

Literature and cultural policy of East Prussia between 1933 and 1945

Cultural and symbolic landscape in the center-periphery relations

Summary

The monograph presents research on the literature and culture of East Prussia in the years 1933-1945, in the area of – influences of cultural policy practiced in the field of tensions between the center of the German Reich and the province of East Prussia. The research problem is presented in the plan of analysis of the East Prussian mentality, the understanding of which coincides with the anthropological concept of culture understood as the reality of thought that characterizes a given human community in time and space. At the center of my research interests are therefore manifestations of cultural life in East Prussia, in particular those that manifest in literary works.

In the study, I have attempted to provide nuanced answers to the question about cultural causes and sources of the Eastern Prussian phenomenon of National Socialism. The results of the analysis of processes implemented at the level of deliberately implemented social activities, as well as phenomena being the implementation of processes occurring in the unconscious (mental) sphere shed new light on the problem of the relationship between ideology, authoritarian systems and transformations occurring simultaneously in the sphere of culture.

As a starting point, I assume that the social, political, and geographical uniqueness of East Prussia and the Eastern Prussian mentality had a major impact on the events in the eastern periphery of the German Reich in the period 1933-1945. The main purpose of my work is to analyze Eastern Prussian literature in terms of attempts to define and describe key elements that co-created the Eastern Prussian space and to examine how this mentality, being also the consti-

tutive backbone of literary practice itself, was constructed at the level of literary discourse. Such a research intention into the literary field proves sensible, taking into account the fact that literature as a field of culture arises and interacts in spaces defined by geographical and historical boundaries, the specificity of which essentially co-determines the role of literature, and often its content – and vice versa, literary texts participate in the cultural and imaginative construction of these spaces.

The idea of – exploring the cultural landscape of East Prussia in the period 1933-1945 exclusively through research in the literary history is not legitimate at a time when the boundaries between humanities are blurred; literature studies, as never before, approach cultural studies in their perception of the subjects of research against the historical background of a given epoch. Using “relational reading of literature”, referring in its basis to the theory of dialogism of Mikhail Bakhtin, I have read and analyzed literary texts in their connection with other texts from the period – from the period of National Socialism in East Prussia and the preceding Weimar Republic.

In search for a methodological basis, I have reached for conceptual resources of three scientific disciplines: literary analysis of the school of New Historicism and the poetics of culture, as well as the sociology of culture and literature and historical anthropology. The starting point is the thesis that literature research can be effectively carried out when literature is understood as the field of anthropologically understood culture.

In this perspective, both prose and poetical literature forms, as a product of a distinguished type of cultural practice, remain for me one of the empirical manifestations of the intersubjectively understood historical reality. Literature understood in this way may be treated as source material with special qualities for research not only strictly literary, but also for studies on the culture and mentality of a given epoch, and vice versa. This particularity results from the fact that literary forms of expression condense central symbols of a given historical culture, as well as cardinal meanings and fundamental metaphors that structure the experiences of participating entities.

At this point, it seems necessary to emphasize the difference between *mentality* that is thematic in the literature, in the press discourse and even in the scientific discourse of the studied epoch in descriptive mode, and *mentality as a research category* which bears characteristics of a heuristic tool. Defining the possibilities of mentality as a research category, I have utilised the research of Poznań-based methodologist Wojciech Wrzosek, who in his commentary on the dynamics of research on *mentalité*, aptly pointed to the following ongoing process: the concepts of mentality and culture are clearly approaching each other. He stated that regardless of whether culture is understood narrowly or broadly

(i.e. as the sphere of material and spiritual culture), the research on *mentalité* is understood as a study of culture. In this sense too, the category of mentality coincides today and is even replaced by the anthropological concept of culture understood as the reality of thought that characterizes a given human community in time and space.

In adopting such a conceptual research concept, the issue cognitively interesting for me is not only the mentioned relativity between the texts of different provenance, but also the possibility of going beyond the study of cultural expressions in order to seek *hegemony discourses* appropriate for the analyzed period. The next research stage, due to the immersion of the discourses of interest to me in the ideology of the 1933-1945 period, focuses on the so-called *ressemblances*, defined by Michel Foucault as correspondence, i.e. the relationship between discourses and non-linguistic reality.

The holistic approach to research on the culture of East Prussia during the period of National Socialism necessarily includes taking into consideration the actions of *institutions* aiming for the implementation of cultural policy, and the impact of this policy on the basic ideas and values shared by people participating in the East Prussian culture. In this respect I use the concept of Foucault who proposes to define discourses and to reveal the practices of power that are contained in these discourses. Referring to the category of power in the context of the research field of East Prussia during the Third Reich, I also use the *theory of power* developed by Hannah Arendt.

Power, in its various manifestations, is tied to the *centro-peripheral context* which in a unique way prejudged the course of social, historical and cultural events in East Prussia. An important element of my viewpoint is the problem of mutual influence of the German Reich, with its center in Berlin, and the province of East Prussia. Such influence was characterised by a tripartite layout: actors (writers and their literary work) – institutions – mechanisms, or *de facto* dependences produced by the subfields of the center and periphery remaining in mutual relations. East Prussia as the periphery of the German Reich can be undoubtedly defined as an area enjoying its own autonomy, thus as a provincial subfield of its own structure. In an attempt to explore the culture of East Prussia during the reign of National Socialism reflected in the cultural and symbolic landscape of this province, I have tried to define a network of concepts that enable us to capture the interaction of the constituent parts of the triangle.

These concepts include such research categories as *the nation (Volk)*, *the fatherland (Heimat)* and *community identity*, as well as the binary opposition of the *open province* and *closed province*. The concept of the *East Prussia province* has been broken down into two ideological areas, namely: the province understood as *geographical space (Raum)* and the province as a *mental map* – a specific cultural

code and symbolic capital functioning as a matrix for ethnic-regional-national identification with a given region. Looking for literary illustrations of the mythization of the "East Prussian landscape", I have searched for a certain list of canonical values - the cardinal features of the cultural alphabet of East Prussia, which I consider synonymous with the cultural and symbolic capital of "East Prussia" in the sense proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. In the collective dimension, the set of these dispositions creates a quality called by Bourdieu the *habitus* – a system of permanent dispositions that are transferred during the process of socialization. These acquired dispositions structure the practices and patterns of cultural perception and underlie the patterns of response to specific social situations.

The concepts of *cultural landscape* and *symbolic landscape* I have also derived from Bourdieu, in an interpretation of the categories of cultural and symbolic capital with a specific and original shift of meaning. In my work, I propose to understand the cultural landscape as a result of a specific cooperation and complementarity of the empirically available objectivizations of culture – in the form of various social practices and manifestations of thought reality that make up a locally symbolic landscape. The cultural harmony in question occurs between deliberately implemented practices shaping social reality (for example, political rituals) and landscape-forming artefacts of the reality of thought, among which I include the analyzed literary texts. In the general sense, the categories of culture and cultural landscape I understand and use alternatively, and when talking about the symbolic landscape, I refer specifically to the reality of thought.

The research time frame I have selected is limited by the period of National Socialism, which inevitably encourages the study of the relationship between the literature emerging at that time and the system of supervisory institutions controlling various areas of life, including cultural life. In order to capture the paradigm shift in the discourses which co-create the area of East Prussian culture, I have returned to the status quo developed by processes and events taking place in the Weimar Republic, and sometimes even earlier. Looking for a convenient starting point for my interpretation, I have thus gone back to the hypothetical and differently dated origins of East Prussian literature.

Implementing the research idea of tracing the cultural landscape of East Prussia in 1933-1945, I have analyzed three basic categories of source materials. They are: a) the corpus of selected literary works; b) documents and files concerning authors of selected literary works that were created and maintained by political institutions, as well as preserved legacies of selected authors along with literary studies originating from the times of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of the Third Reich; and c) selected press published in East Prussia in the researched period. In the analyzes, I have taken into account literature created

not only by writers living in East Prussia, but also by those who left this province, but socialization of whom mainly took place in the East Prussian province, and thus was marked by the impact of landscape, regional culture and local traditions. In the selection of literary material I have followed the criterion of typicality and representativeness. Therefore, I have tried to include the literature written by the authors of various social provenance, adhering to diverse political sympathies and characterized by different artistic qualifications. Among the analyzed literary texts there are the works of writers associated with East Prussia by both a wide range of recipients living in the province, as well as readers from beyond its borders. Undoubtedly, this group includes such authors as Ernst Wiechert, Agnes Miegel, Alfred Brust and Paul Fechter. On the other hand, *poetae minores* are a special feature of the literary landscape of a given region, because most often they are the ones closest to their regional readers. Therefore, in the process of recording the history of literature in East Prussia and searching for a specific *genius loci* of the region, I have devoted special attention to this group of writers. Among the literary works belonging to the above-mentioned group, I have included works by such writers as Paul Brock, Martin Borrmann, Gertrud Papendick, Erich Hannighofer, Fritz Kudnig, Charlotte Keyser, Johann Wolf, Agnes Harder, Alfred Karrasch, Hansgeorg Buchholz and Hans Joachim Haecker. An important tool in the selection of literature was also the social criterion. It found its expression in the selection of materials for analysis including the works of writers from different backgrounds and areas of the province, thus reflecting in their work the various East Prussians *millieux*, including the circles of Eastern Prussian Junker families (Otffried Graf von Finckenstein).

The analysis of literature created in the 1933-1945 is accompanied by the invariable question about the autonomy and freedom of art, and thus the question of whether and to what extent this literature mirrors the author's reflection on the surrounding world, or whether it stems from the writer's creative imagination. Questions as to how much the creative process of literature can be controlled, and maybe even steered, appear in the context of the aggressive cultural policy pursued by the National Socialists impossible to ignore in scientific research. Literary works were not only the product of a given period, but they also generated meaningful contexts co-shaping the face of the cultural reality of their time. In the discussed period and system, the authors themselves were conscious or unconscious transmitters of ideology, and by their work supported by state cultural institutions they multiplied this system. I have treated the discourse of the press published in East Prussia in the time that I am interested in as a complementary source of reference to the studied literature. Accepting the above-mentioned optics of the school of New Historicism, I see the problem of

multilateral exchange between the text and its historical and cultural context, and treat the literary text as "a statement produced and assimilated within history and inside the history of other products and assimilation", which consequently means that the literary work is not separated from the accompanying historical cultural reality.

Starting from the existing status quo, i.e. the leading hegemony discourses in the culture of East Prussia shaped in the course of historical socio-political processes in the period of the Weimar Republic, I have aimed to grasp the changes of discursive paradigms and the formation of new cultural phenomena under the influence of changing historical circumstances, which manifested, among others, in the cultural policy practiced in East Prussia by the Third Reich apparatus.

I have considered the contexts and historical-cultural circumstances of the creation of figures that make up the thought construct of East Prussia to be necessary prerequisites for the questions concerning the influence of the National Socialist ideology on the provincial and regional identity and the appropriation of imaginary spaces by this ideology.

I have defined this construct of the province of East Prussia on the basis of separation of *hegemony discourses* which are constituted by the same cardinal meanings on three levels.

The first of these is the analysis of processes *implemented through deliberate social activities* emerging from the analysis of historical and cultural contexts of the implementation of the Third Reich policies in East Prussia. I have drawn conclusions on the basis of the analysis of historical processes affecting the course of events in East Prussia and the cultural policy affecting the Eastern Prussian society in the 1933-1945 period. A significant complement to the above information is the analysis of the content of articles from selected daily newspapers and periodicals published in East Prussia in the 1930-1944 period. The titles included "Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung", "Königsberger Tageblatt", "Ostpreußische Zeitung", "Tillsiter Allgemeine Zeitung", "Der ostpreußische Erzieher", "Heimatkalender für den Kreis Labiau", "Ostpreußischer Haus- und Familienkalender" and "Ostpreußischer Bauernkalender". Such a selection was dictated by the desire to analyze the message with which individual publishers, more or less involved in the implementation of the National Socialist ideology, reached different social strata of the East Prussian province.

Another level of discourse has been determined by the analysis of elements of *imaginary spaces*: the myth of the German East and the myth of East Prussia. This issue shall be considered in more detail further in the summary.

The third level results from the analysis of the phenomena that occur due to *processes occurring in the unconscious (mental) sphere*. Defining them was possible

once I have recognized the proper meanings condensed in literary works created in the analysed temporal and territorial frameworks. I have assume that a literary text is one of the best source materials enabling understanding of the social and collective way of seeing the world by others, learning about the objectivization of the thinking of people of a given era in the form of images, representations and cardinal symbols. As a product of the imagination of a writer living in a specific historical time, the literary text in a special way condenses in itself the problems of its era and the cultural environment in which it was created. Thus, it collects, duplicates and transmits basic cultural symbols of the era, components of the system of norms and values, and behavior patterns that form the core of the culture of a given time.

As a result of the analysis of the aforementioned source materials, it was possible to distinguish the elements of the leading discourses on the above-mentioned three levels and to follow the transformations that they were subjected to during the period of National Socialism.

The end of the 19th century marks the beginnings of national and nationalist reinterpretations of the myth of *the German East*, consisting of the ideas of the so-called missionaries, German *Kulturträger* in the east: the concepts of the “bulwark” and “bastion” (*Bollwerk*) protecting from the threat of the Slavs, and later the idea of the “German national land” (*deutscher Volksboden*). Although these elements or symbols were present in the discourse concerning all geographical parts of *the German East*, the experience of World War I and its repercussions in the form of the provisions of the Versailles Treaty had a special impact on the intense transformation of these mental figures and the arrangement of new ones in East Prussia. This had an impact on the emergence of symbols specific to East Prussian culture which soon became its foundations subject to a specific strengthening through an intense process of mythologization.

As part of the expansion of the concept of *Bollwerk*, the image of East Prussia as a borderland (*Grenzland*) was also used. It was based on emotional ties with the East Prussian homeland (*Heimat*) which was characterized as a territory which its inhabitants must defend by separating from their neighbors in order to protect their regional and national culture. The image of the national community was based on a triad: the family land (*Scholle*) – homeland (*Heimat/Vaterland*) – nation (*Volk*). The idea of *Heimat* from the Eastern Prussian perspective reflected the “German community” – both the real one, established through local connection with the family land (*Scholle*), as well as the symbolic, imaginary affiliation with the nation in an ideological sense. The common thread, which in a way connects the two homelands and citizens forming the community of the German nation, was the duty (*Pflicht*) whose individual fulfillment manifested in different ways depending on the position and role of the individual in society.

Duty (*Pflicht*) that involves fidelity (*Treue*) towards the family land (*Scholle*), and further also to the East Prussian homeland (*Heimat*) and the ideological homeland (*Vaterland*) in a sense of belonging to the German national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) all formed the basic canon of identification of any East Prussian.

The success of the NSDAP in East Prussia was attributed in previous studies on the period of National Socialism to the economic growth and improvement of the life standards of average citizens of this province. Not denying this, I believe that three factors determined the exceptional success of the ideology of National Socialism in the province in question. The first of these was the special location of East Prussia (*Ostpreußens Sonderlage*) approved by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles and the related new dimension of the borderland, supported by the myth of the German bastion in the east (*Bollwerk*). The intensive increase in popularity of NS ideology in East Prussia was also influenced by the *dominant Protestant-agricultural milieu* and very *strong conservative and national traditions* present in the province. These factors determined that the development of National Socialism in East Prussia assumed a different direction and was characterized by a different dynamics than in other parts of the Reich. The fact of the special location of East Prussia, resulting from separating the provinces from the rest of the Reich through the “Polish corridor”, was used by the socialists both for achieving their goals within the Eastern Prussian province, and for central policies – as a means of demonstrating the strengthening of power and implementation of the NSDAP foreign policy concept. Treating the *Bollwerk* as a starting point for the implementation of their policy goals, they based their actions on correlation and handling of three circumstances. At the provincial level, they wanted to strengthen the sense of the need to build and belong to the German national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) conditional on blood community (*arische Abstammung*). This need was fueled by a systematic awareness raising policy concerning the threat posed by borderland residence (*Grenzlandpropaganda*) surrounded by dangerous neighbors and – as a consequence of this fact – a demonstrative exclusion of all strangers not belonging to the community (*Ausschluss von ‘Gemeinschaftsfremden’*). From the level of the Reich’s policy, the special location of East Prussia as the most eastern German province was used as a bridgehead for the implementation of the long-term plan of pushing to the east (*Drang nach Osten*) in order to acquire and incorporate into the Third Reich further areas necessary to expand the German living space in the east (*Lebensraum im Osten*). Another aspect of NSDAP propaganda was the attempt to attribute the key role to the Eastern Prussian peasants in the implementation of the idea of a “rebirth” of the German state enlarged by the new living space in the east. This is an expression of a large-scale program within the framework

of NS policy for East Prussia based on the symbolic capital of such concepts as: the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), patrimony (*Scholle*) or the blood and earth conception steeped in Nazi ideology (*Blut und Boden*).

The way in which National Socialists used the categories of *the German East* and *the myth of East Prussia* is evident in the way the two constructs evolve in the period from 1933 to 1945. This evolution was nothing but the shift of meanings within the above-mentioned mental concepts in order to appropriate the imaginary spaces of the German East and create a “new” myth of East Prussia, suitable for shaping the National Socialist vision of the regional identity of the province. The practices of shifting the meanings found within these constructs are, in Roland Barthes’ view, the process of creating a new myth. The mythologizing activities within the aforementioned ideas are also examples of the practices of discourse manipulation as stipulated by Foucault. The turning point in the perception of the German East was September 1, 1939. The German East became the starting point of the myth of the German colonization of the East which gave grounds for the historical legitimization of territorial claims in the East. The idea of the *colonization of the East* as a politically conscious enterprise of the Germans, publicized already in the interwar period, was seized upon by Adolf Hitler. He expressed it via the concept of creating additional *living space* through the colonial policy conducted in the immediate foreground of the Third Reich.

In the new interpretation of the idea of the *German colonization of the East*, two elements of the East Prussian myth played a key role. The East Prussian *Bollwerk* appeared in the new role of the German Eastern mobile *frontier*, which, through the possibility of constant conquest and populating new spaces, was to keep German society in a state of constant youth, dynamism and strength. Further, the idea of the Teutonic Order served as a certain founding myth for *the “new” German state space in the East*.

The consequence of the key shifts within the Eastern Prussia myth indicated here was a series of propaganda efforts carried out by National Socialists, whose task was to strengthen other elements of the myth in order to legitimize the East Prussian province outside – towards the Reich center – but also inside; the intent here was the strengthening of regional and collective identity of East Prussian community. This ideologization is reflected in the narrative of all the newspapers and periodicals I have mentioned, with the exception of the daily newspaper *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung*, the last issue of which was published on December 31, 1933.

The concepts emerging from the analysis of the cultural landscape create a certain *meta-space* of superior features characterizing the province of East Prussia, and thus functioning as the cultural code and symbolic capital of this province as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu. Considering the fact that authors would

build the narrative of the majority of analyzed literary works around the aforementioned notions – native land, patrimony, duty, landscape and the borderland and bastion of Germanness in the East, they can be considered as thematic complexes around which the *hegemony discourses* of East Prussia were formed. The functioning of the indicated discourses, however, was not characteristic only for the duration of the Third Reich. The moment of their appearance in the Eastern Prussian public space dates back to the beginnings of the *Keiserreich*. The discourses, reinterpreted over time in the context of changing socio-political conditions and influences of the cultural policy pursued by the National Socialists, have changed their meanings. Transitions of meanings have taken the following directions: fatherland (*Heimat*) versus the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), patrimony (*Scholle*) versus ideological blood and earth (*Blut und Boden*), the bulwark of civilization/bastion of Germanness in the East (*Bollwerk*) versus drive to the East (*Drang nach Osten*). The spectrum of intense manipulations of discourse conducted by the National Socialists included also the semantic changes within *the World War I myths*. The shifting of the meanings of these cardinal symbols aimed at creating a new myth of Eastern Prussia to support the implementation of National Socialist policies both at provincial level (for example, strengthening the identity of the Eastern Prussian community by excluding non-members of the community), as well as central level (for example, the enlargement of space for the German nation with East Prussia acting as a bridgehead for this purpose).

In the center of the main narrative trends of East Prussian literature published in the Third Reich, there are invariable thematic complexes which were of interest to the East Prussian authors also during Wilhelm's reign and in the times of the Weimar Republic – within the "small homeland" literary movement. The distinguishing feature of the East Prussian small homeland and the undeniable element around which the sense of the collective identity of East Peasants was built was the *cultural landscape*. It was constructed as a special kind of historical landscape in the understanding of Friedrich Ratzel, with elements characteristic for the region: Teutonic castles (with a special admiration for the Malbork castle) and memory sites of World War I created in the times of the Weimar Republic, especially the monument commemorating the victorious battle of Tannenberg. An equally important role, and perhaps even the most important role for the bond built with the East Prussian homeland, was played by the *natural landscape understood as the countryside, nature and scenery*. The natural elements characteristic of this area have in the process of mythologization become East Prussian landscape symbols. The definite icons of the East Prussian landscape include: boundlessness (*die Weite*), dunes, lakes, forests, cranes, elks, the Curonian Spit, the Romincka Forest and the Trakehnen stud. Separate yet

permanent elements of the East Prussian landscape were the palace and park complexes owned by the gentry.

In literature published in the Third Reich, the cultural and natural landscape is presented in various literary forms and assumes various functions. First of all, it is an expression of affirmation, fascination with and attachment to the East Prussian homeland. An interesting aspect of how the indicated symbols were propagated was the widely implemented cultural policy leading to the promotion of the East Prussian province and its artists. This was done, among others, through publication of whole issues of special newspapers and magazines appearing in the center of the Reich and devoted to the literature and culture of East Prussia. In this way, the idea of a special role of the German East was promoted; the National Socialists thus assigned it the colonization mission and the task of acquiring new living space for the German nation.

In literary texts, apart from aesthetic values, the landscape was also assigned specific therapeutic and psychological functions. As unpolluted nature – a kind of anti-civilization biotope, it was supposed to be an antidote to psychic wounds caused by the experience of World War I violence (Ernst Wiechert, *Die Majorin* [Mrs. Major], 1934), as well as the violence of the National Socialist policy (Ernst Wiechert, *Das einfache Leben* [Simple Life], 1939). Literary works show East Prussian nature as an ahistoric element (often with mystical powers) that influences the formation of the raw, melancholic and often “surly” nature of the eastern man (*Ostmensch*). On the other hand, the natural world can be a source of exceptional, life-giving force (Alfred Brust, *Eisbrand: die Kinder der Allmacht* [The Eisbrands: Children of Omnipotence], 1933; H. Buchholz, *Grita*, 1934; E. Wiechert, *Die Jeromin-Kinder* [Children of Jeromin], 1945/1947).

The love for the East Prussian homeland is also manifested in devotion and attachment to the family land/patrimony (*Scholle*) in relation to which the obligation (*Pflicht*) is put above all else (Paul Brock, *Alles Lebendige muss reifen* [All Life Must Age], 1942). The Eastern Prussian rural novel, also known as the novel of patrimony (*Schollenroman*) was present in the canon of East Prussian literature since its hypothetical beginnings dated by Hubert Orłowski to the second half of the 19th century. Authors of such novels written in the period of National Socialism focused their narrative around the heroes who, despite their hesitation, eventually made the decision to return to their homeland separated by the “corridor” from the rest of the Reich – to fulfill their duty towards the “ideological patrimony” (Paul Fechter, *Die Fahrt nach der Ahnfrau* [The Journey to the Ancestress], 1935; Agnes Miegel, *Kathrinchen kommt nach Hause* [Katie Comes Home], 1931). Undoubtedly, this type of narrative supported the efforts of the political program to counteract the exodus of the East Prussian population who sought

better living conditions, especially in the face of economic crisis, which severely affected East Prussia at the turn of the 1920s and 30s.

The role of the peasantry in building the future of the German nation was particularly emphasized in the policy of the National Socialists implemented in East Prussia. A number of novels ideologically imbued with the myth of blood and land (*Blut und Boden*) corresponds with this intention (including Agnes Harder, *Neue Kinder alter Erde* [New Children of the Old Earth], 1933 and Erich Hannighofer, *Erde* [The Earth], 1936). The ethos of duty towards the native land and family appears in the stories by Johanna Wolff and Otfried Graf von Finkenstein. It is worth emphasizing that this is a universal phenomenon, common to all social strata in Eastern Prussia, as illustrated by novels *Die Mutter* [Mother] by Otfried Graf von Finckenstein (1938) and *Mutter auf Erden* [The Mother on Earth] by Johanna Wolff (1933).

Another large thematic complex that appears especially in poetry published in the 1933-1945 period by the authors associated with East Prussia is the theme of *World War I*. Poems and stories were written and then intensively absorbed by recipients due to numerous reprints in the local press. The authors included Fritz Kudnig (*Tannenberg*, 1942), Agnes Miegel (*Hindenburg, Kriegergräber, "Ostland"*, 1943), and Arnold Hein (*Gloria Victoria! Erzählung aus der Tannenbergsschlacht 1914* [Gloria Victoria! Stories of the Tannenberg Battle of 1914], 1934). They describe a sacrificial fight in a sense of duty to defend one's homeland in a glorified and mythologized manner, presenting the victory of Marshal Hindenburg at Tannenberg as the final triumph over the "Slavic element". This topic was used by National Socialist propaganda realizing yet another shift in the components of the East Prussian myth. Styling Hitler as the successor of von Hindenburg, he is presented as the next providential man of Eastern Prussia, a savior from the oppression of the economic crisis and the chief preparing the province to fulfill the key role of the bridgehead in the struggle for living space for the German nation in the East.

This shift from *Bollwerk* towards *Drang nach Osten*, which took place in the myth of East Prussia due to the policy implemented by the National Socialists, redefined the function of the Reich's border in the East. The bend that until now had been a bastion took the form of a mobile *frontier*, enabling the colonization mission in the East to populate new spaces and keep the German society in a state of dynamism, strength and constant youth. The key figure for the implementation of this move was the figure of knights of the Teutonic Order which served as a founding myth for the "new" colonization of the German state space in the East. In this case, the National Socialists drew the symbolic capital from the early work of Agnes Miegel, above all from her epigonic ballad novel, *Die Fahrt der sieben Ordensbrüder* [The Journey of Seven Friars of the Order]. An invaluable

role was also played here by literary works that transformed the cultural landscape of East Prussia, marked by the activities of the Knights of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with particular emphasis on Malbork as *Wunderwerk des deutschen Ostens* (Jacob Schaffner, *Die Predigt von Marienburg* [The Sermons of Malbork], 1931).

A separate thematic complex of East Prussian literature was Königsberg as the only important for the Reich cultural center of the East Prussian region, which the local cultural policy wanted to express (which is visible in the works of i.a. Gertrud Papendick, *Vor den Toren, Die Kantherkinder* [Before the Gates, The Kanther Children], in: E.M. Sirovatka (Hg.), *Königsberg. Die goldene Stadt im Osten* [Königsberg. The Golden Town in the East], and Agnes Miegel, *Königsberg*).

The field of Eastern Prussian literature gathers all the aspects of cultural policy to which Jan-Pieter Barbian refers when describing the institutions of the Third Reich state apparatus and their task of “disciplining” and controlling the creative process of writers. In the discussed power system, the author could act as a medium of National Socialist ideology. On the discursive level, writers whose work was supported and rewarded by state cultural institutions multiplied figures and symbols constituting important components of the propaganda mechanism of power (for instance Agnes Miegel). The authors who intentionally opposed the proposed ideological game were subjected to various repressions (see the case of Ernst Wiechert). Analysis of the corpus of historical source materials, which consist of both documents collected in the Bundesarchiv Berlin Lichterfelde, as well as files kept by NSDAP in cases of individual East Prussian authors, allows to answer the question about the functions of censorship and self-censorship. At the same time it highlights the problem of supporting or repressing specific writers in the public life of East Prussia in the Third Reich. However, in the literature of East Prussia created in 1933-1945, we find a number of items bearing the signs of a clear fascination with Nazi ideology (including Agnes Miegel, *An den Führer, Hymne an Ostpreußen, Viktoria* [To the Führer, A Hymn to East Prussia, Viktoria], in: the same, *Ostland-Gedichte* [Ostland Poems], 1943, Alfred Karrasch, *Stein, gib Brot! Eine Chronik aus dem Kampf unserer Tage* [Stone, give us Bread! A Chronicle of the Fight of Our Days], 1935; *Parteigenosse Schmiededecke: Ein Zeitroman* [Party Comrade Schmiededecke. A Period Piece], 1934; Agnes Harder, *Neue Kinder alter Erde* [New Children of the Old Earth], 1933). Still, there are thematic complexes around which literary works constantly focus; the notions in the center of the hegemony discourses of East Prussia – from Wilhelm's Reich, through the Weimar Republic, to the Third Reich. Shifts within the meanings of these concepts result from the nature of the implemented cultural policy, which gave an appropriate tone to the interpretations of the works created at the time and reinterpretations of earlier works.

The analysis of literary works published during the Third Reich in East Prussia, in the narrative and receptive context of works of Eastern Prussian literature from before 1933, allows us to note the persistent system of norms, values and behavior patterns in specific social situations regarding cardinal matters. These matters included: attitude to the homeland and values determining attachment to it, attitude towards strangers, sense of duty, and responsibility for the land, family or family property. These reactions resulted from the system of values, which consisted of a whole range of components coming from both the so-called sphere of material existence, as well as language, customs, beliefs, art and morality patterns. The presented components are just basic elements, co-creating the image of the human world, unknowingly or consciously accepted in the process of primary and secondary socialization at the time. Literature, as a product of the imagination of a writer living in a specific historical time, in a unique way condensed the problems of the era and the cultural environment in which it was created. Thus, the literary text accumulated, reproduced and transmitted the basic cultural symbols of the era, the components of the system of norms and values, and behavioral patterns constituting the core of the culture of a given time.

I also perceive the aforementioned system of cultural beliefs as an expression of *mentality* characterizing the human community I am studying. National Socialists accurately recognized the determinants of mentality, its fundamental elements and rules determining the course of life in the Eastern Prussian province. Through the mythologizing efforts, they consciously subjected to strengthening all elements distinguishing the East Prussians community, and at the same time treated them as a starting point for implementing the central policy within the province. In the times of the Weimar Republic – following the findings of Robert Traba – National Socialists had to tackle both the “monolithic” and “mosaic” way of understanding and creating an image of the Eastern Prussian province. The time of Nazi supremacy was characterized by the desire to fully homogenize the East Prussian province by excluding all forms of culture other than German.

In conclusion, it can be said that East Prussia was characterized by a certain degree of binarism. On the one hand, the province can be described by means of cardinal and universal features for all peripheries, namely the maladjustment to its current center – in the case of Eastern Prussia to the German Reich from 1933-1945 – both materially and mentally. On the other hand, when it comes to the scale of support for the Nazis, the province is seen as equal to the center which undergoes the process of adaptation to the present, and in many respects even ahead of it.

In contrast to Berlin, where at the beginning of the 1930s the Social Democrats and communists rivaled with the National Socialists appropriating the political scene, in East Prussia, apart from Königsberg itself, there were very few representatives of opposition political groups. National Socialism, therefore, could well enter the ruts of Prussian conservatism à la Hindenburg and Eastern Prussian Junkerism. Taking as a starting point the statement that the social, political and geographical uniqueness of East Prussia and Eastern Prussian mentality had a major impact on the events of the eastern periphery of the German Reich in 1933-1945, in the study I have made an attempt to answer the question of the causes and sources of the Eastern Prussian National Socialism, through a nuanced analysis of the cultural phenomena described above. The results of the analysis of processes implemented at the level of deliberately implemented social activities, as well as phenomena being the implementation of processes occurring in the unconscious (mental) sphere shed new light on the problem of the relationship between ideology, authoritarian systems and transformations occurring simultaneously in the sphere of culture.

The findings can serve as a useful source of knowledge, concerning both the understanding and shaping the mechanisms of culture and social life in modern times – which can then be appropriate, because it is not bound by the described risks.