Archiwum» i archiwum" ['The archive' and the archive], *Teksty Drugie : teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja*. 2017 (2017): 301.

<sup>15</sup>Alicja Szałagan, "Stefan Szymutko (1958-2009)", *Polscy pisarze i badacze literatury przełomu XX i XXI wieku* [Polish writers and literary scholars at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries], 23 April 2019, [http://www.ppihl.waw.pl/mediawiki/index.php?title=Stefan\\_SZYMUTKO](http://www.ppihl.waw.pl/mediawiki/index.php?title=Stefan_SZYMUTKO).

<sup>16</sup>Stefan Szymutko, „Niepokój zwyczajności” [The restless everyday], in *Poszukiwanie realności: literatura, dokument, kresy. Prace ofiarowane Tadeuszowi Bujnickiemu* [Searching for reality: Literature, document, borderlands: Works for Tadeusz Bujnicki], ed. Stanisław Gawliński and Wojciech Ligęza (Kraków: Universitas, 2003), 233–38.

ko limited his reading of philosophical texts to writing down page numbers and key words (which referred to the most interesting parts of the text) on flashcards, which he later used in his essays. An exception to this rule is Szymutko's copy of the first edition of Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. A certain pattern emerges in the notes:

98 – difference in recording body [EPILOGUE]  
 103 – desire to be present [EPILOGUE]  
 and Thoth in The Phaedrus (SiC)  
 (...)  
 133 – silent signifier [EPILOGUE]  
 (...)  
 175 – savage: silent (SiC)  
 319 – supplement as a source  
 [POSSIBLY: POST-EPILOGUE]<sup>17</sup>

Notes in square brackets suggest that Szymutko intended to use the quotes in his new book. However, they are nowhere to be found in *Nagrobek... or Przeciw marzeniu?* [Against the dream?]. Most likely, Szymutko planned to use the selected fragments of *Of Grammatology* in a new collection of essays on Silesia, which he did not have time to write,<sup>18</sup> or, as the acronym "SiC" indicates, in an unwritten book on Teodor Parnicki's *Słowo i ciało* [Word and body]. In this particular case, the notes indicate what Szymutko had planned to write. The copy of Derrida's book is interesting for one more reason. Let us look at the following quote:

One does not ask how much of presence and how much of representation are found in presence.<sup>19</sup>

Szymutko wrote on the margin: "Maybe one does ask nevertheless." This slightly humorous remark suggests that the philologist studied the problem of inalienable and indisputable reality: he also commented on it in the notes left on the margins of his other books.

The study of Szymutko's library also allows us to reconstruct (of course, always with slight hesitation) the fundamental problems of practically inaccessible texts, such as, for example, his M.A. thesis devoted to the analysis of time and space in Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz's *Czerwone tarcze* [Red shields]. Let us look at a number of remarks Szymutko made on the margins of Iwaszkiewicz's novel:

<sup>17</sup>Polish version: Jacques Derrida, *O grammatologii*, trans. Bogdan Banasiak (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo KR, Robert Reszke, 1999) Stefan Szymutko's Library [hereinafter referred to as SSL], ref. no. 155. The reference numbers are consistent with the collection's catalog I received from Kalina Jaglarz, who is in charge of the collection. If no reference number is given, I use "[n.d.]" instead. I mark the omitted fragments of the notes with an ellipsis sign. I mark illegible fragments with "[?]". The spelling of Szymutko's notes is original.

<sup>18</sup>In an interview from 2003, Szymutko talked about his plans to write a new book: "I hope that I will one day come back to Silesia of my childhood and youth (...) I will write about people who do not appear in *Nagrobek...* or are mentioned only briefly." Stefan Szymutko, „Ciotka Cila idzie do Europy. Ze Stefanem Szymutką rozmowę przeprowadziła Wiesława Konopelska" [Aunt Cila goes to Europe: Wiesława Konopelska interviews Stefan Szymutka], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone* [What is literature still for? Scattered writings], ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 217.

<sup>19</sup>Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 322.

In Red S., reality is (usually) a system that tests all concepts<sup>20</sup>  
 concrete life (current history begins to prevail again)<sup>21</sup>  
 Compromised word<sup>22</sup>

These insightful notes on the margins of *Czerwone tarcze* demonstrate that the philologist first experimented with the concept of the word in the context of non-linguistic history when he was writing his M.A. thesis. He further developed this problem in his doctoral dissertation devoted to Teodor Parnicki's *Koniec "Zgody Narodów"* [The End of "peace among nations"]. Moreover, the notes in which Szymutko summarized individual chapters also contain ideas that he would develop in his later essays:

as it has already been said, art is breaking out from (...) real time, just as the artistic space is breaking out from a real space with its own 1) political 2) religious 3) and social baggage<sup>23</sup>

The world functions in two ways: the subject penetrates it in order to evoke the image of the past, but eventually it is the world that evokes this moment, and it does not always correspond to what the subject intended.<sup>24</sup>

Notes in Iwaszkiewicz's novel force us to revise the opinion that it was only in his doctoral dissertation that Szymutko "came up with" the problem of the relationship between the subject, language, text, and reality, which he later studied throughout his entire academic career. It turns out that Szymutko had interpreted literary texts in terms of topics and problems that he defined as essential at the end of his life already at the beginning of the 1980s.<sup>25</sup> For example, in Janusz Sławiński's introduction to the book *Przestrzeń i literatura* [Space and literature], Szymutko thus comments on Sławiński's observation that "the represented space may emerge from the text only to the extent to which it was designed in it (...)" by means of descriptive sentences:

It only appears to be the case; in Iwaszkiewicz's novel descriptive sentences shape the space only slightly: the space emerges on the margins of the story.<sup>26</sup>

Szymutko developed the problem of storytelling on the margins and the non-linguistic reality "on the margin of the word" twenty years later in a paper devoted to Sławiński's *Semantyka wypowiedzi*

<sup>20</sup>Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, *Czerwone tarcze* [Red shields] (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1971), 103 SSL, ref. no. 1802.

<sup>21</sup>Iwaszkiewicz, 94.

<sup>22</sup>Iwaszkiewicz, 181.

<sup>23</sup>Iwaszkiewicz, 189.

<sup>24</sup>Iwaszkiewicz, 194.

<sup>25</sup>See: Stefan Szymutko, „Zaczyn” [Leaven], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone*, ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 175–91.

<sup>26</sup>Janusz Sławiński, „Przestrzeń w literaturze: elementarne rozróżnienia i wstępne oczywistości” [Space in literature: Elementary distinctions and preliminary obvious statements], in *Przestrzeń i literatura* [Space and literature], ed. Aleksander Okopień-Sławiński and Michał Głowiński (Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1978), 16 SSL, ref. no. [n.d.].

narracyjnej [Semantics of the narrative utterance].<sup>27</sup> Extensive notes made by Szymutko on the copy of Miron Białoszewski's *Odczepić się* [Unhinge] further confirm that the philologist had consistently been working with a specific set of topics and problems.<sup>28</sup> Szymutko thus sums up his – unfortunately partially illegible – analysis of the poem *Lato jak liść w rowie* [Summer like a leaf in a ditch]:

It does not end with exaltation, there are things that crush exaltation into dust, like the uprising (...) <sup>29</sup>

The analogy between Warsaw in the sun and Warsaw in the Uprising is discredited; it is revealed how insignificant the comparison to reality is. The image of Warsaw created with the help of uprising terms is an illusion; the real image of Warsaw is something far more important. That is why I criticize, that is why I distance myself from the meaning expressed in the title (an autonomous creation): not everything may be thus colored as it was in the previous poem. (...) <sup>30</sup>

Such an interpretation of Białoszewski's poem, which Szymutko wrote, most likely, at an early stage of his university education,<sup>31</sup> could also appear in *Przeciw marzeniu?* – his last book published during his lifetime, in which he asked, “how reality hinders literature, literary imagination, and dreams.”<sup>32</sup>

A separate category of interesting pre-texts are flashcards (notes, summaries) at the end of fiction or academic books that Szymutko, most likely, intended to review. Such notes give us insight into unwritten reviews and also testify to the philologist's interest in the subjective aspect of critical and theoretical texts. For example, in Ryszard Nycz's *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości* [Literature as a trace of reality], Szymutko was interested not so much in the concept presented in the book, but in Nycz's worldview or even his personality:

1) Nycz is very cynical – the man is only culture, besides that: the darkness of biology

(...)

6) Nycz is very dark: he does not create, nihilism, passing, impermanence

(...)

10) Nycz is presumptuous – you have to notice that (see, especially, Białoszewski)<sup>33</sup>

<sup>27</sup>Stefan Szymutko, „Semantyka wypowiedzi narracyjnej – problemów ciąg dalszy” [Semantics of the narrative utterance: Further problems], in *Przeciw marzeniu?: Jedenaście przykładów, ośmioro pisarzy* [Against the dream?: Eleven examples, eight writers] (Katowice: Wydawn. Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 33. This article was first published in *Sporne i bezsporne problemy współczesnej wiedzy o literaturze* [Disputable and undisputable problems in contemporary literary studies] (ed. J. Abramowska, W. Bolecki, R. Nycz, Warsaw 2002). It is a longer version of a paper delivered by Szymutko at a conference organized by the Institute of Literary Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences in 2001.

<sup>28</sup>Szymutko wrote his first academic paper on Białoszewski (see Stefan Szymutko, “Blaski i cienie Helikonu na Marszałkowskiej” [The lights and shadows of Helikon on Marszałkowska], in *W kręgu dwudziestowiecznego realizmu* [In the circles of twentieth-century realism,] ed. Włodzimierz Wójcik (Wydawn. Uniw. Śląskiego, 1983), 91–107). He primarily analyzed *Szумы, zlepy, ciągi* [Noises, clumps, strings] in it. The observations made by Szymutko on the margins of *Odczepić się* were not used in this article.

<sup>29</sup>Miron Białoszewski, *Odczepić się* [Unhinge] (Warsaw: Państwowy instytut wydawniczy, 1978), 48 SSL, ref. no. 781.

<sup>30</sup>Białoszewski, 49.

<sup>31</sup>This is evidenced by the fact that the notes on *Odczepić się* and *Czerwone tarcze* are similar in size and complexity. When he started to work on his doctoral dissertation, Szymutko copied most of his comments on flashcards.

<sup>32</sup>Stefan Szymutko, *Przeciw marzeniu?: Jedenaście przykładów, ośmioro pisarzy* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2006), 7.

<sup>33</sup>Ryszard Nycz, *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości: poetyka epifanii w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej* [Literature as a trace of reality: The poetics of epiphany in new Polish literature] (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas”, 2001) SSL, ref. no. 577.

Szymutko made the following comments on his copy of Krzysztof Uniłowski's *Koloniści i koczownicy* [Colonists and nomads]:

- 2) Well, he likes to stir the waters: in a fishing sense – the title of the review: The Stirrer  
 (...)
   
12) U does not want to see: reality is dangerous  
 (...)
   
77 –KU's nihilism<sup>34</sup>

In such notes, Szymutko primarily paid attention to stylistic details and the manner in which the author developed their argument. He accused Nycz of, among others, arbitrary selection of quotes or even “blackmailing readers with quotes,” observing at the same time that “well-chosen quotes” “supposedly [exemplify] the same strategy, but it is something else.” Respectively, in Dariusz Nowacki's *Wielkie wczoraj* [The great yesterday], Szymutko saw “Quotes – clichés,” “Archaisms: alas, Gad, erst,” and the language of advertising slogans.<sup>35</sup> In Przemysław Czapliński's *Mikrologi ze śmiercią* [Micrologues with death], he pointed out that the author used the same narrative trick in all essays in the book:

detective revival of the argument – isn't it too easy, isn't it too inadequate?<sup>36</sup>

Szymutko also criticized Czapliński for “intellectualizing” and “intellectualizing as the experience of the speaker,” thus demonstrating that he is critical of the unwritten rules of academic writing.<sup>37</sup> But why did the philologist focus so much on the linguistic layer of the works he read? We may assume that he believed that literary and critical texts should be governed by similar poetics. Szymutko analyzed this topic in essays devoted to Janusz Sławiński.<sup>38</sup> He also suggested several times that the “academic” and the “literary” come together in his texts, creating within them a unique mode of expression.<sup>39</sup> However, we are only able to understand how important this topic was for Szymutko, and how closely it was related to his mode of reading literary works, when we analyze the books in his private collection. Szymutko further comments on this question in the notes he made for his unwritten reviews:

<sup>34</sup>Krzysztof Uniłowski, *Koloniści i koczownicy: o najnowszej prozie i krytyce literackiej* [Colonists and nomads: On the latest prose and literary criticism] (Kraków: Universitas, 2002) SSL, ref. no. 1345.

<sup>35</sup>Dariusz Nowacki, *Wielkie wczoraj* [The great yesterday] (Kraków: Zielona Sowa, 2004) SSL, ref. no. 667.

<sup>36</sup>Przemysław Czapliński, *Mikrologi ze śmiercią: motywy tanatyczne we współczesnej literaturze polskiej* [Micrologues with death: Thanatian motifs in contemporary Polish literature] (Poznań: Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne, 2001) SSL, ref. no. 1833. In the note on the side, Szymutko explains why he thinks that Czapliński's book reads like a “detective” story: “there is a mystery in every essay.”

<sup>37</sup>Szymutko criticizes them, among others in the introduction to his habilitation dissertation, see Stefan Szymutko, “Niewyrażalna i niedostępna rzeczywistość” [Inexpressible and inaccessible reality], in *Rzeczywistość jako zwątpienie w literaturze i literaturoznawstwie* [Reality as doubt in literature and literary studies] (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 1998), 9–31.

<sup>38</sup>See Stefan Szymutko, „Ciało profesora Sławińskiego” [Professor Sławiński's body], *Teksty Drugie: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 4, no. 28 (1994): 43–52; Stefan Szymutko, „Bycie humanistą. O artykułach Janusza Sławińskiego w «Tekstach» (1972-1981)” [Being a humanist: Janusz Sławiński's articles in „Teksty” (1972-1981)], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone*, ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 119–23.

<sup>39</sup>“As a literary scholar, I have an incredible opportunity to prepare: as a writer, I look around in literature, I look for a potential place for myself (...), I practice tricks on the sidelines (i.e. in (supposedly) academic texts, I quietly prepare myself for literature).” Szymutko, “Zaczyn”, 182.



- 4) Felling so close to one another: the nameless [?]
- 5) Post-new wave poetical language: breaking clichés etc.
- (...)
- 8) Text corrected [?] stylistically? – what does that mean? A poet! Bring out the meaning of formulas<sup>40</sup>

Although it is difficult to say what Szymutko meant by saying that he “feels close” to Uniłowski,<sup>41</sup> the fact that he draws attention to Uniłowski’s “post-new wave” style in the next comment leads us to perhaps the most interesting discovery. Szymutko’s copy of *Spór o poezję* [Dispute about poetry], with new-wave manifestos of the Silesian poetry group “Kontekst” [Context] (Tadeusz Sławek, Andrzej Szuba, Stanisław Piskor and Wojciech Paźniewski), is full of marks and notes.<sup>42</sup> Certain problematic consistency may be found in the fragments of essays that Szymutko most likely commented on when he was still a student. They all concern the relationship between the artistic form and reality, defined by the members of “Kontekst” in terms of historically changing conditions of social communication.<sup>43</sup> As we know, Szymutko had been interested in the relationship between semantics of reality and literary texts throughout his academic career, as exemplified by his studies of Parnicki’s writing and his late essays.<sup>44</sup> However, Szymutko never openly stated in his published texts that he found inspiration in the aesthetic program of “Kontekst,”<sup>45</sup> which he may have known firsthand. Therefore, it is possible that it was *Spór o poezję* and the young Silesian literary and academic community<sup>46</sup> that constituted a point of reference for Szymutko’s early criticism.<sup>47</sup>

Apart from smaller traces,<sup>48</sup> such a hypothesis is confirmed by *Zrozumieć Parnickiego* [Understanding Parnicki], the book version of Szymutko’s doctoral thesis, in which the scholar discussed an

<sup>40</sup>Uniłowski, *Koloniści i koczownicy*.

<sup>41</sup>Apart from the obvious fact that both scholars were colleagues, or even friends, as confirmed by Uniłowski’s dedications in books given to Szymutko.

<sup>42</sup>Włodzimierz Paźniewski et al., *Spór o poezję* [Dispute about poetry] (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1977) SSL, ref. no. 1226.

<sup>43</sup>I discuss this question in more detail in: “Rzeczywistość w stanie wyjątkowym – filolog – literatura. Dwa komentarze do praktyk filologicznych Stefana Szymutki” [Reality in a state of emergency - philologist - literature: Two comments on the philological practices of Stefan Szymutko], in *Imiona anomii: literatura wobec doświadczenia stanu wyjątkowego* [Names of anomie: Literature in the face of the experience of the state of emergency], ed. Piotr Sadzik (Warsaw: PWN, 2019), 321–49.

<sup>44</sup>Cf. Stefan Szymutko, „Parnicki - ostatni pisarz bytu” [Parnicki - the last writer of being], in *Po co literatura jeszcze jest? Pisma rozproszone*, ed. Grzegorz Olszański and Mariusz Jochemczyk (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2013), 27–37; Szymutko, „Niewyraźalna i niedostępna rzeczywistość”.

<sup>45</sup>Szymutko’s debut text, his review of Piskor’s novel *Ruchomy kraj* [Moving country] (*Poglądy*, no. 8 (1981): 12), suggests that as well.

<sup>46</sup>In 1980 or 1981, an essay by Szymutko was to be published in a book edited by Andrzej Szuba and Marek Pytasz devoted to the Silesian artistic circles (I provide this information after: “Wydawnictwo «Śląsk» przygotowuje almanach literacki «Młode środowisko literackie». Z Witoldem Nawrockim rozmawiał Janusz Karkoszka” [The publishing house “Śląsk” is preparing the literary almanac “Young literary community.” Janusz Karkoszka interviews Witold Nawrocki], *Trybuna Robotnicza*, no. 19 (1980): 3). The book was probably never published, and instead, in 1981 the publishing house “Śląsk” began publishing the series *Studio. Almanach literacko-artystyczny* [Studio: A literary and artistic almanac]. However, Szymutko never published in *Studio*.

<sup>47</sup>Szymutko underlined this quote from *Spór o poezję*: “(...) if you constantly set your sails to catch new winds and explore new routes, you are not an avant-garde artist. You are a true avant-garde artist, if you go ‘deep into the structure’ of a given epoch or a certain period.” Paźniewski et al., *Spór o poezję*, 154. See Paweł Sarna, *Śląska awangarda: poeci grupy Kontekst* [The Silesian avant-garde: poets of the Kontekst group] (Katowice: Katowickie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne, 2004), 28–35.

<sup>48</sup>For example, in an article about Białoszewski, Szymutko refers to exactly the same fragment of an interview with Białoszewski as Piskor in *Spór o poezję*. Of course, Szymutko underlined the quotation in his copy of the book. See Szymutko, „Blaski i cienie Helikonu na Marszałkowskiej”, 91; Paźniewski et al., *Spór o poezję*, 29.

innovative method of reading Parnicki's novel.<sup>49</sup> At the end of the book, Parnicki is praised for creating a "new perception of reality in literature."<sup>50</sup> According to the philologist, Parnicki's novels are an inspiration for "the cultural avant-garde of the future."<sup>51</sup> Such remarks are rooted in the avant-garde understanding of literary form as a harmony between the structure of the text and the structure of the epoch in which it is created, characteristic for "Kontekst." It turns out that Szymutko's book, which gave rise to the so-called Silesian school of Parnicki and is thus considered his most "academic" publication, has a lot in common with the aesthetic program of the "Kontekst" poetry group.

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The study of Szymutko's private library is a source of new and insightful observations, so much so that private libraries of literary scholars should become an obligatory object of study in the cultural history of philology. The analyzed textual traces found in books allowed me to discuss Szymutko's unpublished (and sometimes unwritten) interpretative ideas and they also remind us of an apparently obvious thing: "Behind the auctorial narrative of academic works" there is always a real person, rooted in time and space, with his "personal anxieties," beliefs, likes and dislikes.<sup>52</sup> Notes, marks and flashcards found in Szymutko's book collection make us reflect on the author's presence in all philological texts, regardless of their superficial stylistic features. Therefore, they allow us to notice the initial context of an academic text, which either becomes blurred in the process of canonization and depersonalization, or, as in the case of Szymutko, remains unnoticed. Notes and marks in books also prove that the stereotype of the library of a scholar in the humanities as a black box, criticized by Julian Krzyżanowski in 1939, in which "idleness," "indolence," and "detachment from everyday life" are cultivated, is simply false.<sup>53</sup> As Peter Burke writes,

(...) knowledge is situated, in contrast to the traditional view of scholars as remote from the world, in laboratories, observatories, libraries and other ivory towers. Scholars do need 'a space of their own' in order to work without distraction, but this remoteness is only relative. They take the world (...) into the lab with them (...).<sup>54</sup>

translated by Małgorzata Olsza

<sup>49</sup>I discuss Szymutko's doctoral thesis in more detail in "Additional Problems with Stefan Szymutko's History", *Forum of Poetics*, no. 6 (2016): 68–79.

<sup>50</sup>Stefan Szymutko, *Zrozumieć Parnickiego* [Understanding Parnicki] (Katowice: Gnome Books, 1992), 228.

<sup>51</sup>Szymutko, 221.

<sup>52</sup>Szymutko, „Bycie humanistą. O artykułach Janusza Sławińskiego w «Tekstach» (1972-1981)", 109.

<sup>53</sup>Julian Krzyżanowski, „Uwagi o studiach polonistycznych" [Notes on Polish studies], in *Uniwersyteckie Studium Polonistyczne: Informator* [Polish Studies Department at The University of Warsaw: Brochure] (Warsaw: Koło Polonistów Studentów Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego im. Józefa Piłsudskiego, 1939), 14. I would like to thank Marzena Franke, head of the Wacław Borowy Library at the Faculty of Polish Studies at the University of Warsaw, for showing me the brochure.

<sup>54</sup>P. Burke, *A social history of knowledge*, vol. 2, Polity, Cambridge 2000, p. 4.

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# KEYWORDS

STEFAN SZYMUTKO

philology

**ABSTRACT:**

In the first part of the article, I demonstrate that private libraries of scholars in the humanities (including literary scholars) have still not become legitimate objects of study and explain the reasons behind it. In the second part of the article, I analyze a case study: Stefan Szymutko's book collection. The analysis of notes, marks and flashcards found on the margins of books demonstrates that various types of pre-texts and "soft facts" allow scholars to expand their knowledge about Szymutko as an academic, literary critic, and writer.

*libraries of scholars in the humanities*

PRIVATE LIBRARIES

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