

## Foreword

The book *Between Languages, Cultures, Literatures. Polish (E)migration Literature in Berlin and Stockholm after 1981* is a volume containing presentations given by researchers at two conferences, which took place at the University of Gdansk (January, 2012) and Stockholm University (May, 2012). The publication is a collection of articles written by specialists in Polish, German and Swedish studies; literary scholars, linguists and culture experts from Germany, Poland and Sweden. All the texts share a common theme: Polish (e)migration literature written within the last thirty years in two European cities which became a destination point for the waves of emigration resulting from the introduction of martial law on December 13, 1981. The ‘Solidarity’ emigration joined the already existing Polish émigré communities in Berlin and Stockholm and contributed to the formation of active intellectual, cultural, literary and political circles in those cities. In time, the mobility of people heading west after Poland’s accession to the European Union also caused that a new, mostly young generation, settled in the two urban centers.

The volume *Between Languages, Cultures, Literatures. Polish (E)migration Literature in Berlin and Stockholm after 1981* is a collection of studies whose aim is to present literary, cultural, linguistic and identity issues raised or dealt with by writers of Polish roots living in Stockholm or Berlin. The papers included in the book concern subjects and problems on which little research has been done so far; this is true especially of the literature created by Stockholm-based writers with cultural roots in Poland.

The clearly defined timeframe – the last thirty years – has caused that maintaining distance from the discussed authors, works and literary phenomena was not always possible. That is why the book should be regarded primarily as an attempt to capture Polish (e)migration literature at a specific point in history and in the specific geographical and cultural settings of Berlin and Stockholm. The publication can be viewed as a sort of testimony to the times in which the “forms” of existence of

emigration and migration literature are changing, while the social and political transformations in Central Europe, Poland's entry into the EU and the democratization of the country have led to a change in the status of the émigré writer, his or her function and role in the country of immigration as well as in relation to the former homeland. The political dimension of this literature, once a magnet attracting the attention of readers at home and abroad, is losing its force, even disappearing. At present, authors with cultural roots in Poland, writing in keeping with their own convictions or preferences, can choose their place of residence themselves, without the sense that they are betraying their native country, language and culture.

The book *Between Languages, Cultures, Literatures. Polish (E)migration Literature in Berlin and Stockholm after 1981* is characterized by a variety of research orientations in presenting the addressed literary, cultural and linguistic issues. The volume begins with review, theoretical and methodological papers, while the later sections contain analyses of particular subjects and works. The choice of the authors, works and literary and cultural phenomena did not always turn out to be the obvious one. This resulted not only from the individual research preferences of those participating in the project, but also from the fact that we wanted, without exceeding the intended volume of the book, to show more than just the literary output of the older generation. Our aim was also to draw attention to the debuts of young authors who seem to be on a literary path heading in a different direction than the path which their parents' generation followed. That is why the names of these young writers appear in the publication together with names of authors who, due to their status in the literary circles of Berlin and Stockholm, were the obvious choice. Time will show whether they will in any way make a name for themselves in the history of Polish literature and writing created abroad. The book also includes papers regarding works which are on the fringes of literature but, which for some reason or other, have been noticed and discussed in Poland, Germany and Sweden.

The publication *Between Languages, Cultures...* does not, of course exhaust the complex and multi-aspect issues present in the literature

created in two European urban centers by writers with Polish cultural roots, but attempts to act as a point of departure for further research on the subject. The articles on Polish (e)migration literature in Berlin and Stockholm, included in one volume, will enable readers to at least initially familiarize themselves with these literatures, to notice the similarities which occur in the process of their development in a different climate and literary, cultural and social context, and also to capture the differences between them. This task is made easier for them by means of a theme and problem based presentation of the articles, which have been arranged alphabetically by the author's last name within the particular sections:

1. Polish Emigration and Immigration Literature in Berlin and Stockholm.
2. Looking Back into the Past.
3. Theatrical Experiments in Berlin.
4. The Poetic Word in Stockholm
5. On the Subject of Identity. Berlin.
6. Questions Regarding Identity. Stockholm.
7. On the Fringes of Literature.
8. In Search of Linguistic Means of Expression.

The papers presented at the conferences as well as the animated discussion during both of the meetings have shown that the area of literature we are penetrating is characterized not only by great thematic diversity, but also allows for a variety of perspectives and theoretical, methodological and interpretational solutions. Thus, we postulate the need to conduct further research in this field, work in the form of descriptive, review, analytical, comparative and even bibliographical studies. We hope that the issues, topics, themes and suggestions for interpretation presented in the book will encourage and inspire others to

undertake further research in the field.

Readers from Germany and Sweden will probably find that the book gives them a better understanding of problems encountered by those living on the verge of two languages and cultures. Perhaps some of the studies will inspire readers to reflect upon themselves and to try to find a place for themselves in the labyrinth of cultures. For readers from Poland, the studies are to some extent a novelty, something that familiarizes them with the image of Polish (e)migration literature in Berlin and Stockholm.

Research on the literary output of Berlin and Stockholm-based writers with cultural roots in Poland was possible thanks to the Polish Johann Gottfried Herder Centre, an extra-departmental unit of Gdańsk University and the Swedish Henrik Granholm Foundation attached to Stockholm University. Moreover, the Swedish foundation as well as the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Stockholm financially supported the publication of the book. We extend our sincere thanks to the sponsors. We also wish to thank the City Public Library in Gdansk for organizing a meeting with the writers Brigitta Helbig-Mischewski and Iwona Mickiewicz, and also editor Tadeusz Nowakowski in Stockholm for preparing the Polonica publishing house's exhibition entitled "Polish (E)migration Literature in Sweden".

We are especially thankful to all the Authors who attempted in their papers and presentations to familiarize us with the subject of Polish (e)migration literature written in Berlin and Stockholm within the last thirty years.

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Stockholm

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