

Mapping transnational spaces of contemporary Europe: A look at the post-2004 fiction
by Polish migrant authors

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Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 is commonly regarded as a watershed in the history of Polish emigration. The massive inflow of Poles to the EU countries, most notably the United Kingdom, has been amply analysed from the perspective of sociology, economics, and psychology. Simultaneously, the experience of migration and the changes it brings about has attracted the attention of those Polish-born authors who themselves inhabit transnational European spaces, and whose works, featuring migrant characters, are now analysed from different critical perspectives: postcolonial/postcommunist, imagological, and feminist, to name but a few. In this paper, I will focus on three such authors who fictionalise migration in their works while at the same time partaking in the cultural in-betweenness that transnational movement entails: Grażyna Plebanek, A.M. Bakalar, and Agnieszka Dale. My proposition is that by portraying contemporary (Polish) migrants, their works reveal various reconfigurations inherent in the experience of leaving one's homeland for the host country, with its idiosyncratic, culture-specific features and more universal patterns of integration, or lack thereof. In doing so, these works also reflect upon contemporary Europe and the way in which selfhood and otherness are (mis)represented and enacted in a variety of settings, ranging from the micro context of an individual, through romantic and family relationships, transnational workplace, and even the dystopian post-human spaces of the Europe of the future. As they map the experience of migration in the 21st century, these works dramatize tensions within contemporary European spaces, where one's gender, ethnicity, and/or provenance affect inter-human relations, challenging and disrupting the official European narrative of "united in diversity."