Monika Rudas-Grodzka

“A Study of Madness: Letters from Prison by Bronisława Waligórska to Her Sister”

My paper focuses on a Polish late 19th-century political activist Bronisława Waligórska who wrote letters from prison to her sister Jadwiga between July and December 1886. Her letters reflect Waligórska’s despair, anxiety, and fear. They are a rare document since on the one hand, they attest to their writer’s struggle against the tsarist censorship, i.e., her attempts at expressing her own thoughts and emotions against external constraints; on the other hand, Waligórska’s letters witness her increasingly mental instability (which would have been called “madness” at the time). The object of my study will be an analysis of a coded farewell to the writer’s sister and a message that was a harbinger of Waligórska’s suicide.