
IN MEMORIAM

EKATERINA STETSENKO
(1946-2018)



Ekaterina Stetsenko, a widely reputed scholar noted for her research in American literature, Doctor *habilitat* in philology, Leading Research Fellow of A.M.Gorky Institute of World Literature of the Russian Academy of Sciences, passed away on July 22, 2018.

Ekaterina Stetsenko was born in Kiev and spent there her formative years as a budding researcher of American literature. She graduated from Kiev State T.G.Shevchenko University majoring in Romanic and Germanic languages and literatures. In the late 60s – early 70s the university took a legitimate pride in its high standards in teaching world literatures. In addition, Ekaterina Stetsenko benefited from advanced literary studies curriculum by following Tamara Denisova's specialized course on 20th century American writings. It provided an opportunity to get to know names and titles hitherto little, if at all, familiar to general Soviet readership; to discover an essentially new literary continent; to prioritize poetics over sociology in fiction. These features promoted students' interest in contemporary American literature which for many of them, Ekaterina included, played a decisive role in determining their further careers.

Following her moving to Moscow, Ekaterina Stetsenko's professional life had been inextricably linked to A.M.Gorky Institute of World Literature. Between 1977 (her first year at the Institute) and her demise it had remained her home institution. The weighty contribution she has made over these years to studying fundamental issues of American literature would take a certain

distance in time to be fully appreciated, with her main research focus being on studying the genres of the novel, travelogue, popular and documentary fiction, as well as elaborating innovative theoretical tools for literary studies. But even now we have every reason to argue that Ekaterina Stetsenko has invariably addressed the most important and complicated phenomena in current literature and science bringing them together by the potent impulse of inquiry. In her PhD dissertation defended in 1978 she explored the intricate problem of time in modern American novels belonging to the so-called Southern School in terms of their contents and structure drawing upon relevant scientific and philosophical tenets of the period. Her habilitation research (*The Destiny of America in Contemporary American Novels*, 1995) demanded further expansion of the author's theoretical horizons.

Ekaterina Stetsenko has never been after sheer quantity in her academic publications. On the contrary, every scholarly paper or book she authored was marked by novel approaches coupled with utmost academic integrity, detailed treatment of the issue under consideration, lucid and elegant manner of writing (elegance in everything was her style). Her willingness to test interpretation models emerging on the junctures of hard and soft sciences was predicated upon the profound and comprehensive knowledgeability in her field, that is, American literature in its synchronic and diachronic aspects. This combination resulted in her pioneering research in ecocriticism and synergy studies applied to fiction. Ekaterina Stetsenko's achievements have been highly acclaimed by international academic community, as evidenced, in particular, by many research grants and fellowships conferred on her by prestigious European and American foundations and institutions (US National Endowment for the Humanities, Newberry Library (Chicago), the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies, Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikanstudien, Freie Universität, Berlin, Bellagio Study and Conference Center, The Rockefeller Foundation). One of the most remarkable editions made possible due to the grant support was *Dialogues/ Dialogi: Literary and Cultural Exchanges Between (Ex)Soviet and American Women* (1991) co-authored by Ekaterina Stetsenko, Maya Koreneva and two American scholars – S.H.Aiken and A.M.Barker.

Between 2005 and 2016, Ekaterina Stetsenko combined her scholarly pursuits with administrative work as Deputy Director of A.M.Gorky Institute of World Literature for Academic Affairs. She held professional membership in the Russian Society of American Culture Studies (RSACS) and European Association for American Studies (EAAS), widely participated in international conferences all over the world, was active as a book editor.

Ekaterina Stetsenko's significant professional accomplishment was her participation in the six-volume *Literary History of the USA* (A.M.Gorky Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences, 1997-2013) as a member of Editorial Board, editor-in-chief for several volumes and one of the principal authors. The unique project implemented by professionals from Russia and other post-Soviet states took about twenty years to be completed, and over this period Ekaterina gave it much of her time, energy and talent. Recent years saw her busy putting together a collection of essays revising philosophical and aesthetic premises of American literature in the context of shifting artistic modes.

For many years Ekaterina Stetsenko had valiantly fought against a grave affliction never yielding even an inch of her life space to it. It would be no exaggeration to identify her as a workaholic fully committed to what she was doing as a scholar. Still, there was another great passion in her life, and it was travelling. With unflagging interest and admirable indefatigability she navigated across new countries and continents striving to learn as much as possible about their nature and culture, or revisiting places she knew and loved dearly. Even when the state of her health threatened this infatuation of hers, Ekaterina found strength and courage to go on travelling.

Not only was Ekaterina Stetsenko a distinguished scholar, but also an intelligent, decent, and highly cultivated person. Her colleagues will miss her badly.

Natalia VYSOTSKA

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