

Introduction

In July 2004, at the invitation of editor Marcin Bolec, I wrote my first column for the Boston-based biweekly *Biały Orzeł/White Eagle*. It took as its point of departure the fact that in English we say “A word to the wise is sufficient,” while the equivalent Polish proverb refers to “two words” (*Mądrej głowie dość dwie słowie*). That proverb gave me a title—“Two Words to the Wise”—for the ensuing columns about Polish language, literature, and folklore, and for a collection of the first seventy columns that was published by Slavica in 2008.

The present volume contains seventy-five more columns, chosen from among the more than two hundred that have appeared in *Biały Orzeł* since 2008. Some of them have been updated, corrected, or otherwise revised. They appear here roughly in the order in which they were originally published, but need not be read in sequence. Some of them were inspired by the calendar, others by new books or articles, still others by my experiences in the classroom, both as student and teacher. As I said in the introduction to the 2008 volume, writing these columns has provided a welcome opportunity to explore new areas and to learn new things.

Where appropriate I have added bibliographical notes that provide information about my sources. In addition to the works mentioned in those notes, especially those by Julian Krzyżanowski, Władysław Kopaliński, Henryk Markiewicz and Andrzej Romanowski, I have often consulted the following publications: Paweł Hertz and Władysław Kopaliński, *Księga cytatów z polskiej literatury pięknej od XIV do XX wieku* (Warsaw: PIW, 1975); three Polish etymological dictionaries with the same title (*Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*) by Aleksander Brückner (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1970 [reprint of the 1927 Cracow edition]), Franciszek Sławski (Cracow: TMJP, 1952–82), and Wiesław Boryś (Cracow: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2005); and numerous dictionaries of Polish and the other Slavic languages.

I have been encouraged in this enterprise by my colleague Bill Moebius, chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, by Dean Julie Candler Hayes of the UMass College of Humanities and Fine Arts, and by the readers of *Biały Orzeł* and of *Two Words to the Wise*. I am grateful to George Fowler of Slavica and Indiana

University for pushing me to compile a second volume of columns; to Oscar Swan for agreeing to write a foreword and for his kind words; to Wayles Browne, from whom I am still learning after 50+ years; and to Rosemarie Connolly of Slavica, an editor's editor. Last, but most, I am grateful to Halina Rothstein for constant inspiration and wise counsel.

Amherst, 2016