

PROFESSOR STEFANIA SKWARCZYŃSKA
(17th November 1902 — 28th April 1988)

Stefania Skwarczyńska — professor emeritus of the University of Łódź; founder and editor-in-chief of the international biannual "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich" ("Problems of Literary Genres") — died in Łódź in the last days of April 1988. Her death means irretrievable loss for literary studies, not only in Poland. Professor Skwarczyńska was the most outstanding Polish theoretician of literature, whose authority was widely acknowledged in Europe and in the world. Scientific ideas that inspired the foundation of "Problems" were highly appreciated in many countries throughout the world, where local publications of the sort were modeled on the periodical Skwarczyńska initiated.

Thematic attractiveness of Skwarczyńska's conceptions as well as her personal authority brought many authors of all continents to publish their dissertations in "Problems".

Professor Skwarczyńska had always remained faithful to her doctoral oath which required that sciences be cultivated "non sordidi lucri causa, nec ad vanam captandum gloriam, sed quo veritas propagatur, per quam lux humani clarius refulgeat"—not for worthless profit or vain fame, but in order to testify to the truth, as only through truth the glory of human genius shines the more clearly. That is why the death of that scholar plunged into mourning her countless friends and students for whom she had been—and will always remain—a most remarkable ideal of a scholar and of a human being.

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Stefania Skwarczyńska devoted her whole, unusually active life to educational and scientific work. In 1925 she took a doctoral degree in philosophy within Polish studies (under professor J. Kleiner) at Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów. She did her French studies under such renowned professors as Roman Porembowicz and Zygmunt Czerny. In 1937 she presented in Lwów her postdoctoral (habilitation) thesis in the theory of literature (the disseration in question, *Teoria listu* = theory of letter = entered the respective research as its perennial part). In the

years 1937—1939 Skwarczyńska held the position of associate professor at Lwów University.

The hardships of war time awaited her in the years 1939—1945. Her husband, lieutenant-colonel in the Polish Army, had gone through the September Campaign, and was imprisoned in a war camp. Stefania Skwarczyńska herself, together with her closest family, was transported to Kazakhstan (1940). After coming back, in spite of her impaired health, she conducted underground teaching and edited conspirational periodicals: "Służba Państwu" (In service of the state) and "Kobieta w Walce" (Woman in warfare) as well as small volumes of poetry: *Wiersze płomienne* (*Fiery poems*) and *Śpiew wojny* (*Song of the war*).

At the beginning of May 1945 Skwarczyńska came to Łódź with a repatriation transport to settle down in the city with which she had been associated since the pre-war years: in 1939 she directed the Department of History of Literature and Theory of Literature of the Łódź branch of Free Polish University. In the years 1945—1951 and 1958—1973 she conducted the Department of Theory of Literature, Łódź University (in 1973 it became the Institute of Theory of Literature, Theatre and Film). She was nominated associate professor in 1939 and full professor in 1957. Professor Skwarczyńska participated in the works of the highest Polish scientific institutions: she was a member of Polish Academy of Learning (1951); correspondent member of Polish Academy of Sciences (1971); its full member (1975). In 1981, Stefania Skwarczyńska was awarded doctorate honoris causa of the University of Łódź. She retired in 1973.

Professor Stefania Skwarczyńska was a founder of the Łódź annual "Prace Polonistyczne" (Polish Philology Works), 1937, as well as the annual "Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich" (Problems of Literary Genres), 1958. She was also a member of the Scientific Society in Lwów (1938); a cofounder of Łódź Scientific Society (1946); of Warsaw Society of the Friends of Science (1951); a committee member of Association Internationale de la Litterature Comparée (1963—68) and the chairperson of International Committee of Slavonic Poetics and Stylistics (1969—1978). Skwarczyńska was a laureate of numerous scholarly awards, and was honoured, too, with many state distinctions (Officer Cross of the Order of Poland's Restitution, 1966—among others) and the local ones.

Professor Stefania Skwarczyńska has trained large numbers of literary theoreticians, some of whom are now university professors. For years she had been a one man-institution.

During the last 30 years Professor Skwarczyńska concentrated the maximum of her inexhaustible energy on the periodical she edited, carefully preparing each issue and promoting new texts and authors. She carried on a rich correspondence with hundreds of people, dispersed, literally, all over the world. These immense sets of letters are stored

mainly in the department of manuscripts of the University Library in Łódź and partly in private collections.

Professor Skwarczyńska's last years were but a dramatic struggle against the progressing disease that interfered with her scholarly occupations. Yet, almost until her death Professor Skwarczyńska watched over her periodical and directed the editorial committee. The editorial staff, continuing the idea of their Master, desire to make the periodical founded by Professor Skwarczyńska a singular extension of her life.

The universality of Stefania Skwarczyńska's scholarly interests resulted in an impressive multitude of books, disserations, studies, articles and reviews counting more than 500 items. A good deal of detailed commentaries have so far been written on this abundant output. Nonetheless, the preparation of a thorough synthesis—one that should be expected to come in the future—will demand a tremendous effort.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Jubilee publications dedicated to Stefania Skwarczyńska: "Prace Polonistyczne" series XX, Łódź — Wrocław, 1965 (in there: bibliography of Skwarczyńska's publications on the 40th anniversary of her scientific work); "Pamiętnik Literacki", 1972, vol. 9, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of Skwarczyńska's birth; Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, series 1. No 2, Folia Polonica, Łódź 1975, on the 50th anniversary of Skwarczyńska's first book; *Documentation of S. Skwarczyńska's research output*, prepared by A. Kluba-Połatyńska and A. Sorbjan, ed. S. Kaszyński, Łódź 1984.

Jan Trzynadlowski

editor-in-chief

"Zagadnienia Rodzajów Literackich"

("Problems of Literary Genres")