The literary output and cultural mission of Polish emigrants in the United States of America in the years 1831-1842

Although the history of Polish emigration in the United States in the nineteenth century did receive scientific coverage, mostly of a historical nature, the works produced by emigrants in the years 1831-1842 have not yet become the subject of synthetic literary studies. The exiles of this period, who, due to the post-November Uprising repressions, ended up in the United States, were the ones who took the first attempts to familiarise Americans with Polish literature. However, their literary output has not been discussed from a holistic perspective nor has it even been collected, which has indicated a need to conduct through studies of source materials, alongside historical and literary research.

The present doctoral dissertation entitled: “The literary output and cultural mission of Polish emigrants in the United States of America in the years 1831-1842” is an attempt to bridge the indicated cognitive lacuna. The purpose of this work is to reconstruct and analyze the literary output of the emigrants, who greatly contributed to the development of the American culture, and today are almost forgotten. A particular emphasis has been placed on showing manifestations of a cultural mission, fulfilled in many various ways, and present not only in the output of the refugees, but also in their public activities.

The analysis has covered the writings of Major Józef Hordyński, recognized as the first November insurgent to come to the United States in 1831, Marcin Rosienkiewicz, considered the author of the first Polish book published in the U. S. and the founder of the first Polish school and library in this country, as well as Paweł Sobolewski, the editor of the first Polish and Slavic magazine being issued in the United States. Sobolewski, together with Rosienkiewicz, reached the New World as part of a group of 234 exiles after the invaders' arrangements in Münchengrätz (1833).

Research conducted in Poland and abroad (primarily in the U. S. thanks to scholarships from the Kosciuszko Foundation and SYLFF, as well as in the Polish Library in Paris) enabled the author to reach such works and biographical facts were either previously unknown or not fully discussed – those have been presented in this dissertation. These studies allowed not only to broaden the knowledge about selected writers, but also to shed new light on the emerging Polish political emigration in the U. S. in the 1831-1842 period.