

**THIRTY-TWO YEARS OF ACTA NEOPHILOLOGICA -  
WITH GRATITUDE TO ITS FOUNDER AND EDITOR  
PROFESSOR JANEZ STANONIK**

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In spring this year Professor Janez Stanonik decided to retire as the Editor of the scholarly journal *Acta Neophilologica*, which he founded in 1968 and edited for thirty-two years. I endeavoured to help him with the material side of the journal from the very beginning until 1995; since then this task has been performed by the present Associate Editor.

Now, when the duty of editing lies on me, such an occasion seems to be a proper moment to say a few words about his past work connected with the journal and particularly to thank him most warmly for all his efforts, which made possible the publication of 205 articles, written not only by him and his colleagues in Slovenia (Professor Stanonik contributed fifteen articles) but also in many other countries. Altogether eighty-nine authors have so far contributed their articles to *Acta Neophilologica*. About two thirds of the authors either come from Slovenia or are of Slovene origin. In order to make practical decisions about the publication of the journal more expedient a small Editorial Board has been founded, and it will be helped by the Advisory Committee.

At the time when Janez Stanonik began publishing this journal, his main aim was to make our research work in Western European and American literature better known to scholars all over the world. However, in a few years' time the journal also became open to scholars from other countries and other fields, particularly in areas connected with Slovene literature and culture, Slovene immigrant literature, and linguistics. I believe that this approach gave the journal a new openness and that it enriched its quality, therefore I intend to follow this policy in the future too.

Professor Janez Stanonik is a member of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts and his pedagogical and scholarly activity is closely linked with the development of the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana. He became the Head of the Department in 1961 and led it until 1984. His favourite research fields and also teaching subjects were Old and Medieval English and German literature, as well as 19th century English and American literature. He was particularly interested in Slovene relations with Britain and the United States of America and he carried out his investigations *in loco* in various regions of America. Let me just briefly enumerate

some of the topics which he dealt with in his fifteen articles published in *Acta Neophilologica*.

A large part of Stanonik's research was devoted to American literature. His study *Moby Dick, the Myth and the Symbol* (1962) is still regularly mentioned in articles written on Herman Melville. In his article, which he published in *Acta Neophilologica* (AN 1971), he added some new material in support of his thesis that the central chapters of Melville's novel are a parody of medieval legends about thankful animals. He found new texts which enable us to understand better the genesis, structure and symbolism of this great novel.

Extremely abundant is Stanonik's research into the earliest cultural contacts between Slovenia and America. Due to his findings we have become acquainted with the influence of the Slovene utopian Socialist Andreas Bernardus Smolnikar on the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and at the same time with the cultural scene in Ljubljana before Smolnikar's departure for America (AN 1968). Stanonik also brought to light the correspondence of Marcus Antonius Kappus from Colonial America (AN 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990). Kappus was among the pioneers of Slovene immigration to America, particularly among Slovene intellectuals. Kappus even participated at the end of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the then "discoveries" of Sonora and California. In his article on Kappus (AN 1995) Stanonik also gave an appraisal of Marcus Antonius Kappus as the first Slovenia-born poet in America. Another important Slovene emigrant to America was Anton Fuster, who was involved in revolutionary activities in Austria in 1848, before his migration to America (AN 1998).

Janez Stanonik's early scholarly love was medieval German literature in Slovenia. On the basis of texts Stanonik found in Slovenia he enlarged our knowledge about the medieval glosses written on the margins of certain manuscripts and also about various connections between Central European legends and myths and the Arthurian saga and the Grail tradition (AN 1987).

The question of the role of the reader in the process of interpretation, acceptance or rejection of (foreign) literature (which is nowadays rather exaggerated by some Slovene scholars and sometimes even presented as a complete novelty in reception theory) was also treated by John Ruskin, one of the Pre-Raphaelites in Victorian England. In his study (AN 1970) Stanonik presents Ruskin as a literary theoretician, and minutely analyzes his views on the relationship between the author and the reader, particularly Ruskin's discussion of literature from the standpoint of its communication value.

These are some of the topics Janez Stanonik dealt with as a contributor to the journal, which he so successfully edited for many years. Of course, he published many articles in other Slovene journals and abroad, among which, I think, his contributions to *Encyclopaedia Slovenia* and the *Slovene Biographical Lexicon* have a permanent value.

The present Editorial Board and, I believe, the Advisory Committee of *Acta Neophilologica* too, intend to preserve and continue the main orientation outlined by the former editor, as well as its scholarly level. It is likely that even more attention will be paid to Slovene-American literary relation, including the

reception of American and British literature in Slovenia, not to mention specifically the field of new literatures, mainly Australian and Canadian literature and their echoes in Slovenia and vice versa. This interest should by no means diminish our interest in literatures written in German, French, Spanish, Italian and other West European languages and cultures. The journal will put a special emphasis on cross-cultural and comparative studies, not excluding relevant linguistic subjects. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the Editor particularly welcomes articles related to Slovene literature and culture.

It is our wish that although Professor Janez Stanonik will no longer be engaged in practical matters connected with *Acta Neophilologica*, he will continue to contribute his articles for many more years. Likewise it is our wish that the many scholars who have so fruitfully and faithfully contributed their works to the journal, will remain our supporters in the future too. Hopefully, new contributors will enrich the journal with their articles and book-reviews, so that *Acta Neophilologica* will thrive in the years to come. This will be the best reward that can be given to Professor Janez Stanonik for his past efforts.

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