



04.07.2019

## **Nałkowska, Orzeszkowa i inni... Rozmowa z Panią Profesor Swietłaną Musijenko**

---

Dzięki uprzejmości Grodzieńskiego Państwowego Uniwersytetu im. Janki Kupały, Katedry Badań Filologicznych „Wschód-Zachód” Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Międzynarodowego Instytutu Adama Mickiewicza w Grodnie, Biblioteki Naukowej Grodzieńskiego Państwowego Uniwersytetu im. Janki Kupały oraz Książnicy Podlaskiej im. Łukasza Górnickiego w Białymstoku redaktorzy „Biuletynu Polonistycznego” – Olga Zakolska i Piotr Bordzoł – uczestniczyli w międzynarodowej konferencji komparatystycznej „Mickiewicz i romantycy wobec kultur wschodniosłowiańskich”. Konferencja stała się okazją do prezentacji Biuletynowych narzędzi wspomagających badania polonistyczne, a także dyskusji nad projektowaną interaktywną mapą ośrodków polonistycznych „Geopolonistyka”.

Podczas spotkania członkowie Zespołu redakcyjnego „Biuletynu” mieli przyjemność rozmowy z Panią Profesor Swietłaną Musijenko – założycielką pierwszej na Białorusi katedry filologii polskiej, zasłużoną badaczką literatur i kultur słowiańskich.

Zapraszamy do lektury.

### **At the beginning, could you say a few words about the history of Grodno Polish studies?**

The story begins even in Soviet times and is connected with cooperation between Poland and the Soviet Union. I am associated with universities from Poland and the Academy of the Soviet Union in Moscow. In Moscow, I defended both my doctoral and postdoctoral theses, sharing time between the Academy of Sciences and the University of Warsaw. At that time, the Polish-Soviet treaty was implemented under the name "elimination of white spots" in the history and culture of Poland and the Soviet Union. On this wave, in 1986 I started working on the work of Zofia Nałkowska. Later, thanks to this, I was able to open her museum.

### **Why did you choose the work of Zofia Nałkowska?**

In Ewa Pieńkowska's book, a handbook for secondary schools, there was the information that Zofia Nałkowska lived in Grodno in the years 1924-1926. I started a research on that and soon it turned out that Nałkowska had lived in Grodno since 1922, and left on January 17 or 18, 1927. Many interesting issues related to Zofia

Nałkowska's biography were related to this period. The writer came to Grodno because she remarried to Jan Jura Orzechowski, a Border Guards colonel. She was already a great lady of Polish literature and got married out of great love. She came to Grodno as the wife of an officer sent to Eastern borderlands. But there was a divorce. Political differences arose between the spouses. Zofia Nałkowska was associated with democracy, her father - Wacław Nałkowski - was a great democrat.

I started collecting materials for my first book. I published it under the title *Creativity of Zofia Nałkowska*. I found a lot of interesting information in the prison museum in Grodno, to which I was admitted as part of the "elimination of white spots" campaign, and this aspect of Nałkowska's biography was unknown. Then I began to collect various materials related to the writer - mainly from gifts: books, photographs, furniture. I went to prison for 3-4 days and photographed the material there. It was not easy to go to prison for this purpose. This is a very old prison - it is almost 300 years old, always served as a penal one and was one of the heaviest.

When I was working on my habilitation thesis, I held consultations with my supervisor, Professor [Wiktor] Choriew, a prominent Polish scholar. We decided that I would ask for permission to lead the chair of Polish philology.

### **Was the formal launch of Polish studies difficult?**

I was sent to the party committee, and various talks were held with me. Mr. Svetlov, who was my curator at the time when I was leaving for a PhD internship at the University of Warsaw, invited me to the committee. I asked him then if it was possible to transport books from Poland - neither our border officers nor yours checked me well. I brought everything I needed. Svetlov was already a high official. He was in favor of opening Polish studies in Grodno, but spoke of the need to stick to resolutions, etc. In Grodno there was the Union of Poles in Belarus, led by Mr. [Tadeusz] Gawin. He was an official of the Belarusian Border Guard and an ardent advocate of Polishness involved in the renewal of Polish culture.

In 1986 I published a book, and in May 1989 I hosted the first international conference at the University of Grodno, "The output of Zofia Nałkowska in the circle of Slavic literatures". Among the guests was a member of a committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, Mr. Nawrocki, also a team of scientists. In June the rector called me and said that I should gather the team, because starting from September 1 I will be conducting Polish studies. And the situation was that I had nothing. Only a library containing nothing more than what I was able to transport from Poland before. Currently, there are over 10,000 books, the first two thousand I donated from my own collection. I got a truck with a driver, we traveled all over Poland and brought what we received, what we were able to collect. On September 1, 1989, classes were to start, and in August, along with 4 students, we went to a Polish language summer school at the then Pedagogical University of Cracow. Later, we cooperated with the university in Krakow, with Professor Jan Trzynadlowski from Wrocław, as well as with the University of Warsaw, where I was on a doctoral

internship. We decided that Polish language classes will be taught in Polish. We prepared the study program together with the University of Gdańsk, where I had a friend from young years, Professor Małgorzata Czermińska. Polish scientists joined us, both literary and linguistic, including Professor Halina Bursztyńska, who comes from Grodno. The opening of the cathedral was very boisterous, described in the Belarusian, Polish and Russian press, even in the program "Wreimia" (the main news program broadcast on public television during the USSR - ed.).

During the existence of the cathedral, we educated over 500 Polish students. We had 17 Polish language subjects and monographic lectures. We invited researchers from Poland and Moscow, several lectures were also conducted by Rolf Fieguth. I promoted 6 doctors in literary studies, there were 2 persons who obtained a doctorate in linguistics.

### **What do the studies look like now?**

There is a process of reducing the number of students, other decisions are made that are, in my opinion, unfavorable for the teaching process. I disagreed with rector [Jauhieni] Rouba and decided to leave the management position. I founded a scientific seminar and invited researchers from Białystok to attend it. Its name is "Universal literature. Ethnos in the light of history and the present day. Polish literature and language". I founded the International Scientific and Didactic Coordination Center "The International Adam Mickiewicz Institute". We continue intensive cooperation with the University of Białystok, to a lesser extent with the Pedagogical University of Krakow. The third center is the University of Gdańsk. It is true that Professor [Józef] Bachórz has already retired, but cooperation with Grodno is now coordinated by Professor Grażyna Tomaszewska. We are friends with Ms. Czermińska, she is a pensioner, but very scientifically active. We organize conferences - one year in Białystok, another year in Grodno. Soon I am moving to Minsk, I would like Polish studies to flourish there as well. Although, at the moment, Belarus is in the process of merging the faculties and institutes, which is a bit surprising, because I think that didactics should serve science and science should become science.

### **What kind of research are you currently doing?**

First of all in the field of general literature. We study three basic problems. The first - Adam Mickiewicz in the light of world literature. Next: my promoter - Choriew - proposed using imagology to study the problem of "me and strangers", Poles and Russians about each other. I use this theory to study Poland-Belarus relations in terms of literature, culture and politics. The third direction is Russian-Polish-Belarusian literary and cultural relations. Finally, the work of Mickiewicz, Orzeszkowa and Nałkowska, three writers who left a lasting mark in world literature and who celebrated Grodno. Many Orzeszkowa's works were created in Grodno, Nałkowska placed the action of her best works here. *Meir Ezofowicz's* new translation into Russian seems to be in the meantime, I wanted to investigate how the novel's illustrations were influenced by Andriolli's illustrations. I believe that the

illustrator proposed to extend the story, suggested the further way for her characters, which has met the dissatisfaction of the writer.

**What do you think the future of Grodno Polish studies will be like?**

I think it will be just like now. Trips from Poland, Russia, from other countries. The opening of the Nałkowska Museum was very boisterous. I invited Mr. [Janusz] Odrowąż-Pieniazek, Director of the The Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature in Warsaw, who said that our museum is organized "scientifically correct". For example, I found architectural details exposed in Nałkowska's works.

**Is learning Polish popular in Belarus?**

I must say that I have never had problems recruiting students. At the moment there are many people who go to Poland.

**What are Professor's scientific dreams?**

I have released over 300 works, mostly related to Polish culture and language. They were printed in Belarus, Russia, Poland, Ukraine, and Switzerland. I published three books. Now I would like to prepare a book in which I would tell the history of the cathedral, the history of Belarusian Polish studies, the history of cooperation with Poland. Then I want to publish the best articles about Nałkowska. There is a significant gap in the research on the writer's work regarding her diaries. I would also like to include some material about dancing with Mickiewicz, the relationship between dance and poetry. I am also interested in the attitude of Eliza Orzeszkowa towards the nationalities living in Grodno. I would also like to continue exploring the Jewish issues in her work, as well as collect and systematize the material devoted to Grodno threads.

**Is Zofia Nałkowska your favorite writer? Maybe Orzeszkowa? Or maybe someone else?**

Someone else. Boleslaw Prus. I am Ukrainian and my interest in Polish literature came from the work of Prus. I think that he is the greatest writer in the whole Polish culture. I like the writing of other artists - from Belarusian literature - [Maksim] Bahdanowicz, from Russian I think Lermontow and Błok are the closest to me.

**And if Prus - which work?**

Short stories. I really like *The Doll* because it is not a 19th century novel, it is a 21st century novel. *Pharaoh* - there are a lot of novelties that came to literature in the second half of the 20th century and are gravitating towards the 21st century. I recognize, I value other writers, I like *Summer in Nohant* by Iwaszkiewicz very much, for example. But Prus is second to none. Society has not grown up yet. To understand him, he must be educated, intellectually prepared.

Thank you for the conversation.

Słowa kluczowe: Nałkowska, filologia polska, uniwersytet, Prus, Grodno, Białoruś, Orzeszkowa

Rozmówca: Swietłana Musijenko