Edward Stankiewicz In Memoriam

Professor Edward Stankiewicz (1920–2013) was the B. E. Bensinger Professor of Slavic Languages and Literatures at Yale University from 1971 until he retired in 1991. Thereafter, he remained an active scholar as Professor Emeritus for nearly twenty years. His continued active pursuit of scholarship reflected his unparalleled dedication to the field. Edward passed away on January 31, 2013, and as Harvey Goldblatt noted in his message to the Yale community, that day we lost one of the world's leading Slavists. Indeed, I can think of few others who were so passionate about Slavic linguistics; he was fluent in many languages, including at least six Slavic languages, and was keenly interested in the diachronic and synchronic state of all Slavic languages and dialects. Born in Warsaw on November 17, 1920, Edward was also a talented artist and poet, who on occasion would entertain guests by playing his mandolin and singing his favorite songs in Yiddish. A Holocaust survivor, Edward immigrated to the United States after being liberated from the Buchenwald concentration camp at the end of World War II. He frequently spoke of his time in transit through Italy, where he developed a love of the Italian language and culture. A student of Roman Jakobson, Edward received his PhD from Harvard in 1954, and taught at Indiana University and the University of Chicago before joining Yale.

Edward Stankiewicz inspired a generation of Slavists. While perhaps best known for his work on Slavic accentology and morphophonemics, he also published on the phonology and morphology of all the Slavic languages, wrote about the theories of language and the history of linguistics, studied the history of the Slavic literary languages, and thoroughly immersed himself in Slavic dialectology. My fellow graduate students and I recall his frequent lectures on the prosodic features of Common Slavic, one of Edward's favorite topics. Edward would declare that only through an understanding of pitch, quantity, and stress in Common Slavic is it possible to predict the corresponding forms in Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, Czech, Polish, or Russian. Long vowels and stress patterns would cause those of us attending his class

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a great deal of trepidation, as Edward would frequently call on us to come to the blackboard to write a morphophonemic transcription of a Russian verb form, or to offer examples of how the Common Slavic acute became shortened in West South Slavic. Those sessions at the blackboard could be occasionally traumatic, but that method prevented us from forgetting Slavic accentology well after we left our graduate programs. Oddly, years later I could hear myself in class using Edward's examples for my own students.

Edward embraced structuralism as his theoretical muse, and his first major published works were structural analyses of Russian dialects, followed by his 1968 monograph, *Declension and Gradation of Russian Substantives* (The Hague: Mouton). Edward took a keen interest in the South Slavic languages. He travelled to Yugoslavia for research and study trips, where he not only collected extensive dialectological materials, but also became a fluent speaker of Slovene and Serbo-Croatian, and established friendships with Pavle Ivić and Blaže Koneski, among others. Edward's extensive works on Slavic morphophonemics and accentology were published or republished in his two volumes of collected essays, *Studies in Slavic Morphophonemics and Accentology* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Studies, 1979), and *The Slavic Languages: Unity in Diversity* (The Hague: Mouton, 1986). These works included many of the central arguments that were further developed in *The Accentual Patterns of the Slavic Languages* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993). In this work, Edward provided a systematic and comprehensive analysis of the Slavic accentual patterns, which is arguably one of the most complex areas within Slavic phonology. I felt privileged to be one of Edward's first research assistants for this project. I remember working at Edward's home in Hamden as I typed the first draft of the chapter on Slovene into his computer. Edward's devoted and multitalented wife, Florence, provided valuable editorial assistance and much good humor during those sessions. All of Edward's graduate students back then were unanimous in their love and respect for Florence, who played such a central role in Edward's life and warmly welcomed so many of us into the Stankiewicz home.

I have only touched upon the many publications and contributions that Edward Stankiewicz made in his long and distinguished career. He produced an annotated bibliography of Slavic grammars and dictionaries, co-edited a book on the Slavic Literary Languages, wrote about emotive language, Yiddish, kinship terms, and scintillating

derivations of Slavic taboo terms. He loved talking about Slavic culture, the pagan beliefs of the early Slavic tribes, and the emergence of the Slavic writing systems. His classes attracted enthusiastic undergraduates, and he mentored so many graduate students, many of whom have continued his legacy, especially Howard Aronson, Bill Darden, Keith Langston, and the late Kenneth Naylor.

I had the good fortune to spend much quality time with Edward between 2003 and 2010 after I moved back to New Haven and began teaching at Yale. Edward and I would meet regularly to discuss topics in Slavic Linguistics, and he would discuss at great length his final project—probably the most ambitious of his career—on emotive language across a broad spectrum of languages. Many chapters of this major work exist in draft form; Edward had a clear vision for the structure and scope of the work, and continuously employed Yale students to be his research assistants up until 2010. Edward also generously taught me one of his favorite subjects—Latin grammar and poetry. Even after so many years, Edward was still keen on teaching me everything he knew, even checking on whether or not I still remembered in which of the Slovene dialects the progressive shift of the circumflex accent did not occur. After our meetings, I would have flashbacks to Edward's lectures when I was a beginning graduate student, trying to grasp the meaning of the morphophonemic zero, marked and unmarked grammatical categories, or the genius of Baudouin de Courtenay.

During this period, Edward spent more time talking and writing about his wartime experiences. He had just published his 2003 memoir, *My War: Memoir of a Young Jewish Poet* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003). His remarkable story of courage and survival helped me understand better why at times he seemed impatient with the minutiae of everyday life, or why some of his professional relationships with others were at times fraught. This knowledge also helped me forgive him for those flaws, and embrace his generosity of spirit, his sharp sense of humor, and his uncanny ability to overcome all obstacles.

Edward also frequented our home for the Jewish holidays, especially Hanukkah and Passover. He recited his own poem extolling the virtues of the latke (traditional potato pancake eaten during the Hanukkah festival) over the hamentasch (the sweet pastry in the shape of the "ear of Haman" eaten for Purim). At many of those family gather-

ings, he would continue to sketch faces of those around the table on the backs of napkins, and play chess with my younger son Michael. He would reciprocate by inviting us to his favorite Chinese restaurant, where he would proceed to speak Mandarin to all the servers, who seemed captivated by Edward's jovial spirit and infectious enthusiasm for life.

With Edward Stankiewicz's passing, we have lost a prolific scholar and a strong advocate for Slavic studies. Edward's pioneering approach was his insistence that all Slavic material—historical, synchronic, standard or dialectal—was worthy of his analysis. His originality was in his ability to make connections and truly celebrate the diversity within the unity of the Slavic world. As we mourn his loss, we can feel fortunate to have had in our midst someone with such a keen intellect and a love of all things Slavic.

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