

Professor Teresa Bela

1946–2026

On 11 September 2026, at Rakowicki Cemetery in Kraków, we bid farewell to Professor Teresa Bela, an eminent scholar of literature, a member of the academic staff of the Institute of English Studies at the Jagiellonian University, a mentor to generations of Kraków Anglicists, our colleague in the Department of the History of English Literature, and a friend to many of us.

Teresa came to Kraków from Przemyśl, a city she always recalled with nostalgia and a distinctly Galician appreciation of the importance of one's roots. She studied at the Jagiellonian University in the second half of the 1960s, when students were taught by scholars who are now remembered as legends of Kraków English studies: Dr Grace Dąbrowska, Professor Irena Przemecka, Professor Przemysław Mroczkowski, and Professor Jerzy Strzetelski. She often spoke of them, always with warmth and respect, aware of the continuity of tradition and of generational change as defining features of university life. It was perhaps from them that she learnt the sense of responsibility and seriousness with which she later approached her profession, or rather her vocation as a teacher and mentor.

After completing her MA thesis on medieval English drama in 1970, she joined the Institute of English Studies, where she taught primarily literature. Under the supervision of Professor Przemysław Mroczkowski, she conducted research that culminated in her doctoral dissertation, completed in 1978, on C. S. Lewis as a critic of the Renaissance. Following her doctorate, Dr Teresa Bela broadened her research interests to include Elizabethan and seventeenth-century poetry. This work resulted in the important habilitation monograph *The Image of the Queen in Elizabethan Poetry*. She continued to publish regularly on Lewis and became an undisputed authority on his work. She also wrote on English medieval literature, including William Langland and Geoffrey Chaucer, as well as Renaissance authors such as George Gascoigne, John Davies, and John Lyly, and religious and contemplative poets including George Herbert, William Cowper, and R. S. Thomas. She also contributed to studies of the reception of Polish literature in Great Britain, writing on Anna Świrszczyńska and Wisława Szymborska.

Professor Bela edited numerous collected volumes and co-authored the influential and much-needed *College Anthology of English Literature*, first published in the 1990s and reissued several times thereafter.

She gathered materials for her publications during numerous international fellowships at the Universities of Oxford, Bochum, St Andrews, Canterbury, and Nijmegen. She also served as a visiting professor at universities in Doha and Bordeaux.

When changes in Polish higher education brought new demands and challenges, she undertook responsibility for the newly established English Studies programme at the Foreign Language Teacher Training College in Przemyśl. She commuted to Przemyśl for fifteen years and later taught literature at the State Higher Vocational School in Tarnów.

At the Jagiellonian University, she supervised more than one hundred MA dissertations and several doctoral theses. She also served as reviewer of doctoral dissertations and habilitation applications at numerous Polish universities.

Alongside her many responsibilities, Professor Bela found time to inspire and organize academic life. She was actively involved in organizing the April Conference, the oldest conference in English studies in Poland, as well as conferences devoted to Professor Roman Dyboski, the founder of English Studies in Kraków. She helped establish the Polish Association for the Study of English (PASE) and served on its executive board for many years. She was also active in the Neophilological Commission of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. At the Jagiellonian University, she served as Head of the Department of the History of English and American Literature and as Deputy Director of the Institute.

We, her students and later her colleagues at the Institute, remember Teresa as a remarkably kind and approachable person, genuinely interested in our research while remaining equally concerned about our lives beyond the university. She was empathetic, always ready to listen and offer advice. It was she who introduced many of us to the art of teaching literature, suggested topics for conference presentations, and reviewed and supervised our doctoral dissertations. Each of us carries something that owes its existence to her presence in the Institute.

We will remember her calm, velvety voice, which brought to every conversation and meeting the reassuring sense that even the most difficult problems could be solved. We will remember the composure and wisdom with which she led both the Department and the Institute. She was always rational and fair, yet at the same time understanding and kind.

Those of us who knew her more closely, as well as those who encountered her through classes devoted to her beloved poetry, know that behind this pragmatic outlook, which allowed her to navigate everyday challenges so effectively, stood an extraordinarily sensitive, gentle, and romantic person. She could move others deeply and was herself moved by the reading of poetry. She was a profoundly good person, endowed with great empathy and a rare gift for

doing good. For many years she cared for retired and ailing professors of English studies in Kraków, organizing assistance for them and preserving the memory of those who had helped build the academic community to which she devoted her entire professional life.

We bid farewell to Professor Teresa Bela with gratitude for all that she gave to her students, colleagues, and friends. She leaves behind her books and articles, the memories of many generations of students, and the kindness she extended to others. We shall miss her greatly. We will remember her as a distinguished scholar, a dedicated teacher, and a truly good human being.

Władysław Witalisz