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## Professor Stefan Zabłocki (1932–2001) – the Founder and the First Head of the Department of Classics at the University of Silesia in Katowice

**S**tefan Kazimierz Zabłocki was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1932 in Rybnik, a son of Aleksander and Teresa of Wroński. As a child, he witnessed the dramatic events of the World War II, which left a permanent imprint on his personality. As a young man, he decided to study in Wrocław, the city he was particularly attached to. There, in 1955 he obtained MA in Polish language and literature and five years later he was accorded another Master's degree, this time in Classics. His *curriculum vitae* gives evidence to how brilliant his academic career was. Every stage of his scholarly *cursus honorum* in the field of Classics would commence in accordance to the dates of the consecutive Olympic games of the modern era. In 1964 he obtained his PhD, in 1968 – became an assistant professor. A full professorship he was given in 1978, two years after he had left the Institute of Classics at the Wrocław University and started working in the Gdańsk University.

Professor Zabłocki considered himself a successor to Prof. Jerzy Krókowski, who in 1957 founded the Department of Neo-Latin literature at the Wrocław University<sup>1</sup>. The list of the Professor Zabłocki's scholarly publications proves conclusively that during his tenure in Wrocław he actually reached the peak of his activity.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. S. Zabłocki: "Jerzy Krókowski (17 X 1898–8 IX 1967)". *Eos* 1967/1968, T. 57, fasc. 1, pp. 7–31.

In Gdańsk, first he focused his efforts into organising a Department of German language and literature, and subsequently, he concentrated on improving and developing the academic capabilities of the Department of Classics.

I first met Professor Zabłocki in February 1976, in Warsaw, during the conference on *The Newest Aims and Methods in Researching the Ancient Culture* held by The Committee of the Ancient Culture Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences<sup>2</sup>. I was given the opportunity to participate in that event by my late Master – Professor Andrzej Kunisz. The paper of Stefan Zabłocki (who was still an assistant professor at the time) on *Selected Problems with Editing Polish-Latin Authors* concluded the conference<sup>3</sup>. The reception of ancient culture was not an overwhelmingly attractive subject to me as a student working on his MA thesis on the social history of Rome, yet, I was deeply impressed by his presentation. By the way, my interest in the paper and its author had been incited by one of the Professor's PhD candidates who held Latin classes at the then Humanistic Faculty at the University of Silesia in Katowice.

I did not come across Professor Zabłocki until a dozen or so years later at the Faculty of Languages and Literature at the University of Silesia, the Dean of which was at the time the then associate professor Jan Malicki. We met there occasionally, for in 1989 I was offered an extra appointment at the Faculty. Because of the initiative and efforts given by Professor Zabłocki and the Dean as well as thanks to the Chancellor Professor Maksymilian Pazdan's favourable attitude towards the project, in 1991 the Department of Classics was founded. In November 1992 the first students started learning ancient literatures at the University of Silesia. In the meantime the Professor gradually enlarged the team. A good philologist, Wanda Strykowska, was entrusted with the care of the newly organised Classic Library. The Professor's closest assistant at the time were, however, a Latinist, Józef Budzyński, and, a Hellenist, Józef Sieroń. Danuta Miodyńska, who held a permanent appointment at the Foreign Languages Learning Centre helped them with language teaching. The plan for expanding the team was developed in close co-operation with the Jagiellonian University and the University of Opole. Joanna Rostropowicz from Opole, and Michał Bednarski, Jerzy Styka, Romuald Turasiewicz, as well as Hubert Wolanin from Kraków give lectures and held classes for the students of Classics<sup>4</sup>.

My acquaintance with Professor Zabłocki deepened in 1995, when he offered me a position at the Department and suggested that I should give lectures on an-

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. Hołzman: "Informacja o ogólnopolskiej konferencji nt. 'Najnowsze kierunki i metody badań w naukach o kulturze antycznej'". *Meander* 1976, T. 31, pp. 256–262.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. S. Zabłocki: "Wybrane problemy edycji autorów polsko-lacińskich". *Meander* 1976, T. 31, pp. 425–442.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. T. Aleksandrowicz: "Ten Years of the Department of Classics at the University of Silesia in Katowice". In: *Scripta Classica*. Ed. M. Bednarski & T. Sapota. Vol. 1. Katowice 2004, pp. 9–16.

cient culture, ancient history and open a Latin seminary. On that occasion I was also proposed to carry on the duty of an informal vice-chair of the Department, so that PhD Budzyński might be relieved of that responsibility. The one-term vacation he took then helped him significantly with finishing his post-doctoral thesis and obtaining the degree of an assistant professor, which was till that time the Department's greatest scholarly achievement. At the same time, PhD scholarships were offered to Tomasz Sapota, a graduate from the Jagiellonian University, and to Łukasz Tofilski, who finished his MA studies at the Wrocław University. They both submitted their doctoral dissertations after the Professor stopped working in Katowice, in 1998. His decision to resign came as a result of his outright refusal of consent to hold the position at the University of Silesia as his main academic appointment. It shows clearly how fiery the Professor's temperament and *ethos* were.

Professor Zabłocki had been the head of the Department of Classics for almost a decade. In that time, he managed to enlist the co-operation of renowned scholars, who were both excellent teachers and inspiring tutors. Encouraged by Zabłocki, Prof. Jerzy Styka and Prof. Alicja Szastyńska-Siemion took care of Tomasz Sapota and Łukasz Tofilski's doctoral theses, the first ones in the history of the Department. The idea of co-operation between different universities in promoting young academic teachers was continued when Romuald Turasiewicz and Józef Korpany tutored the authors of the next two doctoral dissertations in Katowice. Also, the bonds between the Department and the Classics Committee of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences turned out to be not less fruitful.

The Professor's scholarly output contains four books and about sixty articles dealing with issues of Classics and neo-Latin literature. They were published in Poland and abroad in Polish, Latin, and German<sup>5</sup>. Most of them were published in the Wrocław years of the Professor's life. During his tenure at the University of Silesia Zabłocki wrote an article on Ryszard Gansiniec as a neo-Latinist<sup>6</sup>. The text had been read in Katowice at the conference dedicated to that versatile philologist born in Siemianowice Śląskie<sup>7</sup>. Polish philologists agree that among the works of Stefan Zabłocki the lasting value have his neo-Latinist works<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. S. Zabłocki: *De Gregorio Samboritano bucolicorum carminum auctore quaestiones*. Warszawa–Wrocław 1962; i d e m: *Antyczne epicedium i elegia żałobna. Geneza i rozwój*. Wrocław 1965; i d e m: *Polsko-lacińskie epicedium renesansowe na tle europejskim*. Wrocław 1968; i d e m: *Od prerenesansu do oświecenia. Z dziejów inspiracji klasycznych w literaturze polskiej*. Warszawa 1976; i d e m: "Literatura nowołacińska. Średniowiecze – renesans – barok". In: *Dzieje literatur europejskich*. T. 1. Red. W. Floryan. Warszawa 1977, pp. 311–382.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. i d e m: "Ryszard Gansiniec jako neolatynista". In: *Prof. dr Ryszard Gansiniec. Z życia i twórczości. Materiały posesyjne*. Do druku przygotował J. Śliwiołk. Katowice 1997, pp. 47–56; see also a review of this book – T. Aleksandrowicz: *Pallas Silesia* 1998, T. 2, z. 2, pp. 135–141.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. T. Aleksandrowicz: "Prof. dr Ryszard Gansiniec. Z życia i twórczości". Sesja naukowa w Katowicach. *Pallas Silesia* 1998, T. 2, z. 2, pp. 124–127.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Starnawski: *Warsztat bibliograficzny historyka literatur obcych*. Warszawa 1988, p. 212; K. Liman: "Polska mediolatynistyka i dyscypliny pokrewne w perspektywie stulecia

In the last years of his life, apparently giving up creative scholarly activity the Professor used to participate in sessions and seminars where he would reveal the sharp wit of an erudite polemist. He was also a master in the art of conversation. His propensity towards anecdotes and witticisms was as evident as his ability to formulate decisive and acerbic opinions of which some I did not share with him.

At the Department of Classics in Katowice Zabłocki gave lectures on the history of Roman literature. The students remember him as a mesmerising narrator and a meticulous lecturer<sup>9</sup>. He was not a severe examiner, although an ordinary exam lasted long, at least one hour. Also, as a reviewer of MA theses he was not austere, because he firmly believed that a teacher's mission was to let students make mistakes and find their own way to correct them. The Professor's most outstanding students are: Zofia Głombiowska of the Gdańsk University and Józef Budzyński of the Higher School of Pedagogy in Częstochowa, a retired assistant professor at the University of Silesia.

Stefan Zabłocki was a typical *homo viator*. Being the head of the Department of Classics in Gdańsk every two weeks he came to Katowice for a few days, visiting on his way Szczecin and Suwałki. Sporadically, he lectured in Germany, Austria and Sweden. He was an excellent philologist, an outstanding expert on neo-Latin literature, the founder and the first chair of the Department of Classics in Katowice<sup>10</sup>.

He died suddenly on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2001 in Gdańsk. At the time of his premature death he was only 69 years old. His body was buried in the family tomb at the cemetery on Bujwid Street in Wrocław on an unexpectedly chilly Thursday of the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2001.

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Polskiego Towarzystwa Filologicznego (1893–1994)”. In: *Antiquorum non immemores. Polskie Towarzystwo Filologiczne (1893–1993)*. Księga zbiorowa pod redakcją J. Łanowskiego, A. Szastyńskiej-Siemion. Warszawa–Wrocław 1999, p. 57; M. Cytowska: “Neolatynistyka polska i główne linie jej rozwoju w ostatnim stuleciu”. In: *Antiquorum non immemores...*, pp. 67, 71.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. K. Lesiak: “Wspomnienie o prof. dr. hab. Stefanie Zabłockim”. *Classica Catoviciana – Scripta Minora* 2001, Vol. 2, fasc. 2, pp. 79–80.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. T. Aleksandrowicz: “Wspomnienie o Profesorze Stefanie Zabłockim”. *Gazeta Uniwersytecka UŚ* 2002, nr 6, pp. 4–5.

*Tadeusz Aleksandrowicz*

**Professor Stefan Zabłocki (1932–2001)**  
 – założyciel i pierwszy kierownik Katedry Filologii Klasycznej  
 w Uniwersytecie Śląskim w Katowicach

**Streszczenie**

W artykule przedstawiono sylwetkę naukową i dydaktyczną Profesora Stefana Zabłockiego, akcentując jego wrocławskie korzenie naukowe i późniejszy związek z Uniwersytetem Gdańskim. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na rolę Profesora Zabłockiego w utworzeniu Katedry Filologii Klasycznej w Uniwersytecie Śląskim w Katowicach w 1991 roku. Podkreślono także słuszność jego koncepcji budowania i rozwijania katowickiej filologii klasycznej w ścisłej współpracy z wybitnymi uczonymi, związanymi głównie z Uniwersytetem Jagiellońskim i Polską Akademią Umiejętności w Krakowie.

*Tadeusz Aleksandrowicz*

**Professor Stefan Zabłocki (1932–2001)**  
 – Gründer und erster Leiter des Lehrstuhls für Klassische Philologie an der  
 Schlesischen Universität in Katowice

**Zusammenfassung**

Im vorliegenden Artikel hat man den Professor Stefan Zabłocki als Wissenschaftler und Lehrer dargestellt, wobei man seine Breslauer Herkunft und spätere Kontakte mit der Danziger Universität hervorgehoben hat. Jedoch besonders hat man der Rolle des Professors bei der Gründung im Jahre 1991 des Lehrstuhls für Klassische Philologie an der Schlesischen Universität in Katowice die größte Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Der von Zabłocki vertretenen Idee, die Kattowitzer klassische Philologie in enger Zusammenarbeit mit hervorragenden Gelehrten, vor allem den aus Jagellonen Universität und der Polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in Kraków, zu entwickeln, wurde hier Recht gegeben.