

Title: The Myth of Mother Poland and the Image of the Mother in post-1989 Polish Initiation Novels

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After the fall of Communism many well-known and first-time writers turned to the genre of the “initiation novel” to preserve their own individual experiences of growing up in a totalitarian/authoritarian state. This constantly growing group of quasi-autobiographical novels emerged as a counterpoint to “the grand narrative” of the official history by presenting the child’s perspective on everyday life under Communism.

Representative of this trend are such novels as A. Libera’s *Madame*, I. Filipiak’s *Absolute Amnesia*, W. Kuczok’s *Bastard*, J. Stefko’s *Possible Dreams*, A. Stasiuk’s *How I Became a Writer* and many others. Despite their varying artistic value, these novels contain rich anthropological material that reveals some lesser-known aspects of the private life of ordinary people living in the conditions of political coercion.

The images of fathers and mothers, as well as the relationships between parents and children, in the post-1989 Polish initiation novels are of special interest with regard to the changes that were introduced to the patriarchal family by the Communist regime. The traditional marriage was transformed into a partnership, in which the spouses had to devote themselves to their professional and civic duties. The emancipation widely promoted by the regime did not bring Polish women actual liberation from an inferior status. In addition to their professional responsibilities, they had to carry the burden of the household duties and bringing up children.

This paper aims to reconstruct the collective image of the mother in the post-1989 Polish initiation novels and compare it with the historical variations of the myth of Mother Poland. A special focus of the analysis will be the mother’s role in the political initiation of the juvenile protagonists and the development of their personal identity.