

## INTRODUCTION

The present collection of essays is concerned with the ancient genre of the epic and its modern heritage. Such a focus of research brings here together some of the most notable Polish scholars representing German and English philology united in a joint effort to shed some light on the many ways and dimensions in which the legacy of the classical epic genre and mode influenced and stimulated the literary achievement of medieval, early modern, neoclassical and contemporary literary traditions flourishing on the European continent since the very foundation of European culture at the dawn of the Middle Ages until the present day.

The overall result is thus as much a sound product of expert interdisciplinary scholarship and research as a celebration of European cultural unity rooted in a common tradition whereby the various phenomena existing in the context of a specific national environment are intertwined in an intricate pattern of mutual correspondences which may only emerge fully in the wake of an interdisciplinary study like the present one.

Needless to say our joint project is much indebted to the scholarly work of many distinguished representatives of the Polish academia without whose research our project would not have come about. Among those a very special place of honour is reserved for Prof. Grażyna Bystydzieńska, to whom this collection of essays is reverently and lovingly dedicated. Prof. Bystydzieńska has been the forerunner of the research of the epic genre in the context of English studies in Poland. Her two studies concerned with the genre of the eighteenth century mock-heroic epic: *O Angielskim poemacie heroikomicznym (Aspekty analizy historyczno-literackiej)* published in 1978 and *The English Mock Heroic Poem of the 18th Century* published in 1982 lay the foundations for the study of the epic not just in the context of English philology, but contributed greatly towards broadening the perspectives of the discipline in Poland.

Prof. Bystydzieńska has also been constantly active in the Polish academic community providing guidance in research to many younger colleagues, as well as being ever an example of professionalism and keeping a fine ethical perspective in academic life. In acknowledgement of all of these qualities the present volume is meant as an expression of gratitude by pupils, colleagues and friends.

A most vital thing about this project is that it has been developed under the aegis of the newly-formed Research Group for the Study of Medieval and Early Modern Culture, which has been created at the Faculty of Modern Philologies and

is also fortunate to include a great number of leading Polish researchers concerned with the discipline at virtually all of the leading academic institutions in Poland. Thus all those involved in the project are either members, or associates, or else sympathisers of our new interdisciplinary platform.

It thus remains the greatest pleasure of the editor of this volume to express his enormous gratitude to the Head of the Research Group, prof. Joanna Godlewicz-Adamiec for her constant involvement in the project and invaluable help in the editing process, especially on the German language side of this enterprise, without which the whole academic adventure would not have taken the form it has.

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